Identity has a History

Rethinking Identity Politics Through Historical Discourses of The Self

Emma Sarian

(BA, Australian National University)

(MRes, Macquarie University)

Department of Modern History, Politics and International Relations

Faculty of Arts

Macquarie University

July 2018

Table of Contents

Abstract

Identity politics has long been accused of fragmenting and destabilising progressive politics, and critiques of its political effects continue unabated in light of its enduring significance. Yet, the majority of these accounts fail to historicise identity, proceeding from metaphysical or psychological definitions that flatten its effects. This thesis takes a poststructuralist approach that conceptualises identity not as some ontological pre-given but as a historically-derived discourse, and thus does not examine what it is but what it does. The aim of this thesis is thus to trace the historical emergence of this discourse in order to move current theorisations about its political effects into a more nuanced, productive avenue.

To do so, it considers two social movements in Australia that are often seen as central examples of the rise of identity politics: the women's rights movement and the Aboriginal rights movement. Engaging in a close reading of the political claims made by activists involved in these movements, it traces the discourses of selfhood through which activists articulated their political demands. More specifically, it takes up the insight that the rise of the term 'identity' is actually historically recent and should be understood as part of a broader historical discourse of selfhood, in order to answer the question of how identity politics works.

In doing so, this thesis suggests that discourses of selfhood in the 20th century were closely tied to the knowledges being produced by the social sciences in this period, and that the discourse of identity reproduced by activists was likewise enmeshed within these logics. Analysing these political claims reveals three ways that identity politics has historically 'worked': by naturalising and thus universalising the individual capacity for agency in terms of recognition, by subsequently politicising human relations as foundational to this agency, and by positing culture as necessary for the development of this agency (and likewise problematising the claim that this capacity was exclusive to Western culture). Ultimately, this demonstrates that the kinds of political claims made possible by identity politics are more extensive than existing accounts allow.

Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Signed: Emma Sarian   Date: 20/07/2018

Acknowledgments

To my supervisors Leigh Boucher and Clare Monagle, thank you both for being not only so encouraging but so generous with your advice. I have no doubt that your faith in me to carry this off has pulled me through. Thank you's alone cannot convey my gratitude to you both for making this experience as fulfilling and exciting as it has been.

The Modern History department at Macquarie University is something special, exactly the kind of collegial, supportive environment that a fledgling scholar dreams of. Thank you to all the staff, both academic and professional, that make it so wonderful.

Thank you also to the staff at the National Library of Australia, the Noel Butlin Archives at the Australian National University, the University of Melbourne Archives and the State Library of Victoria - I would not have been able to take proper advantage of these amazing facilities without their efforts. A special thank you also to those who work behind the scenes of Trove, which is truly a national asset that deserves the support of everyone committed to accessible culture and history.

To mum and dad, your hard work has given me enormous privileges, including the ability to complete this thesis, and so I consider this your achievement as much as my own.

Macquarie University stands on land that has never been ceded by its traditional owners and custodians, the Darug people. Australia remains the only Commonwealth government that has not established a treaty with its Indigenous people, and the political contests that form part of this thesis are still ongoing. Thus, I would like to close by acknowledging the passion and the commitment of the activists in these pages, whose stories cannot be told too often.

Abbreviations

Aborigines Progressive Association	(APA)
Aborigines' Advancement League	(AbAL)
Australian Aboriginal Fellowship	(AAF)
Australian Aborigines' League	(AAL)
Australian Federation of Graduate Women	(AFGW)
Australian Federation of Women Voters	(AFWV)
Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies	(AIATSIS)
Australian Teachers' Federation	(ATF)
Australian Union of Students	(AUS)
Australian Women Against Rape	(AWAR)
Australian Women's Charter	(AWC)
Committee for Aboriginal Citizenship	(CAC)
Council for Aboriginal Rights	(CAR)
Council of Action for Equal Pay	(CAEP)
Equal Pay Council	(EPC)
Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders	(FCAATSI)
Federal Council of Aboriginal Advancement	(FCAA)
National Aboriginal Conference	(NAC)
the National Aboriginal and Islander Liberation Movement	(NAILM)
National Advisory Committee for International Women's Year	(NAC IWY)
National Council of Women	(NCW)
National Library of Australia	(NLA)
Noel Butlin Archive Centre, Australian National University	(NBAC)
Union of Australian Women	(UAW)
United Associations of Women	(UA)
United Nations Status of Women Committee	(UN SWC)
University of Melbourne Archives	(UoMA)
Women's Christian Temperance Union	(WCTU)
Women's Electoral Lobby	(WEL)

Introduction

We have been told for many years now that progressive politics is in crisis, and one of the most frequently identified culprits for this state of affairs is that ill-defined yet seemingly well-known phenomenon, identity politics. When this thesis commenced in early 2015, a substantial literature on this subject already existed, but with the success of the Leave campaign to withdraw the United Kingdom from the European Union in June 2016 and the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States five months later, identity politics was implicated once again as a key cause of conservative success. Mainstream publications pointed to an increasingly economically disenfranchised 'white working class' as the source of this conservative shift and suggested that identity politics was to blame for marginalising this group, failing to articulate a universal political vision that would engender solidarity across racial lines and win political power for the progressive cause.[1]

Much of the research around identity politics is likewise concerned with this question about the kind of politics that it enables – or precludes. Thus, despite a variety of approaches to theorising identity politics, this overarching concern with the conditions for political solidarity structures the kinds of questions that are raised, which centre on whether a politics based in identity can transcend its apparent tendency towards essentialism, tribalism and atomism. For instance, a liberal critique suggests that a focus on group identity inevitably limits individual freedom and the capacity of individuals to engage in the public sphere. A Leftist critique claims that only a politics based on class solidarity can truly bring about political change, while identity politics can only splinter individuals into increasingly particularised groups. A poststructuralist critique suggests that identity's essentialising promise of closure and fixity reinscribes exclusive categorisations. But is this all that identity politics does? Is this

---

[1] Mark Lilla, 'The End of Identity Liberalism', *The New York Times*, November 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/20/opinion/sunday/the-end-of-identity-liberalism.html; Chris Arnade, 'What Do Donald Trump Voters Really Crave? Respect', *The Guardian*, July 2016, http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/jul/30/what-do-donald-trump-voters-want-respect; David Leonhardt, 'Who's Campaigning on Identity Politics?', *The New York Times*, May 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/30/opinion/republicans-midterms-immigration.html; James Traub, 'The Party of Hubert Humphrey', *The Atlantic*, April 2018, https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/04/did-hubert-humphrey-doom-the-democratic-party/557282/; Richard North Patterson, 'How Democrats Can Beat Trump's White Identity Politics', *Huffington Post*, May 2018, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/opinion-patterson-identity-politics_us_5a7391a6e4b01ce33eb12c61.

all that can be said about its political effects? More specifically, how can a theorisation of identity politics as inimical to solidarity explain the historical evidence of its capacity to produce enormous change, political and otherwise?

These questions are largely overlooked by the literature since what this research shares, despite its methodological variety, is that it largely fails to take 'identity' as a historical object. This is despite the rise of a prominent Foucaultian critique of identity, which suggests that the constitution of human subjectivity is the result of *historically-specific* discourses that reproduce disciplinary power. Thus, even many notable poststructuralist accounts of identity politics focus on the historical development of identity *categories* – such as race, gender and sexuality – rather than the concept of identity itself. Yet, as a number of historians have noted, the contemporary usage of 'identity' is a very recent phenomenon and references to identity prior to the mid-twentieth century are scarce. It is precisely this historical lens that allows us to think about how identity politics *works* by asking what identity politics has, historically, *done*; in other words, what discourses has it mobilised and what political effects have they produced?

Thus, while I am approaching this issue as a historian, I wish to suggest that this concern about the lack of historicity in accounts of identity is not simply a disciplinary quibble; rather, it is the contention of this thesis that identity politics cannot be adequately theorised without understanding how it operationalises a particular historical discourse of selfhood known as 'identity'. This is an explicitly poststructuralist approach, which conceptualises power and thus the political in terms of discourses that structure the subject's way of knowing and being in the world. To ask what identity politics does through a poststructuralist lens is to question what ways of knowing and being 'identity' makes possible or impossible. Most poststructuralist accounts treat the answer to this question as already known, following Foucault's famous theorisation of modern identity, and as a result they tend to flatten the historical complexity of identity's political effects; specifically, the kinds of political claims it makes possible. Instead, this thesis suggests that by recovering the historicity of identity, by recognising its historical novelty and specificity, a more nuanced picture emerges of the kinds of politics that it can produce.

More specifically, my interest in this subject was raised less by the contemporary salience of these debates than by a dissatisfaction with how these accounts failed to tally with the rights claims of the historical actors who are said to have inaugurated this new politics. In other words, it was turning to the historical archives that raised the theoretical challenges which underpin this thesis. For instance, the radical Women's Liberationists are commonly designated archetypal enactors of identity politics, yet my initial research of their political claims found that their demands were not so easily reduced to contemporary frameworks of separatism or atomism. Likewise, the demands for cultural rights and recognition made by Aboriginal activists seemed to draw on far more complex and seemingly contradictory logics than are generally allowed within the literature's framework of liberal versus collective rights.

In fact, as this thesis demonstrates, it is precisely these tensions and the ways that activists negotiated them that constitute how a discourse works, or how it produces certain political effects. As Duggan has suggested, much of the theoretical work on identity politics operates in a "pedagogical mode" that dismisses activists' engagement of political discourses as ignorant or naïve, elides the historical specificity of the social movements it critiques in favour of abstract theorising, and thus fails to take seriously the possibility that the effects of political discourses are uneven, unpredictable and often transformational in unexpected ways.[2] I likewise contend that our understanding of a discourse is greatly enriched by paying closer attention to actual instances of its enactment, rather than offering purely theoretical accounts that elide its complexities. Thus, I wish to rethink identity politics not simply through historicist theory, but by theorising through the historical, turning to the archives in order to recover these discursive tensions as a source for generating political theory.

Consequently, this thesis seeks to supplement existing poststructuralist accounts of identity with another approach, broadly termed the history of the self. This work, though in many ways tied to the Foucaultian interest in the subject, provides a different way of thinking through the question of identity. In particular, this history highlights the increasingly central role of scientific knowledge in shaping conceptions of selfhood, as the burgeoning disciplines

---

[2] Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality?: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003), 81.

of psychology, anthropology and sociology each informed the other in theorising new models of the self and its relationship to society and culture. 'Identity' was only one of a number of these models, yet it gained almost instant popularity when psychologist Erik Erikson first proposed it in the 1950s, and it remains the popular model of selfhood in contemporary Western culture. As historians of identity have demonstrated, to understand its success as a discourse, we must look to the historical anxieties about self and society that it was able to resolve. As my thesis suggests, it is through such a historicisation of identity as a discourse that we can understand its specifically *political* mobilisation.

It is important at this stage to outline my definition of identity politics since, as Alcoff notes, one of the difficulties in theorising identity politics is that it is often referenced in a broad and vague way.[3] This thesis takes identity politics as a particular kind of collective political action that arose in the political movements of the late 1960s (often termed 'new social movements'), which was distinct because of its new understanding of collective identity as a cultural construction, and thus a site of political contestation. It thus identified culture as a site of oppression and aimed at cultural change, so that its demands were not directed strictly at the state. In this sense it is distinguished from earlier logics of political claims-making, which focused on redistribution of material resources by the state, and often aspired to state power as the means to achieve this goal.[4] Melucci makes this distinction in terms of a shift in focus from issues of material production to symbolic production, or the production of meaning.[5] Identity politics is also sometimes conflated with the 'politics of difference', which considers collective identity not only politically important, but also a normative good and, as my thesis will suggest, this relationship is not coincidental.

In these terms, this thesis does not consider nationalism to be a form of identity politics since nationalist demands are ultimately related to contestations over state citizenship, and thus

---

[3] Linda Alcoff, 'Who's Afraid of Identity Politics?', in *Reclaiming Identity: Realist Theory and the Predicament of Postmodernism*, ed. Paula M. L. Moya and Michael R. Hames-García (Berkeley ; Los Angeles ; London: University of California Press, 2000), 313.

[4] Christian Scholl, 'The New Social Movement Approach', in *Handbook of Political Citizenship and Social Movements*, ed. Hein-Anton van der Heijden (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2014), 238. Though see Calhoun's challenge to this schema: Craig Calhoun, '"New Social Movements" of the Early Nineteenth Century', *Social Science History* 17, no. 3 (1993): 385–427.

[5] Alberto Melucci, 'The Symbolic Challenge of Contemporary Movements', *Social Research* 52, no. 4 (1985): 801.

mobilise collective identities in a way that is distinct and not reducible to 'identity politics' alone. Likewise, it is important to delineate identity politics from the 'politics of recognition'; while the two are related, the latter refers to a specific claim that arose out of identity politics, as a demand for state-based recognition of identity categories such as gender, race and sexuality.[6] As my thesis will suggest, the politics of recognition is enabled by certain logics that have arisen from identity politics, but it does not encompass them, and this distinction is important for thinking through their political effects.

Thus, the aim of this thesis is to reconsider the question of how identity politics works, or what are its political effects, by historicising identity as a particular discourse of selfhood through which activists have made political claims. To do so, it will conduct a discursive analysis of the political demands made by activists within two social movements in Australia, the Aboriginal and women's rights movements. The thesis is therefore divided chronologically into two time periods, with the early development of scientific discourses of self from the 1930s to the 1960s, and the emergence of identity politics 'proper' from the late 1960s to the 1970s, and the rights claims of each movement within these periods is analysed in turn. In doing so, this thesis will offer a comparative analysis – which is largely absent from the literature – in order to demonstrate the dynamism of discourse, the way that logics of self and society intersected in varying ways, and how this created different possibilities for the two movements in making political claims.

After a review of the literature and the research method adopted by the thesis, Chapter One turns to the early period of the women's rights movement and introduces the discourse of personality as a key component of women's rights-claiming in this period. A formerly liberal theological discourse, the personality was increasingly deployed by activists during this period in psychological terms, as the development of the personality came to be articulated as a

---

[6] As my literature review details, normative theoretical approaches to identity politics often focus exclusively on the politics of recognition because of the challenge it poses to liberal democratic theory, as encapsulated in the famous debates between Nancy Fraser, Charles Taylor and Axel Honneth. See Charles Taylor, 'The Politics of Recognition', in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann and Charles Taylor, 25-73 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994); Nancy Fraser, 'Recognition without Ethics?', *Theory, Culture & Society* 18, no. 2–3 (June 2001): 21–42; Axel Honneth, 'Recognition or Redistribution?', *Theory, Culture & Society* 18, no. 2–3 (June 2001): 43–55.

basic psychological need. In particular, psychoanalytic ideas within psychology popularised understandings of the human self as a being composed of unconscious drives, where the improper regulation of these drives could produce an 'unhealthy' personality. This problematisation of selfhood reflected an overarching concern with the viability and legitimacy of democracy as a political order, where the proper functioning of democratic society was understood as the result of psychologically well-adjusted individuals. Within this discourse, activists were able to articulate new visions of marriage, domestic life and motherhood that called for an expansion of women's social role in the name of healthy individuals and thus a stable, democratic society.

Chapter Two turns to the early period of Aboriginal rights-claiming and traces the way that early Aboriginal rights activists' calls for citizenship also engaged these psychological discourses of selfhood, particularly as they linked pride to the individual's capacity to participate in society. In these terms, the 'right to cultural survival' was demanded in terms of the more fundamental need for group belonging and recognition, where grouphood was increasingly defined in terms of culture rather than race. The chapter considers in more detail the 'cultural turn' and its specific implications for claiming Aboriginal rights. In particular, it traces how the rise of culture was linked to the decoupling of the terms 'culture' and 'civilisation' by anthropological work in the 1930s, which separated the definition of culture from the supposedly universal, inevitable social process of civilisation to a holder of distinct group identities and values. By the 1960s and the advent of 'identity', which relied heavily on these earlier understandings of selfhood and society, culture could be articulated not only as a component of identity but as a psychological necessity for its development, and thus demanded as a right.

Chapter Three moves to the advent of 'identity politics' in the 1970s, which also marks a key shift in women's rights activists' articulation of the relationship between self and society. Where earlier understandings of social organisation viewed the 'adjustment' of individuals to their social roles in functionalist terms as a natural, objective process, the 'cultural turn' in the 1950s and new fears about mass culture problematised the notion of individuals being 'adjusted' to society and reconceptualised this process instead as an act of power. In these terms, women's inequality was a result of oppressive power relations, which shaped the

personality through culture in order to reproduce existing unequal social structures. At the same time, new discourses of selfhood such as identity proposed increasingly interpersonal models of the human self, and it was these discourses that underlined the new insistence by women's rights activists that the 'personal is political'. In these terms, the development of the personality could only be achieved through relations with others, and freedom likewise became a matter of developing new forms of identification through which a more free, authentic identity could emerge.

Chapter Four considers the late period of the Aboriginal rights movement which, like the women's rights movement, was characterised by a shift in activists' articulation of society as structured by power relations, particularly through their extensive engagement with the concept of colonialism. Key to this concept was the Fanonian notion that colonialist culture denied those who were colonised the possibility of identification with a positive self-image, and thus articulated the conditions of political resistance in terms of such a positive identification. Cultural survival thus became paramount not simply as a goal for Aboriginal activism but as its very precondition. At the same time, engaging longstanding discourses that posited the psychological alienation rendered by modern Western culture opened a space for Aboriginal rights activists not only to demand the right to cultural survival, but also to reject settler culture and its forms of governing in preference for their own, and thus to demand sovereignty. The demands of activists in this period can therefore be understood as engagements with intersecting contemporary discourses that problematised Western culture, by implicating its role both in individual psychological oppression generally, and colonial oppression specifically. In the final discussion, the thesis suggests three key ways that identity politics has operated within the historical analysis and uses them to rethink contemporary debates around identity politics through the figure of the authentic self.

Literature Review and Method

The key argument of this thesis is that, before we can offer critical judgements of identity politics, it is necessary to articulate more clearly how identity politics *works*; that is, what are its political effects and how are they brought into being? As I will contend, there are three overarching approaches to the critique of identity politics, each of which fails to adequately contend with this question, albeit on differing grounds. What unites these accounts, however, is that they problematise identity on the same terms; namely, they understand the issue at stake in identity is whether it is essentialising, where this essentialism is always considered a problem. Why it is a problem depends on the theoretical assumptions behind each approach but they all converge upon the claim that a politics based on identity is ultimately atomising, reifying and depoliticising.

Thus, the liberal democratic approach sees the essentialising impulse of identity as suppressing individuality in favour of group identity, which fractures the polity and encourages particularist commitments rather than universal ones, thereby corrupting the public sphere. The Leftist approach likewise considers identity politics as inherently antithetical to progressive political change, since its insistence on essential difference obscures the common (economic) roots of oppression and in turn thwarts the possibility for class solidarity. The poststructuralist approach, following Foucault, sees this essentialist impulse as a denial of the fundamental heterogeneity and fluidity of identity, an effect of power that seeks to close off other possibilities and thereby secure its reproduction. As I contend, what limits these approaches is their failure to historicise identity, to recognise that it is a particular historical discourse of the self, without which they can only offer reductive accounts of the relationship between essentialism and its production of political change, as enacted by identity politics. I thus sketch out my own approach, which combines a poststructuralist conception of discourse with existing histories of the self, in order to rethink current debates about what identity politics does.

Liberal Critique and Individuality

To begin, there is a longstanding debate within normative democratic theory about whether the demand for recognition of identities is a valid or useful political claim. Specifically, in this

approach, the key issue to be theorised is the way that a politics of identity introduces group identification into politics, and whether this can or indeed should be accommodated by a liberal democratic framework. It is for this reason that this scholarship generally considers identity politics in terms of the 'politics of recognition', or the political demand for states to recognise group identities, as embodied in the policy of multiculturalism. The objection to such a demand of the state is twofold: first, that it threatens to subordinate the individual to the group, preventing the kind of critical distance required for true autonomy and, second, that it attempts to bring this group affiliation into politics and thus undermine democratic institutions.

While contemporary liberal theory has come a long way from its classical foundations, I wish to define classical liberalism here to point out some key logics that remain foundational to more recent liberal critiques of identity politics.[1] Specifically, classical liberalism theorises politics in terms of the instantiation of a social contract amongst free individuals, who submit themselves to collective decision-making on the condition that it does not violate their (naturally-granted and thus socially inviolable) individual freedom; in other words, the legitimacy of a collectively-constituted government is founded on its defence of individual freedom. Crucially, freedom is defined here in Kantian terms as the capacity for rationality through which individuals can gain critical distance from externally-imposed ideas, applying a universal process of reason in order to arrive at judgements that can be said to be wholly their own. It is in these terms that individuals can be said to be autonomous agents, in making reasoned decisions for which they can subsequently take full responsibility.

Despite the fact that theories of democracy have more recently been modified to accommodate critiques of this liberal rational subject, particularly from feminist and critical race theorists, this understanding of the relationship between individual freedom, rational deliberation and the legitimacy of government remains central to liberal critiques of identity politics. As these critiques suggest, the dangers of rights claims based on affirming cultural

---

[1] My definitions of classical liberalism and communitarianism follow Hampton's account in Jean Hampton, *Political Philosophy* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1997).

identity lie in their threat to individual capacity for rational choice.[2] More specifically, as Benhabib notes, while we might concede that culture plays a role in forming identity, it does not follow that *certain* cultures must be prioritised for certain individuals, and to do so is in fact a deprivation of individual autonomy. As she asserts, "communities do *not* have the right to deprive their children of humankind's accumulated knowledge and civilizational achievement in order to propagate their own ways of life", but rather, must expose their children to both their own and other knowledges, so that they may choose freely amongst them.[3] This argument takes to its logical endpoint the liberal conception of culture as a resource through which individuals can rationally determine their own values and ways of living and suggests that, as the foundation of democratic politics, rational deliberation ultimately can and should transcend boundaries of difference (cultural and otherwise) in order to establish universal norms.[4]

Against this claim, a number of scholars have taken up the insight that identities are socially constituted in order to argue for the right to cultural recognition specifically. Proponents of the politics of recognition begin from an assertion that the recognition of identity is an essential human need, since it is through intersubjective recognition that individuals develop their own sense of self, including self-respect and self-esteem. Axel Honneth provides the most well-known defence of the politics of recognition which, in his terms, offers a fuller account of social and political life, since it does not reduce human relations to a simplified notion of rational interest. Rather, the politics of recognition stems from a conception of human action as also intrinsically bound by emotion, including suffering, and it is only in

---

[2] Seyla Benhabib, *Another Cosmopolitanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010); Bhikhu Parekh, *A New Politics of Identity: Political Principles for an Interdependent World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Chandran Kukathas, *The Liberal Archipelago: A Theory of Diversity and Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Arthur Meier Schlesinger, *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998); Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Democracy On Trial* (New York: Basic Books, 1995); David A. Hollinger, *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2006).

[3] Seyla Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2002), 124–25. See also Amartya Sen's notion of culture as an 'irreducible social good' within his capability approach to development: Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[4] This is the basis of Benhabib's notion of interactive universalism, as well as Young's concept of deliberative democracy: see Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture*; Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community, and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990).

recognising this potential for inflicting suffering on the other that a truly ethical ground for politics can be named. For Honneth, identity politics as the politics of recognition brings to light the way that political goods, particularly material distribution, fundamentally rest on an ethical imperative to ensure the full realisation of each individual identity. As he suggests:

> Conflicts over distribution, as long as they are not merely concerned with just the application of institutionalized rules, are always symbolic struggles over the legitimacy of the sociocultural dispositive that determines the value of activities, attributes and contributions.[5]

Identity in these terms is a psychological explanation for human action, and identity politics is therefore the natural expression of certain groups whose identity has been misrecognised.

Working within a similar normative conception of recognition as an individual 'good', Taylor and Kymlicka both attempt to reconcile individual autonomy with the importance of identification with a group. For Taylor, this is a more fundamental characteristic of human subjectivity, which is fundamentally intersubjective or "dialogical".[6] By contrast, Kymlicka is more wedded to the liberal subject and thus suggests instead that it is the desire for group belonging that is fundamental to individuals, and thus must be honoured by democratic institutions.[7] For both of these scholars, however, culture is the primary framework through which the process of identity formation takes place, and through which individuals are able to derive the meaning and values through which they can take action; that is, culture is essential to individual autonomy. Young also claims that group-based identity is not simply an individual good but a specifically democratic good, since it encourages a plurality of worldviews and thus ensures that dominant hierarchies do not become entrenched within political institutions.[8] For all three of these scholars, since group-based identities are natural to the formation of human subjects, the maintenance of group difference becomes both an individual and a democratic good.

Liberal critics of this position point to the way that culture and its relation to identity is simplified in these accounts, presented as something that is static, easily definable and thus

---

[5] Honneth, 'Recognition or Redistribution?', 54.
[6] Taylor, 'The Politics of Recognition', 32.
[7] Will Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community, and Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), chap. 2.
[8] Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*.

transparent.[9] As Appiah notes, both Taylor and Kymlicka take for granted that it is clear who belongs to a cultural community, and that individual claims to membership of these cultures are easy to recognise. Likewise, both scholars assume that, for individual subjects themselves, identification with certain groups is straightforward and without conflict; in other words, the question of the *validity* of claims to culture is never raised. As Appiah stresses, however, this characterisation of culture elides the way that cultural belonging is inherently bound up with issues of validation, since being identified as part of a group involves conforming to expectations of this shared identity:

> [T]here will be proper modes of being black and gay: there will be demands that are made; expectations to be met; battle lines to be drawn. It is at this point that someone who takes autonomy seriously may worry whether we have replaced one kind of tyranny with another... The politics of recognition... can seem to require that one's skin color, one's sexual body, should be politically acknowledged in ways that make it hard for those who want to treat their skin and their sexual body as personal dimensions of the self.[10]

Thus, while Appiah concedes that identity politics might have been historically necessary for change, he challenges its desirability as a political end because it is a politics that ultimately subordinates the individual to the group. For both Appiah and Benhabib, the imperative of an authentic identity cannot be fulfilled by recourse to cultural recognition, but rather through a liberal democratic framework which ensures that the formation of identity remains open, and thus 'free'.

What all of these scholars share, despite their diverging arguments, is that they fail to account for the role of power in identity formation; that is, even where they theorise identity as a social construct rather than some pre-social essence, they do not consider seriously how this formation might entail more than natural, objective moments of human relation. For instance, as Phelan notes:

> The acknowledgement that we are constituted, which is the first step away from an atomistic liberalism, must be followed by the question: By what or whom are we so built? The answer "language," or "culture," or "tradition," is hardly an answer unless it is followed by more

[9] Christopher F. Zurn, 'Identity or Status? Struggles over "Recognition" in Fraser, Honneth, and Taylor', *Constellations* 10, no. 4 (December 2003): 530; Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture*, 56–57; Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity*, 120–30.
[10] Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity*, 110.

questions: Who controls the language, culture, and tradition? What interests and purposes are served by the present constitution of the self?[11]

Nor do they problematise the role of power in the constitution of identities, whether through language or otherwise. For instance, as McNay suggests, these approaches fail to seriously grapple with the notion that language itself is imbricated in power and, in Bourdieu's terms, can act as a form of symbolic violence.[12] For these scholars, identity as a way of knowing and being in the world is simply an ontological given, a psychological explanation for human action. Thus, as Hekman claims, while scholars such as Benhabib and Young attempt to accommodate difference, they are still ultimately wedded to a politics centred on the rational subject who is capable of transcending frameworks of power (whether known as language, culture or tradition), despite the fact that this subject has been problematised extensively in the last few decades.[13]

Moreover, this rational subject produces a certain understanding of political action. These scholars take for granted the capacity of rationality to produce a fully self-possessed, sovereign subject whose free and reasoned participation in collective decision-making will secure the establishment of a just political order. This normative model fails to address the more fundamental political moment which assigns certain individuals and groups as capable or incapable of rationality, and thus regulates their inclusion within the sphere of the 'political'. In other words, this approach to political change fails to either problematise or address the question of actually-existing forms of power, and what they mean for political action. As Markell characterises it, "the existence of misrecognition is largely treated as an unfortunate fact".[14] These scholars thus miss what was both novel and effective in the emergence of a politics of identity, which specifically problematised the moment of recognition as an act of power. By bracketing off political change as simply the outcome of rational deliberation, they greatly downplay the political effects of identity politics despite recognising that, historically, this effect has been enormous. In doing so, they lose much of

---

[11] Shane Phelan, *Identity Politics: Lesbian Feminism and the Limits of Community* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 1989), 145.

[12] Lois McNay, *Against Recognition* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 62.

[13] Susan J. Hekman, *Private Selves, Public Identities: Reconsidering Identity Politics* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 55–57.

[14] Patchen Markell, *Bound by Recognition* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003), 21.

their purchase as critical analyses, because they cannot account for how we might move from what *is* to what *ought*. As my thesis suggests, the corrective to this is an analysis of identity politics as a specific historical discourse which produced political change.

Left Critique and Solidarity

A Leftist approach to identity politics shares this commitment to democratic governance but rejects the liberal focus on individual rights as insufficient for addressing the fundamental source of oppression, the economic ordering of the means of production.[15] 'Class' in these terms is not an identity, but a specific material relation to the means of production within a society. In this view, culture reflects but does not constitute power structures, and political action targeted to cultural change is thus ultimately incapable of bringing about liberation. Identity politics, which is defined as an attempt to change the cultural status of certain identity groups, is in turn often dismissed as merely 'culturalist', considered politically ineffective at the least and complicit in capitalist structures at the worst.

For instance, a number of scholars suggest that the rise of identity politics from the late 1960s must be understood in material terms as the result of rapid economic change, which brought greater affluence but also increasing social dislocation and isolation.[16] The era of Fordism saw a growing middle class favoured with high wages and rates of employment, whose commitment to a class-based politics grew weaker as they were incorporated into the ranks of consumer capitalism. Instead, new terms under which to organise were born in the name of 'identity' and, in the transition to neoliberalism in the 1970s, it was in these terms that marginalised groups began to protest against the effects of increasing economic precarity. As Gitlin suggests, for instance, the turn to identity is a natural psychological response to capitalism's fracturing of family and community. Within a modern world characterised by

---

[15] The scholars I refer to here identify themselves as part of the 'New Left', and I follow a general understanding of that term as defined in Dennis L. Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain: History, the New Left, and the Origins of Cultural Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

[16] Eric Hobsbawm, 'Identity Politics and the Left', *New Left Review*, no. 217 (1996): 38–47; Richard Rorty, *Achieving Our Country : Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999); Kenneth Surin, *Freedom Not Yet: Liberation and the Next World Order* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); Todd Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams: Why America Is Wracked by Culture Wars*, Reprint edition (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 1996); Michael J. Piore, *Beyond Individualism – How Social Demands of the New Identity Groups Challenge American Political & Economic Life* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995).

fragmentation, the apparently natural desire for a fixed identity has led to the 'fetishisation' of difference and particularity as a means by which to strengthen community boundaries.[17] For these scholars, then, identity politics is understood as a kind of misdirected psychological response to the dislocating effects of capitalism that is unable to challenge the root cause of this oppression.

The rise of identity politics is thus understood as a 'failure' of the political vision required to strengthen class solidarity, and evidence of capitalism's increasing hegemony. For instance, even scholars sympathetic to newer claims for the importance of culture, such as Fraser, suggest that a politics centred on identity shifts the focus of political demands from economic redistribution to an overemphasis on cultural representation.[18] Thus, while Fraser concedes that certain groups are denied equal participation within politics due to their cultural status, she nevertheless insists that the corrective to this situation should not lie in state recognition of collective identities, which ultimately threatens to subsume the individual under homogenising categories. Instead, Fraser suggests rethinking recognition not in terms of identity, but rather in terms of status, or "parity of participation" within the political sphere, which she suggests shifts our conception of injustice away from relativistic and conflictual standards of psychic injury against some essential identity, to an understanding of injustice as the unequal cultural positioning of individuals within society.[19]

Fraser's critique, though broadly socialist feminist in approach, highlights a number of key concerns shared across these two literatures, both liberal and Left; namely, that identity politics threatens individual freedom by subsuming individuals within reified categories, and also threatens solidarity by repudiating the possibility of a universal political subject. We can see here that Left critique is not exclusively Marxist in approach, but can more rightly be described as social democratic, because it highlights not only the importance of resistance to capitalism, but also echoes the liberal concern with the preservation of democracy. Both approaches take issue with identity politics because its valorisation of difference seems to undermine the capacity for universal commitments apparently necessary for political action.

---

[17] Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams*, 127.
[18] Fraser, 'Recognition without Ethics?', 21.
[19] Ibid., 24.

As Gitlin laments, "what is a Left if it is not, plausibly at least, the voice of a whole people?... What is a Left without a commons, even a hypothetical one? If there is no people, but only peoples, there is no Left".[20]

There are a number of problems with this approach. First, it fails to address the point made by a number of historians that identity politics arose not merely because a class-based politics succumbed to capitalist imperatives, but also because this politics itself had failed to achieve change for minority groups, who thus turned to new ways of defining their oppression.[21] Zaretsky goes further than this, noting how this popular account of identity politics as a rejection of Marxism elides the way that conceptions of identity in this period were influenced by contemporary Marxist thought, which was itself closely engaged with the new ideas of psychoanalysis. Thus, the politicisation of identity in this period was very much defined by Marxist concerns around individuality and conformity, desire and fear, and the role of the psyche in the reproduction of capitalism.[22] In reducing the complexity of the emergence of identity politics to reactionary psychological impulses, these scholars elide this immense body of literature which has complicated the classical Marxist relationship between economic base and cultural superstructure, and also reduce the problem of class solidarity to reductive notions of 'false consciousness'.[23] For these scholars, identity politics is only ever a veil that covers the reality of the material source of oppression.

What might be termed a neo-Marxist approach suggests that, not only does this approach reproduce a simplistic relationship between political solidarity and 'class consciousness' but, in doing so, it downplays the true cost of identity politics. This literature takes seriously the problematisation of the classical Marxist notion of 'ideology' which, as Zaretsky highlighted, was intimately concerned with issues of identity. In particular, this scholarship builds on

---

[20] Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams*, 21.

[21] Susan Bickford, 'Anti-Anti-Identity Politics: Feminism, Democracy, and the Complexities of Citizenship', *Hypatia* 12, no. 4 (November 1997): 111–31; Douglas C. Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America* (New York ; Chichester: Columbia University Press, 1998); Barbara Ryan, *Identity Politics in the Women's Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2001).

[22] Eli Zaretsky, 'The Birth of Identity Politics in the 1960s: Psychoanalysis and the Public/Private Division', in *Global Modernities*, ed. Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson (London ; Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1995), 244–59.

[23] I am thinking particularly here of Marxist thinkers such as Althusser, Gramsci and even Marcuse.

Foucault's suggestion that neoliberalism can be understood not simply in terms of the particular economic imperatives of advanced capitalism, but also in terms of how those imperatives are secured through the regulation of human life. Thus, the persistence of capitalism is not explained by a coercive state, a duplicitous capitalist class or a misguided proletariat, but through the making of subjects who invest in and thus conform to capitalist logics. In this approach, the relationship between neoliberalism and identity politics is not simply a matter of 'false consciousness', and identity politics is likewise not only a 'mistaken' pursuit; that is, identity politics is not ineffectual against capitalism but is specifically complicit in its maintenance.

For instance, by politicising the externalisation of identity as 'representation', identity politics fits neatly into a neoliberal logic of consumption in which identities are constructed through the accumulation of external identity 'markers', and the politics of representation thus becomes a politics *through* consumption.[24] Likewise, identity politics is said to *personalise* oppression by locating it within individuals who are 'intolerant', and thus envisions liberation solely in terms of personal transformation (a critique which is made in another way by Fraser, who notes that "policing people's beliefs" is incompatible with individual freedom).[25] Thus, identity politics does not simply divert attention away from the material structures of oppression, but creates subjects who invest in – and derive a sense of identity from – a particular understanding of themselves as victims (or indeed perpetrators) of individual prejudice. In both cases, the ethicisation of an essential identity is understood as part of a broader neoliberal logic that is inherently individualising and depoliticising, and thus obstructs the conditions for political solidarity. I suggest some limitations to this approach in my review of poststructuralism below.

---

[24] Sarah Banet-Weiser, *AuthenticTM: The Politics of Ambivalence in a Brand Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2012); L. A. Kauffman, 'The Anti-Politics of Identity', in *Identity Politics in the Women's Movement*, ed. Barbara Ryan (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 23–34; Alexandra Chasin, *Selling Out: The Gay and Lesbian Movement Goes to Market* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001); Dennis Hume Wrong, *Reflections on a Politically Skeptical Era* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 2003); Roopali Mukherjee and Sarah Banet-Weiser, *Commodity Activism: Cultural Resistance in Neoliberal Times* (New York: New York University Press, 2012); Lois McNay, 'Self as Enterprise: Dilemmas of Control and Resistance in Foucault's The Birth of Biopolitics', *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no. 6 (November 2009): 55–77; Eva Illouz, *Cold Intimacies: The Making of Emotional Capitalism* (Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2007).

[25] Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995); Fraser, 'Recognition without Ethics?', 27.

Poststructuralism

The third approach to identity politics is specifically concerned with understanding identity through a particular problematisation of power, and thus theorises the political effects of identity through a much broader lens of 'the political'. This scholarship follows a poststructuralist framework that reorients the question of power away from acts of sovereign authority, and instead locates it in a diffuse network of power relations through which human action is disciplined, rather than coerced. In particular, this approach leans heavily on Foucault's theory of power as discourse, in which certain knowledges become authorised as 'truth', including certain ways of knowing the self. While my thesis adopts this Foucaultian conception of discourse, I want to suggest that there are some limitations to existing poststructuralist accounts of identity politics that require a supplementation of this approach.

Poststructuralism suggests that all social formations are radically contingent, because these formations and the subjects produced within and through them are necessarily incomplete and impervious to closure. Rejecting essentialist analyses of social formations and social identities as pre-given – for instance, where language as ideology is used to mask some extra-discursive reality – poststructuralists instead theorise power as precisely this process of making (impossible) claims about the 'true' nature of reality, which are ultimately attempts to close off its radical contingency and thereby sediment social structures in particular ways.[26] In this schema, social formations are discursively constructed, where discourse is not simply a linguistic concept but

> a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – a way of representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular historical moment. Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language. But… since all social practices entail *meaning,* and meanings shape and influence what we do – our conduct – all practices have a discursive aspect.[27]

This concept of discourse, formulated by Foucault, understands power as a productive force which shapes social action through its regulation of knowledge, 'truth' and subjectivity.

---

[26] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. and trans. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 131.
[27] cited in Hall, Stuart, 'The Work of Representation', in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London ; Thousand Oaks, CA; New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1997), 44.

The significance of Foucault's work for questions of identity is in the reconception of selfhood as both an effect and also a reconstitution of power. Denaturalising identity, Foucault suggests that the self is actually constituted by the process of subjectification, a dual moment in which the self both becomes a subject of discourse – and thus capable of action – but also at the same time subject to discourse, which delineates the subject positions that the self is able to inhabit. In these terms, autonomy and agency are not the acts of some extra-discursive, rational self that can stand apart from power; rather, action is always both produced and delimited by the formation of certain subjectivities – or certain identities – within power.[28] One of the key implications of Foucault's theory of disciplinary power is that it governs *through* freedom, since it constitutes the particular ways that we understand ourselves as being free, and thereby shapes what our acts of freedom look like. Thus, in Foucaultian terms, the political effects of identity politics cannot be counted in terms of 'protecting' individual freedom and autonomy from some collective: instead, the effects of identity must be understood in terms of the reproduction of discourse and its normative logics.

The most influential account of identity in these terms is Judith Butler's theory of performative gender. Butler's early work on identity was particularly driven by the question of why individuals identify with identity categories that are oppressive. Her answer, following Foucault, suggests that such an act of identification is necessary for an individual to be recognised by the Other, and thus to move from being an object to a subject. In these terms, all moments of identification are also moments of subjectification, and therefore recapitulations to power. Bringing together Foucault's theory of power with the deconstructive notion of citationality, Butler suggests that gender identity is not an expression of some essential self but a result of citational practices through which gender is 'performed', where performativity refers to "that aspect of discourse that has the capacity to produce what it names".[29] Thus, the moment of recognition is also a successful citation and reauthorisation of a discursive norm:

---

[28] Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 98.
[29] Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 13.

> If a performative succeeds (and I will suggest that "success" is always and only provisional), then it is not because an intention successfully governs the action of speech, but only because that action echoes prior actions, and accumulates the force of authority through the repetition or citation of a prior and authoritative set of practices. It is not simply that the speech act takes place within a practice, but that the act is itself a ritualized practice.[30]

What is important about this 'performative' nature of identification is that it conceptualises recognition not as some natural, objective human relation, as Honneth or Taylor might have it, but as a *power* relation. In these terms, recognition is the successful repetition and reproduction of those signifiers that produce an identity in discourse, a continuous process of sedimentation around certain identity markers that creates the effect of 'fixity'. It is this apparent fixity of identity that is the ultimate end of power, which seeks to make natural and inevitable that which is in fact changeable and contingent. For Butler, then, identity is always ultimately an essentialising process which means that it only reproduces, and cannot contest, power.

Neither can this totalising impulse of identity be negated by simply pointing to some 'non-essential' foundation. For instance, Scott has issued a stringent challenge to analyses of identity that attempt to ward off charges of essentialism by pointing to socially-constituted experience as its ground.[31] As Scott notes, this tendency to ascribe authority to experience, and thus epistemic privilege to those who speak from a certain identity position, misunderstands the fundamental point that ways of being and the knowledges produced by them are always mediated by discourse. Thus, appeals to experience "constitute subjects as fixed and autonomous, and who are considered reliable sources of a knowledge that comes from access to the real by means of their experience" and, in doing so, these appeals "avoid examining the relationships between discourse, cognition, and reality, the relevance of the position or situatedness of subjects to the knowledge they produce".[32] Attempts to

---

[30] Judith Butler, 'Burning Acts: Injurious Speech', *The University of Chicago Law School Roundtable* 3, no. 1 (January 1996): 205–6, https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/roundtable/vol3/iss1/9.

[31] Some early examples of social constructionism being used as a universal foundation for identity in feminist thought include the work of Catherine MacKinnon, Carol Gilligan and Nancy Chodorow. For a 'postmodernist' critique of this position, see Nancy Fraser and Linda Nicholson, 'Social Criticism without Philosophy: An Encounter between Feminism and Postmodernism', *Theory, Culture & Society* 5, no. 2–3 (June 1988): 373–94.

[32] Joan W. Scott, 'The Evidence of Experience', *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 4 (1991): 782–83.

essentialise identity, even a socially-constructed one, are thus always ultimately reinscriptions of power.

Instead, in this Foucaultian framework, agency is produced in the moments where the insufficiency of identity and its claim to be totalising is laid bare, and the possibilities for different ways of knowing and being oneself can be thought. Likewise, resistance to power is understood as the disruption of the norms by which a signifier is tied to its signified, and the contingency of this relation is thus made visible. As Butler suggests, "all signification takes place within the orbit of the compulsion to repeat; 'agency' then, is to be located within the possibility of a variation on that repetition",[33] and, thus, "[t]he critical task is… to affirm the local possibilities of intervention through participating in precisely those practices of repetition that constitute identity and, therefore, present the immanent possibility of contesting them".[34] Power is thus not something that can be transcended but must rather be made unfixed and unstable in order for 'freer' possibilities of human relation and identity formation.

This 'answer' to the problem of essentialist identity has been taken up widely by critical theorists within both poststructuralist and postmodernist fields.[35] For these scholars, it is the very indeterminacy and flexibility of the self that must be celebrated if we are to resist the totalising impulse characteristic of power.[36] For instance, Haraway famously proposed the

---

[33] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (London: Routledge, 1990), 145.

[34] Ibid., 147.

[35] Poststructuralism and postmodernism are often conflated since they are historically entangled and share a number of similar concerns. Postmodernism is generally defined as a school of thought that developed in the 1980s as a rejection of modernist beliefs in metanarratives and the possibility of grasping them through some universal reason. Poststructuralism developed in the same period, and sometimes involved the same scholars, but was more specifically a repudiation of structuralist approaches to linguistics as ahistorical, closed systems of meaning. Both reject essentialising or universalising theories and are generally treated coextensively because of this shared ethos and its broad influence on later critical theory, as I do here. See Jane Caplan, 'Postmodernism, Poststructuralism, and Deconstruction: Notes for Historians', *Central European History* 22, no. 3–4 (September 1989): 260–78.

[36] This approach has only been strengthened by the intervention of black feminists in the 1990s, who disputed existing feminist theorisations as positing a universal women's experience that does not apply to many marginalised women and noted that categories of oppression do not simply overlap but are co-constituted, and must be theorised as such. See Kimberlé Crenshaw, 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color', *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–99; Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race, & Class* (New York: Vintage, 1983); bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman* (London: Pluto Press, 1987).

figure of the cyborg as an alternative to essentialising humanist dichotomies of man/nature, as well as the linkage of women to nature within this binary through the figure of the 'goddess', by offering instead a subject that is discontinuous, partial and changeable. Likewise, Anzaldúa attempts to capture the hybridity of subjective experience through her concept of the 'borderlands', spaces of indeterminacy inhabited by those who exceed the norm:

> A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. Los atravesados live here: the squint eye, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half dead; in short those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the 'normal'.[37]

What all of these diverse approaches have in common is that they ultimately suggest a kind of anti-norm as norm – against norms of fixity and totality, they suggest norms of fluidity, hybridity, indeterminacy.[38]

The primary objection levelled at this theorisation of resistance in terms of anti-essentialist norms is that it seems to render organised resistance impossible and, as a specifically critical theory, is thus limited.[39] One way of addressing this has been to posit 'strategic essentialism', that is the tactical deployment of essentialism for political change. This was most famously suggested by Spivak as a means by which 'third world' feminists could intervene in a politics

---

[37] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 2007), 25.

[38] It is worth noting that much of the literature I am describing here can be located within the field of posthumanism, which applies postmodernist/poststructuralist imperatives of fluidity and hybridity to their critique of humanism, thereby problematising the boundaries of 'human-as-culture/animal-as-nature' and resituating the discursive subject of culture within new materialist frameworks. In particular, posthumanism deconstructs the stability of identity categories in terms of the possibilities that are opened up if the body is understood as porous, or as an interface between the self and its material location. In these terms, identity politics is problematised not only for 'essentialising' subjects but for re-binding them within the confines of humanist hierarchies. See, e.g., Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA, USA: Polity, 2013); Cary Wolfe, *What Is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Neil Badmington, *Alien Chic: Posthumanism and the Other Within* (London: Routledge, 2004).

[39] Gayatri C. Spivak, 'Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography', in *The Spivak Reader*, ed. Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean (London: Routledge, 1996), 203–36; Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference* (London; New York: Routledge, 1989); Iris Marion Young, 'Gender as Seriality: Thinking about Women as a Social Collective', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 19, no. 3 (April 1994): 713–38; Mridula Nath Chakraborty, 'Wa(i)Ving It All Away', in *Third Wave Feminism*, ed. Stacie Gillis, Gillian Howie, and Rebecca Munford (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 101–13.

that effectively refused them any subject position at all,[40] although she later reconsidered the usefulness of this claim.[41] Riley suggests, for instance, that "it is compatible to suggest that 'women' don't exist – while maintaining a politics of 'as if they existed' – since the world behaves as if they unambiguously did".[42] Yet, as Hames-García notes, it remains impossible within this framework to make normative judgements about when such a deployment can be judged valid, and when it is an unacceptable act of power.[43] More specifically, it does not address the poststructuralist claim that, even when occupying an intentional, 'strategic' position, speaking as though this position is a universal one inevitably reinscribes oneself and others within power. As Alcoff suggests:

> In both the practice of speaking for as well as the practice of speaking about others, I am engaging in the act of representing the other's needs, goals, situation, and in fact, who they are, based on my own situated interpretation. In post-structuralist terms, I am participating in the construction of their subject-positions rather than simply discovering their true selves.[44]

I would suggest that what both of these positions are contending with is an inherent difficulty of Foucaultian theory, which is its tendency to think of closure only in terms of domination. That is, even though from a Foucaultian perspective moments of closure always also contain their own failure, rarely are the closures enacted by essentialist or universalising claims theorised in terms of the possibilities they open up. Thus, the scholars I have reviewed so far have closely examined the possibilities that are closed down by claims to identity, without equally thinking through their productive effects. In these terms,

> to invoke a stable subject as the active agent of politics is *not* to refer to a subject that precedes discourse or politics; it is to performatively enact that subject as the initiator of politics. It is to understand the political effects this mode of subjectification generates.[45]

---

[40] Spivak, 'Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography'. See also Uma Narayan, *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions, and Third-World Feminism* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 155.

[41] Gayatri C. Spivak, 'In a Word: Interview', *Differences* 1, no. 2 (1989): 124–56.

[42] Denise Riley, *'Am I That Name?': Feminism and the Category of 'Women' in History* (London: MacMillan, 1982), 112.

[43] Michael R. Hames-García, '"Who Are Our Own People?": Challenges for a Theory of Social Identity', in *Reclaiming Identity: Realist Theory and the Predicament of Postmodernism* (Berkeley ; Los Angeles ; London: University of California Press, 2000), 117.

[44] Linda Alcoff, 'The Problem of Speaking for Others', *Cultural Critique*, no. 20 (1991): 9.

[45] Moya Lloyd, *Beyond Identity Politics: Feminism, Power and Politics* (London: SAGE Publications, 2005), 58.

As Lloyd suggests, claims to identity must be understood as performative acts working within specific contexts, and we can thus understand the 'strategic' nature of identity claims not in terms of choice, but in terms of the historical possibilities for political action that have been available to different subjects at different times. In this way, the effects of identity can be moved beyond the binarism of fixity/fluidity, to engage more seriously its instability as a performative discourse. As poststructuralists are keen to stress, nothing stands outside of power; the question is thus not whether identity is implicated in power, because that answer is already given, but whether its effects produce stability or instability, coherence or incoherence, within a given discursive order.

Part of the problem, I contend, is that most of these approaches sidestep the discursive character of 'identity' altogether. What I mean by this is that these analyses of identity flatten its complexity as a historically-produced discourse because, approaching identity as a metaphysical or ontological object, they proceed from a position in which the operation of identity is a matter of determining its 'true nature'; thus, to know what identity does, we first theorise what identity is.[46] For instance, while Butler's deconstructionist approach rejects the 'metaphysic of presence' implied by a core self, her analysis is also informed by a psychoanalytic framework that understands identity ontologically as structured by certain processes of desire and recognition. Thus, Butler herself is working within a certain discourse of what identity *is* in order to theorise what particular identity categories do. As Medovoi notes:

> Even so trenchant a philosophical critic of identity as Judith Butler, who persuasively argues that identity is the result of our practices and not their ground or origin, has not attempted a genealogy of identity of the sort that, for instance, Foucault once offered for sexuality… [I]n offering only a theory of identity rather than a history, it foregoes a philosophically hard-won opportunity to redescribe identity, not as the universal product of human practices, but instead as a bounded one tied to the contingencies of a historical moment.[47]

---

[46] For instance, Hekman's suggestion that we understand identity in terms of Kleinian object relations theory, or Alcoff's proposal for approaching identity through postpositivist realism. Hekman, *Private Selves, Public Identities*; Alcoff, 'Who's Afraid of Identity Politics?'

[47] Leerom Medovoi, *Rebels: Youth and the Cold War Origins of Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 2.

This approach not only fails to adequately address the complexities and contingencies of this discourse as it operates in the world, it is also not really an explanation of 'identity' per se. In fact, Butler herself characterises her work as a "feminist genealogy of the category of women".[48] Likewise, the rest of the literature I have reviewed so far, while claiming to think through 'identity', is actually focused on examining the effects of *particular* identity categories, rather than 'identity' itself. Taking as its starting point some theoretical model of selfhood – whether psychoanalytic, poststructuralist or psychological – this scholarship fails to extend Foucault's critical insight that discourse is a historical product, and that discourses of selfhood, including the concept of 'identity', are historically contingent. I likewise contend that it is not adequate to simply take Foucault's model of the subject as some totalising account of 'identity', which has its own historical specificity. Doing so inevitably reduces our analytical capacity to consider the effects of identity as a discourse.

Histories of the Self

To supplement the poststructuralist approach, then, I suggest turning to the history of ideas around the self, or what I term 'histories of the self'. Within the discipline of history, scholarship on the self has a time-honoured place, although the way that scholars have approached this history has changed to reflect contemporary methodological concerns. Specifically, the earlier, seminal works in this area, such as those of Trilling and Taylor, are more strictly examples of intellectual history, while more recent works on the role of the human sciences and neoliberal 'technologies of the self' are either indirect or direct responses to Foucault's theory of subjectification. However, I bring them together here because their enquiries are all based on taking 'the self' as a historical object, an approach that is also taken by this thesis. Thus, while this literature is not engaged with the question of identity politics specifically, I want to suggest that it is this historicist approach to identity, together with a rethinking of the question of power, that will offer a better understanding of how identity politics works.

To begin, most scholars characterise the modern self as a result of an increasing 'interiorisation' of the self in Western society, a process that is identified within a number of

---

[48] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 5.

key 'movements'. First, the late medieval period was characterised by a rigid social (and more broadly cosmic) order, in which the individual's sense of self was strictly defined by their place within a divinely ordained hierarchy. The advent of modernity, including the rise of state formations that disrupted religious institutions and capitalist economies that reconfigured social life, hastened the breakdown of these hierarchies and created a flexibility in social roles that had not existed prior. As Trilling suggests, this new indeterminacy of the individual's 'place' in society produced a corresponding split between the external, social self and the private, inner self – which were no longer coterminous – and likewise created a new concern with the authenticity of this inner self.[49] As a result, society came to be understood increasingly as antithetical to the authentic inner self, a constraining and corrupting force that coerced the individual into false roles; a view most famously put forward by Jean Jacques Rousseau.[50]

Taylor supplements this narrative of the historical 'interiorisation' of the self by pointing to the effect of modernity's increasingly rationalistic, instrumentalist vision on a predominantly Christian worldview. In particular, the mechanisation of the world as embodied by the thought of Descartes led to a new shift in the moral source of action from the outside world to the inner self and, likewise, moral action became not about perceiving some external order, as Platonist idealism had it, but about the inner process of perception itself; the valorisation of rationality in this period reflects this new emphasis on ensuring that the act of perception is not made in error.[51] This new scientific ethos found correspondence in the Reformation, which turned this instrumentalist worldview into a religious ethic, where the godly life was accessible to all through a process of personal commitment, entailing the scrutiny of one's conscience in order to ensure that one's rational will – and thus one's perception of Good – remained faultless.[52]

---

[49] Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1972), 9–18.

[50] Ibid., 62. See also Charles B. Guignon, *On Being Authentic* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2004), 31.

[51] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1989), 149. See also Marcel Mauss, 'A Category of the Human Mind: The Notion of Person; the Notion of Self', in *The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History*, ed. Steven Collins, Michael Carrithers, and Steven Lukes, trans. W. D. Halls (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 21.

[52] Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 232–34.

With a detour through Romanticism, Taylor thus arrives at the twentieth century and the culmination of the modern self. From Romanticism, the modern self received a renewed commitment to nature as the source of moral good, which rejected rationalism as the means by which moral action can be perceived, and instead valorised 'natural' impulses and authentic emotions as the true moral source of human action.[53] This questioning of the limits of human rationality became acute in the early twentieth century, with the huge social dislocations occasioned by war and rapid industrialisation. In particular, psychoanalysis became influential because it suggested both that humans were not rational but driven by instinct, and also threw into doubt the notion of authenticity itself by pointing to the ways that the psyche was deliberately structured to repress truths, to hide itself from itself. This problematised the self at a time when anxieties about the tensions between social cohesion and human individuality were running high. As most historians of the self claim, it is this context which explains the emergence of our contemporary understandings of identity.[54] As these historians thus suggest, identity and its significance for explaining our lives is not simply a reflection of some real psychological nature, but actually the result of broader historical transformations in our knowledge of the world and our place within it.

For these scholars, then, the contemporary salience of 'identity' is part of a historical shift in which the self became gradually central to ways of knowing and being in the world. And while this work does not consider 'identity' as a discourse in the specifically Foucaultian sense, it

---

[53] See also Roy F. Baumeister, *Identity: Cultural Change and the Struggle for Self* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Suzanne R. Kirschner, *The Religious and Romantic Origins of Psychoanalysis: Individuation and Integration in Post-Freudian Theory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Pauline Johnson, 'The Quest for the Self: Feminism's Appropriation of Romanticism', *Thesis Eleven* 41, no. 1 (May 1995): 76–93; Roy F. Baumeister, 'How the Self Became a Problem: A Psychological Review of Historical Research', *Journal of Personality* 52, no. 1 (January 1987): 163–76; Warren Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 121; Eli Zaretsky, *Secrets of the Soul: A Social and Cultural History of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Vintage, 2005), 20.
[54] Lionel Trilling, 'Authenticity and the Modern Unconscious', *Commentary* 52, no. 3 (September 1971): 39–50; Baumeister, *Identity*; Taylor, *Sources of the Self*; Susman, *Culture as History*; Zaretsky, *Secrets of the Soul*; Peter L. Berger, 'Sincerity and Authenticity in Modern Society', *The Public Interest* 31 (Spring 1973): 81–90; Ian Hacking, *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998); Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity*; Philip Cushman, *Constructing The Self, Constructing America: A Cultural History Of Psychotherapy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Da Capo Press, 1996); Philip Gleason, 'Identifying Identity: A Semantic History', *The Journal of American History* 69, no. 4 (1983): 910–31; Colin Campbell, *Easternization of the West: A Thematic Account of Cultural Change in the Modern Era* (Boulder, Colo.: Routledge, 2008); Mervyn F. Bendle, 'The Crisis of "Identity" in High Modernity', *The British Journal of Sociology* 53, no. 1 (March 2002): 1–18.

can nevertheless be understood as part of an increasing sensitivity to the historical contingency of categories of knowledge that are often taken for granted as 'natural'. Identity in this literature is thus a specifically *historical* product; likewise, its emergence in modern times is not due to the inevitable 'discovery' of some already-existing aspect of human psychology, but a response to a specific context in which issues of individualism and conformity, alienation and community, culture and autonomy, produced new concerns and new priorities around the self. As Zaretsky suggests:

> debates concerning identity and difference, essentialism and social constructionism, the politics of cultural studies and the politics of deconstruction, though important are nonetheless internal to the politics that characterize our time. They presuppose identity as the central content of politics and do not historicize it. Therefore, these debates do not provide a means to situate and evaluate the politics of the present, as only an historical perspective can.[55]

This work has been expanded in recent years by historical scholarship which focuses more closely on the role of the social sciences in developing modern conceptions of selfhood.[56] For instance, as a number of scholars have demonstrated, the development of psychology was closely linked to the World Wars and the concerns that they generated about questions of human sociability and the capacity for peace.[57] The legitimacy of psychology as a discipline of

---

[55] Zaretsky, 'The Birth of Identity Politics in the 1960s: Psychoanalysis and the Public/Private Division', 251.

[56] The best sources of social and cultural impact of the social sciences in Australia remain Katie Wright, *The Rise of the Therapeutic Society* (Washington, DC: New Academia Publishing, 2011); Joy Damousi, *Freud in the Antipodes: A Cultural History of Psychoanalysis in Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2005). The remaining literature on the development of the social sciences in Australia largely consists of institutional or biographical histories: see, Stephen Garton, *Medicine and Madness : A Social History of Insanity in New South Wales 1880-1940* (Kensington, N.S.W.: University of New South Wales Press, 1988); Catharine Coleborne and Dolly MacKinnon, *Madness in Australia : Histories, Heritage and the Asylum* (St. Lucia, QLD : University of Queensland Press, in Association with the API Network and Curtin University of Technology, 2003); Milton James Lewis, *Managing Madness : Psychiatry and Society in Australia 1788-1980* (Canberra: AGPS Press, 1988); Warwick Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness : Science, Health and Racial Destiny in Australia* (Carlton South, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2002); Joy Damousi, 'Australian Medical Intellectuals and the Great War', *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 53, no. 3 (2007): 436–50; David McCallum, *Personality and Dangerousness: Genealogies of Antisocial Personality Disorder* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Helen Bourke, 'Social Scientists as Intellectuals: From the First World War to the Depression', *Histories of Australian Sociology*, 2005, 145; Helen Bourke, 'Sociology and the Social Sciences in Australia, 1912-1928', *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology* 17, no. 1 (March 1981): 26–35; Michael Crozier, 'Society Economised: T.R. Ashworth and the History of the Social Sciences in Australia', *Australian Historical Studies* 33, no. 119 (April 2002): 125–42; Raewyn Connell, 'Setting Sail: The Making of Sociology in Australia, 1955–75', *Journal of Sociology* 51, no. 2 (June 2015): 354–69; Fran Collyer, 'The Birth of a Speciality: The Sociology of Health and Medicine in Australia', *Health Sociology Review* 21, no. 1 (March 2012): 116–30.

[57] Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Ellen Herman, 'Psychology as Politics: How Psychological Experts

knowledge was cemented by its incorporation into government, as it was increasingly called upon to explain human behaviour and thus to suggest solutions for its management. As Herman suggests,

> Psychology's political progress was founded, first and foremost, on the ever-present militarism of the war and postwar years... With their knowledge linked to progress, maturity, enlightenment, and peace – as well as power – psychological experts conceived of their future in very ambitious terms. Their postwar duty was to help construct a comprehensive "science of human behaviour" that would be theoretically sophisticated yet practically equipped for the tasks of "prediction and control". They aimed at nothing less than to "fashion a new civilization" and "restructure the culture of the world".[58]

As she thus notes, it is this very history that explains the contemporary importance of identity, and why "historians (and other observers of postwar society) have been wrestling so constantly with questions of identity, experience, and subjectivity in recent years".[59]

This emphasis on the role of new scientific knowledges about the self is also driven by Foucault's genealogical scholarship on the self and, while work like Herman's is not explicitly poststructuralist in approach, it nevertheless nods to Foucault in its focus on the relationship between the historical development of scientific discourses and state regulation. Foucault himself famously offers a history of the psychological sciences that informs his seminal *History of Sexuality.* As Foucault claims, the establishment of psychology as a 'rational' field of knowledge cannot be understood separately from its imperative as a form of regulation, creating the categories through which human subjects could be understood as measurable, calculable and thus, could be governed rationally; what Foucault characterises as a

Transformed Public Life in the United States, 1940-1970' (Brandeis University, 1993); Mathew Thomson, *Psychological Subjects: Identity, Culture, and Health in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Kurt Danziger, *Naming the Mind: How Psychology Found Its Language* (London: SAGE Publications, 1997); Eva S. Moskowitz, *In Therapy We Trust: America's Obsession with Self-Fulfillment* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); Edward J. K. Gitre, 'Importing Freud: First-Wave Psychoanalysis, Interwar Social Sciences, and the Interdisciplinary Foundations of an American Social Theory', *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 46, no. 3 (June 2010): 239–62; Edward J. K. Gitre, 'The Great Escape: World War II, Neo-Freudianism, and the Origins of U.S. Psychocultural Analysis', *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 47, no. 1 (2011): 18–43; James J. Farrell, *The Spirit of the Sixties: The Making of Postwar Radicalism* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Andrew R. Heinze, 'Schizophrenia Americana: Aliens, Alienists, and the "Personality Shift" of Twentieth-Century Culture', *American Quarterly* 55, no. 2 (June 2003): 227–56.

[58] Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology*, 306–7.

[59] Ibid., 15.

'neoliberal' form of government.[60] The particular discourses of the self produced by science must therefore be understood specifically as forms of power regulating human subjectivity.

This Foucaultian approach is taken up in more recent literature which considers what is often termed the rise of 'therapeutic discourse' in contemporary society. Most influential in this field is Rose, who claims that identity and its effects cannot be understood separately from its historical relationship to what he terms the 'psy' discourses and their implication in neoliberal forms of government:

> Social psychology was to provide a vocabulary for understanding these problems that trouble a democracy. It was to evaluate the prospects of resolving them in democratic ways. It was to provide the means for the formulation of proposals to resolve these problems that were, on the one hand, in accordance with rational scientific knowledge and, on the other hand, accorded with the democratic values of Western, liberal, pluralist and individualist societies.[61]

For Rose, psychology resolves the 'problem' of liberal democracy, which assumes legitimacy by limiting state power over the individual, by redefining freedom as a responsibility of the individual, and likewise renders the capacity of an individual to be responsibly free as a matter of therapeutic adjustment. Thus,

> modern individuals are not merely 'free to choose', but *obliged to be free*, to understand and enact their lives in terms of choice... Their choices are, in their turn, seen as realizations of the attributes of the choosing person — expressions of personality — and reflect back upon the person who has made them... Norms of conduct for the civilized are now disseminated by independent experts, no longer explicit agents of a social code of moralizing instructions enjoined by superiors, but concerned professionals seeking to allay the problems, anxieties and uncertainties engendered by the seemingly so perplexing conditions of our present. They operate a regime of the self where competent personhood is thought to depend upon the continual exercise of freedom, and where one is encouraged to understand one's life, actually or potentially, not in terms of fate or social status, but in terms of one's success or failure acquiring the skills and making the choices to actualize oneself.[62]

---

[60] Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard, 1st ed. (New York: Vintage, 1988); Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction'*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990).

[61] Nikolas Rose, 'Psychology as a Social Science', *Subjectivity* 25, no. 1 (2008): 454.

[62] Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 87.

For many critics of therapeutic discourse, then, identity's effects are ultimately atomising and depoliticising; the effect of psychological discourses of the self has been to personalise what are actually structural problems, to locate them in the maladjusted individual, and to authorise the psychologist as the means by which these problems can be solved.[63] Feminist critics have also suggested that identity's implication in therapeutic discourse is a specifically gendered issue, since its imperatives for self-help and confession target women in particular ways – for instance, by encouraging self-care as a means of fulfilling caring duties towards others – and likewise stymies the possibility of political change.[64] Echoing the concerns of democratic theorists, who assert that universalist commitments are required to maintain a democratic polity, these scholars see identity as inevitably bound up with psychological discourses whose imperatives of regulation bring the private into the sphere of the public and thus impede political action.

However, complicating these more straightforward accounts of the rise of identity as inherently depoliticising, a number of scholars suggest instead that new discourses of the psychological self have also created possibilities for mobilising against oppressive social norms, which they point to particularly in the civil rights and feminist movements.[65] As Wright notes, uncritically reproducing the notion that the public sphere is the only appropriate site for a (rational, objective) politics misses the way that this sphere has always excluded certain subjects from speaking, and thus cannot account for the

> emancipatory potential of the change in the relationship between public and private life, and how 'speaking out' about personal problems has opened up new discursive space in which it is not only the powerful that can have a public voice.[66]

---

[63] Frank Füredi, *Therapy Culture: Cultivating Vulnerability in an Uncertain Age* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2004); Dana Cloud, *Control and Consolation in American Culture and Politics: Rhetoric of Therapy* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1998); James L. Jr. Nolan, *The Therapeutic State: Justifying Government at Century's End* (New York: New York University Press, 1998); Moskowitz, *In Therapy We Trust*; Eva Illouz, *Saving the Modern Soul: Therapy, Emotions, and the Culture of Self-Help* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Nolan, *The Therapeutic State*.

[64] Dana Becker, *The Myth of Empowerment: Women and the Therapeutic Culture in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); Kathleen Lowney, *Baring Our Souls: TV Talk Shows and the Religion of Recovery* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Wendy Simonds, *Women and Self-Help Culture: Reading between the Lines* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992).

[65] Linda Nicholson, *Identity Before Identity Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Wright, *The Rise of the Therapeutic Society*; Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology*; Craig Calhoun, ed., *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity* (Oxford, UK ; Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1994).

[66] Wright, *The Rise of the Therapeutic Society*.

Likewise, Herman contends that the

> consequences of psychological expertise during the period covered by this book were characteristically mixed and contradictory – sometimes repressive and deserving of condemnation, sometimes inspiring people to move boldly in pursuit of personal freedom and social justice. The popularization of psychological vocabulary and the public appearance of a language of subjectivity do not necessarily prove the seamlessness of elite domination or the existence of a tidal wave of false consciousness that blocks progressive social change by simultaneously corroding the self and making it the subject of almost obsessive attention. Inclinations toward personal growth, self-esteem, and pleasure can form the basis for new concepts of community and collective action even as they rationalize isolated programs of individual self-improvement.[67]

Nicholson agrees, and concludes that "identity politics caused neither the demise of the left, nor can it simply be equated with an interest group politics. Rather, it represented a serious attempt to reconfigure our understanding of social difference".[68] What all three of these historians of identity suggest is thus that the effects of identity as a psychological discourse cannot be reduced simply to domination, and it is through historical analysis specifically that we can recover this sense of their indeterminacy.

Finally, one of the key points that emerges from this intersection of histories of social sciences and the self is that the very term 'identity' was hardly in use before the mid-twentieth century. As Moran claims, only a very few scholars have noted this novelty of identity and although their work is not new, this insight has failed to be taken up by the literature. Instead, the majority of scholars historicising identity treat it interchangeably with the terms 'selfhood' or 'subjectivity'.[69] Moran takes this as proof of how identity has become *the* way of understanding selfhood today. However, for Moran, the historical newness of identity matters:

> More than a simple popularisation of a word and concept, then, the idea of identity should be viewed as offering a new way of framing and shaping historically persistent concerns about selfhood, others and the relations between them, as these are themselves undergoing change. Against the grain of dominant assumptions that 'identity always mattered', what this also suggests

---

[67] Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology*, 15–16.
[68] Nicholson, *Identity Before Identity Politics*, 4.
[69] Marie Moran, *Identity and Capitalism* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2014), 13–23.

> is that the very possibility of construing oneself as 'having an identity' – whether personal or social – is an historically novel formulation.[70]

Medovoi too notes the disjuncture between theories and histories of identity, and suggests that historicising identity allows us to question not the 'truth' of what identity is but its operation as a discourse, so that we can ask instead: "[W]hen and how did 'identity' become the product of our performative practices? What is the history of its emergence? And what, for that matter, might be provoking its discursive subversion at present?"[71] This thesis builds on this injunction to more radically historicise identity, to seek out the historical formation of its (complex and varied) logics, and thus to more carefully think through its implications as a specific way of knowing and thinking about the self.

In this way, by bringing together poststructuralist approaches to identity and histories of the self, this thesis offers two correctives to these existing approaches for theorising identity politics: first, in treating the discourse of identity as a historical object, it takes seriously the notion that the effects of discourses are uneven, and that it is in analysing the very tensions and contradictions that arise when they are deployed that we can see how they work. In these terms, discourses are not static, and their effects are likewise not stable or pre-figured. Instead, their intersections with other logics and the tensions that are thereby produced are productive. Second, it historicises this discourse specifically by turning to the historical archive rather than repeating 'common sense' historical narratives about power, science and their implication in politics, which too often become reductive and reifying because they must fit the priorities of theory. Instead, leading from archival research destabilises this impulse by taking seriously the complexity of demands made by political subjects, an imperative that is derived not simply from an ethical concern in dealing with historical actors, nor from a realist impulse to 'correct' accounts of the past, but specifically from a conviction that doing so is theoretically productive and enriches political theory.

---

[70] Marie Moran, 'Identity and Identity Politics: A Cultural Materialist History', *Historical Materialism* 26, no. 2 (2018), http://www.historicalmaterialism.org/articles/identity-and-identity-politics.
[71] Medovoi, *Rebels: Youth and the Cold War Origins of Identity*, 2.

Method

To briefly restate my methodological approach then: through a poststructuralist perspective that is historically sensitive, this thesis takes identity to be a discourse and thus a historical object. My research question, which asks how identity politics works, was thus posed specifically to reflect this understanding of discourse as constitutive, as working to produce certain effects. In these discursive terms, it defines political effects as the ways of knowing and being that 'identity' makes sayable, and how they shape political demands. The aim of this thesis was thus to identify the discourses of selfhood through which the contemporary concept of 'identity' emerged, and to do so specifically within the context of political claims-making, in order to theorise the relationship between the two.

To answer this question, the thesis considered two social movements in Australia that have been universally implicated by scholars in the history of the rise of identity politics: the women's rights movement and the Aboriginal rights movement. Engaging in a discursive analysis of the rights claims made by activists involved in these movements, this thesis did not analyse the substantive content of their claims; rather, it traced the discourses of selfhood – or more strictly, of the relationship between self and society – through which activists articulated their political demands. Following the scholarship on selfhood, which identified the late interwar years in particular as an important moment in its development, it considered a period from the 1930s to the 1980s in order to identify any transformations in the discourses of selfhood through which activists made demands, particularly if and when 'identity' figured amongst them. This periodisation goes against most accounts of identity politics, which usually begin where my timeframe ends, however, this choice reflects my contention that existing narratives of identity politics' emergence have missed the way that certain discourses of selfhood were already configured and in operation by the time of 'identity politics proper'.[72]

---

[72] As Hemmings suggests, our own histories of how identity politics 'happened' must be scrutinised in terms of the kinds of discursive effects they reproduce in the present: Clare Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010). For reflection on the historicisation of Australian social movements, see, e.g., Judith Ion, 'Unravelling Our Past: Questions of Feminism, History and Memory', *Australian Feminist Studies* 13, no. 27 (April 1998): 107–16; Megan Jones, 'Historicising Feminist Knowledge: Notes toward a Genealogy of Academic Feminism of the 1970's', *Australian Feminist Studies* 13, no. 27 (April 1998): 117–28.

Reflecting the historically-led approach of this thesis, the material selected for discursive analysis was produced through archival research. The method for selection and analysis of material followed Hemmings' recent work on 'political grammars', in which she uses a number of what she terms 'tactics' in her approach to her archival material. First is a citational tactic which cites only the source and not the author of an extract which, according to Hemmings, takes attention away from "who said what" and places it instead on the overarching patterns across sources.[73] This aligned with my own aim to think through broad discursive logics across disparate sources, however, I adapted it to my own purposes. Specifically, Hemmings' choice to de-authorise her material was driven by her focus on famous figures and her attempt to resituate their work within a broader oeuvre. Following Hemmings, I eschewed an analysis of political claims in terms of individual intention. However, rather than 'de-authorise' my sources, and thus erase the work of activists who are already often missing from history, my own tactic in this thesis was instead to 'de-source', or to treat as commensurable, sources which were actually generically varied.

Thus, I did not employ the more usual practice of selecting material on the grounds that it was representative of some majoritarian viewpoint or was historically significant. Instead, my method was to read any political claim made for Aboriginal or women's rights, including speeches, press releases, pamphlets and posters, as equal forms of discursive evidence. This way of reading assumed the commensurability of all the political demands under analysis since, regardless of their genre as speeches, slogans or press releases, of their delivery by organisation Presidents or unnamed conference members, of their status as official documents or obscure ephemera, each demand stood as equal evidence of the discursive logics in operation and was thus brought together in my analysis.

At the same time, it is worth acknowledging the partiality of every archive, and the way that the process of archival creation is imbricated in power, including the researcher's own role in its reproduction.[74] For instance, while I sought a variety of sources, the main body of my

---

[73] Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*, 21.
[74] This problematisation of unmediated access to objective knowledge is in large part due to the postmodern/poststructuralist challenge to scientism that I have already outlined. See, in particular, Part 3 of

archive ultimately consisted of conference papers, organisation newsletters and pamphlets, because these were the documents assessed as worthy of inclusion by those who first collected the material – often activists themselves with a stake in telling their own story – as well as those who organised them, members of archival institutions with their own priorities around public relevance and access. The material that constituted my archive was thus not simply a neutral reflection of the past, but the result of choices made about who and what matters, and why. As I have already suggested, it is for this reason we must remain critical of the way that our own scholarship reflects and also reproduces historical discourses in the present.

Following a broadly Foucaultian conception of politics, my definition of a political claim was broad, encompassing any individual who made a demand that was both public and also made on behalf of a collective. Thus, archival material was limited to claims made explicitly for public consumption. The choice to focus on public claims reflects the desire to delineate public speech from private thought; the existing scholarship on both groups has often sought to understand the political subjectivities of its actors through a focus on the thoughts and self-conception of individuals, without taking the key step of linking the effect of subject-positions to their political effects within discourse. Without this step, such analyses can only turn to a deterministic relation between subject-position and action to explain political change. Consequently, this thesis has not made claims for what individual actors *think*, which would not be satisfied by this method and is in any case an ethically dubious project with regard to Indigenous knowledges and subjectivities. In following a Foucaultian conception of discourse, my analysis neither assumed nor denied intentionality on the part of activists; rather, it set aside questions of intention or strategy in order to think through what was *said* as part of broader frameworks of the 'sayable'.

Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1972). The literature on the 'archival turn' and its implications is vast, but an excellent overview of what I discuss here can be found in Francis X. Blouin and William G. Rosenberg, *Archives, Documentation, and Institutions of Social Memory: Essays from the Sawyer Seminar* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007).

This approach, in moving away from issues of intention and individual belief also allowed for a comparative approach, which has largely been eschewed by existing accounts, I would argue because the two movements have been considered too disparate in their claims and intent. However, the choice to place the Aboriginal and women's rights movements together in this analysis was a deliberate and, I would argue, a fruitful one. Thus, unlike many histories of political activism, which emphasise moments of contest between particular groups or ideologies, this thesis focused on the shared discursive grounds of claims-making across them, and it was precisely in doing so that the operation of these logics was made apparent since the same logics were nevertheless capable of producing very different claims. This result demonstrates how the political effects of a discourse are contextually specific and must be analysed accordingly. While comparative analysis of claims-making across movements is scarce, the work done by feminist and Indigenous scholars on the intersection of white and Aboriginal women's rights-claiming proves the fertility of such an approach.[75]

Finally, I moved out from a close analysis of specific political claims-making to identify a number of broader political effects being mobilised by identity as a discourse in order to reconsider some contemporary theoretical claims. Following Hemmings' notion of 'haunting', the purpose of tracing these logics was not simply to supplement these accounts with more detail or produce a more 'accurate' account of the past, but to think about how present ways of theorising identity politics are already operating within, and responding to, the logics of the discourse of identity. As Hemmings states:

> For this approach not to be a mere prioritization of a different, but nevertheless singular, history, the attention needs to be firmly placed on what happens when we fold what haunts these stories back into them, making visible what is, importantly, *already there*. To fold what is almost-

---

[75] Anna Cole, Victoria Haskins, and Fiona Paisley, eds., *Uncommon Ground: White Women in Aboriginal History* (Canberra, ACT: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2005); Fiona Paisley, *Loving Protection?: Australian Feminism and Aboriginal Women's Rights, 1919-1939* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000); Fiona Paisley, 'Citizens of Their World: Australian Feminism and Indigenous Rights in the International Context, 1920s and 1930s', *Feminist Review*, no. 58 (1998): 66–84; Marilyn Lake, 'Childbearers as Rights-Bearers: Feminist Discourse on the Rights of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Mothers in Australia, 1920–50', *Women's History Review* 8, no. 2 (1999): 347–363; Victoria Haskins, '"Lovable Natives" and "Tribal Sisters": Feminism, Maternalism, and the Campaign for Aboriginal Citizenship in New South Wales in the Late 1930s', *Hecate* 24, no. 2 (1998): 8–21; Marilyn Lake, 'Colonised and Colonising: The White Australian Feminist Subject', *Women's History Review* 2, no. 3 (September 1993): 377–86; Patricia Grimshaw, 'Gender, Citizenship and Race in the Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Australia, 1890 to the 1930s', *Australian Feminist Studies* 13, no. 28 (October 1998): 199–214; Patricia Grimshaw, 'Colonising Motherhood: Evangelical Social Reformers and Koorie Women in Victoria, Australia, 1880s to the Early 1900s', *Women's History Review* 8, no. 2 (June 1999): 329–46.

but-not-quite forgotten back in is a process that inquires after obscured dimensions of the present, rather than one that seeks an alternative history to replace those that are dominant now.[76]

In this way, my thesis concluded with the question of what identity politics does by adding a number of its political effects back in to existing theoretical debates, in order to see these contests anew.

---

[76] Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*, 180–81.

The Early Period: 1930s – 1960s

1.

Women's Rights and Healthy Personalities

In 1951, Amy Wheaton, president of the Australian Federation of Women Voters (AFWV), prescribed the goals of the Women's Movement thus:

> Will this do as a definition of the Good? The complete development and integration of the social personality consistent with equal opportunities of development for all members of the widest possible human society and full co-operation in a world adapted to harmonious, satisfying social relationships...
>
> Social anthropologists have performed a great service to humanity by studying and comparing the sex statuses of primitive cultures and showing the amazing number of solutions divised [sic] by the human race to the same problem of sex relations. They have shown that sex differences in occupation and ways of life, even in personality, vary so widely from one society to another that they cannot be due to biological differences. Men and women learn what is expected of them in their culture and attitudes corresponding to the cultural differences develop [sic] in childhood.
>
> The Women's Movement has been faced, therefore, with the problem of eliminating an entrenched evil — the social injustice of assessing women as members of a category, instead of as persons, and relegating them to a system of lower valuation.[1]

Wheaton was fond of theorising contemporary social conditions in technical terms, having studied social sciences as a postgraduate at the London School of Economics. However, her speech above is exemplary of the kind of account given by women's rights activists in the post-war years. In a period that is often characterised by scholars as the dawn of the social sciences,[2] Wheaton is only one of the many women's rights activists of the time who engaged with 'expert' knowledges in order to make sense of and posit solutions to women's inequality. Long before the academisation of feminist theory in the 1970s, then, scientific discourses around the nature of the individual, the social order, and the relation between the two, were critical in shaping the rights claims made by activists working towards women's equality.

---

[1] AFWV Nine Triennial Conference, Perth, WA, 1951. Records of the Australian Federation of Women Voters MS 2818, Box 2, National Library of Australia (NLA).

[2] Susman, *Culture as History*; Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith after Freud* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Nikolas Rose, *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self*, 2nd ed. (London: Free Association Books, 1999).

It is this role of scientific discourses in the development of women's rights-claiming that is largely missing from existing accounts of the women's movement in Australia. In particular, the development of the movement throughout the twentieth century is characterised in terms of a shift from maternalist rights, in which (white) women framed motherhood as a public contribution to the state and thus made demands for their rights as citizens, to claims for individual rights brought on by the sexual revolution in the 1970s and its challenge to the assumed mutuality of womanhood and motherhood.[3] While most of this literature does acknowledge the role of emerging scientific knowledge in changing conceptions of motherhood, family and society, the effects of these discourses on women's rights-claiming have not been examined in any detail. The result is that the politics of later activists, their focus on experience and consciousness-raising, their blurring of the personal and political, and their rethinking of sex and motherhood, are treated as entirely novel, without considering how they formed part of broader historical logics. As this chapter suggests, however, these

---

[3] Catherine Kevin, 'Subjects for Citizenship: Pregnancy and the Australian Nation, 1945-2000', *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* 12, no. 1/2 (2006): 131–42; Catherine Kevin, 'Maternity and Freedom: Australian Feminist Encounters with the Reproductive Body', *Australian Feminist Studies* 20, no. 46 (March 2005): 3–15; Dorothy Scott and Shurlee Swain, *Confronting Cruelty: Historical Perspectives on Child Protection in Australia* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 2002); Shurlee Swain, '"I Am Directed to Remind You of Your Duty to Your Family"': Public Surveillance of Mothering in Victoria, Australia, 1920–40"', *Women's History Review* 8, no. 2 (June 1999): 247–59; Marian Quartly and Judith Smart, *Respectable Radicals : A History of the National Council of Women Australia, 1896-2006* (Clayton, Victoria: Monash University Publishing in conjunction with the National Council of Women of Australia, 2015); Marian Quartly, 'Defending "The Purity of Home Life" Against Socialism: The Founding Years of the Australian Women's National League', *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 50, no. 2 (2004): 178–93; Judith Smart, 'Feminists, Flappers and Miss Australia: Contesting the Meanings of Citizenship, Femininity and Nation in the 1920s', *Journal of Australian Studies* 25, no. 71 (January 2001): 1–15; Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism* (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1999); Marilyn Lake, 'State Socialism for Australian Mothers: Andrew Fisher's Radical Maternalism in Its International and Local Contexts', *Labour History*, no. 102 (2012): 55–70; Marilyn Lake, 'The Independence of Women and the Brotherhood of Man: Debates in the Labour Movement over Equal Pay and Motherhood Endowment in the 1920s', *Labour History*, no. 63 (November 1992): 1–24; Michelle Arrow, '"Everyone Needs a Holiday from Work, Why Not Mothers?" Motherhood, Feminism and Citizenship at the Australian Royal Commission on Human Relationships, 1974–1977', *Women's History Review* 25, no. 2 (March 2016): 320–36; Patricia Grimshaw, Ellen Warne, and Shurlee Swain, 'Constructing the Working Mother: Australian Perspectives, 1920-1970.', *Hecate* 31, no. 2 (2005): 21–33; Lisa Featherstone, *Let's Talk About Sex: Histories of Sexuality in Australia from Federation to the Pill* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011); Lisa Featherstone, 'Sexy Mamas? Women, Sexuality and Reproduction in Australia in the 1940s', *Australian Historical Studies* 36, no. 126 (October 2005): 234–52; Zora Simic, 'Butter Not Bombs: A Short History of the Union of Australian Women', *History Australia* 4, no. 1 (June 2007): 7.1-7.15; Kerreen Reiger, 'Reconceiving Citizenship: The Challenge of Mothers as Political Activists', *Feminist Theory* 1, no. 3 (December 2000): 309–27; Lesley Johnson, '"As Housewives We Are Worms": Women, Modernity and the Home Question', *Cultural Studies* 10, no. 3 (October 1996): 449–63; Barbara Curthoys and Audrey McDonald, *More Than a Hat and Glove Brigade: The Story of the Union of Australian Women* (Sydney: Bookpress, 1996); Margaret Bevege, Margaret James, and Carmel Shute, eds., *Worth Her Salt: Women at Work in Australia* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1982); Pam Young, *Daring to Take a Stand: The Story of the Union of Australian Women in Queensland* (Brisbane: Pam Young, 1998).

later demands were very much generated by the development of discourses of selfhood and society in this earlier period. In particular, underwriting the rights claims of activists at this time was a new concept of the personality that, ultimately, recast the relationship between the individual and society in profoundly important ways.

But how was this concept of the personality understood? And what did Wheaton mean by her definition of the Good as the "complete development and integration of the social personality"? References to the personality appeared before the post-war period – particularly in religious terms – and scholars such as Moyn have noted the extent to which personalism and its defence of the individual personality were advocated by religious figures in the aftermath of the World Wars.[4] In Australia, this was more often expounded through the 'new liberalism' of T. H. Green, whose ideas were greatly influential among Australia's religious and political figures in this period, including no less than Prime Minister Alfred Deakin.[5] As Moyn suggests, personalism's appeal lay in its response to contemporary anxieties over political totalitarianism and economic modernisation, through its critique of the spiritually empty materialism offered by both communism and capitalism.[6] These were not disparate fears but were united by an overarching concern with how the political and economic changes of modern life were affecting the individual, whose autonomy was foundational to democracy and whose 'health' was thus both a social as well as individual issue. Most crucially, however, as this chapter argues, it was in this period that such concerns

[4] Samuel Moyn, *Christian Human Rights* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); John Hellman, *Emmanuel Mounier and the New Catholic Left, 1930-1950* (Toronto ; London: University of Toronto Press, 1981); Wayne Hudson, *Australian Religious Thought* (Clayton, Vic.: Monash University Publishing, 2016), 140–46.

[5] Ian Tregenza, 'Are We "All Socialists Now"? New Liberalism, State Socialism and the Australian Settlement', *Labour History*, no. 102 (2012): 87–98; Ian Tregenza and Marnie Hughes-Warrington, 'State and Civilization in Australian New Idealism, 1890-1950', *History of Political Thought* 29, no. 1 (2008): 89–108; Gregory Melleuish, *Cultural Liberalism in Australia : A Study in Intellectual and Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 19; Gregory Melleuish, 'Liberal Intellectuals in Early Twentieth Century Australia: Restoring the Religious Dimension.', *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 35, no. 1 (April 1989): 1–12; Marian Sawer, *The Ethical State?: Social Liberalism in Australia* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 2003), 69–70; Hudson, *Australian Religious Thought*, 135.

[6] Samuel Moyn, 'Personalism, Community, and the Origins of Human Rights', in *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Stefan-Ludwig Hoffman (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 88.

around the human personality came to be increasingly understood in specifically *psychological* terms.[7]

Thus, while the discourse of the personality was certainly prevalent in the post-war period, engagement with this discourse was not restricted to religious intellectual elites, nor was it understood strictly in religious terms and, importantly – as this chapter demonstrates – the increasing influence of psychological concepts of self invested the discourse of the personality in ways that created new possibilities for claiming rights. Specifically, this psychological conception of self naturalised and universalised the development of the individual personality as a psychological imperative necessary to individual health, and tied this individual health to social stability in theorising the healthy functioning of society as a product of healthy individuals. As this chapter will trace, these new discourses of self and society were critical to the rights claims of women's rights activists in this period, who, like Wheaton, turned to precepts such as 'integration' and 'adaptation' in order to make demands which could be framed both in terms of individual rights and also the collective social good. Thus, this chapter will consider how this concept of the personality underwrote activists' claims for expanding women's social role beyond the private sphere, in claims for the right to work and equal pay, framing economic independence as a necessity for healthy marriages, healthy homes, and ultimately, healthy society.

Healthy Marriages

Contemporary understandings of the personality as the cornerstone of individual freedom offered an especially significant challenge to the traditional conceptualisation of marriage, and this was seized upon by women's rights activists determined to carve out a new social role for women. In keeping with their sense of inhabiting a new era, these activists pointed to past prejudices and highlighted as a turning point the newfound recognition of the right to economic independence, which was itself derived from a growing acceptance of the rights and freedoms of the individual. This narrative was explicitly articulated by Jessie Street,

---

[7] The references in this thesis to 'psychological discourses' and the 'psychological self' reflect what Rose has termed the 'psy' knowledges, which include the discursive logics produced by *both* psychology and psychoanalysis. However, it distinguishes between psychoanalytic and psychological *theories,* since they have distinct and incommensurable approaches to the human self.

president of the United Associations of Women (UA), in a paper on the economic independence of women:

> Originally a man's wife was practically his property – his possession to do with as he would. She had practically no rights whatever… But as the public conscience changed after the principle of the economic independence of the worker was acknowledged and ideas developed as to the liberty and rights of the individual, the urge arose to improve the position and status of married women…
>
> I have endeavored to establish the claim of the married woman for economic independence in such a way as to shew [sic] that the claim is in keeping with modern ideas as to the respective status of husband and wife, and with the progressive improvement of the rights and protection of the individual. The institution of marriage began in the form of capture and bondage and through the ages it is developing into the highest form of human relationship. It began by the satisfaction of physical desire and it has developed into mental and spiritual companionship.[8]

In this passage, Street made the claim for women's economic independence in terms of their rights as individuals, but also in terms of a modern understanding of marriage that respected these rights and was thereby elevated into a 'higher form'.[9] This new understanding delineated marriage into good and bad forms that turned on the capacity of marriage to further the individuality of both men *and* women.

Phyllis Duguid was also involved in the fight for women's economic independence and wrote a pamphlet arguing for payment to homemakers in 1944. Together with her equally prominent husband Charles, Duguid is most often noted for her humanitarian work in support of Aboriginal rights, but she was also a strong advocate for women's rights through her involvement in the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and Women's Non-Party Political Association. In her pamphlet, Duguid made a case for government payments to homemaking wives, and her claims rested less on women's contributions to the nation – as Lake characterised maternal citizenship – but more on the necessity of economic independence for the individual in securing a healthy marriage. Like Street, she first pointed to the contemporary social structures that made freedom dependent on payment:

---

[8] 'The Economic Independence of Married Women', (c. 1940s). Papers of Bessie Rischbieth MS 2004, Box 3, NLA.
[9] This has been termed 'companionate marriage', and is also linked to new understandings of marriage as providing equal sexual fulfillment: See, e.g., Featherstone, *Let's Talk About Sex*, 133–34; Marilyn Lake, 'Female Desires: The Meaning of World War II', *Australian Historical Studies* 24, no. 95 (October 1990): 267–84.

The position of the non-wage-earning wife, the 'non-gainfully employed person', can no longer be ignored. One of the essential principles of democracy is that each member of the community should have the right to sell his labour and by his earnings to manage his own life, so that in recording his vote he is recording the decision of a free and independent citizen. Our present economy is such that only the possession and use of money can guarantee freedom. The person without money of his own… cannot be free. He must live his life in accordance with the will of the person or group of people who 'keep' him.[10]

Having thus made a claim for economic independence in terms of the political rights of citizenship, Duguid then moved to a personal register in highlighting the danger of potential corruption inherent to an unequal marriage:

It is not suggested for one moment that most husbands are mean tyrants or petty over-lords in their own homes but it is important to realize that our present system supported by law certainly allows them to be such... This situation is humiliating for the wife, and thoroughly bad for the husband. The fact that he has full power to grant or refuse her request for money gives him a power which is always unjust and sometimes actually cruel.[11]

In concluding, Duguid appealed to a progressive vision of marriage, arguing for married women's economic independence not simply in terms of rights but also for creating a 'true partnership' of free and equal individuals:

Pioneers in so many fields, is it too much to hope that Australians will lead the way in establishing homes founded on the true partnership of men and women who are free, equal, and interdependent?[12]

In this way, the new prioritisation of the individual personality was not only understood as a political matter but also a social one in its bearing on the stability and health of marriage. A wife's right to freedom and equality allowed her the development of personality that was necessary for a successful marriage. For instance, speaking on women in industry, Muriel Heagney claimed: "If women are continually held in subjection to men, they can never achieve full personal development. And every repression arising from this cause has its repercussion in their family relationships, making for instability and unhappiness".[13] Marriage was thus redefined by these activists as a relationship in which husband and wife existed on equal

---

[10] *The Economic Status of the Homemaker* (Adelaide, 1944): 4. Papers of Ruby Rich MS7493, Box 63, NLA.
[11] Ibid., 6.
[12] Ibid., 11.
[13] 'Women in Industry', text of broadcast aired on 2UE, 27 Oct 1936. Papers of Ruby Rich MS 7493, Box 50, NLA.

terms and did not inhibit one another's development as individuals. By contrast, a marriage of unequals was destined to sully the sacred institution in its degradation of the personality, which under activists' terms required individual autonomy in order to develop. The persistence of this notion of marriage is evident in a remark made some three decades later at a conference for women graduates, where a paper on working women and the needs of the family stressed:

> By a successful marriage I do not necessarily mean one which is surrounded by all the material marks of success, but one in which husband and wife are growing in love and understanding into a degree of unity. This true unity of marriage does not submerge the personality of either, but in and through it each becomes more truly him and her self.[14]

Here, marriage was further elevated into an institution that not only allowed the personality to develop freely, but actually enhanced its development through the relationship of two equal partners.

Feminist historians have already remarked on the parallels drawn by women's rights activists in this period between marriage and slavery, both in the economic and sexual sense. Scholars such as Lake have noted how women's rights activists in the early part of the twentieth century aligned themselves as state subjects, independent of their husbands, and demanded that the government recognise their individuality as citizens by acknowledging their contributions to national life in terms of their maternal duties.[15] Lake observes how these activists highlighted the importance of individuality in terms of bodily integrity, defining the economic dependence of marriage as sex slavery, and women as sex objects for the use of their husbands, which violated their claims to individuality. However, economic dependence and the 'slavery' of marriage were also often rejected in terms of the stagnation of women's personal development, and the effect of this in corrupting marriage. For women's rights activists, the recognition of the primacy of the individual could not be compatible with a social (and sexual) role that assigned women as subordinate to men, not simply because this

---

[14] Jean McCaughey, "The Needs of the Family and the Years at Home with Young Children", *Leading A Double Life, A Report on the Conference on Married Women Graduates at Work,* (Melbourne: University Women's College, 24 November 1962). Records of the Australian Federation of Graduate Women MS 9592, Box 25, NLA.

[15] Marilyn Lake, 'Personality, Individuality, Nationality: Feminist Conceptions of Citizenship 1902–1940', *Australian Feminist Studies* 9, no. 19 (March 1994): 25–38; Katie Holmes, '"Spinsters Indispensable": Feminists, Single Women and the Critique of Marriage, 1890–1920', *Australian Historical Studies* 29, no. 110 (April 1998): 68–90.

deprived them of political and economic rights – such as the right to equal pay and the right to nationality – but because the deprivation of such rights violated the more fundamental psychological *need* for development of the personality.

The changing significance of marriage in this period has been described by a number of scholars as a renewed investment in the family as the site of 'personal life'; that is, of a self existing beyond social roles. As Zaretsky notes, it was this notion of personal life that characterised the New Woman of the late nineteenth century, who strove to assert an individuality that could transcend a social order which defined her exclusively in terms of the family.[16] However, while this search for personal life continued to be directed outside of the family in the early decades of the twentieth century, the end of World War II and the advent of Fordism brought with it a re-turn to the family, which was not simply a reversion to the strict Victorian division of public and private, but also added a new significance to the private sphere as the site where the individual self could best be developed and expressed.[17]

While the renewed importance of the family is a truism of 1950s history, what is less discussed of this trend is the extent to which new conceptions of selfhood were critical to this investment in the personal life through the family. In particular, from the turn of the century, Freudian psychoanalysis introduced a powerfully individuating concept of self, with its theorisation of the personality as *id*, *ego* and, later, *superego*, which provided "the first great theory and practice of 'personal life'".[18] Beginning with his *Interpretation of Dreams* in 1899, Freud posited a notion of human experience that was profoundly subjective, since reality was not accessed directly by the self but was "first dissolved and internally reconstituted in such a way as to give it a unique and contingent meaning".[19] Within this schema, sexual and romantic choices became reflections of individual personalities, of the idiosyncratic desires

---

[16] Zaretsky, *Secrets of the Soul*, 43.

[17] Ibid., 148; Nikolas Rose, *Inventing Our Selves: Psychology, Power, and Personhood* (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 79; Wright, *The Rise of the Therapeutic Society*, 128; John Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties: Private Sentiment and Political Culture in Menzies' Australia* (Sydney: Pluto Press, 2000). Prime Minister Menzies famously alluded to this in his speech for the 'forgotten people', characterising a commitment to the home in terms of a site in which to develop individuality: Judith Brett, *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People* (Chippendale, NSW: Macmillan Australia, 1992), 44–46.

[18] Zaretsky, *Secrets of the Soul*, 5.

[19] Eli Zaretsky, 'Psychoanalysis and the Spirit of Capitalism', *Constellations* 15, no. 3 (Sep 2008): 369.

and neuroses that they produced, and marriage was thereby reconceptualised as a "uniquely personal sexual relation".[20] Well before the 1950s, then, marriage was being conceptualised in terms of its individuating capacities, and this recast women's equality in marriage as not only a moral but a psychological imperative.

In Australia, psychoanalysis never gained the kind of institutional standing that it did elsewhere, and it was only in 1940 that the first centre, the *Melbourne Institute of Psychoanalysis,* was established.[21] However, if its reception was mixed amongst professionals, it was unquestionably influential in bringing the psychological self to popular awareness.[22] Scholars have noted, in particular, the extent to which women's magazines were early and eager adopters of psychological discourse, as their content took an increasingly therapeutic tone in enjoining women to cultivate their psyches in service to personally fulfilling, and thus psychologically healthy, partnerships.[23] Similarly, as the increasing divorce rate in the 1940s produced anxieties about social stability and moral decline, it was to psychological precepts that Australians turned to find a solution.[24] As Reiger suggests, the marriage guidance movement, which was initially dominated by Christian discourse, steadily absorbed psychoanalytic precepts about the psychological health of the individual so that, by the 1950s, it was shifting

> in a more 'therapeutic' direction, that is to an orientation towards personal development rather than social stability… Training in psychoanalytic principles led to a focus on the *intra*personal dynamics of the client as an individual man or woman.[25]

The claim for full development of the personality through marriage that was adopted by women's rights activists throughout this period was thus a reflection of an increasingly

[20] Zaretsky, *Secrets of the Soul*, 150; Judith Allen, 'Cultural Genealogies of Anovulation: Revisiting Abortion, The Pill and Feminist Sexual Politics', in *Feminism and the Body: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Catherine Kevin (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 8–28; Featherstone, *Let's Talk About Sex*.

[21] Peter J. Ellingsen, *A History of Psychoanalysis in Australia: From Freud to Lacan* (Kew, VIC: PsychOz Publications, 2013); Damousi, *Freud in the Antipodes*, 100.

[22] Damousi, *Freud in the Antipodes*, 100; Wright, *The Rise of the Therapeutic Society*, 72; Ellingsen, *A History of Psychoanalysis in Australia*, 95.

[23] Wright, *The Rise of the Therapeutic Society*, 144–47; Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties*, 20–23; Damousi, *Freud in the Antipodes*, 100–102.

[24] Kerreen Reiger, 'The Coming of the Counsellors: The Development of Marriage Guidance in Australia', *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology* 23, no. 3 (December 1987): 375–87; Wright, *The Rise of the Therapeutic Society*, 144–47; Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties*, 20–23.

[25] Reiger, 'The Coming of the Counsellors', 379–82.

dominant discourse that recast individuals as psychological selves and recast *individuality* as the marker of a psychologically *healthy* self.

Healthy Homes

It is important not to overstate the hegemony of the 'refamilialisation' of personal life in this period. As Johnson suggests, the 'return to the home' in the 1940s and 1950s was not simply a return to domesticity, rather

> home represented, for women, the site of their agency... Their capacities and responsibilities in this sphere gave women a stake, as they saw it, in the life of the nation and in building modern life in Australia. In this scenario, women were active participants in modern social existence; they were central to what they believed to be the project of this new world - ensuring people could be in control of their own lives, to define their futures.[26]

This is reflected in claims for women's rights since, while the primacy of the nuclear family remained largely unchallenged, women nevertheless articulated a right to greater public participation through the discourse of the individual personality. The earlier suffrage movement had established the claim for women's participation in public life, and this claim was no less important in the post-war years when women demanded the right to involvement in shaping the 'new world'. However, a clear tension was emerging between their arguments for independence, which implicitly destabilised the gendered social order, and their understanding of the nuclear family as the foundation of society, which would be secured through a 'healthy' marriage.[27] Invoking the personality was one means by which activists attempted to reconcile this tension, beginning in the 1930s and developing into a more sophisticated account in the 1950s and 1960s, as it expanded beyond political principles to invoke contemporary knowledge from the increasingly popular fields of social science and psychology. This new conception of the personality argued for individual freedom not only as a right but as a social good, by configuring women's desire for a social role outside of marriage both as a psychologically natural, and moreover a socially positive, impulse.

In the first instance, the right of married women to work was cast not only as a matter of their economic freedom but also as a matter of their health. In the 1930s, this was given in the

---

[26] '"As Housewives We Are Worms"', 461.
[27] Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties*, 42; Lake, *Getting Equal*, 98–99.

vaguer terms of frustration and resentment, which were cast as the natural human response to a lack of independence:

> The complete dependence of the homemaker is resented… She can never have the satisfaction of feeling 'this money is mine - I have earned it and I can spend it as I like'. The desire to be able to say and do this is common to both men and women. The ability to do it is one of the bases of freedom and independence.[28]

By the late 1940s, however, this motif of the frustrated housewife had grown into a more complex narrative, which would come to absorb women's rights activists for decades. In its initial stages, it was diagnosed as a 'maladjustment' between modern social structures and the persistence of retrograde social values and roles that together forced married women into a psychologically unbearable impasse. Activists were thus making two interrelated claims: one, a recognition that women, married or single, should be permitted a role in public life whether through participation in work or the community; and two, the acceptance that women, even within their domestic role, should have duties and interests outside the private sphere.

We see a tentative step towards this position at an AFVW conference in 1948, where there is an acknowledgement that some women's ideals of domesticity are not shared by all:

> We are back to pioneering days without their spaciousness. We live in rushing, strenuous days. Days in which there is no time to relax - hardly any time to think, in which homemakers are forced to keep in their homes (if they are to run them efficiently), and are bound from morning to night by household chores… This state of affairs leads to frustration in the individual, as freedom to choose one's path is essential to human development. The homemaker today is certainly no longer free to choose her own path; her home occupies her full time. To many women this is ideal, but there are a large number who would give home their first duty and then would like to be free to have many other interests... Is it any wonder that her health breaks, and her nerves are frayed to pieces?[29]

While freedom of choice is certainly at issue here, there is also a gesture towards a more complex understanding of the healthy personality as one that requires time for leisure and the pursuit of interests, beyond the concerns of domestic life. In this way, activists framed the

---

[28] UA, *Woman as a Homemaker* (Sydney, c. 1940s). Papers of Ruby Rich MS 7493, Box 35, NLA.
[29] Judy Garrard, 'The Status of Women in the Home', AFWV Conference, 1948. Records of the AFWV MS 2818, Box 9, NLA.

desire to develop as a free individual as a natural aspect of human psychology, and any stifling of this development as necessarily damaging to its health. This link between the right of women to choose work and their health is made even more explicit in a pamphlet by the UA, which stated under the heading 'An Ideal: A Just World':

> Healthy women, in common with healthy men, desire stability, security, beauty and dignity in their lives. These cannot be obtained unless their human needs for work and play are satisfied. Neither one of these needs can be violated without destroying the other. If their work life suffers, their emotional life does too. What a poignant tragedy it is that men learn so slowly that, unless women are allowed to choose their own work, they become poor things and wretched mates.[30]

Here, the desire for work and leisure are naturalised as part of the healthy development of the personality, while the right to choose work, including outside of the home, is likewise upheld as a prerequisite of a happy marriage.

This stress on the importance of leisure time for the personality acknowledged homemaking and mothering duties as potentially burdensome and created a space for normalising women's desire for participation outside the domestic sphere. Thus, Jean Arnot, a devoted campaigner for equal pay, both acknowledged women's apparently rightful place in the domestic sphere but also suggested that leisure not only could, but should, be used to enhance mental health:

> Women have not realised the real value of their leisure, which men have in their longer public career. Though household chores make the task very difficult, we have to realise the right use of leisure to recreate the body and spirit.[31]

In a similar vein, the Western Australian branch of the United Nations Status of Women Committee (UN SWC) identified the harm of monotonous, unskilled domestic labour on personal development, calling for a readjustment of women's social roles to reflect a changed society in which this kind of work had become unnecessary:

> [W]e hold that the time is now opportune for a re-orientation of the traditional views of the limited roles of women in a world of workers… Let us face it. Housework as a sole occupation is, indubitably, eminently respectable and drearily dull… It restricts women's personality if the

---

[30] UA, *Are Women Wage-Earners Responsible for the Unemployment of Men?*, (Sydney, c. 1940s). Papers of Ruby Rich MS 7493, Box 72, NLA.
[31] Australian Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Report of Seventh Conference, Newcastle, NSW, 1954. Records of the Australian Federation of Business and Professional Women Z517, Box 9, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, Australian National University (NBAC).

dose be too large. The monotonous daily repetition, whether one is aware of it or not, does not allow of that effort and variety which keeps the mind alert and the eye observant. Total absorption in the work around the house is not only no longer necessary, it is also, we believe, undesirable. New ways of living call for new ways of thinking.[32]

These appeals to the health of the housewife made use of a wider consensus about the ill effects of too much work and the need for leisure to counteract them. Thus, the Australian Women's Charter (AWC) in 1949 resolved:

> We believe that the provision of community amenities, and an adequate family wage, economic security and independance [sic] for all members of the family, is necessary to free mothers and home-makers from household drudgery…
>
> Whereas great developments have been made by the application of scientific methods in the work of the factory, farm, and office and every other sphere, resulting in the enjoyment by workers in these spheres of reduced hours, increased earnings and greater facilities for rest and recreation, and
>
> Whereas the responsibility of the mother still continues for 24 hours a day and 7 days a week.
>
> We recommend that
>
> an immediate investigation be made into work in the home to discover ways and means of extending similar benefits to mothers.[33]

Drawing this parallel between the drudgery of commercial work and that of domestic labour, activists made clear that leisure had been acknowledged as a psychological necessity, and that women were entitled to it as were men (though it was implied that the pursuit of this leisure should not involve an interruption in maternal duties). As early as 1948, activists were claiming social services from the government as a right for women, not only to bring them economic independence but also to allow them the opportunity for leisure and time to pursue their own happiness. For instance, the Australian Labor Women's Charter demanded

> [t]he RIGHT to all the social services and amenities essential to ensure the highest standard of health, education, recreation and culture… and all the assistance necessary so that mothers…

---

[32] 'The Case for Equal Pay in Australia', State Executive, Women's Service Guilds of W.A., c. 1950s. Papers of Bessie Rischbieth MS 2004, Box 37, NLA.

[33] AWC, *Australian Woman's Charter 1946-1949*, (Sydney, NSW: 1949). Records of the Australian Women's Charter MS 2302, Box 4, NLA.

will have leisure and opportunity for developing their own talents and personality while enjoying life to the fullest extent.[34]

Thus, decades before Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* identified 'the problem that has no name' in the alienation of married women within the home, and bemoaned that "our culture does not permit women to accept or gratify their basic need to grow and fulfill their potentialities as human beings", women's rights activists were challenging the traditional view that women's interests should lie exclusively within the domestic sphere through the discourse of the personality.[35] As these activists suggested, participation in the public sphere, whether through work or community, was important to the development of psychological health, and women's freedom and opportunity to pursue this depended both on economic independence and also a reconfiguration of social roles. At the same time, these activists treated the centrality of marriage and women's homemaking role as inevitable, and they encouraged rather than challenged the importance of this role to society at large.

The rights claims being made by women's rights activists drew on a number of interrelated discourses that rose to prominence in this period. In the first instance, there was a growing concern with what was often termed 'suburban neurosis' or 'housewife syndrome', both in the professional and popular spheres.[36] This syndrome was included under the broader umbrella of 'nervous disorders' or neurasthenia, which had long been understood as a pathological response to the rapid change occasioned by modernity and what was known as 'cultural lag', a misalignment between traditional cultural values and the new social order.[37] 'Housewife syndrome' was likewise conceptualised as a psychological reaction to this modern restructuring of married women's lives that had left them isolated, engaged in monotonous labour and with thwarted expectations regarding the fulfilment offered by domestic life. This diagnosis was made as early as 1920, when neuropsychiatrist Abraham Myerson published *The Nervous Housewife,* pointing specifically to industrialisation and feminism to account for

---

[34] *The Australian Labor Women's Charter: Each for All and All for Each*, pamphlet, Sydney, July 1948. Melbourne Trades Hall Equal Pay Committee (1978.0110), Box 3, University of Melbourne Archives (UoMA).
[35] Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Dell, 1963), 115.
[36] Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties*, 45; Wright, *The Rise of the Therapeutic Society*, 139.
[37] Wright, *The Rise of the Therapeutic Society*, 49–87; Susman, *Culture as History*, 117; Mari Jo Buhle, *Feminism and Its Discontents: A Century of Struggle with Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 92; Gitre, 'Importing Freud', 250.

his titular subject, which he suggested was "a phenomenon of the present-day American home".[38]

This ambivalence towards modernity was reflected in the demand for more leisure to counteract the potential psychological hazards faced by housewives. The conceptualisation of leisure as not simply a luxury but a necessity of life was responding to fears about the effects of industrialisation and its production of 'mass society'.[39] In the United States, hugely popular texts such as David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* (1950) and William H. Whyte's *The Organization Man* (1956) offered sociological analyses of the dangers of a society that encouraged its (male) members to subordinate individuality and conform in order to achieve material success.[40] These analyses relied on explicitly psychological understandings of the self; for instance, Whyte highlighted the tension between the 'group ethos' driving the 'organization man' to conform and his own psychological inclination to individuality, which led inevitably to neurosis. Riesman theorised 'inner-directed' and 'other-directed' personality types and suggested that contemporary social conditions were responsible for the prevalence of the latter, thereby reproducing conformity.

Against this concern was placed the demand for leisure, which could, by contrast, afford the individual an opportunity for development. A vitally classed and raced concept, it was still linked in this period to evolutionist concepts of civilisation that understood leisure as the prerequisite for the production of culture which defined 'advanced' societies.[41] The Australian Workers' Union had invoked this understanding when it demanded the right to leisure some sixty years before women's rights activists:

> With machinery put to its proper use, that of contributing to the happiness of mankind,
> increased leisure will give opportunities for the cultivation of all those higher faculties latent in

---

[38] Abraham Myerson, *The Nervous Housewife* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1920), 1.
[39] Andrew Jamison and Ron Eyerman, *Seeds of the Sixties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 34; Maureen Molloy, *On Creating a Usable Culture: Margaret Mead and the Emergence of American Cosmopolitanism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), 65; Farrell, *The Spirit of the Sixties*, 150; Zaretsky, 'The Birth of Identity Politics in the 1960s: Psychoanalysis and the Public/Private Division', 245; Susman, *Culture as History*, 107; Medovoi, *Rebels: Youth and the Cold War Origins of Identity*, 23.
[40] For an Australian perspective on fears of mass society, see Peter Beilharz, 'Tocqueville in the Antipodes? Middling through in Australia, Then and Now', *Thesis Eleven* 65, no. 1 (May 2001): 51–64.
[41] Brett Bowden, *The Empire of Civilization: The Evolution of an Imperial Idea* (University of Chicago Press, 2009).

man but now repressed by the pressure of a social system which makes the satisfaction of mere material wants an all-absorbing struggle.[42]

Women's rights activists were thus appealing to an older discourse but refashioning it in key ways, through newer understandings of the psychological self. Entangled within broader discourses of normative individualism which feared conformity, the psychological self was conceived as naturally inclined towards individuation and therefore suffering harm if this psychological imperative was hindered. Within this framework, the material effects of labour, both public and private, could be reimagined beyond socioeconomic terms, in the psychological production of individuality.

Healthy Societies

The greatest objection to the employment of married women had always centred on motherhood as women's most important duty and the neglect of children if women's roles were to be expanded outside of the domestic sphere. As this chapter has already noted, one of the ways in which earlier activists attempted to secure women's rights was by appealing to their roles as maternal subjects. This was no less true of mid-century activists, who were very conscious of the charge that working mothers were neglecting their children and sought to counter it by stressing the priority of marriage. However, their constructions of the role of motherhood now had to contend with simultaneous claims that cast marriage and motherhood as limitations to women's freedom. This tension was reconciled in activist discourse by linking the psychological health of women to their rearing of children, thereby to their centrality within the nuclear family and thus, ultimately, to the stability of the social order itself.[43]

Even as many women's rights activists in this period might be termed conservative for their insistence on the pre-eminence of the nuclear family, they were nevertheless explicit in their calls for a reordering of society that broke down the strict division of public and private

---

[42] Quoted in W. G. Spence, *Australia's Awakening : Thirty Years in the Life of an Australia Agitator* (Sydney: The Worker Trustees, 1909), 74.

[43] Judith Smart, '"For the Good That We Can Do": Cecilia Downing and Feminist Christian Citizenship', *Australian Feminist Studies* 9, no. 19 (March 1994): 50; Smart, 'Feminists, Flappers and Miss Australia', 3; Grimshaw, Warne, and Swain, 'Constructing the Working Mother', 30.

spheres. This was true of even more avowedly 'traditional' women's rights organisations.[44] For instance, the conflict between motherhood and professional life formed a great area of interest at a conference on married women graduates at work held in Melbourne in 1962. The conference was opened by Ada Norris, who set the tone for the conference with her opening suggestion that

> we start with the United Nations concept of the family as the fundamental unit of society,
> remembering at the same time the Status of Women Commission's insistence on the principle of
> no discrimination on account of marital status.[45]

As its audience suggests, the conference was composed largely of middle-class women, and its outlook was more individualist and conservative than its contemporaries. As a report on the conference noted, there was "a pleasant absence of any aggressive 'Suffragettism'".[46] Likewise, in several of the conference papers regarding the demands of motherhood, speakers agreed that women were biologically inclined to want children and likewise most fitted to their care. For instance, one paper claimed:

> A girl will experience a deep emotional need, as a woman, to settle her life into the time-
> honoured and respectable channels of a wife and a mother… A girl would be madly dedicated if,
> on the chance of a happy marriage, she turned away towards her chosen career. Worse than this,
> she would be foolish and misguided. The biological unit of the human species is the family, and it
> is within the framework of filling parental functions that the fullest degree of maturity can be
> developed.[47]

For these women, the role of the nuclear family remained paramount, and women's wish for motherhood was natural and inevitable.

At the same time, there was also an acknowledgement that women desired other roles, through work or the community, and that the duties of motherhood could be limiting where they infringed on this capacity for public participation. This desire for public participation was likewise presented as psychologically natural, rather than a failure to conform to social roles.

---

[44] As Smart notes, activists in this period saw no contradiction in making public interventions in order to defend the private sphere, and the dichotomy of conservative/progressive activism is thus unhelpful for our analyses of their claims: '"For the Good That We Can Do"', 41.
[45] *Leading A Double Life, A Report on the Conference on Married Women Graduates at Work,* (Melbourne: University Women's College, 24 November 1962): 5. Records of the AFGW MS 9592, Box 25, NLA.
[46] Judith O'Neill, *Leading A Double Life,* 4.
[47] Dora Bialestock, 'The Needs of the Woman Graduate Herself'. In *Leading A Double Life,* 12.

In this way, arguments for returning to work were framed around the primacy of the family and its health:

> Boredom and dissatisfaction with life forms a common syndrome in educated women as the family grows up… We go to considerable efforts to protect our families from physical ailments, but I suggest that the bored discontented mother with insufficient mental outlet after years of interesting training and work can do her family more harm than one infected, for example, with tuberculosis. Boredom and discontent are insidiously malignant and contagious and their treatment could be more expensive and protracted than that of tuberculosis. (Sanitariums are closing, but mental hospitals are bursting at the seams.)
>
> To prevent this discontent syndrome, return of the mother to the job for which she has ability and training might be worth trying.[48]

The pathologisation of boredom was thus used to make a claim for women's social role outside of marriage in the name of the family; appealing to psychological precepts, the healthy personality was presented as one that was developed through recreation and the pursuit of interests outside of the home. Citing sociological studies that denied the ill effects of working mothers on children, these speakers claimed instead that work provided

> psychological benefits to the wife and consequently the family as a whole. One recent survey (1964) carried out by the Victorian Women Graduates Association supports the findings of earlier surveys that many working wives had perforce become much more efficient on the home front.[49]

Work was thus characterised not only as a means of economic independence but as a facility for the psychological development deemed necessary to be a healthy, competent wife in service to the family. As a corollary, where women's roles were restricted to the domestic sphere, they became a danger rather than an asset to society.

The broader claim being made in these papers was that the development of women as individual persons needed to be encouraged for more than its own sake. More specifically, women's health and its linkage to familial health was related by women's rights activists to the proper functioning of *democratic* society. Thus, AFWV's 1948 conference declared that:

---

[48] Ibid., 13.

[49] Helga Alemson, 'Statement on the 'Marriage Bar' in the Commonwealth and State Public Services', c. 1964. Papers of Ruby Rich MS 7493 Box 63, NLA.

The A.F.W.V. in Conference assembled affirms, after years of war in defence of democracy and freedom, its conviction that the sacredness of human personality has always been the keystone of the women's movement…

EXPRESSES therefore its whole-hearted support of democracy, which the experience of many lands shows has given a fuller spiritual and mental life and a higher and more equal standard of living to all members of the community than any other system of Government, and declares its whole-hearted opposition to any form of totalitarianism.[50]

This kind of staunch liberal individualism is perhaps not surprising of an organisation that was for many years openly opposed to what it perceived as the communist tendencies of other women's rights activists such as Jessie Street. Nevertheless, what is important here is how this insistence on democratic individualism engaged with the discourse of personality in making a claim for women's rights. This affirmation of democracy as providing a "fuller spiritual and mental life" reflected an understanding of the psychological self as one that was nurtured by difference and the possibility of greater individuation in development. In these terms, the claim to expand women's social role was thus necessarily related to the safeguarding of democracy. Consider this scenario posited at an AFWV conference in 1951:

Frustrated mothers working 90 hours a week in labour-making houses, deprived of social contacts and encouragement, mean tension in the home.

Frustration manifests itself in various ways. Aggression is one type of response and this may be directed against husband or child or some other scapegoat. Withdrawal is another of response, sometimes taking the form of escape into neurosis. Unhappy family relationships are reflected in the disturbed personality of children, and the vicious circle of problem parents-problem children may be perpetuated, perhaps to culminate in a Hitler, a totalitarian regime, an ideology, which, through its destructive tensions, wrecks the world.[51]

To a modern audience this conclusion seems rather extreme, however, the reasoning accords perfectly with the discourses of self and society in circulation at the time. In these terms, the nuclear family was the foundation of society, and the wife and mother was the lynchpin of the family. Her health was therefore paramount as a matter of public interest.

The AFWV's caution that frustrated mothers could lead ultimately to a totalitarian regime was thus a literal pronouncement, reflecting an understanding of political and social systems as

---

[50] Bessie Rischbieth, AFWV Silver Jubilee and 8th Triennial Conference, Melbourne, 1948. Records of the AFWV MS 2818, Box 9, NLA.
[51] Amy Wheaton, AFWV 9th Triennial Conference, Perth, WA, 1951. Records of the AFWV MS 2818, Box 2, NLA.

outgrowths of individual psychology, and democracy in particular as a product of healthy, individuated personalities. This formulation was explicitly spelled out by Wheaton, as reported by one conference-goer:

> [D]emocracy, of necessity, must be a <u>living</u> tradition, and our fundamental problem was how to ensure that the children who might realise our ideals would, first of all, be born, and, secondly, that they should be nurtured in the spirit of democracy.
>
> The family had, at various times and in divers [sic] cultures, carried out a wide range of functions, but even in this rapidly changing social institution three of these were fundamental: reproduction, the care and nurture of children, and the handing on of culture. Even the last of these functions devolved mainly on the mothers of families for, as recent psychological advance had indicated, the early years of a child's life were the most significant for the formation of attitudes (including prejudices) habits, moral qualities, and, indeed, for the development of the whole personality and way of life. Other institutions might share with the family, to an increasing extent, the function of maintaining, handing down and adding to our culture, but the mother would remain the key-stone of the arch of democracy.[52]

Through this conceptualisation of motherhood as a socially and culturally vital function, both the state and society were called upon to support the development of women as individuals. As Wheaton concluded:

> [B]asing family life on secure foundations… was largely a matter for the policies of Governments in lessening the incidence of economic burdens on the family… Important also for our consideration were the opportunities our society could offer to women for the full development of personality and capacities, which should include, but not be limited by, child-bearing and child-rearing. We should never forget that the mother, even if unaware of her significance, remains the chief bearer of culture.[53]

Here, it was the responsibility of society to facilitate the right conditions for women's personality to flourish, allowing them to take their place in public life for the benefit of the family and, by implication, all of society. Through this conceptualisation of individual psychology as the ultimate determinant of social functioning, these activists politicised women's private roles as homemakers and mothers while simultaneously presenting their solution – the expansion of women's social role beyond motherhood – as a means by which the private sphere could be protected, rather than challenged. In this way, through the

---

[52] AFWV Silver Jubilee and 8th Triennial Conference, Melbourne, VIC, 1948. Records of the AFWV MS 2818, Box 9, NLA.
[53] Ibid.

discourse of the personality, calls for women's freedom and economic independence could sit more comfortably alongside the prioritisation of the nuclear family.

This valorisation of motherhood reflects one of the key shifts engendered by psychoanalytic and psychological knowledges of the time: a new concern with the child.[54] Traditional Freudian theory in particular stressed that personality development was fully completed in childhood, and even psychologists sceptical of Freud suggested that childhood was at least a critical – if not exclusive – period of development. In turn, the importance of mothering practices, which had steadily grown throughout the Victorian period, was now authorised as scientific fact, especially as neo-Freudian frameworks such as object relations theory took hold from mid-century.[55] Going further than Freud, object relations theory pointed to the first few months of life as the key period of personality development, which was determined solely by the relationship between mother and infant. It was this privileging of motherhood in psychoanalytic thought that women's rights activists engaged with, rather than the normalisation of female sexuality, which had a more limited effect particularly in Australia, where early engagements with psychoanalysis often evaded the question of sexuality.[56]

This understanding of personality development was integrated into anthropological and sociological knowledge, which was overwhelmingly functionalist in Australia; that is, it assumed "most aspects of life could be understood in terms of their purpose in the social machine" and, further, that all societies were set on a path of evolutionary progress.[57] The nuclear family was thus conceived as a necessary and also inevitable unit in the ordering of society (inevitable since Western society was assumed to be the most highly evolved). Social *dis*order was in consequence largely understood as the result of the failure of this unit to fulfil its social purpose, which was the raising of psychologically healthy children. It was for this reason that the child became the centre of public concern in the first half of the century, as

---

[54] For an overview of the Australian case, see Lisa Featherstone, 'Surveying the Mother: The Rise of Antenatal Care in Early Twentieth-Century Australia', *Limina* 10 (2004): 16–31; Scott and Swain, *Confronting Cruelty*, chap. 3; Damousi, *Freud in the Antipodes*, 245–48.

[55] Rose, *Governing the Soul*, 169; Zaretsky, *Secrets of the Soul*, 194–204.

[56] As Featherstone suggests, Freud's impact in Australia was more to be found in popular culture than the medical field: *Let's Talk About Sex*, 175; See also Ellingsen, *A History of Psychoanalysis in Australia*, 95.

[57] Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties*, 59.

the lynchpin of social stability.[58] The development of the personality was thereby linked to the issue of citizenship, which was reflected in the terminology of 'adaptation' or, more commonly, 'adjustment': the maintenance of the social order was increasingly conceptualised as the capacity of the 'well-adjusted' individual to be 'integrated' into society through the adoption and fulfilment of their social role.

What drove this politicisation of the personality as a social issue was a concern with totalitarianism that persisted through the twentieth century, first as it was embodied in fascism, and later, communism. As numerous scholars have suggested, it was during the course of the two World Wars that the social sciences and psychology gained an institutional foothold, as well as popular legitimacy, through their co-option into state apparatuses, and it was during the Cold War that this authority was consolidated.[59] The state's turn towards these fields reflects how, as the psychological self became common sense, so too did the claim of the new social sciences to provide a solution to the 'problem' of totalitarianism. As Herman notes:

> Because adjustment seemed to have such positive civic, as well as personal, overtones, maladjustment was considered a national hazard. It was this specter of incomplete or failed adjustment, and the realization that psychological and social fitness were inextricably linked in any measure of social well-being, that prompted a new mood of receptiveness to the psychological duties of national government.[60]

In particular, and in accordance with contemporary understandings of the psychological self, the rise of totalitarianism was theorised in terms of the predisposition of individual personality types. Most influential was the release of *The Authoritarian Personality* by a number of prominent members of the Frankfurt School in 1950, a work that attempted to explain the rise of fascist movements in Europe, particularly regarding anti-Semitic prejudice, and which was able to "convince so many that prejudice was determined by deep psychic structures and, conveniently, offered a practical way of measuring the personality's

---

[58] Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology*, 183; Wright, *The Rise of the Therapeutic Society*, 91; Rose, *Governing the Soul*, 125; Edward Hoffman, *The Drive For Self: Alfred Adler And The Founding Of Individual Psychology* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co, 1994), 105.
[59] Rose, *Inventing Our Selves*; Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology*; Nolan, *The Therapeutic State*; Moskowitz, *In Therapy We Trust*; Wright, *The Rise of the Therapeutic Society*.
[60] Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology*, 239.

inclinations toward (or away from) authoritarianism".[61] As Zaretsky suggests, then, "World War II completed the process by which the mother moved to the center of democratic imagination".[62] The freedom for individual development of the personality being espoused by women's rights activists was thus directly linked to the democratic discourse of responsible citizenship on which the maintenance of the Western social order depended.[63]

The Case of Equal Pay

To trace the contours of this discourse of personality, it is instructive to consider the demands for equal pay made by women's rights activists during the late 1940s and 1950s. Echoing their predecessors, these activists were keen to emphasise the relationship between economic independence and the freedom of the individual; however, they stressed the significance of this freedom in terms of the development of the personality. As early as 1935, the National Council of Women was claiming that "[t]he right to earn is one of the essential rights of human personality",[64] but it was the AFWV in the late 1940s who began developing the most sustained argument around economic independence and the personality. In 1949, the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration held a Basic Wage enquiry that aimed to resolve a dispute around increasing the basic wage. The case for equal pay did not come under its terms, however, several women's organisations sought to make use of the opportunity to plead their case. At the time, women's wages were raised from 54% to 75% of the male rate according to the concept of a living wage, which was based on the needs of a single female without dependents. Again, in 1953, under the eye of a Menzies government hostile to trade unions, a Wage and Standard Hours inquiry was held in which employers asked for a reduction in wages, a move that received strong objections from women's rights activists, who considered it a double penalty for women workers.

The AFWV made submissions to both of these inquiries arguing the case for equal pay. In these submissions, they argued for the right to equal pay as a right of citizenship, of

---

[61] Ibid., 182.

[62] *Secrets of the Soul*, 250.

[63] Joy Damousi, 'Building "Healthy Happy Family Units": Aileen Fitzpatrick and Reuniting Children Separated by the Greek Civil War with Their Families in Australia, 1949–1954', *The History of the Family* 22, no. 4 (October 2017): 476.

[64] NCW Meeting, 30 Aug 1935. Records of the National Council of Women, 1924-1990 MS 7583, Box 11, NLA.

democracy and of humanity. Undergirding these claims was an account of what they termed the present 'sociological setting', that is, the present socioeconomic structuring of society in which all transactions of goods and services were made in monetary terms. Echoing Street and Duguid's distinction years earlier, the 1953 submission stressed the demand for equal pay as one of distributive justice which, quoting Aristotle, was established as "equality in proportion of merit to rights".[65] The definition of merit was likewise made in terms of democratic values: "men and women as persons, also develop individual differences due to the interaction of nature and nurture. Democracy aims at providing equal opportunities in the nurture of fundamental differences".[66] The AFWV's conception of distributive justice was thus a formulation of democratic equality that upheld normative individualism, while at the same time claiming a minimum standard of welfare for all.

This definition of distributive justice was not an arbitrary one but had its foundations in an understanding of the good life that upheld the primacy of the individual personality while at the same time acknowledging the extent to which this personality was shaped by its context. Having established the connection between distributive justice and payment, the submission went on to highlight the necessary relationship between payment and the conditions of the free individual:

> The handicap of sex discrimination is most obvious in the economic field for, in our economy, a money income is the means by which we not only meet our material needs but also fulfil such conditions of the free personality as freedom of choice and freedom from arbitrary external restraints.[67]

Likewise, the demand for social services was made in the recognition that, in a society where distributive justice was necessarily delivered in the form of money, provision would have to be made for those in special circumstances, and this provision was a right under the terms of the universal human right to the good life:

> The second and third requirements of distributive justice - a minimum standard of living and provision for specific obligations - can be discussed together as aspects of the equality or

---

[65] AFWV, Statement to Equal Wage Case, 1953, 3. Records of the AFWV MS 2818, Box 10, NLA.
[66] Ibid., 4.
[67] AFWV, *A Case for Equal Pay, for presentation at the Inquiry into the Basic Wage,* (1949): 1. Records of the AFWV MS 2818, Box 16, NLA.

> universality principle in human rights… According to our interpretation of justice, all these groups
> have equal claims to the minimum conditions of the good life.[68]

Rather than drawing a distinction between individual negative rights and collective substantive rights, the AFWV's submission demonstrates a more holistic view of the individual and society that argued for substantive economic rights in the name of protecting and nurturing the (socially embedded) individual. The Council of Action for Equal Pay (CAEP) stressed this point when it claimed: "Problems of equal pay for the sexes cannot be separated from equal status and equality of opportunity. Every sex differential carries within it germs of injustice and seeds of destruction of personal potentiality".[69]

This argument for equal pay relied on a notion of democratic freedom as a matter of choice, and established the relationship between a lack of choice, missed opportunity and, as a result, an artificial limitation of the personality. The personality was thus understood as requiring both negative freedom as well as substantive opportunity for development; likewise, discrimination in equal pay and the right to work was characterised not only as perpetuating economic dependence but also as violating the individual freedom to choose, both in the choice *to* work and the choice *of* work. The AFWV made this explicit claim against discrimination in arguing for equal pay: "Rigid classification by sex instead of individual differences is a limitation of the freedom of the individual".[70] It further added that restrictions against married women working were also a violation of this right to choose:

> The question whether married women should work, or not, should not be arbitrarily
> decided for them. The conditions of democratic freedom require that the choice be left to the
> mature individual who, presumably, can best give due consideration to all the relevant factors in
> the situation.[71]

The Union of Australian Women (UAW) echoed this sentiment, but added that this right of women to work had to be supported through social provisions, in order to provide mothers with the structural support necessary to ensure they had equal opportunity in accessing employment:

---

[68] AFWV, *Statement to Equal Wage Case*, (1953): 6. Records of the AFWV MS 2818, Box 10, NLA.

[69] *Are Women Paid Men's Rates?* (Sydney, c. 1942): 3. Records of the Melbourne Trades Hall EPC (1978.0110), Box 2, UoMA.

[70] AFWV, *A Case for Equal Pay*, 3.

[71] Ibid.

> A woman is an individual, and if she wishes to continue with the work she has chosen to do after her marriage, that is her right as an individual. The means of doing so is a social responsibility. Motherhood should not be a bar to a woman's right to a chosen career.[72]

This demand for women's right to work without discrimination was not only concerned with freedom for its own sake, but with the effect that a lack of choice and opportunity had on the personality. For instance, the United Nations Association of Australia's Committee on the Status of Women concluded its argument for equal pay by asserting: "It permits the exercise of conscience, the true test of liberty, in the choice, and the extent of the choice, between the various fields within which women may wish to express their personalities".[73] This was echoed by the AWC, whose claim for married women's right to work remarked that "recognition that a woman is an individual with right to express herself in the work of her choice is an inch by inch struggle".[74] In this formulation, work was not only demanded in terms of a right to economic independence, but was also characterised as a means by which freedom of choice allowed for the development, and expression, of personality. This emphasis on choice and opportunity as the hallmarks of individual freedom and the prerequisites for the development of the personality demonstrates the increasing centrality of the discourse of the personality in activists' demands for the expansion of women's social role.

Claims for equal pay also often appealed as part of their argument to the effect of unequal wages on the status of women. The AFWV's conclusion to their 1949 submission to the basic wage enquiry reflects this:

> The limitations imposed by custom on choice of occupation and opportunities for advancement have, in addition to their economic effects, other significant repercussions on the social status of women... [W]omen tend to reflect in their cultural status the inferior values derived from assessment of achievement within the artificial limits imposed by traditional prejudice.
>
> The vicious circle of sex discrimination... must be broken somewhere in order to initiate a new tradition free from prejudice and discrimination.

---

[72] UAW, 'We Call it Common Justice!', *Every Woman,* (Sydney, Jun 1954): 6. Records of the Union of Australian Women Federal Office deposit Z236, Box 125, NBAC.
[73] UN SWC WA, 'The Case for Equal Pay in Australia'.
[74] AWC, *Quarterly Report,* (Sydney, 1965): 2. Records of the AWC MS 2302, Box 1, NLA.

The CAEP likewise stressed that unequal wage rates "result in the under-estimation of women's value to society as workers and home-makers".[76] And as Eileen Powell claimed, "There are many other adverse effects of a discriminatory wage policy; the manner in which it lowers women's status generally and promotes other forms of discrimination".[77] In the same way, calls for equal pay critiqued the link between women's inferior status and the devaluation of 'women's work':

> Regarding the effect of a lowered basic wage standard upon the general status of women, it is submitted that a lowered status in one sphere soon results in inferior status in other directions, just as the low status of woman has in the past led to of any work they may do. In the teaching profession in New South Wales, most women teachers only receive 85% of their equivalent male rate…, surely a glaring example of unjust discrimination when related to training and ability.
>
> But where pay is equal between the sexes, as, for instance, in the professions of medicine, and dentistry, when such professions are practised privately no question arises regarding discrimination.[78]

The teachers themselves noted this implication of discriminatory pay, as a Victorian representative of the Australian Teachers' Federation (ATF) claimed:

> We insist also that equal pay is only one facet of this inequality, that equal status and equal claims to all positions in the schools is a corollary of equal pay. Only thus can the implied inferiority, so resented by women teachers, be removed.[79]

However, this concern with the effect of unequal pay on women's lower social status was not simply about its material effects and the valuation of women's work. Rather, as the ATF's quote suggests, it was also about the 'implied inferiority' attached to this valuation, which women's rights activists claimed had its very own, specifically psychological effect: namely, women's lower status was responsible for reproducing a sense of inferiority within the women themselves. As early as 1938, this concern around women's self-image was being

---

[75] AFWV, *A Case for Equal Pay*, 4.

[76] 'The Case for Equal Pay', Leaflet No. 2, c. 1940s. Papers of Ruby Rich MS 7493, Box 50, NLA.

[77] 'Equal Pay – And How It Would Benefit Women', April 1958. Papers of Ruby Rich MS 7493, Box 49, NLA.

[78] AFWV, 'Case for presentation to the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration in Opposition to the application by Various Employers for a Reduction in the Female Basic Wage from 75% to 60% of the Male Basic Wage', 1953, 4. Records of the AFWV MS 2818, Box 16, NLA.

[79] ATF, Nineteenth Annual Council Meeting and Twenty-Seventh Annual Conference of Australian Teachers, Perth, WA, 1947. NLA.

characterised as a medical condition, with the CAEP arguing against women's lower rates of pay due to "the effect on family life by debasing the value of women as social entities and conducing to [sic] an inferiority complex".[80] Thus, women's rights activists also made claims for equal pay and the removal of discrimination in terms of the effect of this inequality on women's sense of self, and thereby on the healthy development of their personality. This concern with the issue of women's self-image would be taken up in the 1970s through the efforts of consciousness-raising, but in earlier decades, material inequality was still the main target for effecting this change. The AFWV, arguing against a wage cut for women in 1953, placed a greater emphasis on the importance of status and the internalisation of inferiority:

> Sex discrimination in remuneration carries with it, by implication, the stigma of inferiority. That is, extrinsic valuations come to be regarded as intrinsic, and they give rise to the belief that only inferior roles are within the capacity of women. The arbitrary assessment of women's wage rates at a mere 60% of male rates affects not only the economic status of women immediately concerned but the status as a whole of women in general. Low status in turn has adverse affects [sic] on… the development of capacity and personality.[81]

Several years earlier, Wheaton spoke in more detail about this connection between women's social status and their self-perception, noting the importance of equal pay for more than economic freedom:

> But remuneration for work in the labour market, is not the only kind of reward. The prestige attaching to position and effort, the sense of achievement and the satisfaction derived from using one's abilities and contributing to the wider good are, perhaps, even more important than monetary reward.
>
> Here I should like to stress the low prestige of homemaking as compared with outside executive work. Home-making for a family is a career, a more than full-time job… Yet why is such an important career… regarded so lightly, and why [are] homemakers and mothers… relegated to the category of housewives with implications of unskilled status — well, it is a valuation that has no rational support. Any woman, like any man, has a need of 'belongingness' — a need to stand well in the group.[82]

---

[80] Presidential Address, CAEP Conference, 8 Feb 1938. Papers of Bessie Rischbieth MS 2004, Box 37, NLA.
[81] 'Addition to Case for presentation to the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration in Opposition to the application by Various Employers for a Reduction in the Female Basic Wage from 75% to 60% of the Male Basic Wage', 9 Feb 1953. Records of the AFWV MS 2818, Box 16, NLA.
[82] AFWV 9th Triennial Conference, Perth, WA, 1951. Records of the AFWV MS 2818, Box 2, NLA.

These activists called for a new conception of women as working subjects in recognition of the fact that a conflict was emerging between women's traditionally domestic role and their newly acquired position as workers, which was inimical to the personality. Their appeals for expanding women's social role thus relied on an understanding of the healthy personality as one that required a social context in which cultural values were congruent with social structures; in a democracy, this necessarily meant the advancement of individual freedom and equality. Consider this formulation by the AFWV:

> In urbanized society a large proportion of women are employed outside the home; yet the role of independent worker conflicts with traditional expectations. As economic status tends to dominate, men have more opportunities of achieving prestige unless women bask in the reflected glory of their husbands. Internalized conflict results in frustration and neurotic maladjustment.
>
> Mental health in the individual is related to social justice. We cannot be mentally healthy persons in an unjust and therefore unhealthy society. Personality is integrated about a coherent system of values that give direction to thinking, feeling and effort and in the light of which we resolve our conflicts… It is because we are conscious of conflicts between our values and our social organisation that the A.F.W.V. organises intelligent effort to promote a better way of life.[83]

In this understanding of social relations, the cause for equal pay was not only a matter of economic justice but also of restoring the social disparity between the professed equal rights of women as individuals and their unequal social status, a disparity that stunted the proper development of the personality, and thereby produced an 'unhealthy' society.

> Again, women as well as men grow up in a democratic climate where lip service is paid to the principle of sharing in decisions and policies. Yet how often are women given the opportunity of contributing to even those decisions which directly affect them? How often do we find women represented on Boards and Commissions?
>
> Professor Quincey Wright says that group tension is a condition arising from inconsistencies among initiatives in the structure of society. Women who develop personality through adjustment along the democratic route of school, University and profession are jolted out of what they have taken for granted to a realisation of this inconsistency in initiative.[84]

Thus, activists' preoccupation with this apparent gap between society's claims to democratic equality and the reality of women's lower status did not simply highlight hypocrisy, but also suggested that this conflict itself caused psychological harm.

---

[83] AFWV 10th Triennial Conference, Adelaide, SA, 1954. Records of the AFWV MS 2818, Box 2, NLA.
[84] AFWV 9th Triennial Conference.

It is for this reason that many claims for equal pay made reference to the way that wage discrimination reproduced women's inferior social position, both in the broader culture and also in the individual, as a psychological construct diminishing a woman's own sense of self. Returning again to the case for equal pay by the Western Australian UN SWC, they stated:

> The whole world over, behind the plea, the hope, the demand for equal pay is the desire of all thinking women for a proper recognition of their capacities. Insofar as some jobs - e.g. higher civil service clerical jobs - are reserved for men, the suggestion of inferiority, the implication that she is not capable, attaches itself to the woman. In the world of practical affairs, there is little doubt, we think, that the status of the position occupied attaches itself to the occupier as a personal attribute, a sign of that person's ability and inclination. This external assessment, we contend, affects one's inward development. Where it is forced on one by a deliberate system of external limitations, the result is a deeply ingrained feeling of inferiority, or frustration.[85]

This passage makes clear the emerging concern with the effects of social inequality on the self-esteem of women. Much of this concern was directed towards attempting to explain why, despite Australian women's gain of political rights in 1902, they had so far failed to attain political power and effect change. For instance, speaking in 1962, a member of the NSW Labour Council commented on the reason women had so far been unsuccessful in attaining equal pay, suggesting that: "women in Australia have not been prominent until now… They're frightened by employers, get inferiority complexes, and begin to think they're not worth anything".[86]

Presaging the consciousness-raising movements that were to become synonymous with second wave feminism, women's rights activists became increasingly interested in women's self-esteem as a barrier to their participation and began to think more expansively about how this might be changed. Thus, the UAW in 1967 suggested that women

> need to be encouraged to join groups, clubs, classes and above all to take part in discussions on all kinds of topics - to learn to express themselves and to gain confidence in speaking in mixed groups - not to feel inferior to the men present but to see themselves as having an equal right to

---

[85] UN SC WA, 'The Case for Equal Pay in Australia'.
[86]'It's only the start, says woman unionist', *The Australian,* 20 Jun 1969, 5.

an opinion. They also need not only an equal right but a willingness to take responsibility and to hold office if necessary.[87]

This understanding of social status as shaping women's sense of self had an appealing explanatory power in addressing women's hesitancy to become involved in political participation, both due to a lack of confidence as well as to an internalisation and acceptance of the claim to inferiority. More than this, however, it brought urgency to the question of status and its damaging effect on the personality, as women's rights activists came to the conclusion that fostering the development of the personality was not simply an end but also a means for achieving equality.

This new prioritisation of women's self-image was clearly influenced by contemporary psychological and anthropological discourses of self and society. For instance, the Australian National Committee for the United Nations produced a paper on 'The Concept of Status' that attempted to explain why irrational prejudices persisted despite the advancement of scientific knowledge:

> Sex prejudices are similar to racial prejudices and the processes of their development are the same. They are irrational and stereotyped and they are propagated in each generation in the process of socialization i.e. of growing into a social group, even though they may be completely inconsistent with the facts of social life and the findings of science. This accounts for their existence in women as well as men, for women, too, are the stereotyped creatures of their culture and their minds develop and function in the same way as men's minds. They accept the status prescribed for them and culturally established as a result of the social interactions of the past - the myths, legends, rationalizations and irrational definitions of situations handed on by tradition from prescientific ages.[88]

This formulation of sex discrimination as the reproduction of irrational prejudices can be understood as the culmination of a number of developments regarding the psychological self and its relationship to society, what might be described as a 'cultural turn'. In the first instance, psychological conceptions of self began to break down the earlier reliance on biological explanations of behaviour. Psychoanalysis, for instance, ascribed universal human

---

[87] UAW, 'Report - Status of Women in Australia', 1971. Records of the Union of Australian Women Federal Z236, Box 15, NBAC.
[88] ANCUN Status of Women Committee, 'The Concept of Status', c. 1950s. Records of the AFWV MS 2818, Box 17, NLA.

drives that were modified by environmental factors to produce the individual personality. This corresponded with an increased acceptance of (a limited) cultural relativism within anthropology, a shift that was not coincidental. It is widely agreed that the anthropologist Franz Boas was instrumental to this shift, in rejecting racial biology as an explanation for group difference and asserting that all cultural values must be understood on their own terms.[89] Boas himself was keenly interested in psychology, and it was to this he turned in order to offer an alternative explanation for individual difference, pointing to cultural determinism rather than racism to explain individual and group difference.[90]

Scholars such as Susman have noted that the 1930s in the United States saw the concept of 'culture' explode in popular discourse, and this was due in no small part to an engagement with Boasian ideas. In particular, a number of Boas' students published some of the most widely read anthropological texts of all time, including Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928) and Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture* (1934). These scholars were part of what is known as the 'culture and personality' school who, as the name suggests, brought Freudian ideas about personality development to their conception of cultural formation and reproduction. As Mead claimed in 1935:

> We are forced to conclude that human nature is almost unbelievably malleable, responding accurately and contrastingly to contrasting cultural conditions. The differences between individuals… are almost entirely to be laid to differences in conditioning, especially during early childhood, and the form of this conditioning is culturally determined.[91]

Likewise, the social sciences and psychoanalysis were also becoming increasingly interpersonal, as the more individualistic Freudian self was reconfigured in Neo-Freudian terms as more socially-embedded, a self whose social interactions were determined as much by cultural patterns as childhood development.[92] 'Culture' and 'society' were thus brought

---

[89] Nicholson, *Identity Before Identity Politics*, 68–69; Zaretsky, *Secrets of the Soul*, 153–54; Susan Hegeman, *Patterns for America: Modernism and the Concept of Culture* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), 49; George W. Jr Stocking, *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1968), 203.

[90] Stocking, *Race, Culture, and Evolution*, 214; Nicholson, *Identity Before Identity Politics*, 65–71; Buhle, *Feminism and Its Discontents*, 99; Zaretsky, *Secrets of the Soul*, 154.

[91] Margaret Mead, *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (London ; Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), 279–80.

[92] Gitre, 'The Great Escape', 23–24; Buhle, *Feminism and Its Discontents*, 87; Joanne Meyerowitz, '"How Common Culture Shapes the Separate Lives": Sexuality, Race, and Mid-Twentieth-Century Social Constructionist Thought',

together in theorising the individual personality as one that was oriented towards social participation – to acquiring a social role within the 'machine' – and whose fulfilment of this role was dependent on the extent to which it was 'socialised', that is, it identified with the cultural values which justified this role.

The issue of maladjustment and self-concept were thus inextricably linked in this period, as an understanding of the psychological self broadened the concept of personality from one that could be understood in terms of universal drives, to one that was determined by the interplay between an individual sense of self and its interaction with external society. In these terms, maladjustment could be as much the product of a 'sick' culture producing 'sick' personalities.[93] For instance, Neo-Freudian psychoanalyst Karen Horney suggested in her influential text, *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time* (1937), that neuroses were produced as a result of contradictions within a culture, which left the individual unable to adjust to their social role. Thus, when women's rights activists pointed to the contradiction between the professed cultural values of democratic equality and the social reality of women's inequality, they did so due to a conceptualisation of the psychological self as depending on a correspondence between self-image, cultural value and social role. It was this understanding of self and its consolidation in the 1960s which would come to problematise culture, as a new source of inequality was found inside the mind itself.

Conclusion

The period from the 1930s to the 1960s saw the emergence of a discourse of personality that reproduced new scientific knowledges regarding the self and its relationship to society. The early theories of Freudian psychoanalysis offered visions of human selfhood as a highly subjective, and thus individualising, experience, while also positing this self as vulnerable to psychological pathology. Within a functionalist conception of society, in which the social order was guaranteed through the 'adjustment' of individuals, psychological health became the

---

The Journal of American History 96, no. 4 (2010): 1057–84; Cushman, *Constructing The Self, Constructing America*, 200.

[93] Susman, *Culture as History*, 166; Edward Hoffman, *The Right to Be Human: A Biography of Abraham Maslow*, Revised, Updated, Subsequent edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1999), 90; Meyerowitz, 'How Common Culture Shapes the Separate Lives', 1073.

new focus of concerns about the stability of society and the security of democracy. In this way, the discourse of the personality was responding to and reproducing contemporary fears about modern life and its effects on self and society.

Moreover, by tracing the deployment of this discourse through the claims made by women's rights activists, this chapter has outlined a number of ways in which it opened space for activists to make political claims. In particular, the framing of the development of individuality as a universal psychological need, and the linkage of this need to the democratic social order more generally, allowed activists to demand an expansion of their social role despite affirming the centrality of the nuclear family, stressing the importance of the health of the mother and wife for raising healthy, democratically-inclined families. The chapter concluded by noting the emerging importance of culture to discourses of selfhood, which suggested that the adjustment of an individual to their social role was determined by a culturally-produced sense of self, and this increasing significance of culture will be taken up in the following chapter, which explores its particular implications for early Aboriginal rights claims.

2.

Aboriginal Rights and Cultural Pride

Unlike the women's rights movement, which coalesced over several centuries, what could be termed a social movement for Aboriginal rights did not begin to take hold in Australia until the late 1960s. However, Aboriginal people and their supporters had engaged in many political struggles in the years prior and, while these efforts were localised and disparate in form and intent, they nevertheless constituted part of an emergent Aboriginal political subjectivity, together with new configurations of Aboriginal rights as a political problem. The fight for Aboriginal Australians' rights in the early half of the 20th century has not gone unnoticed by scholars, particularly in terms of its intersection with other contemporary political actors, such as women's and labour rights groups. For instance, there has been much recent scholarship on the involvement of women's rights activists and organisations in claiming rights for Aboriginal women in terms of particular ideals of Australian colonial womanhood.[1] Likewise, political moments such as the 1946 Pilbara strike have been studied in order to better understand the interaction of race and class within the Australian labour movement,[2] as well as its importance to the formation of prominent Aboriginal rights organisations such as the Council for Aboriginal Rights (CAR) and the Federal Council of Aboriginal Advancement (FCAA, renamed in 1964 as the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, or FCAATSI).[3] There has also been considerable attention paid to the formation of the first Aboriginal-led Aboriginal rights organisations in

---

[1] Marilyn Lake, 'Feminism and the Gendered Politics of Antiracism, Australia 1927–1957: From Maternal Protectionism to Leftist Assimilationism', *Australian Historical Studies* 29, no. 110 (April 1998): 91–108; Lake, 'Colonised and Colonising'; Lake, 'Childbearers as Rights-Bearers'; Paisley, *Loving Protection?*; Haskins, '"Lovable Natives" and "Tribal Sisters"'; Alison Holland, 'Wives and Mothers like Ourselves? Exploring White Women's Intervention in the Politics of Race, 1920s-1940s', *Australian Historical Studies* 32, no. 117 (October 2001): 292–310; Alison Holland, 'Compelling Evidence: Marriage, Colonialism and the Question of Indigenous Rights', *Women's History Review* 18, no. 1 (February 2009): 121–36.
[2] Michael Hess, 'Black and Red: The Pilbara Pastoral Workers' Strike, 1946', *Aboriginal History* 18, no. 1/2 (1994): 65–83; D. M. Wilson, 'Different White People: Communists, Unionists and Aboriginal Rights 1946-1972' (University of Tasmania, 2013); Bob Boughton, 'The Communist Party of Australia's Involvement in the Struggle for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Rights 1920-1970', in *Labour & Community: Proceedings of the Sixth National Conference of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History*, ed. Robert Hood and Ray Markey (Wollongong, NSW: Dept. of Economics, University of Wollongong, 1999), 37–46.
[3] Sue Taffe, *Black and White Together FCAATSI: The Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, 1958-1973* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2005); Bain Attwood, *Rights for Aborigines* (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2003).

the 1930s, such as the Aborigines Progressive Association (APA) and the Australian Aborigines' League (AAL), for the ways in which they both reflected and challenged colonial Australia's assumptions about Aboriginal people.[4]

This early phase of Aboriginal rights-claiming is often framed as assimilationist due to its overwhelming tendency to assert rights for Aboriginal people in terms of universalist notions of an apparently neutral liberal democratic citizenship. For the most part, activists framed the inequality faced by Aboriginal Australians in terms of their exclusion from Australian citizenship, which activists articulated as theirs by right of British occupation and the obligations accrued therewith by the state. This right was denied Aboriginal people on the grounds that they were unable to fulfil the responsibilities of citizenship and, for this reason, activists claimed rights for Aboriginal people by asserting their inherent capacity to take their place amongst the white Australian citizenry, in defiance of popular racist knowledge which suggested they could not. This 'assimilationist' logic, which assumed the desirability of a universal (white) citizenship, is placed in contrast to claims from the late 1960s for specifically *Aboriginal* rights, which were made in terms of Aboriginal people's unique relationship to the nation-state due to their indigeneity.[5]

While this is an important distinction to make, it does not reflect the complexity of the political discourses being engaged and redeveloped in this early period. In particular, the dichotomy of universal citizenship rights versus particular Indigenous rights elides some more foundational logics at play in claims that traverse both categories.[6] Instead, this chapter will

---

[4] Andrew Markus, *Blood from a Stone: William Cooper and the Australian Aborigines' League* (Sydney: Unwin Hyman, 1989); Anna Haebich, *For Their Own Good: Aborigines and Government in the Southwest of Western Australia, 1900-40* (Nedlands, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 1988); Heather Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales, 1770-1972* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2008).

[5] John Chesterman, *Civil Rights: How Indigenous Australians Won Formal Equality* (St. Lucia, QLD: University of Queensland Press, 2005); Taffe, *Black and White Together FCAATSI*; Attwood, *Rights for Aborigines*; Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus, *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights: A Documentary History* (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1998); Miranda C. L. Johnson, *The Land Is Our History: Indigeneity, Law, and the Settler State* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), 22–25; Russell McGregor, 'Protest and Progress: Aboriginal Activism in the 1930s', *Australian Historical Studies* 25, no. 101 (October 1993): 555–68; Peter Read, 'Cheeky, Insolent and Anti-White: The Split in the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders—Easter 1970', *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 36, no. 1 (1990): 73–83.

[6] As Clark notes, for instance, claims for land rights had recourse to both universalist ideas of civil rights regarding racial equality, as well as particularist notions about the rights of Indigenous peoples to land. See Jennifer Clark, *Aborigines & Activism: Race & the Coming of the Sixties to Australia* (Crawley, WA: UWA Press, 2008), 119.

reconsider the claims-making of Aboriginal rights activists in this period in terms of discourses of the self and society, particularly in terms of the new scientific knowledges of culture that brought into question earlier functionalist understandings of this relationship. As this chapter will suggest, the apparent contradictions between universalist and particularist logics underlining Aboriginal rights-claiming in this period can more clearly be understood in terms of these transformations in historical discourses of selfhood.

Thus, this chapter will first consider the notion of pride, and how it was mobilised in this period through psychological precepts of the healthy, civically-responsible personality, in a way that was distinct from women's rights activists because of its emphasis on group belonging, through which activists could demand both the maintenance of Aboriginality and also call for the right to assimilation. As the chapter then suggests, it was only through the decoupling of 'culture' and 'civilisation', and the problematisation of the superiority of 'Western civilisation', that assimilation could come to be articulated not as an inevitable process of cultural evolution, but as an act of cultural violence or 'genocide'. It will also consider how this redefinition of culture as a socially-integrating force placed it at the heart of a new conception of 'identity', in which culture mediated between the individual self and their sense of continuity with their social roles. Finally, it will consider the effects of these transformations by turning to claims for land rights, and trace how the increasing centrality of culture and group belonging in discourses of self and society created space for land rights to emerge as one of the key battlegrounds in the claiming of Aboriginal rights.

Culture and Pride

In 1940, Michael Sawtell, chairman of the Committee for Aboriginal Citizenship (CAC),[7] wrote to the Chief Secretary of NSW Alwyn Tonking criticising the newly constituted Aborigines Welfare Board – a reformulation of the earlier Board for the Protection of Aborigines in line with the 1940 *Aborigines Protection (Amendment) Act,* which directed a shift in policy from Aboriginal protection to assimilation. In his letter, Sawtell pointed to the continuing lack of Aboriginal representation on the Board, in defiance of the wishes of Aboriginal people themselves, and suggested:

---

[7] Also known as the Committee for Aboriginal Citizen Rights.

I am afraid Sir, that you do not realise that the most intelligent people of aboriginal blood of this State have now reached the state of culture when they are anxious to co-operate with the Government for the welfare of their own people and to undertake the responsibility of helping their fellow aborigines to grow up to a higher state of Citizenship.[8]

Sawtell came from an educated family but chose to eschew university study for the life of a drover, travelling widely through outback Australia and thereby gaining firsthand exposure to Aboriginal communities and the conditions under which they lived. Taking up their cause in the 1940s, he became familiar with Aboriginal activists such as William Ferguson and Pearl Gibbs through their work in the APA. While his efforts on behalf of Aboriginal people would be characterised as paternalist today, his statement reflects a common platform of 'progressive' white Australians at this time, championing the cause of Aboriginal people in terms of their capacity for becoming educated into responsible citizenship. As Sawtell's letter suggested, it was through attaining a higher level of 'culture' – or civilisation – that an individual became qualified to execute their responsibilities and was thereby capable of civic participation. Sawtell would later step down as chairman of the CAC in 1962 over the question of lifting the prohibition against the sale of alcohol to Aboriginal people; in line with his conception of citizenship, Sawtell was against ending the ban because he believed Aboriginal people had not yet gained the necessary level of education – and concomitant sense of responsibility – to earn this particular right.

While this part of the story is well-covered by scholars, what is pertinent to this chapter is the way that this understanding of the responsible citizen was tied to the notion of individual pride. One of the central tenets of Aboriginal rights activists in this period was the relationship between pride, self-reliance and the capacity of the individual to meet their civic responsibilities to society. For activists, responsible citizenship could not be expected of an individual whose pride and thus capacity for self-reliance had been thwarted by dependence on others, leaving them demoralised and unwilling to help themselves.[9] As Sawtell asserted in the same letter:

---

[8] Michael Sawtell to A. U. Tonking, 1st July 1940. Papers of Joan Kingsley-Strack MS 9551, Box 11, NLA.
[9] Fiona Paisley, 'White Women in the Field: Feminism, Cultural Relativism and Aboriginal Rights, 1920–1937', *Journal of Australian Studies* 21, no. 52 (January 1997): 120.

> I am very well aware of all the difficulties of helping our fellow Australians, the Aborigines, to help themselves. That is really the crux of all human problems. We need tact, intelligence, sympathy and real understanding of human nature to regenerate the detribalised and demoralised people that we have so cruelly wronged.[10]

As this quote suggests, self-reliance was considered intrinsic to 'human nature' and thus foundational for social health more generally. It was therefore through a particular lens of human selfhood that activists argued for Aboriginal people's capacity for citizenship. For instance, the Aborigines Uplift Society – in keeping with its name – emphasised the importance of 'uplift', not charity, for fostering pride and self-reliance in Aboriginal people:

> Social service is good and necessary, but it is not a remedy for social ills. We must aim to remove causes rather than give relief. Social service is often unwise and degrading to the recipient. Uplift is enobling [sic]. Our ultimate aim must be a self-reliant, self dependent people. We must "help the aboriginal to help himself". Till this is done, the aboriginal problem remains.[11]

This framework provided an alternative explanation for the apparent failure of Aboriginal people to embrace white civilisation, which was used as proof of their racial inferiority and which Aboriginal rights organisations fought so strongly against. In the same vein, the *Aborigines' Protector* reprinted an article by the Methodist Reverend Stanley Jones, who rejected the belief that Aboriginal people were racially inferior, and instead suggested that social exclusion and dependence on charity produced not only material but 'mental' harm, ultimately thwarting the capacity for progress:

> To say that the aborigine cannot get beyond a certain stage in education disregards the fact that when he gets to a certain level of education he begins to realise that he has no real part in the civilized life for which he is being educated – he is not a citizen, he cannot own land, and he is not accepted in the new society. What incentive has he to learn further? This corporate suppression paralyses the will to advance. If all doors are open to him and he can become a useful and contributing member of the new society then the will to live and to advance is aroused. Now nothing is open. He becomes an object of charity, a disintegrating process. What he needs is not charity but justice.[12]

---

[10] Michael Sawtell to A. U. Tonking, 1st July 1940. Papers of Joan Kingsley-Strack MS 9551, Box 11, NLA.
[11] *Uplift,* no. 5 (March 1939).
[12] 'Australia's "National Blot"', *The Aborigines' Protector* 1, no. 6 (1939): 15.

This linkage of pride and self-reliance – which can be traced to earlier liberal and Protestant thought[13] – was in this period reproduced by new discourses of the psychological self, which activists also deployed in their claims for Aboriginal rights. In particular, the need for pride was posited as foundational to the structuring of the human personality, and its lack identified as producing anti-social, apathetic, or even hostile individuals – what was termed an 'inferiority complex'. Thus, one appeal for Aboriginal self-determination made this link between the development of an inferiority complex and its impact on the civic 'education' of Aboriginal people:

> To include an aboriginal representative on the A.P. Board we consider is only just, fair, reasonable, and democratic. It would give the aborigines a new sense of dignity and responsibility. It would also be a great aid in the education of the aborigines, for at present aborigines are suffering from an acute racial inferiority complex; they have lost the will to live, and because an [sic] all sides ignorant Government officials do not understand and even ridicule ancient aboriginal culture, some aborigines feel that it is not worth while to become educated in the culture of the white man.[14]

Likewise, a contrast was made between those educated Aboriginal people who were 'willing' to assimilate, and those whose psychologically demoralised condition left them unwilling:

> At present the aborigines are suffering from a very acute racial inferiority complex. They feel, and are made to feel, that they are not wanted. Many of them are past caring or trying to fit themselves into our way of life. They have lost all hope… The intelligent aborigines are willing and anxious to undertake the duties and responsibilities of citizenship. They know that many of their own race are in a demoralised condition, who need all the help a Christian people can give them.
>
> The best way to help people is to help them to help themselves. We must try to inspire the aborigines with hope and confidence.[15]

William Morley, secretary of the Association for the Protection of Native Races, went even further in suggesting that the failure to rid Aboriginal people of their inferiority complex would ultimately result in social conflict:

> to turn them into useful and self-respecting citizens may be more difficult… but it is the only way in which Australia can prevent a formidable situation in days to come, and at the same

---

[13] Paisley, 'White Women in the Field', 122. Taffe also makes this link between Christianity and Aboriginal rights claims for self-sufficiency from the period after WWII but, as I suggest, it was in operation much earlier. See Sue Taffe, 'Aboriginal Rights and Justice Campagins: A People's History', in *The 1960s in Australia: People, Power and Politics*, ed. Shirleene Robinson and Julie Ustinoff (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 220.
[14] CAC to Chief Secretary, 11th July 1938. Papers of Joan Kingsley-Strack MS 9551, Box 11, NLA.
[15] 'Our Aborigines', *Grit* (March 1939).

time avoid the criticism and condemnation of other nations. With encouragement and sympathy, half-castes can rise above their environment and overcome an "inferiority complex". This has been repeatedly demonstrated.[16]

The need to foster pride in Aboriginal people was thus considered absolute, as a means by which to resist the forces that were instead creating an 'inferiority complex'. In this, white activists were echoing Aboriginal activists themselves, who from the outset had asserted pride in their racial background, denying charges of biological inferiority as well as criticising the humiliation visited on Aboriginal people by protectionist policies. Most prominent of these was William Cooper, an Aboriginal activist and devout Christian who established one of the first Aboriginal rights organisations, the Australian Aborigines' League:

> The whole attitude of the white man towards the aborigine has all along been to dis-spirit and humiliate him, to extinguish his self-respect, to suppress his ambition; in short, to kill his hope. To his natural disabilities the white man has added other disabilities which I cannot enlarge upon here, and which make the conditions of life seem so hard that the very atmosphere in which he lives appears hostile, and the consequence is he has no will to live.[17]

Here, Cooper made explicit the relationship between the superior attitude of white people and the humiliation which drove Aboriginal people to despair. As Cooper claimed elsewhere:

> The white race, in its dealings with the dark race, seems always to think in terms that involve the aboriginal as something sub-human, or, at least, outcast. Many of our friends even seem to be infected with a superiority complex which is not fair to our race. May I plead for an attitude that will recognise our real humanity for, though we have suffered unspeakable horrors since the coming of the white race, we still have that self respect which causes a feeling of hurt when received with a superior and merely tolerant attitude.[18]

Appealing to that self-respect which defined 'real humanity', Cooper stressed the harm that was caused by notions of collective white superiority that disparaged Aboriginality and induced hurt and hopelessness in the individual. As Attwood and Markus have noted, Cooper was unique amongst early Aboriginal activists for his emphasis on maintaining pride in Aboriginal heritage, where other contemporary groups such as the APA instead stressed the

---

[16] 'Don't Tell England', *The Aborigines' Protector* 1, no. 1 (Dec 1935): 6.
[17] *Herald (Melbourne),* 24 March 1930. In Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus, *Thinking Black: William Cooper and the Australian Aborigines' League* (Canberra, ACT: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2004), 32.
[18] William Cooper, Secretary, AAL, to the Editor, *Ladder* 1, no. 4 (June 1937). In Ibid., 58.

ability of Aboriginal people to shed their primitive culture and assimilate into white society.[19] However, the APA too was not shy about criticising white superiority, rejecting paternalist charity and asserting racial pride in the capacity of Aboriginal people to progress:

> We have no desire to go back to primitive conditions of the Stone Age. We ask you to teach our people to live in the Modern Age, as modern citizens. Our people are very good and quick learners… When our people are backward, it is because your treatment has made them so. Give us the same chances as yourselves, and we will prove ourselves to be just as good, if not better, Australians, than you! Keep your charity! We only want justice.[20]

Both groups thus identified attitudes of white superiority as a significant cause of Aboriginal people's disadvantage, in the humiliation and loss of dignity it engendered, and which prevented Aboriginal people from attaining progress.

It was for this reason that activists identified notions of white racial superiority as a key threat to Aboriginal people's advancement, and thus stressed the importance of fostering collective racial pride, emphasising the defence of Aboriginal grouphood and culture as a prerequisite for encouraging individual dignity. As the CAC had earlier implied, the disrespect shown by white people towards Aboriginal culture was harmful to the dignity of the individual. Thus, Sawtell, reporting on an Aboriginal Conference held in 1940, described how he

> advocated the teaching of aboriginal folk lore in schools to give the children, both black and white, some knowledge of the charm of aboriginal culture that might help the aboriginal children to grow out of their racial inferiority complex.[21]

Likewise, the WCTU, which also viewed the cause of Aboriginal people as a Christian duty, recommended protection of 'full-blood' Aboriginal people on reserves, preserving Aboriginal culture through isolation from white civilisation, as well as the provision of assistance for economic development in order to foster Aboriginal self-dependence and thereby secure racial pride: "With trained advisors who really understood the communal essence of tribal life native people could develop co-operative enterprises which would help to maintain their pride in their own race".[22] By the end of the 1950s, several Aboriginal rights organisations had

---

[19] Ibid., 14–15.
[20] APA, 'Aborigines Claims Citizen Rights!', Sydney, circa 1930s. Papers of Joan Kingsley-Strack MS 9551, Box 12, NLA.
[21] Michael Sawtell, Report of Aboriginal Conference, 2nd Jan 1940. Papers of Joan Kingsley-Strack MS 9551, Box 11, NLA.
[22] Phyllis Duguid, 'The Atlantic Charter and the Aborigines', *Smoke Signals*. 52, no. 2 (March 1940): 18.

included this principle in their official policies, including, the Aborigines' Advancement League, which had as one of its official aims, "To promote better understanding between dark and white Australians, and to foster in the Aboriginal people, an appreciation of, and pride in, their continuing heritage",[23] as well as FCAA, which recommended:

> Adoption by the Commonwealth Government of an entirely new policy to foster racial pride and to encourage the aborigines to retain the essential elements of their own social, ceremonial and religious structure in place of the destructive policy of the past, which has resulted in chaos and extermination.[24]

In this way, the imperative of individual pride became tied to the need for racial or group pride as a prerequisite for Aboriginal advancement. The early insistence by Aboriginal rights activists of the importance of pride was thus significant because it created a space for claims for greater Aboriginal self-determination – in terms of generating self-respect and therefore self-reliance – as well as assertions of Aboriginal racial equality and pride, which paved the way for later demands for preserving cultural identity.

What is evident in this linkage of individual pride to group identity is the way that older discourses of self-reliance were being gradually reconfigured within the newer 'psy' discourses of the human personality.[25] The idea of the 'inferiority complex' in particular became hugely popular in the period from the 1920s to the 1940s.[26] While often misattributed to Freud in mainstream literature, it was actually coined by Viennese psychologist Alfred Adler, who would prove influential to a later generation of psychologists due to his highly interpersonal model of human personality.[27] According to Adler, the development of the personality depended on overcoming an innate sense of inferiority and

---

[23] AbAL pamphlet, c. 1957. Papers of Charles Duguid MS 5068, Box 8, NLA.

[24] FCAA, 'Heads of Proposals for Agenda for a Conference on Native Rights', 1959. Papers of Charles Duguid MS 5068, Box 8, NLA.

[25] As several scholars have noted, for instance, these discourses and the logics of Protestantism shared a number of congruencies, particularly in their focus on gaining understanding and thus mastery of the interior self, the ultimate goal of which was the capacity for self-direction. See, e.g., Kirschner, *The Religious and Romantic Origins of Psychoanalysis*, 45; Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties*, 22–23; Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity*, 45–82. Meyer goes so far as to suggest that the mix of religion and popular psychology which arose in the early 20th century was actually a substitute for a liberal Protestantism in decline. See Donald Meyer, *The Positive Thinkers : A Study of the American Quest for Health, Wealth and Personal Power from Mary Baker Eddy to Norman Vincent Peale* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 2013).

[26] Wright, *The Rise of the Therapeutic Society*, 135; Heinze, 'Schizophrenia Americana', 232.

[27] Duane P. Schultz and Sydney Ellen Schultz, *A History of Modern Psychology* (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2015), 146; Hoffman, *The Drive For Self*.

gaining self-esteem, which fostered social feeling and the desire for social participation. Conversely, failure to overcome this was termed an 'inferiority complex', which instead produced aggression towards others. Rather than strengthening the ego, as Freudian terms would suggest, this conception of personality suggested that a well-adjusted personality was produced in the confluence between the individual's self-image and the successful fulfilment of their social role; in other words, their sense of belonging to and participation in a group.[28]

As Susman has noted, the importance of self-confidence for individual success predated Adler's theories; however, with the rise of the discourse of personality in the 1930s, individual capacity for social adjustment – that is, the ability to fit in or belong – gained increased attention as the route to both individual advancement and social stability.[29] Adler's work, like so much of the social sciences conducted in this period, was markedly influenced by the aftermath of WWI and the rapid pace of technological change, which produced a widespread and widely debated fear around the prospect of imminent social disintegration.[30] The result of this fear was a new interest in the 'group' as an object of knowledge.[31] Moving gradually away from Freudian models that stressed the individualistic interaction between self and environment, scientific theories of personality turned instead towards more interpersonal models of selfhood that emphasised the role of the group in shaping individual behaviour – the rise of social psychology being the most obvious instance of this new focus. In particular, social scientists were keen to understand the factors that produced social cohesion and, more specifically within a democratic context, those which fostered civic responsibility and participation in individuals; a focus that was only heightened by the rise of fascism in Europe, and by increasingly fraught race relations in the United States. Adler's theory of personality, which defined the healthy personality as one possessing social feeling, can thus be understood as another response to this overarching concern with encouraging social cohesion and democratic responsibility. Within this context, the notion of the inferiority complex was

---

[28] Susman, *Culture as History*, 200; Hoffman, *The Drive For Self*, 101.

[29] Susman, *Culture as History*, 279; Heinze, 'Schizophrenia Americana', 232; Hoffman, *The Right to Be Human*, 96.

[30] Molloy, *On Creating a Usable Culture*, 85; Zaretsky, *Secrets of the Soul*, 270; Susman, *Culture as History*, 107.

[31] Susman, *Culture as History*, 110; Zaretsky, *Secrets of the Soul*, 219.

readily embraced by the popular culture as an explanation for anti-social behaviour and thus social failure.

It was precisely this fear that activists engaged with in making early claims for Aboriginal rights. Using the new discourse of personality which pointed increasingly to the environment rather than biology as the key factor in its development, activists made demands for Aboriginal self-reliance and independence not only on moral grounds but also in terms of their necessity for the healthy personality. The apparent failure of Aboriginal people to assimilate thus constituted proof of a social rather than an individual or racial failure. Moreover, this concern for the healthy personality was tied to the broader imperative of maintaining social cohesion amongst settler and Indigenous groups, an imperative that only heightened as the Aboriginal population proved more resilient to extinction than the white settlers had previously envisaged. In these terms, it was vital that Aboriginal people be encouraged to feel a sense of pride in themselves and in their group, without which they could not develop the psychological capacity for successful citizenship. Early claims for the importance of retaining Aboriginal grouphood were thus centred around its ultimate role in assisting the individual to assimilate, a position which was not initially contradictory[32] but only became so with the reconceptualisation of culture and belonging.

Culture as Civilisation

Scholars have recognised the extent to which Aboriginal rights activists prior to the 1960s adopted the assimilationist discourse of 'civilising' Aboriginal people into responsible citizenship; however, they have not also thought through how this discourse worked alongside an increasingly contradictory discourse that asserted the value of Aboriginal culture in fostering individual pride and group cohesion.[33] This is an important omission because it

---

[32] As, for instance, suggested by Attwood, *Rights for Aborigines*, 68. Attwood later acknowledges the role of anthropological ideas of group belonging for Aboriginal claims to cultural pride, but does not link this to these earlier discourses: Ibid., 207.

[33] Russell McGregor, *Indifferent Inclusion: Aboriginal People and the Australian Nation* (Canberra, ACT: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2011), 39–40; McGregor, 'Protest and Progress'; Attwood and Markus, *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights*, 12; Attwood, *Rights for Aborigines*, 68; Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, 155–56; Richard Broome, *Fighting Hard: The Victorian Aborigines Advancement League* (Canberra, A.C.T: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2015); Henry Reynolds, *Dispossession : Black Australians and White Invaders* (North Sydney, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1989), chap. 4. But see, Bronwyn Carlson, *The Politics of Identity : Who Counts as Aboriginal Today?* (Canberra, ACT: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2016), chap. 3.

was this very tension between the two that created a space for the later criticism and eventual abandonment of assimilation as a policy. Specifically, the decoupling of the formerly synonymous terms 'culture' and 'civilisation', which began in the 1930s, created a space for the coexistence of demands for both material progress and cultural preservation, by separating culture from the supposedly universal, inevitable 'civilising' process to a holder of distinct group identities and values, ultimately rendering assimilation both unnecessary and undesirable.

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, where the term 'culture' was used by activists, it was almost exclusively synonymous with definitions of progress and uplift, that is, attaining a higher level of civilisation. It was not until the 1950s, and the growing emphasis on the need for Aboriginal people to celebrate their collective identity, that the term came to be used more widely in its modern sense, as a set of customs and beliefs shared within, and tying together, a social group. Consider this appeal by Cooper:

> We do not want our people to remain primitive, uncultured and a prey to all comers. Why should we remain in the near Stone Age? The British were once where we are now. The conquering power of Rome, whatever else it did, lifted the British to culture and civilisation. We want that same uplift.[34]

Echoing contemporary ideas about the historical nature of progress, Cooper rejected the notion that Aboriginal people were incapable of civilisation by pointing to the historical, not racial, origins of British people's progress. His sentiment was echoed by the APA, another political organisation established by Aboriginal activists William Ferguson and Jack Patten in 1937. As its name suggests, the APA believed that it had a duty to see its primitive brothers and sisters raised to civilisation so that they might enjoy the benefits of progress and modern life. As Patten wrote in the organisation's short-lived paper:

> We want to be absorbed into the Nation of Australia, and thus survive in the land of our forefathers, on equal terms… We do not wish to go back to the Stone Age, we want to join in the march to progress and civilisation.[35]

---

[34] William Cooper, Secretary, Australian Aborigines' League, to the Minister for the Interior, Thomas Paterson, 25 June 1937. In Attwood and Markus, *Thinking Black*, 75.
[35] 'Calling All Aborigines', *Abo Call,* no. 3 (June 1938): 1.

These references to the march of progress reveal an understanding of material modernisation as an inevitable, natural social process, without which Aboriginal people would not survive. Cooper agreed with this platform, arguing against the alternative of protection, which segregated Aboriginal people from white civilisation by isolating them on reserves. As Cooper claimed, this attempt to preserve primitive Aboriginal culture was doomed to fail, because the human desire and drive for progress was inexorable:

> There are certainly primitive people, living the life of their fathers, but I venture to doubt if one of these is ignorant of the white man and his wonderful new world. These will not be kept in their present conditions short of compulsion so complete as to be impracticable, without an enormous policing force. Whether the white man likes it or not, every native is headed toward the culture of the white man.[36]

Most importantly, this 'progress' was considered a universal, natural process. In contrast to the destruction of 'primitive' Aboriginal culture, which was criticised by activists as a deliberate act of violence, the gradual assimilation into modernity of those Aboriginal people that had been 'detribalised' or estranged from traditional culture was understood as a natural and inevitable outcome.[37] For instance, the APA produced a recommendation in 1940 which stated:

> That the Federal Government does not allow the war to stop the gradual education of our people living in the Northern Territory and elsewhere from their tribal state up to the point where they are fit and able to be accepted as citizens of the Commonwealth and merged into the white race. We consider the gradual absorption of the Aboriginal people into the white race, to be the most practical and natural course for our people.[38]

Bound between what seemed an inescapable choice between remaining isolated and 'backward' or being assimilated into modern white civilisation, the APA made a firm bid for the latter. David Unaipon, a noted Aboriginal preacher and author, also argued against protection by pointing to the inevitability of progress:

> Civilisation has come to my people so suddenly that they have not been able to adapt themselves to it. Evolution is a process which takes time. Some people say white man should leave the Aborigine alone, should not interfere with his customs manner of living.

---

[36] Cooper, to Min. Int., 21 January 1939. In McGregor, 'Protest and Progress', 563.

[37] Attwood and Markus, *Thinking Black*, 13–14; Henry Reynolds, *Frontier : Aborigines, Settlers and Land* (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1996), 108–30.

[38] APA, Resolutions to Conference, Dubbo, 2 Jan 1940. Papers of Joan Kingsley-Strack MS 9551, Box 11, NLA.

> The white man must not leave the Aborigine alone. We cannot stand in the way of progress. The Aborigine must not be left alone in the middle of civilisation.[39]

Likewise, the WCTU made a resolution in 1940 urging that:

> This resolution recognises that the aboriginal people are willing and are able to develop. It has too long been believed that their intelligence was low, and their power to develop non-existent. Their intelligence is now generally recognised, but their desire for development is rarely taken into account. Because they maintained their stone-age civilisation so well in this inhospitable country we are inclined to think they should be encouraged to stay at that stage forever. But this attitude surely greatly underrates their natural human power of development.[40]

For the WCTU, too, the policy of assimilation was preferable to protection and isolation, because the latter did not accommodate the 'natural' desire and aptitude for education and development – that is, for entry into modernity – possessed by Aboriginal people.

Intent on eradicating the myth of racial biological inferiority, Aboriginal and white activists alike stressed the 'proof' against this myth in Aboriginal people's capacity to attain 'culture' and to progress, reinforcing existing understandings of modernity and civilisation as a universal, natural and therefore desirable process. In particular, activists pointed to anthropological evidence that Aboriginal culture had remained 'primitive' due to material constraints, falling behind on the path of progress because their environment forestalled their advancement:

> We must remember that the progress from the phase of the nomadic hunter towards a higher civilisation has always been made by way of the development of agriculture and husbandry, by the attainment of a settled mode of life such as this entails, and by the accompanying leisure and the development of foresight begot of the seasonal phases of an agricultural and pastoral existence. These things were denied to the Australian by the very nature of his new home.[41]

Echoing this line of social evolutionist anthropology, one contribution to *Uplift* launched a defence of Aboriginal people as potential citizens by pointing to their inherent capacity to become loyal British subjects over the dubious loyalty of immigrants:

> There is no minority problem as would result from immigration of large numbers from overseas, because the native always loses his culture and his language as readily as he changes his

---

[39] 'An Aboriginal Pleads for his Race', c. 1930s. Papers of Charles Duguid MS 5068, Box 10, NLA.
[40] Phyllis Duguid, 'The Atlantic Charter and the Aborigines', *Smoke Signals* 52, no. 2 (March 1940): 18.
[41] Frederic Wood Jones, *Australia's Vanishing Race* (Sydney, 1934).

coat. He puts on the new culture and adopts the new language with the same facility. Experience has shown that the aborigines, when civilised, are "more British than the British" and more loyal to the person of the Sovereign and the obligations of Empire than are many whites. The development of Australia's hinterland by aborigines, under white or civilised aboriginal instruction, will populate the area with a people, who are not only Australian, but British. The settlement of this area with people of the same ideals as our own will solve the matter of the open door, for these natives, thus merged into the civilised community, will rally to the defence of their country and ours.[42]

This argument had also been made earlier by Cooper who, characterising the loss of 'primitive' Aboriginal culture as inevitable, stressed instead the natural affinity of Aboriginal people to British culture and identity:

> A statesmanlike policy will make Australia safe to the Empire for the Aboriginal is more British often than the white. They are intensely loyal to the person of the King and the Empire and as they lose the primitive culture, destined to ultimately perish, they assume the culture of Britain. Trained in modern conditions, the aboriginal will be the bulwark of the defence system as it affects the country so peculiarly his own. How preferable is this policy for settling Australia to bringing in of Southern Europeans, a policy which is already disadvantageous where it has been done.[43]

Western culture was thus understood as synonymous with modernity, which was by definition simply an advanced stage of social progress universally attainable to all, and the assimilation of Aboriginal people into white society was likewise understood as a natural, inevitable outcome of this progress rather than an act of violence and erasure (which could only make sense when culture, not race, was seen as a determinate of grouphood).

It was within this logic of inevitable progress, and before the reconceptualisation of culture as a condition of grouphood, that early Aboriginal activists made their claims for rights. Within this rubric, assimilation into white civilisation did not have to lead to loss of Aboriginal grouphood, which at this time still hinged on race. As the AAL claimed, Aboriginal cultural practices had their place in Aboriginal identity, so long as they did not conflict with the broader process of uplift:

> The attention of our League has been drawn to the staging of an aboriginal corroboree at Darwin for the benefit of American Tourists. It is our opinion that the commercialising of the

---

[42] 'Our Aboriginal Asset', *Uplift* 1, no. 8 (Dec 1939).
[43] William Cooper, Secretary, AAL, to Sir John Harris, Secretary, Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society, 16 March 1937. In Attwood and Markus, *Thinking Black*, 69.

aboriginal people in this way is derogatory to the cause of their uplift, causing on the part of partly civilised people, a resuscitation of undesirable practices which will retard their uplift. Our League does desire the preservation of the best features of aboriginal culture and feels that the preservation of certain corroboree dances, in the way the Old World peoples have retained their folk dances, is in harmony with this, but great care should be exercised till such time as the native race is so fully civilized that the outlook on the corroboree is just that of the Old World civilization on their folk dances.[44]

Likewise, the capacity of Aboriginal people to become 'cultured', which was used as proof against racial biological inferiority, actually allowed for an assertion of pride in Aboriginal racial identity:

My league very definitely appeals for a fair deal for the whole race, full blood or coloured. We definitely protest against discrimination in favour of any one section... The supposed superiority of the half-caste is not admitted, and in fact, all thought of breeding the half-caste white, and the desire that that be accomplished, is a creature of the white mind. The coloured person has no feeling of repugnance toward the full blood, and in fact, he feels more in common with the full blood than with the white. We dark folk have no regret that we are coloured, nor do we admit any fundamental superiority in being white. We are proud of our race. We know that a dark person, full blood or half-caste, can do anything he is shown how, and can do it as well as a white man. Our plea and aim is that the whole dark race be lifted to full modern culture, and be granted full equality in every way with the white race.[45]

From the beginning of Aboriginal rights activism, then, was an avowal of pride in a distinct Aboriginal identity, even as Aboriginal activists called for assimilation into white civilisation, and the tension between these two imperatives would become strained as 'culture' and 'civilisation' were gradually redefined.

This evolution of the concepts of civilisation and culture has been commented on by a number of scholars of the early twentieth century, who point to the 1930s as the period in which our contemporary understanding of culture came into its own.[46] Turn-of-the-century conceptions of civilisation and culture were influenced by the work of the social evolutionists of earlier

---

[44] William Cooper, AAL, to Min. Int, 15 June 1936. In Ibid., 51.

[45] William Cooper, AAL, Letter to Editor, 5th November 1936, *Ladder* 1, no. 4 (June 1937): 23-4.

[46] Susman, *Culture as History*; Stocking, *Race, Culture, and Evolution*; Hegeman, *Patterns for America*; Molloy, *On Creating a Usable Culture*; Richard Handler, *Critics Against Culture: Anthropological Observers of Mass Society* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005); Marc Manganaro, *Culture, 1922: The Emergence of a Concept.* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2002); Nicholson, *Identity Before Identity Politics*, 65–86.

decades. Precursors to the discipline of anthropology, social evolutionists understood the differences between societies as a result of their varying locations along a universal path of progress, and 'culture' and 'civilisation' both denoted these stages of progress. It was thus possible to talk about cultures as higher or lower according to their level of advancement along this path. It was not until Boas put forward his notions of cultural relativity in the first decades of the twentieth century that 'culture' began to be used in the plural form as *cultures*, as the particular patterns of life that ordered social groups in idiosyncratic ways, unrelated to some universal civilising process.[47] Culture could thus be understood in Herderian terms as the *Volksgeist* or soul of a people, or what was often discussed in popular discourse as a 'way of life'.[48]

This conception of culture as a way of life was hugely popular in the 1930s, a trend that was both reflected and reinforced by the immense popularity of anthropological texts chronicling the lives and values of 'exotic' foreign peoples. Two of the most popular have already been mentioned earlier, Benedict's *Patterns of Culture* and Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa*. Mead and Benedict were both students of Boas, and maintained his commitment to cultural relativism, which challenged assumptions of Western cultural superiority. Mead's work in particular used the cultures under study to draw contrasts with that of her own native United States, often unfavourably. For instance, as its title suggests, *Coming of Age in Samoa* chronicled the lives of Samoan children as they transitioned into adulthood, but as Mead herself wrote, the work was also explicitly intended to shed light on the American context:

> Whether or not we envy other peoples one of their solutions, our attitude towards our own solutions must be greatly broadened and deepened by a consideration of the way in which other peoples have met the same problems. Realising that our own ways are not humanly inevitable nor God-ordained, but are the fruit of a long and turbulent history, we may well examine in turn all of our institutions, thrown into strong relief against the history of other civilisations, and weighing them in the balance, be not afraid to find them wanting.[49]

---

[47] Stocking, *Race, Culture, and Evolution*, 203–14.
[48] Nicholson, *Identity Before Identity Politics*, 84.
[49] *Coming of Age in Samoa*, (New York: William Morrow, 1928).

The popularity of these anthropological texts was thus not only due to their revelation of new ways of living, but also to the space opened up by these revelations for critiquing existing cultural formations.[50]

What is evident in the decoupling of culture from civilisation in this period and in the concomitant new interest in cultural Others, then, is a growing ambivalence regarding modernity and its effects on society.[51] Social disintegration, it seemed, was the price of progress, which was supplanting the traditional Western way of life and replacing it instead with a fragmented, conflicted modern culture. Trading heavily on psychological notions of repression and integration, culture became the new focus for social stability as the psychological integrating force that shaped individual members to their social roles. Likewise, 'civilisation' was increasingly used to denote material and technological advancement, and this in turn was now understood as a potential threat to a harmonious, stable culture.[52] This accounts for the romanticisation of 'primitive' cultures often found in these anthropological texts and the public responses to them; while modernity produced repressed, anxious neurotics, primitive cultures, with their harmonisation of individual personality and social role, produced healthy personalities and thus social cohesion. As Molloy suggests of Mead's enormous public success:

> In portraying Samoa as a 'homogenous' society, one in which there was no separation between an individual and his or her culture, she provided a concrete exemplar of the kind of unity of individual and society… [which] was the embodiment of the dream that…, to quote Croly, "the individual becomes a nation in miniature… [and][t]he nation becomes an enlarged individual".[53]

'Culture' thus gained an increasingly central role in theories of self and society, both for its role as a socially integrating force that determined and defined grouphood, but also in shaping the individual to 'fit' within their society, and it was these new shifts in understandings of self, society and culture which would ultimately come together in the notion of 'identity'.[54]

---

[50] For an account of what this looked like in Australia, see Paisley, 'White Women in the Field'.

[51] Molloy, *On Creating a Usable Culture*, 43; Susman, *Culture as History*, 156.

[52] Susman, *Culture as History*, 156; Molloy, *On Creating a Usable Culture*, 43.

[53] Molloy, *On Creating a Usable Culture*, 61.

[54] Johnson notes the waning power of this discourse of inevitable progress but fails to link it to her separate observation that assimilation became untenable with new assertions of the right to identity: *The Land Is Our History*, 25,55.

Culture as Identity

From the 1950s onwards, the demand for preserving Aboriginal culture, which was still largely made in terms of maintaining racial and individual pride, became increasingly central to Aboriginal rights-claiming, as activists began to articulate a more sophisticated conception of the relationship between the individual personality and a sense of belonging within a group. Bolstered by the new weight of culture in understandings of self and society, this conception of cultural belonging as essential to the healthy personality gave rise to the notion of *cultural identity*, and likewise reconceived such markers of grouphood as history, language and land as determinants of this identity. As a result, assimilation began to fall out of favour as a desirable policy and, by the 1960s, integration was being heralded as the best approach by activists, because it claimed compatibility between the maintenance of Aboriginal cultural identity and the entry of Aboriginal people into modernity.[55]

In the early 1950s, white activists were taking their first steps towards this position, suggesting that a middle way might exist between the preservation of Aboriginal culture, whose destruction was fatal for the individual personality, and the participation of Aboriginal people in modern progress, which was inevitable and (presumably) beneficial. One of these early critics of assimilation was Dr Donald Thomson, a noted anthropologist who had made an extensive study of traditional Aboriginal culture throughout his career and wrote several newspaper articles demanding justice for Aboriginal people. In one of these articles he suggested:

> What is needed is a simple "charter of rights" – a charter granting to the blackfellow the right to his own hereditary lands, and the simple right to live his own life… as a free, independent human being.
>
> The recognition of his territorial rights – the right to enjoy social, political and religious freedom. Yes, religious freedom too. This does not infer… to deny to him either progress or Christianity. But merely the right to choose for himself…
>
> Let us attempt even at this late hour to safeguard and preserve what is left of their pattern of culture – not necessarily as a permanent way of life - but as a pattern in to which they can weave gradually, bit by bit, such elements of our own culture as may seem fitted to their needs – and

---

[55] For an overview of the uses of 'assimilation' in Aboriginal policy, see McGregor, *Indifferent Inclusion*, chaps 4–6.

which they must themselves weave into the existing social-political-economic, or religious framework.[56]

Thomson had previously advocated reserves as a means of preserving Aboriginal culture, a position that brought him into conflict with another noted anthropologist, A. P. Elkin, who was at this time an influential advisor to the government on Aboriginal affairs and a strong proponent of assimilation. However, as McGregor has emphasised, Elkin's view of assimilation was also ambivalent, and distinct from that of government officials in asserting the importance of maintaining a distinct Aboriginal group:

> The Aborigines are racially different from us, and recognizably so. In spite of the economic, religious, social and political assimilation at which we aim, they will be a distinct group, or series of groups, for generations to come. Indeed, they will develop pride in their own cultural background and distinctness while at the same time, being loyal and useful citizens.[57]

As McGregor notes, this position was common to many contemporary anthropologists, who proceeded from a functionalist understanding of the individual's relationship to their social group, which assumed that maintaining the group structure was integral to successful social progress.[58] As Elkin explained: "Through their own [Aboriginal] group life, continuity with the past will be retained; social security in the present be experienced and assurance for the future certain. These are essential principles for a people's well-being".[59] Thomson likewise stressed the importance of the group for individual wellbeing when he recommended that:

> The Aborigines be encouraged to retain their culture and institutions in their entirety as an integrating force – an important and vital factor in survival and associated with racial and cultural pride. In the past the policy has been everywhere to belittle and destroy native culture, and with it their solidarity.[60]

---

[56] Donald F. Thomson, 'Wanted – simple justice for the Aborigine', *Melbourne Argus,* 10 Apr 1950.
[57] A. P. Elkin, 'Wards, not Aborigines, in the Northern Territory: The proposed ordinance "To provide for the care and assistance of certain persons"', 1953. Quoted in Russell McGregor, 'Nation and Assimilation: Continuity and Discontinuity in Aboriginal Affairs in the 1950s', in *Modern Frontier: Aspects of the 1950s in Australia's Northern Territory*, ed. Julie T. Wells, Mickey Dewar, and Suzanne Parry (Darwin, N.T.: Charles Darwin University Press, 2005), 23.
[58] Ibid., 25–26. See also Russell McGregor, 'Assimilationists Contest Assimilation: T G H Strehlow and A P Elkin on Aboriginal Policy', *Journal of Australian Studies* 26, no. 75 (January 2002): 43–50; Russell McGregor, 'The Concept of Primitivity in the Early Writings of A.P. Elkin', *Aboriginal History* 17, no. 1/2 (1993): 95–104.
[59] 'Assimilation and integration' ANZAAS address, Aug 1959. Quoted in McGregor, 'Nation and Assimilation: Continuity and Discontinuity in Aboriginal Affairs in the 1950s', 24.
[60] 'Aborigines' rights to tribal lands should be recognised', *The Herald*, 31 Dec 1946.

This understanding of the significance of preserving Aboriginal culture was initially echoed by Aboriginal rights activists, who framed the preservation of this culture not as a challenge to modern values of progress, but rather as an aid to its fulfilment. For instance, the Australia and New Zealand Civil Liberties Society, concerned with the failure of Aboriginal people to attain citizenship rights, offered an explicit critique of assimilation as a policy in 1953, pointing to the necessity for supporting Aboriginal culture and allowing Aboriginal people to develop "as a people":

> The new Commonwealth policy is called "assimilation". This clearly means the destruction of the aboriginals as a people. Mr. R.S. Leydin, Government Secretary, has said that assimilation means the inevitable breaking down of their tribal life and deep-rooted culture. Now I don't want to sound sentimental about this, but it must be remembered that… the aboriginal has had nothing positive from white man's culture, and that most of the positive elements of his life belong to his old culture. Without a drastic improvement in his pay, his health, his education, he is not liable to fit himself into a white economy without demoralisation…
>
> We feel that any real solution must recognise the aboriginals are a people with their own languages, culture and traditions; but it must offer as well full citizenship, active assistance towards their development as a people.[61]

As a corollary, this understanding of the relationship between culture and the individual meant that the loss of culture was conceived as a psychological threat for Aboriginal people:

> [b]y destroying his culture – highly specialized, and finely adjusted to suit his functional needs – by destroying these things *we have taken from him the meaning of life* – the very desire to live.
>
> And so on Cape York Peninsula I found the natives even then speaking of themselves – without rancour – as "the last people". They accept this fact without rancour; they believe that their race is doomed.[62]

By the 1960s, the importance of retaining Aboriginal culture moved to the forefront of Aboriginal activism as an explicit policy of activist organisations.[63] It was at this time that the first national Aboriginal rights organisation emerged, the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement. Formed in 1958, its membership was drawn beyond organisations specifically interested in Aboriginal rights to encompass a variety including women's rights groups,

---

[61] W. Pearson, 'Aboriginals in Australia', 17 Sep 1953. Papers of Jessie Street MS 2683, Box 29, NLA.
[62] Thomson, 'Wanted – simple justice for the Aborigine'.
[63] McGregor, *Indifferent Inclusion*, 179–81.

Christian groups and unions. In preparation for its second annual conference, FCAA drew up a draft agenda that demanded the following:

> Need for a complete review of Australian native policy and recognition of the fundamental right of the Australian aborigine to live as a free, independent human being and to retain his own traditions, law and custom, and his religious life. Establishment of a scientifically informed administration, established primarily to safeguard the interests and well-being of the aborigine. Full rights of citizenship for aborigines who live and work in the white community.
>
> Action by the Commonwealth Parliament to provide a definite charter of rights and liberty for the aborigines and adoption of a policy of native administration based not on caprice but on the needs of the people… which is in complete conflict with the spirit of the statement made by the Commonwealth Minister for Defence on March 10th, 1947, which accepts as inevitable the destruction of aboriginal culture.[64]

Contrary to scholarship that characterises FCAA's early years as focused on equality rather than special rights, it can be seen that, from the outset, FCAA questioned the inevitability of the erasure of Aboriginal culture and instead made a claim for its retention as a right.[65] Then, at its fifth annual conference in 1962, FCAA passed a resolution affirming the priority of retaining group identity and suggested a campaign for promoting this view over the rejection of assimilation. Aboriginal rights activists argued instead that Aboriginal people could only achieve progress and equality if they were able to retain their culture and collective identity. One article in APA's publication *Churinga* made this relationship clear:

> Our pauperised position in this rich and prosperous land is not of our making. A conquered people, subjected to foreign laws, which destroyed our way of life, dispossessed us of our land, our culture, including our language and almost everything upon which people depend for life and dignity… Making claim to our heritage before we are swallowed up by the Government's assimilation policy and thus remain an underprivileged section of the community, we are making a determined effort to retain our identity as Australian Aborigines. Then we shall stand equal, freely making our contribution to the advancement of this nation.[66]

Counter to the logic of assimilation, then, was an emerging challenge to the assumed relationship between white culture and progress, which had rendered white culture

---

[64] 'Heads of Proposals for Agenda For a Conference on Native Rights', 1959. Papers of Charles Duguid MS 5068, Box 8, NLA.
[65] Taffe, *Black and White Together FCAATSI*, 16; Attwood and Markus, *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights*, 19; Chesterman, *Civil Rights*, 94.
[66] Marrangaroo Kabarli, 'Why Don't Aborigines Help Themselves?', *Churinga* 1, no. 1 (1964): 6-7.

inevitable and, ostensibly, desirable. Stan Davey, a prominent white activist and general secretary for FCAA, made this point: "There are strong and real objections to an assimilation policy which assumes one of the races involved in the process has nothing to contribute to the national character and whose only hope is to 'get lost' in the dominant community".[67] Herbert Groves, Aboriginal president of the APA, concurred:

> It is assumed that if the Aboriginals are going to lead the same kind of life as other Australians, then they must disappear as a culturally distinct group...
>
> Our policy of assimilation, in fact, is simply a kindly form of white chauvinism; an expression of our belief that there is nothing worth preserving in Aboriginal culture, and of our dislike of accepting a permanent national minority in Australia.[68]

Asserting the worth of Aboriginal culture and collective identity, these activists insisted that progress could be attained without the imposition of white over Aboriginal culture, and likewise that society could exist in a multicultural form. The socialist journal *Outlook* also printed an extended critique of assimilation in 1962 that argued:

> The basic assumption is that the economic and social advancement of Aborigines to full citizenship demands that they disappear as culturally distinct groups and become submerged in the general community. It implies that there can be no place in Australian society for groups which retain different characteristics and beliefs. It assumes that Aborigines will wish to become like us and will acquiesce in the destruction of their group life in return for individual entry into our society. Education is seen solely as a means of training Aborigines to adjust to 'our way of life'...
>
> There is no suggestion that we should ask them how they would like to live and help them to achieve it. It is assumed without evidence or argument that the economic security envisaged will bring with it the intellectual stimulation and social and human satisfactions once provided by their traditional culture.[69]

Implicit in these quotes is a broader rejection of earlier understandings of white, Western culture as simply an embodiment of an organic process of social evolution. Instead, in this period, with the increasing assertion of the significance of Aboriginal culture, there was a concomitant reconceptualisation of progress as something distinct from culture, which allowed activists to demand both. It was through this new understanding of culture and

---

[67] 'Genesis or Genocide? The Aboriginal Assimilation Policy, *Provocative Pamphlet,* no. 101 (July 1963): 9.
[68] Herbert S. Groves, 'The Case for the Aborigines of NSW and the Whole of the Commonwealth of Australia', c. 1966. Papers of Jessie Street MS 2683, Box 28, NLA.
[69] 'Assimilation – or the right to co-exist?' *Outlook,* (August 1962): 5.

collective identity that assimilation was able to be rearticulated as an imposition of white over Aboriginal culture, that is, as an act of domination or violence. Most tellingly, it began to be described as 'genocide', for instance, at a conference by the Cairns ATSI Advancement League in 1962, which disparaged "genocidal government 'assimilation' policies", and the following year in a pamphlet by Stan Davey entitled "Genesis or Genocide?"[70] It was not until the 1970s, however, that this violence would come to be understood as part of a broader system of colonial power, and the white Western values of modernity would be brought more sharply into question.

We can see in this new significance of group identity a coalescing of the two earlier discourses, of individual pride through group belonging and culture as an integrating force for the social group. This is not coincidental, but rather demonstrates the extent to which the various fields across the social sciences from their inception constantly informed one another in their shared interest to understand the relationship between individual and society. What brought these two discourses together, however, was a new shift in the 1950s, which Susman has termed the 'Age of Erikson'. Erik Erikson, one of the many German immigrants to the United States in this period, was a psychoanalyst who offered yet another revision of Freud and was elevated into public awareness with his coinage of the term 'identity crisis'. While the war years had produced an interest in the group and an explanation for mass behaviour in terms of collective cultural patterns, from the 1950s the fear of mass society returned interest to the individual. As *The Authoritarian Personality* had warned, mass culture could only ever produce authoritarianism and a stultifying conformity. Earlier demands for individual 'adjustment' now fell under suspicion.[71]

Psychoanalysis, never very keen on theories of group psychology which often strained Freudian principles, turned back to the individual with renewed vigour, but also with a more culturalist approach. At the forefront of this movement was Erikson, who theorized the development of the ego identity as "a socially conditioned process of individual psychic

---

[70] 'A Call to Action: Decisions of the Second Conference for Advancement of the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders of Queensland', Cairns, Dec 1962. Papers of Barry Christophers MS 7992, Box 23.

[71] Gleason, 'Identifying Identity', 927–28.

integration".[72] Rejecting a strictly Freudian conception of society as a source of repression and pathology, Erikson instead considered society an indispensable part of individual psychological development. According to Erikson, the successful development of identity involved a "sense of inner continuity and social sameness" and, crucially, this ability was predicated on the ability of an individual to identify *with* the cultural values and roles offered by their society. Thus, he defined 'identity crisis' as the period

> during which the individual through free role experimentation may find a niche in some section of his society, a niche which is firmly defined and yet seems to be uniquely made for him. In finding it the young adult gains an assured sense of inner continuity and social sameness which will bridge what he was as a child and what he is about to become, and will reconcile his conception of himself and his community's recognition of him. If, in the following, we speak of the community's response to the young individual's need to be "recognized" by those around him, we mean something beyond a mere recognition of achievement; for it is of great relevance to the young individual's identity formation that he be responded to, and be given function and status as a person whose gradual growth and transformation make sense to those who begin to make sense to him.[73]

Erikson's conception of identity thus synthesized earlier schools of thought around the development of personality through group belonging and the role of culture in shaping personality to produce social cohesion; yet it also appealed to the contemporary moment in creating a space for the possibility of individuality not simply in despite of, but *because* of, the individual's sociality.

More importantly, and an issue that keenly interested Erikson, were the implications of this theory of identity for those who were marginalised by society. As Erikson suggested, all individuals also had a *negative* identity, built on the roles and values discouraged by society, and the struggle of marginalised groups could thus be understood as attempts to assert a positive identity. As a number of scholars have noted, African American literature of this

---

[72] Louise E. Hoffman, 'From Instinct to Identity: Implications of Changing Psychoanalytic Concepts of Social Life from Freud to Erikson', *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 18, no. 2 (April 1982): 139.
[73] Erik H. Erikson, 'The Problem of Ego Identity', *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 4 (1956): 66–67.

period often expressed the effects of racism in terms of this kind of psychological dislocation.[74] Ralph Ellison's essay "Harlem is Nowhere" is exemplary of this work:

> Not quite citizens and yet Americans, full of the tensions of modern man, but regarded as primitives, Negro Americans are in desperate search for an identity. Rejecting the second-class status assigned them, they feel alienated and their whole lives have become a search for answers to the questions: Who am I, What am I, Why am I, and Where?… But without institutions to give him direction, and lacking a clear explanation of his predicament… the individual feels that his world and his personality are out of key. The phrase "I'm nowhere" expresses the feeling borne in upon many Negroes that they have no stable, recognized place in society.

Written in 1948, this piece precedes Erikson's first and most successful publication on identity by two years, and it demonstrates the extent to which Erikson's theories were a product of and a response to a context in which the relationship between individual personality and culture had already been problematised in a particular way. Likewise, as Moran suggests, it was precisely the synthesising capacity of Eriksonian 'identity' which made it so popular as a discourse of protest for marginalised groups since, in responding to this problem, it

> offered a way of naming the formation of self through group cultural experiences, but in drawing on Freudian and Eriksonian understandings of 'individual psychology', did not reject the notion of the autonomous individual so important to the civil rights campaigns.[75]

The importance of culture for the individual now had a name in 'identity', and the demand for culture as a universal right could finally emerge.

The Case of Land Rights

One of the clearest ways to trace the discursive changes being discussed here is to consider their operation within claims for land rights. What is most striking about these claims is the fact that demands in terms of economic progress and assimilation into wider society were often placed alongside demands in terms of racial and cultural preservation, a synthesis which is often treated as incompatible by current conceptual frameworks. As most scholars have already noted, early Aboriginal rights activists in the 1930s often made claims to land in terms of 'protection' of the Aboriginal race; but, in doing so, they also turned to anthropological

---

[74] Marianne DeKoven, *Utopia Limited: The Sixties and the Emergence of the Postmodern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 233–44; Eli Zaretsky, *Political Freud: A History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 38–79.

[75] Moran, *Identity and Capitalism*, 108.

accounts of culture that asserted the relationship between individual wellbeing and the preservation of grouphood through culture. For instance, Charles Duguid, one of the most prominent early Aboriginal rights activists of this period, repeatedly characterised Aboriginal people's right to land not only as an economic resource but also a cultural one. Duguid was president of the Aborigines Protection League, a South Australian organisation formed in 1926 with the intent of creating a model Aboriginal state, and he made this point in explaining the aims of the organisation:

> The whole crux of the aboriginal problem is land. Before the arrival of the white man in Australia every inch of this continent was owned by the natives. There were strict inter-tribal boundaries and the whole of the aborigine's life was interwoven in his tribal land. His mythology was bound up in his land. As an unborn spirit, he dwelt in various sacred spots, returning again after death. Every possible phase of his life was dependent on the tribal land. These conditions are still to be found in certain parts of Australia and it is the aim of the League to see they are not interfered with, for without his tribal land the aborigine is lost, there is no purpose in life left for him.[76]

Proceeding from contemporary understandings of culture as a socially integrating force, Duguid stressed the way that Aboriginal society was structured by particular cultural beliefs, in which land played a central role. Moreover, the individual, shaped within the pattern of their culture, would be psychologically harmed by the loss of this culture and, likewise, by the loss of land. Within a discourse of culture as a universal civilising process, protection or isolation of Aboriginal culture posed the only solution to the functionalist imperative for preserving grouphood; however, it was this imperative that paved the way for later claims asserting cultural preservation as a right for individual psychological well-being, and thus the capacity for economic progress and participation.

This linkage of economic progress and cultural preservation grew stronger in the 1950s, as protectionist demands for Aboriginal reserves gave way to new calls for co-operatives as the basis for Aboriginal rights to land. This change reflects the shift from 'culture' to 'cultures' as idiosyncratic ways of living, which offered the possibility of *both* economic development and the preservation of culture. Co-operatives satisfied both imperatives and were favoured by a number of organisations as a solution to the 'problem' of Aboriginal development. This was

---

[76] Aborigines Protection League, c. 1930s. Papers of Charles Duguid MS 5068, Box 3, NLA.

spurred by the establishment of the Pilbara Cooperative in Western Australia, formed by Aboriginal stakeholders who had earlier participated in the 1946 Pilbara strike. Mediated by Don McLeod as white representative, the group was consolidated first in 1951 under the company name Northern Development and Mining Company and – when this was liquated – as Pindan in 1955. The Cooperative and its aims were hugely influential to the policies of Aboriginal rights organisations of the period, particularly for CAR in Victoria and the NSW-based Australian Aboriginal Fellowship (AAF).[77] As CAR suggested in a 1957 bulletin:

> The money from exploitation of minerals on the reserves could well be used to found a co-operative scheme similar to the one initiated by Don McLeod in the north-west. Many Australian Aborigines now make the transition in one short life-time from the Old Stone Age culture to the modern industrial age. This transition took our ancestors 20,000 years to accomplish. Nevertheless, if this transition is to be made as painlessly as possible, very special circumstances are required. We do not want the sort of assimilation that means that we swallow up the Aborigines and destroy their age-old culture and wisdom. What is required is a new economic basis for the tribal people to improve their standard of living, and develop themselves within their own framework of tribal life and under their own direction… The Aboriginal people of Don McLeod's group have shown what they can do to help themselves when they have the incentive and the opportunity.[78]

For CAR, cultural preservation was not opposed to the economic progress of Aboriginal people but rather the key to its realisation, since preserving Aboriginal culture would foster in individual Aboriginal people the self-reliance necessary for success. The AAF supported cooperatives in similar terms:

> It is much easier to build a Community Co-operative amongst aborigines, Papuans or Islanders than in our social set-up of each man for himself… They are knit together in a life-long bond of mutual aid. It is the basis of their social life.
>
> In this atmosphere the co-operative technique is being applied as a practical means towards the social and economic uplift of background [sic] peoples throughout the world.
>
> CO-OPERATIVES TEACH PEOPLE TO DO SOMETHING FOR THEMSELVES AND NOT WAIT FOR GOVERNMENTS OF MISSIONS TO DO THINGS FOR THEM – CO-OPERATIVES DEVELOP IN PEOPLE THE CAPACITY TO WORK TOGETHER… THE HIGHEST TEST OF CIVILISATION.[79]

---

[77] Anne Scrimgeour, '"To Make It Brilliantly Apparent to the People of Australia": The Pilbara Cooperative Movement and the Campaign for Aboriginal Civil Rights in the 1950s', *Journal of Australian Studies* 40, no. 1 (January 2016): 17.

[78] CAR, Bulletin no. 10 (Apr 1957). Papers of Jessie Street MS 2683, Box 26, NLA.

[79] AAF, 'The Case for the Aborigines of NSW and the Whole of the Commonwealth of Australia', c. 1957. Papers of Jessie Street MS 2683, Box 28, NLA.

Evoking anxieties about the dangers of individualistic Western culture, cooperatives offered an alternative cultural frame which nevertheless upheld the confident, self-sufficient, socially-minded personality required for economic and civic success. Thus, even where rights to land were framed as an economic resource, as in demands for cooperatives, there remained an underlying imperative for cultural preservation as it affected individual personality.

The importance of this relationship between culture and the individual only deepened in progressive years, as several disputes over land from the early 1960s brought the question of land rights to the forefront of Aboriginal rights activism. Most prominent were the forced removals of Aboriginal people from Mapoon and Lake Tyers missions, which were defended by the state governments involved as beneficial to assimilation. These removals prompted an outcry from Aboriginal rights activists, who condemned them not only in terms of civil rights violations, but more strongly in terms of their destructive effect on Aboriginal cultural continuity and the integrity of the individual personality. Thus, a member of the AAL, writing to the *Herald* against the closure of Lake Tyers, stressed this relationship between land, individual pride and the maintenance of cultural 'roots':

> As a committee member of the Aborigines Advancement League, I would like to compliment Noel Hawken on his article (Herald 30/3/63). He shows a sound approach to assisting the dark people to regain their dignity.
>
> To state that the Victorian aboriginals are not tribal people now evades the crucial point; they were tribal people with tribal lands, and their sense of loss and cultural rootlessness is all the greater accordingly. It is against this background that we must look at Lake Tyers.[80]

Likewise, CAR also protested the closure of Lake Tyers, emphasising the social degradation which had resulted from loss of land in terms of cultural erasure and thus individual "sickness":

> The 'assimilation' policy espoused by the Victorian Government… assumes that the backward dark person is merely a depressed white, that there is nothing of importance in the group's Aboriginal inheritance and that these people have no right to choose how they are to live in harmony with the dominant white community…

---

[80] J. A. Davidson, Letters to the Editor, *Herald,* 23 March 1963.

> The forced disinheritance from their pride in a racial background and from the land of their
> forefathers has destroyed self-respect and created a spirit of hopeless despair – the real sickness
> of the dark people, from which the symptoms emanate. [81]

What is evident in these protests is how the decoupling of culture and civilisation had opened a space for the critique of assimilation. As cultural preservation and economic progress came to be understood not only as compatible but in fact contingent processes – or as it was termed, 'integration' – the policy of assimilation was likewise reconceptualised as not only unnecessary, but wilfully destructive. This understanding only reinforced claims for land which, being tied decisively to Aboriginal culture, was now posited as necessary for this integration to occur, and thereby to secure social cohesion with the wider community. For instance, Barrie Pittock, who became interested in Aboriginal rights through his membership in the Society of Friends, wrote extensively on the issue of land rights for FCAATSI throughout the 1960s. In one submission to the South Australian government relating to a proposed Lands Trust Bill, he suggested:

> We know of no anthropologist who would deny the strong ties between Aboriginal groups
> and their tribal land and that land provides the foundation for the group's existence...
>
> The Gurindjis here do not want to remain isolated from the rest of the Australia society,
> they want to retain their connections with the past, they want to join fully in the community from
> their own secure base…
>
> As the Gurindjis increased their confidence and self-respect from running their own lives
> would be much more capable and willing to intergrate [sic] into our multi-racial society.[82]

In this submission, Pittock was at pains to stress the importance of mineral and land rights not for their economic benefits but because they were essential to Aboriginal integration, which would in turn ensure social harmony between Aboriginal and settler Australians. Likewise, the Armidale Association for Aborigines, an affiliate of FCAATSI, made a case for Aboriginal control of land in terms of the security it would bring to the individual by preserving the group to which they belonged, which would ensure their successful integration with the wider community:

---

[81] 'Big Business Behind Bolte Move to Scrap Lake Tyers', *Guardian*, 4 Apr 1963.
[82] A. B. Pittock, FCAATSI, 'Submissions concerning the Aboriginal Lands Trust Bill, With Particular Reference to Mining Rights', c. 1965. Papers of Barry Christophers MS 7992, Box 16, NLA.

> Land is most important to the Aborigine, both materially and spiritually; to have a stake in the land would develop the confidence so sadly lacking amongst many Aborigines. Land ownership would create a sense of both physical and spiritual security in which the Aborigine can prepare for life in the modern world and from which the individual can sally forth to mix with the wider community whenever he feels prepared to offer them the challenge and to risk the pain of rebuff.[83]

One of the most extended analyses of the role of land in maintaining grouphood and thus psychological integrity came from Reverend Frank Engel, who published a report on land rights for the Australian Council of Churches in 1965. In his paper, Engel emphasised both the particular importance of land to Aboriginal people, but also asserted a "natural relationship of all men to the land", an historically- and culturally- derived psychological connection, which defined individual and group life:

> Land is a basic factor of all human life. It is basic, not in the sense of private ownership of a parcel of it, but in the sense that each individual belongs to a people who belong to a defined area of land which legally and permanently belongs to them. It is in this general sense which applies to all human beings as human beings that it is, first of all, important to the Aborigines that there is land which is theirs, by right, as a people.
>
> Secondly, land which has been occupied for generations has important psychological, social and cultural associations for individuals and the race. These are not dispensable extras of life itself. So to be deprived of land is to be deprived also of these things connected with the land which give meaning, stability, security and motive force to individual and group existence…
>
> This natural relationship of all men to the land is intensified for the Aborigines by the closely-woven inter-relation between the land and their religious beliefs and practices…
>
> The working out and implementation of [land settlement schemes] is urgently necessary in order to bring new hope and dignity to a people whom we have stripped not only of their land but also of those fundamental qualities which give meaning and character to human life.[84]

FCAATSI's land rights campaign in 1968 made extensive use of both Engel and Pittock's work, notably in its published statement on the campaign, which emphasised as its fourth point the importance of land "for the psychological well-being of the Aborigines":

---

[83] 'Land Rights for Aborigines', n.d. Papers of Gordon Bryant MS 8256, Box 178, NLA.
[84] Frank G. Engel, 'The Land Rights of Australian Aborigines', Australian Council of Churches Annual Meeting, 1965, 12.

It is a sociological fact that every human being needs a sense of belonging to a group with which he shares common beliefs, traditions, and attitudes to life. Such groups should be a source of pride, confidence and self-respect.

Most Aborigines, because of their appearance, are forced to see themselves as part of an Aboriginal group, so that it is vital psychologically that Aborigines as a group have traditions and achievements to be proud of. Land is an important symbol of Aboriginal grouphood and a vital link with old traditions and an honourable and proud history. The final dispossession of the Aboriginal people would cut that link and be a symbol of defeat and the death of a tradition. Deprivation of land thus leads to restlessness and a degrading lack of self-respect, and initiative, and pride.[85]

In the same terms, a joint proposal by CAR, AAL and FCAA suggested that, by granting land rights to Aboriginal people, both the psychological need for cultural identity and the modern imperative for economic development could be met, thereby ensuring Aboriginal social continuation:

This policy is advanced in strict opposition to the present policy of segregation which the Government now practices. What is proposed is simply that the aboriginal people for the FIRST time be granted land to own and develop. That instead of dispersal amongst white community, this small group of people should keep their identity and develop economically as a free and normal village community.[86]

What was still nascent in these claims for land rights was the burgeoning understanding of culture as a source of identity. While the term 'identity' itself did not become widely used until the late 1960s, demands for land in this period demonstrate clearly that a new understanding of selfhood and culture was taking hold, in which belonging to or 'identifying with' a group as defined by culture was integral to individual development. In this way, land could be conceptualised as a psychological as well as a material resource, and rights to land be claimed in terms other than economic 'progress'. To finish with Aboriginal activists' own words, it is worth quoting at length a paper on Aboriginal policy by the APA, delivered by H. C. Coombs at the 1968 FCAATSI Annual Conference:

You Parliamentary gentlemen may not realise that the land question is not merely the yearnings of the Aborigines to be landed gentry at the community expense. There is much more behind the question than that. Greater ineradicable emotional and psychological reasons that

---

[85] FCAATSI and Abschol, Aboriginal Land Rights Campaign 1968 statement. Papers of Joe McGinness MS 3718, Box 9, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS).
[86] CAR, 'Save the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Reserve', Vic, 1962. Papers of Barry Christophers MS 7992, Box 7, NLA.

prompt all responsible Aborigines to seek justice in this matter, not the least of these reasons being that WE are a conquered people, everything has been taken from us, including our personal status and our dignity…

This land that is called "in question" is not dead soil, the financial, material concept of the quite apparent justness of our claim – even on these grounds, is not our main consideration here. This land, this claim for justice is one that represents a symbolic being, a oneness, a complete belonging to the land, to the nation who recognises our just claim, to the land of our fathers.

It is also an assuagement to hurt sensibilities. It is a land tie, an identification to ourselves and with our fathers. It is, above all, a recognition of our fathers' title.

It is more: for today, it can well mean the recognition, and our bond of place within the Australian community. It can mean that pride of Race, pride of nationality, pride of entry into the Australian community in a dignified manner can be accorded us, our children, and the generations to come.[87]

Conclusion

This chapter has traced the way that culture emerged as a key concept for scientific discourses of self and society in this period, particularly as a new way of defining group belonging. Early psychological theories of self had stressed the importance of belonging for the health of the personality, but it was anthropological work on 'cultures' in the 1930s that brought new significance to the group as a way of life through which the individual self came to 'identify with' their social role. The development of Eriksonian 'identity' in the late 1950s can thus be understood as a response to this increasingly cultural, interpersonal understanding of the self, which posited the process of becoming an individual in terms of self-definition, but also problematised the role of culture in facilitating – or stymying – this process.

Examining Aboriginal rights claims through these discourses demonstrates the limitations of frameworks of universal versus particularist rights. As this chapter makes clear, claims for universal citizenship rights and Aboriginal difference sat alongside each other throughout the early twentieth century, and this is not simply a result of personal idiosyncrasy or political strategy, but rather a reflection of the discourses within which these claims were being articulated. Within a framework that understood social change in terms of a universal process of material progress, claims by Aboriginal rights activists for 'assimilation' did not entail loss

---

[87] APA, 'Aboriginal Policy', *Churinga* (June/August 1968): 7-8.

of difference in the way that contemporary understandings suggest. Rather, Aboriginal rights activists could assert the maintenance of difference through a discourse of self and society that theorised the importance of the group – whether racially or culturally defined – for the development of the individual. It was only with the decoupling of 'culture' from 'civilisation' that assimilation could be articulated as a form of erasure, and the need for grouphood become a right to cultural identity. The next chapters will trace the implications of this cultural turn, and how its denaturalisation of the relationship between self and society defined the subsequent rights claims of both the women's and the Aboriginal rights movement.

The Late Period: 1970s – 1980s

3.

Women's Rights and Sexist Power

It is something of a truism that the 1970s marked a turning point in political activism, with protest taking new forms of direct action and civil disobedience in the wake of experiences fighting for civil rights and against the Vietnam War. In Australia, one of the first steps towards the establishment of the Women's Liberation movement actually occurred at a Vietnam War moratorium march in December 1969.[1] At the march, a pamphlet was distributed entitled 'Only the Chains have Changed', and its authors – Helen Jarvis, Sandra Hawker and Martha Ansara – encouraged women to attend a meeting on women's liberation being held the next month. In March 1970, a group of women would protest Adelaide University's annual beauty pageant, naming themselves Women's Liberation, while in that same year Germaine Greer's radical feminist polemic *The Female Eunuch* would be published. By 1971, a women's liberation newspaper, *Mejane*, had begun circulation, and Women's Lib groups had been established in Sydney, Adelaide, Melbourne and Brisbane. Taking its cue from the pioneering Women's Lib groups in the United States, Women's Liberation Australia was avowedly against becoming an organisation, eschewing a formal structure and rejecting hierarchy as implicitly anti-feminist. In contrast to earlier women's organisations, it was less interested in political lobbying and focused instead on cultural change, particularly through individual consciousness-raising.

As Chapter One previously suggested, the advent of women's liberation in the 1970s is often treated as something entirely new or largely unrelated to earlier discourses of rights-claiming. Thus, while a wealth of literature exists on the discursive shifts around sex, reproduction and challenges to motherhood produced in this period, the reasons for this shift are overwhelmingly explained in structural rather than discursive terms: for instance, scholars point to the increased share of women's participation in the workforce, growing admission to higher levels of education, and access to contraception as key material causes for women's

---

[1] Susan Magarey, 'Sisterhood and Women's Liberation in Australia', *Outskirts* 28 (May 2013), http://www.outskirts.arts.uwa.edu.au/volumes/volume-28/susan-magarey.

growing political mobilisation.[2] In these terms, the new experiences afforded to women within a changing socioeconomic order produced new ways of thinking and being that were encapsulated in the theories of 'women's liberation'. However, such accounts take for granted and thus do not explain the relationship between experience and the kinds of meanings and significance produced by it; that is, they do not account for the way this experience is always-already articulated through existing discourses. In so doing, this scholarship fails to contend with how the discourses of women's liberation – the denaturalisation of the family, the emphasis on individual experience, the rejection of the state – were a specifically historical product.

Instead, if we think through the development of the women's rights movement as part of broader historical discourses of selfhood and society, we can likewise understand the discursive shifts in this period in terms of the tensions generated by these discourses, through which a new revolutionary understanding of social and personal relations could be articulated, and new possibilities for rights claims emerge. In particular, as this chapter will demonstrate, one of the political effects of new discourses of the self as a cultural product was the *politicisation* of the so-called 'adjustment' of individuals to their social roles, allowing what was previously a natural, neutral process of a functionalist order to be conceived instead as an oppressive act of power. This idea of the social order had very different implications for the claiming of rights since, in this framework, the free development of the personality was a good *ipso facto* – being liberation from an oppressive social order rather than an essential ingredient in the 'proper' functioning of that order.

---

[2] Reiger, 'Reconceiving Citizenship', 315; Kevin, 'Maternity and Freedom', 5–6; Kevin, 'Subjects for Citizenship', 135; Lake, *Getting Equal*, 217–31; Ann Curthoys, 'Doing It for Themselves: The Women's Movement since 1970', in *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, ed. Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans (Sydney: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1992), 430; Marian Sawer, *Making Women Count: A History of the Women's Electoral Lobby* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2008), 205; Simic, 'Butter Not Bombs', 11; Joy Damousi, 'Marching to Different Drums: Women's Mobilisations, 1914-1939', in *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, ed. Raymond Evans and Kay Saunders (Sydney: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1992), 350–75; Grimshaw, Warne, and Swain, 'Constructing the Working Mother'; Verity Burgmann, *Power, Profit and Protest: Australian Social Movements and Globalisation* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2003), 102–3; Bevege, James, and Shute, *Worth Her Salt*, 75; Young, *Daring to Take a Stand*, 51; Gisela T. Kaplan, *The Meagre Harvest: The Australian Women's Movement, 1950s-1990s* (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1996).

In order to unpack these differing implications, this chapter turns to the rights claims of activists in the women's movement from the 1970s and 1980s and their reproduction of emerging discourses of self and society. First, it will consider how earlier women's rights activists' concerns over status became central to later activism, which developed a more sophisticated account of the connection between culture and individual personality, embodied in the notion of sexism. Next it will demonstrate how this concern with sexism was underpinned by a corresponding concern with the suppression of the individual personality, which was held to be a result – and also a necessary component – of an oppressive social order. The chapter will then consider how this concern framed the way women's rights activists approached the issue of resistance to their oppression, which they conceptualised in terms of a reclamation of the personality through self-definition. Finally, it will consider how this conception of the free personality as identity free from power was used to critique the nuclear family and the role of motherhood, an argument that was used particularly around claims for legalised abortion.

Sexism

As the previous chapter suggests, women's rights activists in the post-war period became increasingly concerned about the psychological effects of women's lower social status, which they understood in terms of frustration and neurosis due to social double standards. In the 1970s, however, this relationship between social attitudes and individual psychology came to be understood in terms of the concept of 'sexism'. The etymology of the term sexism is unclear, particularly since there has been almost no research on this question, but Shapiro, focusing on the United States, points to several public uses of the term: in 1965 by Pauline M. Leet during a Student-Faculty Forum at Franklin and Marshall College, in 1968 by Caroline Bird in her pamphlet 'On Being Born Female', and again in 1968 by Sheldon Vanauken in his pamphlet 'Freedom For Movement Girls – Now'.[3] While these references were few and far between in the 1960s, by the following decade, sexism exploded into public consciousness as *the* rubric for conceptualising and discussing women's inequality. As early as 1973, the South Australian division of the Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL) was making submissions to the

---

[3] Fred R. Shapiro, 'Historical Notes on the Vocabulary of the Women's Movement', *American Speech* 60, no. 1 (1985): 3–16.

Primary and Secondary Schools Curriculum Advisory Board on the topic of sexism in education. This demand for the non-sexist education of children would remain pivotal for women's rights activists over the next two decades, which reflects its centrality to their conception of how inequality was reproduced.

What was nascent in earlier post-war activists' concern around low status and poor mental health was a new and growing concern with women's sense of self more generally; that is, there was a growing conception of culture as shaping individual selfhood, and how this was fundamental in determining both thought and action. With the popularisation of the concept of sexism, this understanding developed into a more complete sociological account of the relationship between the social order and the individual that located a key source of oppression within the individual themselves. This new conception is clearly laid out in the Women's Liberation newssheet *Hetaera*:

> The Women's Liberation Movement has developed out of the growing conviction that women have been radically and systematically discriminated against on the basis of their sex. We are thus forced into a position of attack in retaliation for the persistent psychological violence perpetrated against us, with its end result of divorcing women from their own bodies and minds, from their lovers, and from their children.
>
> [Arguments against this position] betray underlying assumptions that are so deeply embedded in the consciousness of many that we generally lack the imagination to challenge them. It is above all true that what Women's Lib. is fighting against is an ideology, and not men per se.[4]

The main target of Women's Liberation as characterised by this passage is the "psychological violence" of sexism, which is "deeply embedded in the consciousness" of both women and men, and which affects thought and action in ways that are unnoticed by the individual. Going further than earlier activists' objections to the material limitations of social roles, this new understanding of sexism added a psychological dimension to explain women's inequality, in which psychological oppression was framed not in terms of pathological neurosis but of power. That is, what had previously been cast as a problem of the individual adjusting to their social role was now politicised as a problem with unequal, oppressive social roles that harmed the individual.[5] Social roles were thus understood as 'violence' because of their function in

---

[4] Women's Liberation Brisbane, 'On Our Feet', *Hetaera* (c. 1970s). WEL ephemera, NLA.
[5] Nicholson, *Identity Before Identity Politics*, 168–73.

alienating women psychologically. Sexism was thus, ultimately, a framework for interpreting the psychological effects of power.[6]

In particular, women's rights activists were adamant that sexism and its patriarchal ordering of society were largely experienced unconsciously by women, as part of a broader process of socialisation that produced the social individual within its particular society. As activists pointed out, however, this process was not an objective, natural one, but reproduced culturally contingent values that were oppressive for women. It is for this reason that education became a primary target of women's rights activists, since schools were identified as a key institution in the reproduction of sex roles, and non-sexist education was, therefore, an important means by which to dismantle the sexist social order more broadly:

> SOCIALIZATION
>
> Every social group develops a pattern of socialization that prepares children for adult life. Each group tends to outline the desirable 'life script' to each class and sex of its members, depending on its values and the needs of that society economically and socially.
>
> FUNCTION OF SCHOOLS
>
> The universal function of schools includes social role selection, indoctrination, sex stereotyping and education in terms of skills. Although schools profess equality of opportunity, they perpetuate inequality in our society. The curriculum, the authority structure of schools and their policies, reflect social stratification and perpetuate stereotyped images of minority groups (such as homosexuality) and sex roles.[7]

The school is represented in this passage as a purpose-built institution for serving the needs of society, by reinforcing sex role stereotypes through the 'indoctrination' of children. Women's rights activists conceived of sexism's unequal ordering of society as reproduced *through* the psychological self, and it was thus at the level of this self that resistance to inequality had to begin. As one activist put it, schools literally 'made' women 'stupid' through their enforcement of sex roles:

> This indoctrination, as is well known, starts at an early age, and pervades the entire educational process… Women are made stupid by the roles they are pushed into. Books on educational psychology always remark that high school years are the ones in which the boys catch

---

[6] Hesford makes the same point but outlines this transformation in terms of power and *emotional* relations: 'The Politics of Love: Women's Liberation and Feeling Differently', *Feminist Theory* 10, no. 1 (April 2009): 5–33.
[7] AUS Women's Dept, 'Sexism in Education', c. 1977. Records of the Australian Union of Students MS 2412, Box 199, NLA.

up to the girls and begin to pass them scholastically. It is no accident that these are the years of increased social pressures on girls to take up their post-puberty feminine roles and learn to live with them. It is not that the boys are growing smarter but that the girls are becoming stupified [sic].[8]

The quotes above were both taken from material produced by Women's Liberation activists, who were not shy about making charges of 'indoctrination' to emphasise the complicity of those involved in this process of oppression. However, the conception of society and sexism they articulated here was not a radical one but was in fact normalised in this period and adopted by most new women's rights organisations. It is evident, for instance, in WEL's policy statement for 1980:

> Sexism may be defined as ascribing certain characteristics and a definite and limited role in society to a person according to her or his sex. Feminism is a belief that all persons have the right to develop their individual abilities without restrictions based on assumptions about the characteristics of one sex or the other. To achieve this, many attitudes, practices, and the power relationships in society must be changed. It is not enough to "permit" people to do things previously considered appropriate only for the other sex; people must be actively encouraged and assisted to develop their interests and abilities and to make informed choices.[9]

This position reiterated WEL's longstanding focus on education as a primary explanatory factor for women's continued inequality, particularly around the lack of progress in the workforce. Although this issue was also addressed in terms of restricted access for those women who would choose to work but were unable to, there was a corresponding and increasingly urgent concern regarding the issue of choice itself; that is, women's capacity for choosing to work or not was itself restricted and, as WEL claimed, this was in large part due to sexist education:

> The literature of sexism in education indicates that Schools frequently reinforce outmoded assumptions and expectations about sex and gender by unnecessarily differentiating between boys and girls in customs and practices; by presenting stereotyped views of men and women in literature and resource materials without analytical comment…; by accepting assumptions about boys and girls, men and women, which lead pupils to limit their choices of subjects and of future

---

[8] Coxsedge, 'The Politics of Women's Oppression'.
[9] 'WEL National Policy Statement', 1980. Papers of Edna Ryan MS 9140, Box 5, NLA.

occupations to those thought to be sex appropriate without the schools having opened their minds

to all the possibilities that are available.

In less forceful language, this statement nevertheless reiterates the claims of indoctrination made by Women's Liberation; for both groups, schools were understood as institutions that limited the 'minds' of individuals and reproduced social inequality on a psychological register.

It was due to this articulation of society that inequality was often conceptualised in terms of oppression, where this term had rarely been used by activists in the decades prior. Since the present social order was framed as inherently structured to reproduce women's inequality, any and all participation by women in this society was necessarily experienced as an act of subjection, regardless of an individual woman's intentions. Furthermore, it was the psychological dimension of this experience that was given new weight, because of its role in reproducing the social order:

We accept the fact that men have established over centuries all of the standards affecting

our lives: religious, economic, social, moral etc… We have been socialized in our homes into being

the type of female male standards require. The male values have penetrated our entire psyche, to

the degree that we are messed up mentally…

Unbeknownst to some women, they are adopting these values, which leads to a "bugger

you Betty I'm alright" attitude… Women who adopt this attitude are not seeking equality with

men; they are seeking equality only with men in the hierarchy power structures… [They] are

seeking ego satisfaction through a male value-system based on power.[10]

Here, the psychological effect of sexism - the invisible "penetration" of sexist cultural values into the "psyche" - was used to explain why some women were willing to participate in this unequal social order, and thereby reproduce their own oppression. Consider a more explicit articulation of this relationship between oppression and its psychological effects:

The education system (reinforced by the family and mass media) acts as a socializer: it

provides its victims with a certain conception of themselves, a certain character, a certain role…

To belong to the "wrong" class, "wrong" race or the "wrong" sex - working class children,

aboriginal children, and female children - is to be oppressed economically, socially and politically.

---

[10] Zelda D'Aprano, *Women's Liberation Newsletter* (June 1974). Records of the Women's Electoral Lobby (1974.0094), Box 1, UoMA.

> Its consequence - psychological and cultural deprivation - is the emasculation of the will to fight,
>
> the draining of energy, and the total servitude to the ordering of society.[11]

Characterising women as victims of their culture, oppression was framed specifically in terms of psychological malaise, which ensured women's submission to the conditions of their own subordination. Women's rights activists in this period thus conceived of women's inequality not simply as a matter of unequal access to rights, but as a product of a 'sick' culture that reproduced an unequal social order through its psychological structuring of the individual personality.

A sizable shift is thus apparent in conceptions of the relationship between individual and society: from the Age of Adler and its pathologisation of individuals as maladjusted to their social roles, and the quest for a new culture that would better fit individuals to modern society; to the feminist critique in the 1970s of culture as the key driver of social inequality, the cause rather than the cure for frustrated personalities. One of the key moments in this shift occurred during the 1950s, when the concern with the perils of conformity and its production of 'authoritarian' personalities led to a suspicion of mass culture, both outside of academic institutions – the most oft-cited example of this being the rise of Beat culture – as well as within them. With the gradual diminution of McCarthyism in the latter half of the decade, Marxist critiques of capitalism could more openly be expressed, and the social sciences during this period in particular produced a number of highly influential and oftentimes controversial works, which brought Marxist concerns with ideology and false consciousness together with new understandings of culture and the psychological individual. Driven by a commitment to the autonomous individual as the foundation of a free, democratic society, and increasingly dissatisfied with both state capitalism and communism, these critiques echoed earlier anthropological work in questioning contemporary culture and its reproduction of the kind of social order that was inimical to the individual personality. In doing so, they would turn earlier sociological formulations on their head.

Where earlier sociology had worked through a functionalist paradigm, defining a 'good' society as one that was stable and cohesive, and in which conflict was produced by

---

[11] Women's Liberation, n.d.. WEL ephemera, NLA.

pathological individuals, during this period a more humanist approach began to emerge, which posited the existence of basic universal human needs that had to be met by society or else produce a frustrated personality. In this formulation, it was societies which could be understood as pathological, in their failure to provide the cultural conditions for healthy personal development.[12] This idea was first brought into prominence by Neo-Freudian Erich Fromm, another Jewish émigré to flee Germany and take up at the Frankfurt School during WWII. A sociologist and then psychoanalyst by training, Fromm was the first to popularise a merger of Freud and Marx, which suggested that personality development could not be understood without taking into account the social conditions shaping family structures, and likewise that social theory had to contend with the factors making up individual consciousness beyond social location.[13] In 1955, Fromm published *The Sane Society*, in which he asked, "Can a society be sick?" and posited the 'pathology of normalcy', that is, the ways in which societies could produce frustrated personalities that were nevertheless coded as 'healthy' because they conformed to cultural norms:

> Today we come across a person who acts and feels like an automaton; who never experiences anything which is really his; who experiences himself entirely as the person he thinks he is supposed to be; whose artificial smile has replaced genuine laughter; whose meaningless chatter has replaced communicative speech; whose dulled despair has taken the place of genuine pain. Two statements can be made about this person. One is that he suffers from a defect of spontaneity and individuality which may seem incurable. At the same time, it may be said that he does not differ essentially from millions of others who are in the same position. For most of them, the culture provides patterns which enable them *to live with a defect without becoming ill*.[14]

Reflecting Cold War fears over propaganda and 'brainwashing', the earlier imperative to 'fit in' or adjust was no longer a *cure* for individual alienation but its *cause*, and the process of socialisation which had previously been viewed as objective could now be politicised; that is, it could be understood as a form of control, or power.

---

[12] Farrell, *The Spirit of the Sixties*, 150; Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity*, 155; Frank A. Salamone, 'Ruth Benedict: Synergy, Maslow, and Hitler', in *Historicizing Theories, Identities, and Nations*, ed. Regna Darnell and Frederic W. Gleach (Lincoln ; London: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 87–106; Campbell, *Easternization of the West*, 94. Meyerowitz also notes that this critique of normalcy was enabled by anthropological theories of cultural relativism, particularly in the work of Ruth Benedict: 'How Common Culture Shapes the Separate Lives', 1082.

[13] Neil McLaughlin, 'How to Become a Forgotten Intellectual: Intellectual Movements and the Rise and Fall of Erich Fromm', *Sociological Forum* 13, no. 2 (1998): 222–23.

[14] Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society* (London: Routledge, 1956), 16.

Fromm's attempt to 'psychologise' Marxism would be overtaken in a few years by another of his Frankfurt School colleagues, Herbert Marcuse. Marcuse is often held up as a leading inspiration to 1960s radicals and the New Left, and he was certainly supportive of the cause of the student revolts in that decade.[15] Bringing Freud back into the spotlight in his famed 1964 treatise *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse suggested that modern society could be understood as a system bent on repressing the instincts and drives of individuals by redirecting their desires and satisfactions towards consumption; domination and social control was thus achieved through a restructuring of the personality in ways that were not consciously felt, even as they denied individual freedom, where 'true' freedom was understood as a fundamentally *psychological* condition. Thus, Marcuse claimed:

> Technical progress and more comfortable living permit the systematic inclusion of libidinal components into the realm of commodity production and exchange. But no matter how controlled the mobilization of instinctual energy may be (it sometimes amounts to a scientific management of libido), no matter how much it may serve as a prop for the status quo – it is also gratifying to the managed individuals…
>
> This mobilization and administration of libido may account for much of the voluntary compliance, the absence of terror, the pre-established harmony between individual needs and socially required desires, goals, and aspirations. The technological and political conquest of the transcending factors in human existence, so characteristic of advanced industrial civilization, here asserts itself in the instinctual sphere: satisfaction in a way which generates submission and weakens the rationality of protest.[16]

In this humanist paradigm, social systems were not evaluated in terms of their ability to maintain cohesion but their capacity to foster psychologically free individuals; and concomitantly, stability was no longer seen as a good but an evil, since it foreclosed the possibility of change. In Marcuse's famous terms, true freedom could only be pursued through the "Great Refusal – the protest against that which is".[17] Thus, the status quo or 'the system' into which the individual was psychologically integrated through culture became a target for activists in a way that would not have made sense in years earlier. As the 'cultural

---

[15] Jamison and Eyerman, *Seeds of the Sixties*, 103; Zaretsky, 'Psychoanalysis and the Spirit of Capitalism', 376; Farrell, *The Spirit of the Sixties*, 148.
[16] Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (London ; New York: Routledge Classics, 2002), 78–79.
[17] Ibid., 66.

turn' intensified, then, so too did the denaturalisation of social relations, and one key consequence was that culture itself could now be understood as a *problem* for those seeking social change. More specifically, culture as the psychological 'patterning' of individuals offered a new discourse of power that was not previously intelligible.

Sexism and the Personality

Underwriting women's rights activists' concern for the psychological effects of sexism was a new conception of the personality that was reconfigured in accordance with this new understanding of society and culture. In conceiving sexism as a form of psychological violence on the individual, women's rights activists likewise articulated the result of such violence as the limiting, if not total alienation, of the 'full' personality. Sexism and the process of socialising individuals into sex roles was thus seen as an act of de-personalisation, and the notion of woman being made less than a person as an effect of sexism was pervasive throughout this period. Just as earlier activists were concerned with the full and free development of the personality, then, so too were women's rights activists in this period, with the crucial distinction that social roles had now become problematised.

This shift in focus towards the psychological effects of sexism on the personality are evident at a seminar convened by the United Nations Association of Australia, who formed a committee to report on women's rights specifically in response to the UN's designation of 1975 as International Women's Year. One of the papers presented at this seminar was interested in the question of equality of opportunity and, rather than discussing issues around material access, this paper was keen to stress the importance of first dismantling social stereotypes and what it termed 'myths' as the primary step towards achieving this goal:

> We are burdened with an enormous amount of traditional masculine and feminine lore – attitudes and beliefs about what a man should be and how he should behave, and attitudes and beliefs about what a woman should be and how she should behave…
>
> HOW ARE THESE MYTHS PROPAGATED:
>
> **Through the Advertising Industry, the Media and by writers of fiction who promote the image of a woman who is -
>
> **ALWAYS a mother and HAPPY to be tied to the kitchen, cheerfully washing the floor, or in the laundry, happily washing the dirty clothes, or at the stove, ecstatically cooking a meal.

**She is a decorative adjunct to an achieving man. The woman is the non-achiever, she is rarely portrayed as being intelligent or being capable of occupying political office or an executive position.

**A passive subjected inferior second class citizen whose claim to fame should be invested in others (her children or her man).

NOT in a unique self-hood, high estimate of self worth, and a capacity to achieve and to succeed, and to contribute as a person in her own right.[18]

The particular social myths being highlighted here are all related in their concern with women's individuality. The suggestion that women had no other interests outside of the kitchen; their portrayal as 'decorative' objects without the capacity for leadership and thus agency; their passive subjection to investment in others rather than themselves: all were highlighted in order to stress in conclusion that the effect of such myths was to deny woman a 'unique self-hood', or the ability to be 'a person in her own right'.

The imposition of social roles was thus understood as psychological violence in limiting the personality, not only in the material sense of restricting its full range of development, but also in the more existential sense of denying its potential to become truly individual, or truly 'itself'. This distinction was clearly made by women's rights activists, including Joan Coxsedge, a Women's Lib activist who became notorious for her involvement in anti-Vietnam protests and was also a member of ALP's Victorian state branch. In a talk entitled 'Power and Control', Coxsedge made the following point:

Women, like everybody else in our community, are forced into artificial roles. Whether these roles are that of the exclusive wife and mother, the career woman or the decision-maker, is almost irrelevant. Role-playing divorces people from their own personality and makes them more vulnerable in general.[19]

As Coxsedge noted, the broadening of women's roles to allow them access to work and leadership was 'irrelevant' since all roleplaying within a sexist society inherently stifled the individual personality. This is a critical difference from the thinking of earlier activists, since it insisted ultimately that women's increased access to and participation in society was not in itself a form of women's liberation, as earlier activists had claimed. Rather, it was only by

---

[18] Joan Pilone, 'Can There be Equality of Opportunity?', UNAA (NSW Div.) IWY Committee Seminar, Sydney, 22 March 1975. Papers of Ruby Rich MS 7493, Box 31, NLA.
[19] Joan Coxsedge, 'Power and Control'.

eliminating the sex roles through which society was ordered that anyone could be said to be truly free, in terms of possessing a fully realised, fully individuated personality.

In fact, women's rights activists were often explicit in rejecting the notion that women ought to aim for an equal place in current society with men, and this claim was made within the framework of their conception of sexism and the personality. Women's rights activists' concern with sex-role stereotypes hinged upon an understanding of the personality that assumed its proper, healthy development was the result of a 'balance' of personal characteristics, which were currently unequally distributed by sexist social roles. In a social order that allocated power to men according to their fulfilment of the male role, aiming for equal footing with men would simply mean adopting the male role and thus contributing to this order; this would not serve to recover the personality of men or women, which required a free and balanced distribution of characteristics unbound by either role:

> We have to fight the continuing presentation of male aggression and competitiveness as "good" and "natural" and start pushing the human qualities of co-operation and compassion, tenderness and caring. This is not to say that all men are evil and all women are pure as the you-know-what. But groups of men ARE running the show and the fate of people, nations and this planet, is pretty much in their hands. It will not do any good at all if women with the same characteristics are [sic] those currently considered appropriate for men in power, were to be in control. We would simply have more of the same insanity.
>
> I believe it is vital and urgent to attack the male stereotype with its un-balanced emphasis on power and proving oneself to one's fellow "men", with its accompanying need to feel different from and superior to the female.[20]

Instead, by ensuring that individuals developed without the imposition of stereotypical roles, a truly free personality could emerge:

> Boys are admired for being curious, adventurous, brave, assertive, clever and for sporting prowess. Girls are admired for their appearance, for conformity, or for their "goodness", for altruistic behaviour, for gentleness, for sensitivity, and frequently, for passivity… The characteristics listed are not specifically male or female but human. We all need the full repertoire, selecting the appropriate type of behaviour for the circumstances, and not being restricted to only half the range because of our sex. They are all valuable in balance in any personality.[21]

---

[20] Veronica Schwarz, 'A Question to WEL', WEL National Conference, Melbourne, 1980. WEL ephemera, NLA.
[21] WEL, 'Sexism in Education', *WEL-Informed* no. 63 (Dec 1977). Records of the UAW Federal Office Z236, Box 16, NBAC.

Thus, the overarching claim being made by women's rights activists in this period was that freedom could only be achieved if the personality was made whole, or fully realised. This was the claim made in a newsletter published by the National Advisory Committee for International Women's Year (NAC IWY):

> Sexism, like racism, takes <u>differences</u> and transforms them into assumptions about what a whole group is "really like" and then imposes these assumptions… [S]exism says "because you, as a group, are women (have distinct physical characteristics in common) you also have to act in much the same way - have the same personalities"…
>
> People are never just people. There is no such thing in practice, as a human being. First we want to know, "is it a boy or is it a girl?" because it affects and alters the attitudes we have and the attitudes we expect that human being to have, according to what sex it is…
>
> This restriction begins as soon as children are taught to be "feminine" or "masculine", that is, as soon as their potential development as full people is limited to one or another set of qualities…
>
> It is necessary to change attitudes and to get rid of artificial distinctions between women and men which limit us all. We need to look at what a human being is and make sure that we no longer create and maintain a society where people are moulded into particular kinds of people on the basis of their physical sex alone. Equality is not the answer so long as our society remains sexist.[22]

The NAC IWY was established by the government to help translate demands by various women's rights groups into actionable policy yet, despite its role as an official organ, it was clearly comfortable critiquing sex roles in the same terms as its more radical sisters. Echoing other women's rights groups, it rejected the possibility of women's liberation without dismantling the sexist ordering of society, and it made this claim by pointing to the effect of sexism in subsuming individual personalities within stereotypical roles. The categories of 'man' and 'woman', far from being natural, were actually the result of an order that repressed individual personality and prevented the realisation of its "full potential". Unlike earlier activists, then, these activists claimed that the psychological patterning of individuals to integrate them into society was not a natural or objective process; rather, socialisation within

---

[22] Shirley Castle, *Australian National Advisory Committee International Women's Year Newsletter* no. 5 (1975).

an unequal, sexist culture was a form of power, which inherently thwarted the full development of the personality.

This new understanding of what constituted a 'healthy' personality reflected the increasing influence of humanistic concepts of self, which began taking hold from the 1960s. In particular, the establishment of the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* in 1961 marked a commitment by a number of prominent psychologists – including Gordon Allport, Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow – to a new kind of psychology that placed human experience and human agency at the centre of psychological theory. In their own ways, each of these thinkers was dissatisfied with the mechanistic conception of humanity within the dominant schools of psychoanalysis and behavioural psychology, which viewed human nature pessimistically as beholden to base instincts, thereby requiring social control. [23] Instead, Allport – credited with coining the term 'humanistic psychology' in 1930 – cautioned against this kind of scientism:[24]

> Man talks, laughs, feels bored, develops a culture, prays, has a foreknowledge of death, studies theology, and strives for the improvement of his own personality. The infinitude of resulting patterns is plainly not found in creatures of instinct. For this reason we should exercise great caution when we extrapolate the assumptions, methods, and concepts of natural and biological science to our subject matter. In particular we should refuse to carry over the indifference of other sciences to the problem of individuality.[25]

By contrast, humanistic psychologists offered a theory of human nature that affirmed the capacity of humans to act autonomously and also responsibly – in other words, to act as democratic citizens. Thus, Allport instead contended: "A minority of democratic whole men can I believe, withstand a majority of totalitarian half-men".[26]

---

[23] Farrell, *The Spirit of the Sixties*, 148–50; Jamison and Eyerman, *Seeds of the Sixties*, 59–60; Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology*, 241–65; Illouz, *Cold Intimacies*, 44–49; Jessica Lynn Grogan, 'A Cultural History of the Humanistic Psychology Movement in America' (The University of Texas at Austin, 2008); Ole Jacob Madsen, *The Therapeutic Turn: How Psychology Altered Western Culture* (Hove, East Sussex: Routledge, 2014); Allan R. Buss, 'Humanistic Psychology as Liberal Ideology: The Socio-Historical Roots of Maslow's Theory of Self-Actualization', *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 19, no. 3 (July 1979): 45.

[24] Roy Jose DeCarvalho, 'Gordon Allport and Humanistic Psychology', *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 31, no. 3 (1991): 9.

[25] Gordon Willard Allport, *Becoming; Basic Considerations for a Psychology of Personality* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), 22.

[26] Quoted in Grogan, 'A Cultural History of the Humanistic Psychology Movement in America', 111.

Allport's interest in the personality was longstanding, stemming from the 1920s, a time when the very concept of the personality was still in its infancy.[27] His description of 'whole' and 'half' men reflects his core commitment to a conception of the psychological self as a unified, agentic organism – a personality – rather than an assemblage of reacting parts, such as the psychoanalytic ego and id, or behaviourist 'adaptations'. This lay at the heart of Allport's model of the personality as a process of becoming, because of its inherent drive towards individuation:

> [T]here seem to be two contrary forces at work. The one makes for a closed tribal being. It takes its start in the dependence of the child upon those who care for him… He is coerced and cajoled into conformity but not, we note, with complete success. He shows a capacity even from birth to resist the impact of maternal and tribal demands. While to a certain degree his group shapes his course, at the same time it seems to antagonize him, as if he realized its threat to his integrity. If the demand for autonomy were not a major force we could not explain the prominence of negativistic behavior in childhood. The crying, rejecting, and anger of a young infant as well as the negativistic behavior of the two-year-old are primitive indications of a being bent on asserting itself. All his life long this being will be attempting to reconcile these two modes of becoming, the tribal and the personal: the one that makes him into a mirror, the other that lights the lamp of individuality within.[28]

For Allport, then, a 'whole man' was one who successfully completed this process of individuation, whose psychological 'integrity' was not compromised by his environment and was therefore more truly himself. This understanding of personality development as a process of becoming was also theorised by Rogers, the father of client-centred therapy, which remains a highly influential approach in contemporary psychological practice. The client-centred approach was a direct reflection of Rogers' conception of the personality as having an 'actualising tendency', in other words an "underlying flow of movement toward constructive fulfillment of its inherent possibilities".[29] Thus, in a 1954 talk on 'What it Means to Become a Person', he suggested that

> to understand the way [the client] feels in his own inner world, to accept him as he is, to create an atmosphere of freedom in which he can move in his thinking and feeling and being, in any direction he desires. How does he use this freedom?

[27] Ian A. M. Nicholson, '"A Coherent Datum of Perception": Gordon Allport, Floyd Allport, and the Politics of "Personality"', *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 36, no. 4 (September 2000): 463–70.
[28] *Becoming; Basic Considerations for a Psychology of Personality*, 35.
[29] *A Way of Being* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1980), 117.

It is my experience that he uses it to become more and more himself. He begins to drop the false fronts, or the masks, or the roles, with which he has faced life. He appears to be trying to discover something more basic, something more truly himself… To remove a mask which you had thought was part of your real self can be a deeply disturbing experience, yet when there is freedom to think and feel and be, the individual moves toward such a goal.[30]

Both of these thinkers were thus 'humanistic' in their insistence that the formation of the personality was the product of a natural psychological drive to affirm some 'real' self.

Perhaps the most influential articulation of this idea was Maslow's concept of self-actualisation. In his own words, this was

man's desire for self-fulfilment, namely to the tendency for him to become actualized in what he is potentially. This tendency might be phrased as the desire to become more and more what one idiosyncratically is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming…. A musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write, if he is to be ultimately at peace with himself. What a man *can* be, he *must* be.[31]

Maslow is famed for his model of the hierarchy of needs, which he published in his bestselling *Motivation and Personality* in 1954, and which is still widely referenced today. This hierarchy posited that human behaviour was motivated first by the pursuit of basic material needs, followed by belonging, esteem and, finally, self-actualisation. This understanding of personality was widely disseminated outside of scientific circles, particularly within the counterculture movement; countercultural figures such as Abbie Hoffman avidly studied Maslow's work, while in 1962 the notorious Esalen Institute in California was established in order to explore the human potential, and assigned as a text for its very first seminar Maslow's second bestseller *Toward a Psychology of Being*.[32] It was this conception of the personality as an unfolding of potential that energised the countercultural search for a form of politics which went beyond the pragmatism of the New Left. As Hoffman declared, change would not be brought about by simple political organisation, but through 'fun': "When I say fun, I mean an experience so intense that you actualize your full potential. You become LIFE. LIFE IS FUN".[33]

---

[30] *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), 108–9.

[31] *Motivation and Personality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 46.

[32] Linda Sargent Wood, *A More Perfect Union: Holistic Worldviews and the Transformation of American Culture after World War II* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 174.

[33] Farrell, *The Spirit of the Sixties*, 223.

The concerns of humanistic psychology thus reflect a broader popular trend which railed against conformity and romanticised individuality: as Medovoi notes, this was a period in which the 'rebel' became a cultural hero.[34] The model of personality offered by humanistic psychology can be understood as a reconciliation between the prevailing shift towards more interpersonal models of selfhood, which stressed the role of cultural rather than biological factors in human behaviour – thus raising the spectre of totalitarian conformity – and a democratic, humanistic commitment to individuality and autonomy. At the same time, this humanistic understanding of the psychological self reoriented the 'problem' of autonomous selfhood to the fostering of a 'true' self. Thus, referring back to Fromm's criticism of the 'pathology of normalcy', Maslow declared in *Toward a Psychology of Being*:

> I am deliberately rejecting our present easy distinction between sickness and health, at least as far as symptoms are concerned. Does sickness mean having symptoms? I maintain now that sickness might consist of not having symptoms when you should. Does health mean being symptom-free? I deny it…
>
> An example is the changing attitude of psychologists toward popularity, toward adjustment, even toward delinquency. Popular with whom? Perhaps it is better for a youngster to be *unpopular* with the neighboring snobs or with the local country club set. Adjusted to what? To a bad culture? To a dominating parent? What shall we think of a well-adjusted slave? A well-adjusted prisoner?…
>
> It seems quite clear that personality problems may sometimes be loud protests against the crushing of one's psychological bones, of one's true inner nature. What is sick then is not to protest... Most people do not protest. They... pay… years later, in neurotic and psychosomatic symptoms of various kinds, or perhaps in some cases never become aware that they are sick, that they have missed true happiness, true fulfillment of promise.[35]

In these terms, conflict and rebellion against cultural norms were the sign of a healthy personality, in attempting to 'actualise' one's inner nature. Friedan cited this argument in the *Feminine Mystique,* noting: "[F]or years, psychiatrists have tried to 'cure' their patients' conflicts by fitting them into the culture. But adjustment to a culture that does not permit the realization of one's entire being is not a cure at all, according to the new psychological

---

[34] Medovoi, *Rebels: Youth and the Cold War Origins of Identity*.
[35] *Toward a Psychology of Being* (New York: J. Wiley & Sons, 1999), 9.

thinkers".[36] This new orientation would later be echoed in Erikson's notion of 'identity crisis', which described teenage rebellion as the outcome of an integral part of personality development in which the individual attempts to reconcile their 'social' and 'true' selves. Crucially, what this conception of self problematised was the notion of freedom; it did not simply reiterate classical liberal ideals of autonomy in characterising psychological freedom as the "foundational freedom",[37] but redefined freedom in new terms as the capacity to be, or to become, one's 'true' self. It was this conception of freedom which underlined women's rights' activists demands, and it was also the discourse through which they would articulate their resistance.

The Personality and Resistance

Having diagnosed the problem of women's oppression as the alienation of the full personality, women's rights activists likewise posed the solution to this oppression in terms of its reclamation. It is for this reason that the concept of consciousness-raising became so popular from the 1970s; since the psychological effects of sexism were understood to occur unconsciously – as 'conditioning' or 'indoctrination' – bringing these effects into conscious awareness was considered a necessary first step in this process of reclamation. As Coxsedge's earlier paper concluded:

> Until this conditioning is seen and understood consciously, women will not be able to evaluate the female role and choose to accept or reject the dictates of its components. It must be intellectualised before she attempts the freedom to choose.[38]

This faith in the power of the individual to become free through self-awareness and thereby attain 'free choice' was pivotal to how women's rights activists framed their enactment of political resistance. Again, this was not confined to the more radical Women's Liberation but was apparent across almost all women's rights groups. For instance, a conference sanctioned by the Whitlam government was held in Canberra to mark International Women's Year and one presenter was Joan Pilone, the first woman to be elected to Sydney City Council and an unsuccessful contender for preselection for the Liberal Party. According to an account of her talk, Pilone highlighted the necessity of what she termed "increased perception":

---

[36] Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 311.
[37] Zaretsky, *Secrets of the Soul*, 282.
[38] Coxsedge, 'Power and Control'.

Ms. Pilone said self-understanding was fundamental not only to individuals but to the Women's Movement. It was one of the indignities heaped on women that they are consistently lumped together and not seen as individuals. She spoke of the role-conditioning of women and the fact that boredom, anxiety and depression are the major health hazards in Australia today and that these miseries affect, above all, women. She asked for the female myths to be destroyed by thinking them through.[39]

Thus, like her more radical sisters, Pilone claimed that the elimination of sexism was key to the Women's Movement, and this end lay in 'thinking through' the myths that were currently thwarting self-awareness.

This focus on 'intellectualising' women's oppression thus brought with it a corresponding interest in women's self-image, suggesting that a primary step in achieving a personality freed of sexism could be taken by rejecting the 'myths' of sex roles and redefining the self in terms that had been previously been denied. For this reason, demands for improving women's self-esteem and self-image became increasingly common in this period as a means by which women could 'resist' their conditioning. Consider this list of potential target areas identified by WEL's action group for women in the home:

a. Confidence: Promotion of self-confidence, self-esteem and self-awareness. In doing so, maintain one's ability to articulate and preserve one's sense of worth.

b. The Media: To educate women to be aware of misleading advertising perpetuating consumerism, to resist the portrayal of the stereotyped housewife and maintain one's individuality…

d. Health: Suburban neurosis, drug taking, consciousness raising, self-help groups and doctor's patronising attitudes.[40]

This list demonstrates clearly the perceived relationship between the psychological harm of socially-imposed stereotypes and its resistance through maintenance of the individual sense of self. Likewise, recommendations made by the NAC IWY highlighted the role of schools in shaping young women's self-perception, by creating awareness of the operation of sexism and exposing them to the possibility of occupying non-stereotypical roles, effectively a strategy of consciousness-raising which would ultimately allow them to achieve 'full development':

---

[39] Blanche D'Alpuget, 'Plenary Session No 1: Let's do a Super Marketing Job', *New Dawn* 1, no. 2 (1975): 2.
[40] c. 1970. Records of the Women's Electoral Lobby (1974.0094), Box 24, UoMA.

> [I]f the Year is to achieve a real erosion of discriminatory practices and a genuine broadening of options for women and girls, then we need more than material resources….
>
> Schools… play a big part in determining how the young adult sees herself. Too many girls leave school with a poor self image, restricted job qualifications, sexist values about their physical appearance, and an unrealistic impression of what life, either at home with children or in the workforce, will be like. But schools are changing. If teachers encourage girls and boys to attempt a wide range of courses, if vocational guidance presents all the information to girls without falling back on stereotypes, if school studies develop to include the contributions women have made to society, and to examine sex-roles and their implications, then schools could contribute to defeating discrimination and enabling the full development of all students. The latter is the true aim of education.[41]

Thus, consciousness-raising and increasing awareness of sexism's effects on the self were seen as pivotal to ending women's inequality, because these processes reoriented women's self-perception. It was only with this self-awareness that women were understood to be able to make free choices about their roles in society and truly secure agency, thereby ensuring that the full development of the individual personality could take place.

Self-definition, a capacity to define the self which was not subject to power, was thus a cornerstone of women's rights activists' conceptualisation of social and psychological freedom. To create a culture in which the individual could identify with their social role was seen as the end result of the psychological resistance through which women could finally define their lives and their selfhood independently of men:

> It is the male structure that defines what characteristics are seen as desirable in men and women. These sex roles dehumanize women by defining women as the supportive/serving caste in relation to the master caste of men… The status of women is determined solely by how we fit into the male structure…
>
> We must realise then, that these patriarchal definitions of us are male-identified. We women have had no part in defining ourselves, and the insidious thing is that so many of us have internalized these definitions that we consider the role we have been assigned to be "natural".
>
> As with most oppressed, we women have had our culture ignored and given no status. As long as we remain male-identified women we are denying our own independent existence and personality.[42]

---

[41] NAC IWY newsletter no. 3 (1975): pgs. 2-3.

[42] Amanda George, 'Sexism/Power/Patriarchy', AUS Annual Council, 1978. Records of the AUS MS 2412, Box 245, NLA.

Being 'male-identified' as a woman meant being subject to a definition of the self imposed by sexism, which naturally constructed 'woman' wholly in terms of 'man'. This construction of women's sense of self denied women the opportunity to know themselves outside of their relationship to men, and thereby reproduced sexism's unequal power relations. In view of this, women's rights activists suggested that being able to engage in self-definition, where the self could choose new identifications, was a necessary condition for the existence of the free personality.

One of the most evident results of this conceptualisation of the self is the emergence in the 1970s of a wholly novel claim by women's rights activists for the right to define their sexuality. Having established that a woman's sense of self was 'male-identified' in its subjection to male needs, and thus to the broader social demand of heterosexual reproduction, activists concluded that a key proponent of becoming 'woman-identified' was therefore to redefine women's understanding of their sexual being. The sexual self thus arose as a critical site of women's oppression and resistance, as one Women's Lib paper, writing on the issue of abortion and bodily autonomy, demanded:

> WOMAN-DEFINED SEXUALITY!
>
> Women's sexuality… reflects women's social, economic, and political situation within our society. Women, in our relations with men, are expected to be passive, non-initiating, decorative, seductive, self-sacrificing, dependent, self-debasing, always supportive. Our function is to service the domestic needs of men, bear and rear children, and take on the bulk of low-paid, low-status jobs outside the home. Our primary identification is supposed to come through a man, children and the home. Our sexual relations, therefore, must occur only with men, and the 'proper' form of sexuality is seen as penis-vagina oriented. Any woman beyond a certain age who is not into heterosexuality within the institution of marriage is stigmatised. Our sexuality is thus rigidly defined for us: heterosexual, penis-vagina centred, within marriage, marriage must produce children.[43]

This demand was also incorporated into official WEL national policy in 1980, with the statement that everyone had "a right to define their own sexuality and develop their own sexual preferences", including the "full acceptance" of homosexuality for men and women.[44]

---

[43] WL, 'The Situation As it Should Be', c. 1970s. Records of the AUS MS 2412, Box 233, NLA.
[44] WEL National Policy Statement, 1980. Papers of Edna Ryan MS 9140, Box 5, NLA.

Sexual identity, including homosexuality, was thus framed as a choice of alternative lifestyle – in other words, a rejection of socially-imposed roles – and sexual desire was likewise understood in terms of preferences arising from the free development of the personality. It is for this reason that lesbianism was often framed by women's rights activists as a political choice, rather than a biological characteristic:

> In becoming women identified we are trying to be more determinate of our own lives and expectations. This necessarily takes many of us into areas the patriarchy does not approve of… [C]hanges which are fundamental threats e.g. where women choose to put all their energy and committment [sic] into other women (lesbianism) the patriarchy will never allow.[45]

Within these activists' framework, lesbianism was understood as a redefinition of the self to become "woman identified", and thus an act of liberation from a sexist, oppressive culture. In this way, defining the self – in its sexual capacity and otherwise – became an act of reclaiming the personality from power, countering the psychological effects of sexism and its reproduction of inequality.

The new prominence of 'identity' in women's rights claims during this period reflects the extent to which concepts of selfhood that were initially specialist psychological terms were nevertheless able to be mobilised within popular discourse. As several scholars of 'the sixties' have noted, the new social movements that arose at this time drew heavily on precepts of humanistic psychology, sometimes explicitly.[46] Even more than their forerunners, women's rights activists of the second wave were eager to theorise their situation, a trend which had only grown as women gained greater access to higher education. Most notably, Friedan, in her seminal *The Feminine Mystique*, excoriated Freudian psychoanalyses even as she turned to the ideas of Neo-Freudians and humanistic psychologists to suggest that

> the core of the problem of women today is not sexual but a problem of identity – a stunting or evasion of growth that is perpetuated by the feminine mystique. It is my thesis that… our culture

---

[45] George, 'Sexism/Power/Patriarchy'.

[46] Grogan, 'A Cultural History of the Humanistic Psychology Movement in America', 201; Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology*; Farrell, *The Spirit of the Sixties*, 205–8; Elizabeth Lasch-Quinn, 'Liberation Therapeutics: From Moral Renewal to Consciousness-Raising', in *Therapeutic Culture: Triumph and Defeat*, ed. Jonathan B. Imber (New Brunswick, N.J. ; London: Transaction Publishers, 2004), 3–18; Moran, *Identity and Capitalism*, 104–13.

does not permit women to accept or gratify their basic need to grow and fulfill their potentialities as human beings, a need which is not solely defined by their sexual role.[47]

Friedan's analysis of women's inequality as a problem of identity and unfulfilled potential brings together humanistic psychology's conception of a 'true' self underlying some social self, and the Eriksonian concept of identity as 'identification with', revealing a discourse which problematised women's inequality in a particular way, and also posited a particular solution.[48]

Specifically, it is within this discourse that we can understand the new demand by women's rights activists in this period to 'define' themselves and choose new 'identifications'. While the conceptions of personality posited by earlier psychologists such as Maslow and Rogers could only see culture as antagonistic to the autonomous self, Eriksonian identity allowed for a reconciliation between individuality and the functions of culture and society, where the former was contingent on the possibilities of identifying with the values and roles of the latter. It was this understanding of the personality which underlined the call for 'women-identified women', which was first made by the American group Radicalesbians in 1970:

> As the source of self-hate and the lack of real self are rooted in our male-given identity, we must create a new sense of self. As long as we cling to the idea of "being a woman", we will sense some conflict with that incipient self, that sense of I, that sense of a whole person… Only women can give to each other a new sense of self. That identity we have to develop with reference to ourselves, and not in relation to men…
>
> It is the primacy of women relating to women, of women creating a new consciousness of and with each other, which is at the heart of women's liberation, and the basis for the cultural revolution. Together we must find, reinforce, and validate our authentic selves. As we do this, we… feel a real-ness, feel at last we are coinciding with ourselves. With that real self, with that consciousness, we begin a revolution to end the imposition of all coercive identifications, and to achieve maximum autonomy in human expression.[49]

Within this framework, psychological freedom was achieved where the social self was congruent with the true self; or, in other words, where the true self could 'identify with' the social roles and values assigned to it by culture, and thus integrate into society without any

---

[47] Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 44.
[48] Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology*, 291–92.
[49] 'The Woman Identified Woman', KNOW Inc, 1970. Quoted in Susan Archer Mann and Ashly Suzanne Patterson, eds., *Reading Feminist Theory: From Modernity to Postmodernity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 106.

loss. The 'problem' of culture thus became acute in this period because of its perceived relationship to the true self and a free personality.

Before the culture could be changed, however, activists had to address the more immediate problem of being alienated from their true selves – what Friedan called the "forfeited self" and Kate Millett described as "internal colonisation" – and the discourse of personality offered by humanistic psychology once more posited a solution. Specifically, in their emphasis on the process of individuation, humanistic psychologists suggested that the way to psychological freedom lay in the encouragement of individuals to recognise and trust in the validity of their own experience. As Rogers explained:

> [T]his separateness of individuals, the right of each individual to utilize his experience in his own way and to discover his own meanings in it, - this is one of the most priceless potentialities of life. Each person is an island unto himself, in a very real sense; and he can only build bridges to other islands if he is first of all willing to be himself and permitted to be himself… [T]here is no philosophy or belief or set of principles which I could encourage or persuade others to have or hold. I can only try to live by my interpretation of the current meaning of my experience, and try to give others the permission and freedom to develop their own inward freedom and thus their own meaningful interpretation of their own experience.[50]

For Rogers, then, the task of the psychologist was to facilitate the patient's trust in their experience, through which they could begin the process of discovering their true self. A number of scholars have commented on the likeness of consciousness-raising to therapy, and I contend that the similarities are not insignificant.[51] Rogers' theorisation of his client-centred approach in particular demonstrates the extent to which consciousness-raising was centred within this discourse:

> If I can create a relationship characterized on my part:
>
> by a genuineness and transparency, in which I am my real feelings;
>
> by a warm acceptance of and prizing of the other person as a separate individual;
>
> by a sensitive ability to see his world and himself as he sees them;
>
> Then the other individual in the relationship:
>
> will experience and understand aspects of himself which previously he has repressed;
>
> will find himself becoming better integrated, more able to function effectively;
>
> will become more similar to the person he would like to be;

---

[50] Rogers, *On Becoming a Person*, 21–27.

[51] Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology*, 276–304.

> will be more self-directing and self-confident;
>
> will become more of a person, more unique and more self-expressive.[52]

Likewise, consciousness-raising groups were framed as a mechanism through which to cast off defensive masks and recover the truth of experience, and thus the truth of self. Activists were clear, however, that this was not simply therapy, but a prerequisite for effective political action, an

> endeavor to become autonomous in thought and behavior… [O]ur way of keeping in touch with our emotions, giving one another information about experiences we have had, trying to understand the meaning of those events, and finally fitting that understanding into an overview of our potential as human beings and the reality of our society – i.e., developing an ideology.[53]

Activist Barbara Susan put it more succinctly: "Consciousness raising is a way of forming a political analysis on information we can trust is true. That information is our experience".[54] In order to break free of coercive identifications and reach a truer definition of self, women had to learn to trust in their experience, and consciousness-raising was essential to this task. Women's rights activists of this period thus operated within a discourse of selfhood that assumed both the existence of some true self, as well as its mediation by a culturally-determined social self, and which defined freedom in terms of the congruence of these two parts, and it was this which underlined both their political practice and their political demands.

The Case of the Family

To gain a better sense of how this problematisation of social roles and their psychological effects shaped women's rights claims, it is helpful to consider what is often heralded as one of the most striking differences between the two movements: their differing approaches to the institution of the family. From the 1970s, the previously unchallenged significance of the nuclear family came under scrutiny, as women's rights activists began to consider its role in the continued oppression of women. Where before familial roles could fit neatly into a functionalist conception of society – as necessary cogs in the social machine – the newly

---

[52] Rogers, *On Becoming a Person*, 37–38.

[53] Pamela Allen, 'Free Space', in *Radical Feminism*, ed. Anne Koedt, Ellen Levine, and Anna Rapone (New York: Times Books, 1973), 272.

[54] Quoted in Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology*, 300.

popular conception of social roles as products of a sexist culture implicated the family and its structuring of sexual relations as yet another site where power, and thus women's inequality, was reproduced. The effect of this new conception was the decentring of the nuclear family from its previous position as the core of society, together with the de-naturalisation of the relationships between individuals within the family, which had already been initiated, however unintentionally, by earlier activists.

This reconfiguration of sexual relations as relations of power is evident in the way women's rights activists framed the issues of rape and abortion. While issues around birth control and abortion had lurked in the periphery of post-war women's activism, rape attracted very little attention until the 1970s, where it gained rapid status as the expression of male power and women's oppression *par excellence*. Specifically, women's rights activists aimed to highlight the nature of rape as a political act:

> Rape is not a random act of psychopathic violence, nor is it the unfortunate result of a man's uncontrollable sex urges. Although rape is inextricably woven into the social relations between men and women it must not be seen a simply a sexual act. Rape is a political weapon, it serves to divide and rule women, to force her back into femininity if she dares to break out, to make her seek a man's protection and to define herself in terms on a man.[55]

It was with the particular aim of raising public awareness around this 'myth' of rape that the national organisation Australian Women Against Rape (AWAR) was formed in 1976. One of its first campaigns was held in that same year, when a woman named Irene was charged with making a false complaint by police after her allegation of rape was deemed unfounded. AWAR hosted a number of protest rallies against this charge, and their published material for the protests demonstrates the extent to which their view of the social order informed their approach to rape:

> Women have always been seen in relation to men - they are seen firstly as daughters, then wives and mothers, never as individuals in their own right. Through the lack of state provision of free childcare, women are confined to the roles of wives and mothers and cannot enter the workforce on an equal basis with men. They are denied control over their own bodies - furthermore they are seen as the sexual property of men…

---

[55] AWAR demonstration flyer, c. 1976. Records of the AUS MS 2412, Box 244, NLA.

> Rape must be seen then, in the context of a society where women always come out second best – it is not due to innate biological urges of men but rather it is a product of the social conditions of men and women – an expression of power men assert over women. In Irene's case and in the case of many women like her, it can be understood in the framework of women who have stepped out of their socially determined roles as wives and mothers to the extent that they are independent of the "protection" of a male…
>
> Our society socializes women to be <u>wives and mothers</u> – that is to bring up children and care for the needs of a man in the confines of the nuclear family. Although many women would prefer the "freedom" of living outside marriage they are often forced back into a family situation because of the "protection" it would afford.[56]

Within this framework, the nuclear family was only another institution for limiting women's freedom by enforcing structural male domination. Likewise, the sexual relation between husband and wife created by marriage was necessarily structured to subjugate women, and therefore could not be recovered simply through the idealisation of a 'partnership of equals'. As another speaker on male violence in society stated more baldly:

> Physical assault flourishes in the safety of the most oppressive social institution of all - marriage and the family. So too does rape, although of course, it isn't rape in marriage is it? In patriarchal language rape in marriage is simply the man claiming his property rights; sorry, conjugal rights.[57]

This conception of the social order was also readily apparent in rights claims for free and legal abortion, which were increasingly the focus of political policy from the 1970s. The Menhennitt ruling of 1969 had set the precedent for legal abortion in Australia, but anti-abortion proponents were quick to challenge this. In particular, 1979 saw a bill moved by MP Stephen Lusher to restrict public funding for abortions, while in 1980, Queensland's state government under Bjelke-Petersen attempted to restrict abortion laws with the Pregnancy Termination Control Bill. Both of these attempts were ultimately defeated after vocal opposition from women's rights activists. The arguments these activists put forward for free, legal abortion were explicit about the way in which women's biological capacity for childbearing was framed as a culturally-sanctioned social role in order to secure men's domination:

---

[56] 'False Complaint – (a licence to rape)', c. 1976. Records of the UAW Federal Office Z236, Box 16, NBAC.
[57] Nancy Peck, 'Violence', c. 1970s. Records of the AUS MS 2412, Box 244, NLA.

The current abortion debate is not about morality but about political power, (power over womens [sic] lives), When women have no control over their bodies they can be denied other forms of power in society on the grounds of their uncontrolled fertility. It is in the interests of men to keep women at the mercy of their bodies. Thus the feminist demand for the right to choose abortion and contraception is a strong threat to the established political order of male power…

Modern society now possesses enough knowledge on birth control to enable women to exercise control over their reproductive functions… Theoretically, at least, women can be liberated from the narrow biological function of continuous "breeding"… What anti-abortionists deny is that abortion is a political and social issue. Denying women the right to choose whether or not to have a child is just reinforcing the entire social oppression of women.[58]

In this passage, pregnancy was characterised as a biological function that women could be 'freed' of through abortion, and women's capacity for motherhood was thus framed as a matter of choice – of women's agency – rather than a natural, inevitable social role. The Australian Union of Students made a similar point when it declared:

We don't believe that women are automatically or biologically destined to be mothers as the prime concern of their lives. We feel that women should have REAL choices about thier [sic] way of life, that the decision to bear a child or not should be THEIR decision, rather than a socially imposed role thrust on them by society's expectations of women. Not all women will choose to have an abortion but it must be a real CHOICE.[59]

Activists were thus clear about how the social role of motherhood was implicated in the reproduction of inequality and could only be decoupled from power if it was separated from definitions of womanhood and thus became a 'real choice' rather than a social obligation. Although women's capacity for childbearing and nurture were still often invoked by feminists as a privileged experience unique to women, in the context of reproductive rights it was more often defined in the same terms of power. As a result, the unaborted child was cast as yet another act of violence upon a woman, not only in the denial of her bodily autonomy, but also in the enforcement of a social role that she was unwilling to perform:

To refuse any woman a non-illegal abortion when she wants one is to deny her a rightful defence against an unwanted invader, to condemn her to curtailment of her liberty, and to sentence her to some very hard labour… It is indeed appropriate to include abortion in this Section

---

[58] 'Our Bodies - Our Choice', n.d. Records of the AUS MS 2412, Box 231, NLA.
[59] AUS NSW Regional Women's Policy Collective, 'Women Decide', n.d. Records of the AUS MS 2412, Box 231, NLA.

on "Violence Against Women" – because violated they are indeed – by the initial unwanted pregnancy, followed often by mental and physical violence when being "judged" by doctors, medical staff, backyard operators – and by a society which does not even allow them expression of what so many really feel about the pregnancy – this invasion of their person and what it will become – their hatred of what is inside of them and what it is doing and will do to them… If she is to keep it she must become its willing slave and loving mother, and learn to "like" and "love" the cause of her duress.[60]

This strident language was clearly aimed at rejecting traditional understandings of the social role of the mother as a natural, and naturally welcome, position. Instead, activists highlighted the coercive nature of motherhood within a sexist society that enforced such a role, often repudiating it through the terms 'breeders' or 'breeding machines':

In this paper we call for greater WEL involvement in support for the childfree lifestyle, and for optional parenthood.

We think it is vitally important for those girls and women who don't want children, or who think they may not want them, to receive overt positive support from their feminist sisters. We talk about reproductive freedom and the pressures which result in contraceptive non-use or misuse, but what about the pressure to have children, sooner or later? We may no longer allow ourselves to be breeding machines, but most of us assume we will have one or two children (when we want, under our own terms). Few of us question the basic assumption: that all women want children… [C]an't we also support the child-free choice as a positive, natural option?[61]

Ultimately, women's rights activists in this period no longer conceived of the family as necessary for the functioning of society, nor that this ordering of family and society was natural. Rather, the family's central position in society meant that it was the key social institution requiring transformation in order to achieve the liberation of women, since it lay at the heart of women's oppression:

The ways in which this entrenched power is maintained are complex, but certainly, the nuclear family is at its base. Children very early learn to regard the man as the person who controls the money and has the authority. Woman's role is in the home, servicing needs, obtaining her highest fulfilment by living through other people...

---

[60] Denise White, 'Abortion – A Feminist Viewpoint', WEL National Conference, Perth, 25 Jan 1976. Papers of Edna Ryan MS 9140, Box 1, NLA.
[61] WEL ACT, 'WEL and the Childfree Lifestyle/Optional Parenthood', WEL National Conference, Melbourne, 1980. WEL ephemera, NLA.

> All women… in demanding the right to freely determine the course of their lives, on the basis of their convictions, are calling for profound changes in the power relations and hence the whole structure of our society.[62]

The revolutionary imperative of women's rights activism in this period was thus inherent to the claiming of women's rights, at least in terms of social revolution, because of this understanding of the social order and the reproduction of power through culturally-mediated social roles:

> Many women in women's liberation are not revolutionaries. But the demands they make for their own improvement require such a fundamental change in society that they are completely inconceivable without revolution. An understanding is coming out of women's lib about the way the present organisation of the family holds women down, together with the recognition of the need to drastically alter the system by which work is divided between the sexes. These changes necessitate a transformation of the whole cultural conditioning of women and therefore of men, as well as the rearing of children, the sort of houses we live in, the legal structure of our society, our sexuality and the very nature of work.[63]

This reconceptualisation of marriage by women's rights activists can be seen as a culmination of the shifts in understandings of self and society throughout the century. One of the enduring ironies of this shift was that the impact of Freudian ideas of selfhood both restricted and also opened up possibilities for rethinking women's inequality. As women's rights activists of the second wave noted, Freudian psychoanalysis naturalised women's subordination to men in its phallogocentrism; but this critique itself built on the new insights generated by Freud's reconceptualisation of the self as entirely shaped by intimate, and specifically *familial,* relations. Freud's theories assumed that familial roles were biologically derived; however, as the cultural contingency of social roles became increasingly accepted knowledge, the family itself was problematised.[64] This was most famously achieved by Kate Millett and Shulamith Firestone in their ground-breaking works politicising sexuality, *Sexual Politics* (1969) and *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970). As Millett suggested with her term 'sexual politics', the social role of

---

[62] Women's Liberation, *Australia: A White Male Dominated Society*, pamphlet (Brisbane, 1973). WEL ephemera, NLA.
[63] Coxsedge, 'Power and Control'.
[64] Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans, 'No Place Like Home: The Evolution of the Australian Housewife', in *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, ed. Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans (Sydney: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), 193.

women within patriarchal culture was reduced to their sexuality, and the psychological effects of this needed to be understood as a form of political power:

> Patriarchy could, as indeed it did, remain in force as a thoroughly efficient political system, a method of social governance, without any visible superstructure beyond the family, simply because it lived on in the mind and heart where it had first rooted itself in the conditioning of its subjects, and from which a few reforms were hardly likely to evict it.[65]

Firestone likewise conceptualised familial relations as a form of power, drawing even more explicitly on Freud to suggest that "the family and its repressions produced a historically specific form of sexuality" which was ultimately damaging to women.[66]

This problematisation of the family occurred over a period in which conceptions of the personality were also becoming increasingly more interpersonal; and while the role of the family remained an important part of personality development in these new models, there was nevertheless a growing insistence that other social relations were also significant to this process. For instance, the Eriksonian understanding of identity placed equal if not greater value on the role of peers in conceptualising the identity crisis through which the mature personality could grow. Likewise, these models, in moving away from the centrality of the family, also rejected a view of personality as essentially fixed from childhood, and instead emphasised personality development as a process of becoming that was fluid and ever-changing. Again, as Erikson's conception of identity suggested, the identity crises which prompted personality growth were not limited to the teenage years but could occur throughout life. The family was thus both problematised and concurrently decentred, creating a space in which women's rights activists could reject the family altogether. In this way, the centring of personal life in the family, which had reached its apogee in the 1950s, gave way in this period as women began to articulate identification with their familial roles as oppressive, and identification with new kinds of communities as the path to liberation.

What is important to note is that humanistic psychologists like Erikson, Allport, Maslow and Rogers did not advocate for a kind of rugged individualism in putting forward their models of

---

[65] Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 177.

[66] Jane Gerhard, *Desiring Revolution: Second-Wave Feminism and the Rewriting of Twentieth-Century American Sexual Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 97.

personality, and this is reflected in the women's rights claims of this period. Humanistic psychology, signalling its deep commitment to ideals of democratic government, asserted that self-actualisation or identity-development was not a solipsistic project but, rather, integral to developing individuals with 'social feeling'.[67] As Medovoi stresses, "'identity' is a normative term and not just a descriptive one. It names an accomplishment and a positive good".[68] Specifically, the models of personality put forward by humanistic psychologists in this period conceptualised its development as a process of "find[ing] a way for the inner of self to connect to the world in a meaningful, satisfying, and socially responsible way".[69] This understanding was clearly shared by women's rights activists, whose search for truer identities also clearly reflected the desire to develop new communities, new cultures and thus more positive, egalitarian relationships. The nature of 'identity politics' in this period is thus more complicated than most histories of the women's movement acknowledge.

Conclusion

As this chapter suggests, one of the key shifts in political claims-making between the earlier and later social movements under review can be theorised in terms of the new discourses of self and culture that emerged in this period. In particular, the shift in understandings of 'culture' to 'cultures', which emphasised the contingency of Western modes of living that had previously been taken as natural, opened a space in which the cultural production of the self could become a problem; that is, the denaturalisation of social roles and their linkage to specific cultural mores raised the problem of how and why those roles were defined. Within a framework of democratic individualism and its fears regarding cultures of conformity, this problem was articulated specifically in terms of how these roles impacted on the individual personality, and the development of humanistic psychology can be seen as a response to this problematisation, in rethinking social roles in terms of culture and its relation to the growth or oppression of individual freedom.

---

[67] I am arguing here against characterisations of this period as a return to individualism, such as in Kevin, 'Subjects for Citizenship', 35. See, e.g, Farrell, *The Spirit of the Sixties*, 206; Zaretsky, *Secrets of the Soul*, 285; Cushman, *Constructing The Self, Constructing America*, 258; Campbell, *Easternization of the West*, 354.
[68] Medovoi, *Rebels: Youth and the Cold War Origins of Identity*, 7.
[69] Kirschner, *The Religious and Romantic Origins of Psychoanalysis*, 55.

Thus, as this chapter demonstrates, thinking through women's rights claims as products of broader historical discourses of selfhood highlights not simply the continuities in the logics of the earlier and later phases of the women's movement, but also the generative tensions through which new possibilities for rights claiming were opened up. In these terms, earlier activists articulated their demands within a discourse that naturalised the social order, and thus made political claims in the name of maintaining this order; however, later activists were working within a discourse of self and society that posited the freedom of the personality as a foundational good and conceptualised this freedom in terms of cultural transformation. This was not simply a turn to 'individualism' or a moralisation of the individual over society but was rather an entirely new conception of the relationship between the individual and society in which individual and collective needs could not be thought apart. The demand for new and more liberating possibilities of identification with- and identification as- could thus be articulated as a moral political demand. However, this discourse of identity and the role of culture in the process of selfhood afforded different kinds of political claims for Aboriginal rights activists, and it is to this that the next chapter turns.

4.

Aboriginal Rights and Colonial Power

Like the women's rights movement in Australia, Aboriginal rights activism in the 1970s and 1980s was shaped by new forms of political protest, often making explicit reference to the civil rights movement in the United States as well as decolonisation efforts across Asia and Africa. The most evident mark of this international influence was the emergence of a national Black Power movement within the urban hubs of Redfern, South Brisbane and Fitzroy, where a new generation of Aboriginal rights activists sought alternative paths for activism in light of what they deemed the unsatisfactory results of the past.[1] In 1969, the publication of Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton's famous text, *Black Power: the Politics of Liberation in America,* was widely read by Aboriginal rights activists in Australia, and its tenets of black self-determination were embraced by young and old alike, with stalwarts such as Kath Walker, Doug Nicholls and Bruce McGuinness all advocating the principles of Black Power. At the same time, even as many Aboriginal activists were increasingly identifying themselves as 'black' Australians, a parallel discourse was also emerging that asserted the unique position of Aboriginal Australians as inhabiting not only a racial but also a colonial position, as the Indigenous peoples of an invaded land.

As I have already suggested, scholars of the Aboriginal rights movement have largely framed these two discourses in terms of an overarching transformation in Aboriginal rights-claiming, from universalist claims for equal citizenship rights in the 1930s to particularist claims for special rights conferred by Aboriginality, which began in the mid-1960s and were consolidated in the next decade. As an exemplary moment, scholars point to the annual FCAATSI conference in 1970, where a growing discontent regarding the lack of Aboriginal leadership within the organisation culminated in its split, after a failed attempt at constitutional reform which would have seen voting rights and executive membership restricted to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The emergence of Black Power in Australia, together with this

---

[1] Clark, *Aborigines & Activism*; McGregor, *Indifferent Inclusion*, 176–78.

increasing emphasis on exclusively Aboriginal leadership, is thus characterised as evidence of a growing move away from coalitional politics towards a separatist ethic within Aboriginal rights activism and the new significance of 'identity' to Aboriginal rights-claiming is likewise theorised in these terms.[2]

However, this literature fails to account for the ways in which these new discourses centring culture and identity were a product of, and responses to, already-existing discourses around the self and society that had been mobilised in earlier rights claims. In particular, as the previous chapter suggests, a key shift in this period that underlined women's rights-claiming was a new understanding of the social order as a network of culturally-reproduced relations of power, and the self as a cultural product embedded within this order. This shift is no less evident in the case of the Aboriginal rights movement, although its implications for rights-claiming were markedly different. Specifically, in this period, the intersection of earlier scientific discourses that asserted the importance of group belonging for the individual and that also redefined the group in terms of culture came to problematise Western claims to cultural superiority in psychological terms. As this chapter suggests, the emergence of Aboriginal claims to cultural identity from the 1970s can be understood in terms of this discourse of cultural erasure as psychological violence.

Thus, this chapter will demonstrate first that, as with the explosion of sexism into mainstream discourse, racism too became central to Aboriginal rights activists' conception of equality. This understanding of racism incorporated both the civil rights movement's notions of racial white supremacy, as well as anti-colonialist notions of settler colonialism, which conceptualised the relation between Aboriginal and settler Australians as a power relation through which Aboriginal inequality was actively and systematically reproduced. It thus turns to the linkage of cultural erasure and psychological violence underlining Aboriginal rights claims in this period, particularly within the claim against 'brainwashing', which had to be

[2] Attwood, *Rights for Aborigines*, 309–34; Clark, *Aborigines & Activism*, 91; Chesterman, *Civil Rights*, 94; Taffe, *Black and White Together FCAATSI*; Verity Burgmann, *Power and Protest : Movements for Change in Australian Society* (St Leonards, N.S.W. : Allen & Unwin, 1992), 34–36; Russell McGregor, 'Another Nation: Aboriginal Activism in the Late 1960s and Early 1970s', *Australian Historical Studies* 40, no. 3 (September 2009): 343–60; Read, 'Cheeky, Insolent and Anti-White'.

countered through cultural survival and revival. It finally considers how framing resistance in this way as a rejection of white colonial culture opened a space for claims to Aboriginal sovereignty, first, by articulating the special relationship between Aboriginal people and their land and second, by rejecting the telos of modernity and its implication of white cultural superiority.

Colonialism

As Chapter 2 has outlined, Aboriginal rights activism towards the end of the 1960s increasingly characterised Aboriginal inequality in terms of violence, exemplified by the claim of Aboriginal genocide. While earlier activists had certainly stressed the physical violence suffered by Aboriginal people at the hands of white Australians both past and present, violence took on a new significance in this period as a specifically psychological act that erased Aboriginal culture and thus identity. This understanding crystallised in the 1970s within the notions of 'racism' and 'colonialism', concepts that had originated in social movements overseas and which Aboriginal rights activists used to articulate their own experiences, though highly conscious of their particular context. A key shift figured by the new concepts of racism and colonialism was their claim that white and settler violence had to be understood as part of a system of power, which sought to reinforce unequal social relations between white and black, settler and Indigenous subjects. The erasure of Aboriginal identity could thus be posited not as an incidental result of white invasion and settlement, nor as the capricious policy of ignorant or malicious individuals, but as an integral function of a broader system to consolidate white colonial power.

Thus, while Aboriginal rights activists continued to criticise discriminatory policies and attitudes, they increasingly characterised these as a continuation and perpetuation of white Australia's historical invasion. In 1980, the National Aboriginal Conference (NAC), a consultative body established by the Whitlam government, sent a delegation to the United Nations to make an appeal for Aboriginal land rights, particularly regarding the struggle at Noonkanbah, where the traditional Yugngora people had refused permission to conduct exploratory mining on their land and had been overridden by Western Australia's Premier. Speaking for their land rights at the UN Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, NAC chairman Jim Hagan made an explicit link between past

colonial violence and contemporary racist attitudes, both of which were implicated in the attempted erasure of Aboriginal culture, a process that Hagan characterised as a 'war':

> The history of the Aboriginal people of Australia, in the 200 years since European occupation of the country, is well documented. It is a history of constant struggle to survive the encounter, and emerge with our culture intact, and with basic human rights.
>
> Today, 200 years later, that raw violence has abated leaving a residue of mindless intolerance as a reminder of that brutal past and as a barrier to progress, present and future. Prejudice, bigotry and racial discrimination are the insidious weapons of the ensuing cold war.[3]

Marking the distinction between old and new forms of violence, Hagan suggested that the racism of the present was simply an extension of the historical oppression of Aboriginal people. This notion of a 'cold war' framed Aboriginal inequality as the result of an active process of oppression, and individual prejudice or racism was thus characterised as part of this wider system of power.

One of the most extensive engagements with this discourse of racism was by the protests against what were termed the 'Queensland Acts'. Referring to the *Aborigines Act* of 1971, this legislation repealed the earlier *Aborigines' and Torres Strait Islanders Affairs Act*, which had been heavily criticised by activists for its denial of civil rights, including the restriction of movement both within and across Reserves, as well as control of personal finances. However, the 1971 *Act* failed to ameliorate any of these restrictions and it thus became the focus of extended protest in the ensuing decade. Activists framed the Acts as a continuation of the white settler state's historical exploitation of non-white minorities, which they defined specifically in terms of cultural racism:

> Our Laws touching such peoples are the starkest expression of the racialist culture of this country. It is by no means a contemporary phenomenon. It is not a unique departure from the established values and attitudes of our community. It is not an aberration in our historical development. The "Aborigines' and Torres Strait Islanders Affairs Act of 1965" of Queensland fits integrally into a career which saw the destruction of the indigenes in the days of early settlement as a necessary stage in pacifying the grass lands of the inland, which saw the harrassment [sic] and persecution of the Chinese miners as a valuable device for monopolising access to the gold in our

---

[3] NAC, 'Noonkanbah: A struggle for rights', *NAC Newsletter* 1, no. 1 (Nov 1980): 7.

earth; which saw the blackbirding of Kanakas as a source of labour for growing cane in a climate said to be unhealthy for most white men.[4]

Likewise, activists stressed that the *Act'*s primary purpose was to maintain the power of the Queensland government through its oppression of Aboriginal people. The Land Rights Committee of Victoria made this explicit in its protest against the land rights dispute at Aurukun in the mid-70s:

> The Queensland government is notorious for its racist laws and for its attempts to crush the Aboriginal people. For a long time it has worked with large companies to steal Aboriginal lands…
>
> Aborigines are denied basic human rights under the racist Queensland Act – the Aurukun sellout is an example of blatant racism.[5]

Lionel Fogarty, who grew up in Barambah under the Acts, was more direct:

> I know racism and sexism is a tool that the pigs use to divide people. The Queensland Act is still here, its [sic] a racist Act against blacks, it is violent.[6]

Thus, while activists were protesting against the racially discriminatory nature of the legislation, unlike activists in earlier decades, they made this protest in terms of a broader discourse that linked this discrimination to a system that reproduced state power and capitalist interests through the oppression and exploitation of Aboriginal people – in other words, the system of colonialism.

While Aboriginal activists certainly engaged with discourses of racial supremacy, they were nevertheless clear on the particularity of their own context, and the way that racism towards Aboriginal people in Australia was enfolded within a broader system of colonialism.[7] As Joe McGinness, president of FCAATSI, chided the Queensland Premier:

> The Premier in his comparison of American Negroes, a non indigenous population, against that of the Australian Aboriginal as a [sic] indigenous people, makes his argument regarding discrimination rather shallow.[8]

---

[4] James Staples, 'The Repeal of the Aborigines' and Torres Strait Islanders Affairs Act of 1965', FCAATSI 14th Annual Conference, Townsville, Qld, 9-11 April, 1971. Papers of Barry Christophers MS 7992, Box 19, NLA.

[5] CARE, LRC VIC, 'Aurukun Aborigines Swindled', 1975. Papers of Joe McGinness MS 3718, Box 9, AIATSIS.

[6] Lionel G. Lacey (aka Fogarty), 'The Liberation Struggle: It Is Time to Organize', *Black Liberation* 2, no. 1 (1976): 5.

[7] One exception to this was the Australian Black Panther Party, which attributed white supremacy solely to the imperatives of capitalism and likewise embraced a universal black subjectivity produced by this exploitation.

[8] Joe McGinness, FCAATSI, Press Release, 31 Jan 1973. Papers of Joe McGinness MS 3718, Box 4, AIATSIS.

Instead, most activists theorised Aboriginal people's discrimination in terms of colonialism, which posited the necessary collusion of the state with capitalism in order to ensure the maintenance of white settler power. In this understanding of Aboriginal oppression, a racist culture was simply the means by which this power was reproduced, and the state and its institutions were therefore inherently antithetical to the attainment of Aboriginal equality:

> One of the main lessons learned would be for our fellows to realise that Departmental Bureaucracy and its white staff is not geared to cater for Blacks. As the system and its laws were designed to suit Colonialism. These laws although modified so it would not be obvious to todays [sic] modern thinking, non-the-less [sic] operates and produces the same results which is exploitation of a nation and its natural resources by investors. Colonists in other words.[9]

The oppression of Aboriginal people was thus conceived as part of a total system of power which implicated black and white alike, and ending this oppression could not be achieved without first dismantling this colonial system. As Josie Briggs, president of FCAATSI, made clear to her mainstream audience in the *Cairns Post*:

> The Westminster system of Government favours colonialism and has the expressed purpose to exploit a nation and its natural resources.
>
> It also breeds racial discrimination which in turn makes it easier for colonial rulers to "divide and conquer". It not only divides whites against blacks, but blacks against blacks and whites against whites.
>
> So, while the colonial laws and the Westminster system of Government prevails, this situation will continue and the results as usual will affect the under-privileged both black and white.[10]

Thus, even activist organisations such as FCAATSI – which eschewed the more radical forms of resistance championed by newer groups espousing Black Power – engaged with what was at heart a revolutionary discourse, in its understanding of the systemic changes required to achieve Aboriginal equality.

Moreover, the reproduction of this systemic oppression was framed specifically in terms of its psychological effects. Thus, for instance, state brutality against Aboriginal people was characterised as eliciting control not only through physical, but also psychological, violence:

---

[9] President's Report, FCAATSI Annual Conference, 1976. Papers of Joe McGinness MS 3718, Box 2, AIATSIS.
[10] Josie Briggs, FCAATSI, Letters to the Editor, Response to 'Is Everyone Aboriginal', *Cairns Post,* 26 Feb 1976.

> The managers on reserves and the pigs and all the other bastards who push us down, they
> want us to be scared, to feel like we are lower than animals, to feel down all the time.
> They want us to do this because this keeps them in power, in control of our minds, in
> control of our bodies, and most of all to control our land.[11]

Racial discrimination was thus posited as an inextricable part of the settler state, as a form of systemic violence that targeted both bodies and minds in order to reproduce Aboriginal oppression and thereby secure state power. The effect of this colonial system, and its reproduction of racism, was to render Aboriginal people not only physically and materially vulnerable, but also psychologically 'confused' and therefore unable to offer resistance:

> Racism is one of the major tools people in power use to keep us confused. Racism is making
> one race of people (white) think they are better than another race of people (black). And when all
> the people in that race (white) believe and feel and act like they know more about us than we
> know ourselves then we, the black, *feel* like we are not capable of making our own decisions.[12]

One of the defining claims of Aboriginal rights activism in this period was thus the articulation of the relationship between the settler state and Aboriginal people in terms of a colonial system of power, in which the very minds of Aboriginal individuals were targets of state violence and were therefore fundamental to Aboriginal resistance.

The shift in Aboriginal rights discourse during this period clearly reflects many of the same transformations shaping the women's rights movement and its new concern with 'sexism'. In particular, the effect of the change from a functionalist view of society as an objectively-operating machine to a culturally contingent system is readily apparent in the theorisations of 'racism' and 'colonialism' being put forward by activists. However, there are a number of key differences, and they are worth exploring through the work of Frantz Fanon. Fanon's influence on postcolonial and critical race theory is difficult to overstate; his work spoke both to the decolonisation movements in the 'Third World' from the 1950s, as well as the movements for black nationalism in the First World from the mid-1960s, when his 1961 text *The Wretched of the Earth* was translated into English.[13]

---

[11] Cheryl Buchanan and Lionel Lacey, 'Conference in Cairns: The Land is our Mother', *Black Liberation* 1, no. 1 (Nov 1975): 1.

[12] *Queensland Aborigines Act and Regulations 1971*, Black Resource Centre Collective, Brisbane, 1976.

[13] William L. Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965-1975* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 60.

Fanon's theorisation of colonialism was clearly part of the broader dissatisfaction with existing explanations of the social order that took hold from the late 1940s and which spurred the turn to culture. Like Neo-Freudians such as Fromm and Erikson, Fanon sought to revise classical psychoanalysis to take into account environmental conditions beyond the family in shaping the individual personality; like Neo-Marxists such as Marcuse, Fanon wished to supplement the classical Marxist interest in material alienation with an account of psychological alienation. Thus, as he suggested in *Black Skin, White Masks:*

> The effective disalienation of the black man entails an immediate recognition of social and economic realities. If there is an inferiority complex, it is the outcome of a double process:
>
> primarily, economic;
>
> subsequently, the internalization – or, better, the epidermalization – of this inferiority.
>
> Reacting against the constitutionalist tendency of the late nineteenth century, Freud insisted that the individual factor be taken into account through psychoanalysis. He substituted for a phylogenetic theory the ontogenetic perspective. It will be seen that the black man's alienation is not an individual question.[14]

The prevalence of inferiority complexes amongst minorities was an already-established narrative in Western psychology, most notably through the work of psychologists Kenneth and Maime Clark, whose famed doll experiments in the 1940s concluded that black children from as young as five displayed a positive association with lighter skin and a corresponding negative self-image.[15] However, while this relationship between prejudice and low self-esteem amongst black people was not new, Fanon's innovation was to suggest that this devaluation of blackness was not incidental to colonial culture but integral to its role in maintaining the colonial social order.

More specifically, arguing against prevailing theories that pointed to individual pathology (or biological inclination) as the cause of inferiority complexes amongst black people, Fanon's sociogenetic approach highlighted instead that the key cause of black oppression was the way in which black identities produced through colonial culture were forced either to internalise settler subjectivity or submit to the psychological violence of a negative self-image:

---

[14] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 2008), 4.

[15] Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology*, 193–99; Zaretsky, *Secrets of the Soul*, 311.

> Every colonized people – in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality – finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle.[16]

In this way, Fanon linked racism – racial prejudice – with a broader system of material oppression – colonialism – whose ultimate imperative was cultural erasure. Likewise, for Fanon, the key to liberation was fostering a new "possibility of existence" by repudiating white supremacy and reclaiming a positive black selfhood, which would establish the conditions for social resistance:

> the black man should no longer be confronted by the dilemma, turn white or disappear; but he should be able to take cognizance of a possibility of existence. In still other words, if society makes difficulties for him because of his color, if in his dreams I establish the expression of an unconscious desire to change color, my objective will not be that of dissuading him from it by advising him to "keep his place"; on the contrary, my objective, once his motivations have been brought into consciousness, will be to put him in a position to *choose* action (or passivity) with respect to the real source of the conflict – that is, toward the social structures.[17]

Cultural Erasure

It was within this discourse of cultural erasure as a form of psychological violence, and assertion of identity through culture as a form of psychological liberation, that Aboriginal rights activism operated in this period. Rejecting earlier activists' assumptions about the neutrality of Western values as mere reflections of objective progress, activists in this period instead framed the promotion of these values of progress as an act of the white supremacy underlying colonial power. Likewise, the erasure of Aboriginal cultural values and the collective identity defined by them was understood as necessary to the maintenance of this system. Within this conceptualisation of Aboriginal and white settler relations, the preservation of Aboriginal culture and collective identity thus took on new and greater significance as an act of resistance against this system and its imperative of erasure.

---

[16] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 9.
[17] Ibid., 74.

In particular, education and the schooling of Aboriginal children, which had long been a central activist demand, came under intense scrutiny through the reframing of the school as a state institution that was necessarily implicated in colonialism. As Aboriginal rights activists contended, the education provided by schools – under the guise of neutrality – actually reproduced the devaluation of Aboriginal culture which justified its erasure and encouraged individual rejection of Aboriginal identity. As activists stressed, it was this derogation of Aboriginal identity which most harmed Aboriginal children, by leaving them without pride in their Aboriginality, and therefore without the means by which to resist the violence of white settler culture. This concern with the role of schools in the indoctrination of Aboriginal children was made central in a 1976 edition of *Black Liberation,* a short-lived newsletter produced by the Black Resource Centre Collective, a group of young, radical Aboriginal activists in Brisbane. Here, the relationship between education and power was made explicit:

> We have a duty to question the aims of white "socialization" (which is another word for brainwashing or doing everything the white man says). And we especially have to question *political* socialization…
>
> The guts of the political socialization of Aboriginal people is that those people who have power, those who make the rules, want to keep that power. For this to happen they must brainwash our children into believing that this system and the law we live under are much better than any other… They haven't been given any other choice.[18]

The maintenance of colonial power was thus linked to the rejection of Aboriginal for white culture, which was posited as both the best – and therefore the *only* – possible structure for society.

In highlighting the political nature of education – that is, its implication in a colonial system of power – Aboriginal rights activists concomitantly brought into question the supposed neutrality of state education, and its claim to objectivity and factuality. Indeed, it was the very claim to neutrality that activists targeted as an act of power, in its erasure of alternative possibilities of experience and knowledge. In the same newsletter, another article entitled 'The Education of Prisoners' drew a clear parallel between the physical violence meted out in the early days of colonisation, and the oppression of Aboriginal people through colonial

---

[18] Cheryl Buchanan and Lionel Lacey, 'Who Will Educate Our Children?', *Black Liberation* 2, no. 2 (1976): 4-5.

education. Moreover, this oppression was defined as 'brainwashing' since, fundamentally, schools denied all children, and Aboriginal children in particular, freedom of thought:

The missionaries, who preached equality of man, became the oppressor just as the Government and the other whites who openly shot our people in the "nigger hunts". Mission schools were set up and full-bloods and half-castes were separated. Half-caste children were seen as the generation who could be civilized because they had white man's blood — somehow this meant more brains. These children were kept in dormitories away from their parents and relatives, to make sure that the brainwashing process would not be disturbed. Today, these mission schools are still going, as well as the Government schools. On the Government-run Reserves there are churches as well so that Christianity is still preached in an attempt to destroy Aboriginal culture.

Now let's look at what a Government school has got to offer a young black child.

Instead of having the freedom to think for yourself, you learn to become parrots — *Salute the flag, Good morning teacher, Sit down, take out your books, Yes sir, No miss, Go to lunch, Go home.* The teacher has full control of your mind and body the whole time you are in class. The room is like a prison.[19]

This context was particularly harmful to Aboriginal children, since it left them without the capacity to challenge the colonial knowledge being imparted by schools, knowledge which was by its very nature oppressive to Aboriginal people. As the article continued:

You must accept that History lessons are based on building up whites as being better than any other race. History teaches racism where you learn to hate Communists, the yellow hordes, the Reds, the Asians, the Japs – yet giving you the feeling that there was no violence on the part of white Australians who went to war like in Vietnam and murdered innocent people…

And what about Science and Religion… in science they talk about "evolution", of people coming from apes, but that's mainly to make the black child feel down because you get told that the black race came from the jungle and out of the trees. The teachers obtain cats, mice, frogs and cut them up; they kill butterflies, pin their wings and keep them in cases – yet the Aboriginal child knows only respect for animals and birds. Religions lessons contain the final put down of the black child. You are taught that Jesus is white with blond hair, that all the angels are white, everything that's good is white… and that anything evil or bad, like the devil or sin is *black*.[20]

Thus, the most harmful aspect of colonial education was its effect on Aboriginal selfhood. By valorising white culture and values, while simultaneously denying Aboriginal children the capacity to challenge the devaluation of their own culture, schools systematically destroyed

[19] Cheryl Buchanan and Lionel Lacey, 'The Education of Prisoners', *Black Liberation* 2 no. 2 (1976): 1.
[20] Ibid., pg. 2.

Aboriginal children's sense of self by devaluing the collective cultural identity from which this self was derived:

> There is further racism when they don't teach anything about Aboriginal history. For an Aboriginal child it gets confusing when you know that Captain Cook never discovered Australia, that Lawson, Blaxland and Wentworth were not the first men to cross the Blue Mountains and that Burke and Wills never discovered North Queensland… It just leaves an Aboriginal child depressed and frustrated because you're not learning anything about yourself.[21]

As activists emphasised, collective cultural identity was essential to individual wellbeing, and access to culture and collective belonging was therefore a right. Likewise, the material problems facing Aboriginal communities were a result of the colonial imperative to devalue and erase this identity:

> The appropriation of Aboriginal children by white Australia has been (and continues to be) one of the most destructive means of undermining Aboriginal people. Children reared apart from their family and culture are deprived of their right to their Aboriginal heritage and the survival of the Aboriginal community is endangered…
>
> [T]here is a unique opportunity to end this process of forced assimilation, and restore basic human rights to Aboriginal people by guaranteeing Aboriginal communities the right to care for all of their children…
>
> Since the 1890's, large numbers of Aboriginal children have been removed from their families by welfare authorities and brought up in white homes and institutions. Children have been alienated form their own people and culture, families dispersed and destroyed, the results – chronic cycles of alcoholism, gaol and further family disintegration.[22]

By the same token, then, resistance to colonial power was characterised in terms of asserting the value of Aboriginal culture and identity:

> Somehow we must help our children deal with the first question of their lives: How can I survive as a black person in a white, racist, progressive, Western society? Unless we deliberately make an effort to politicize our children, they will grow up to believe that being white is the only possible identity for them. Children must be taught that they have culture and a history which they can be proud of, and that getting back our Aboriginality (that is, love and respect of our land and ourselves as Aboriginal people) is going to be the key to their survival.[23]

---

[21] Ibid.

[22] 'The Battle for Aboriginal Kids', *Aboriginal Land Rights Support Group NSW Newsletter* no. 15 (Dec 1981).

[23] Buchanan and Lacey, 'Who Will Educate Our Children?', 4-5.

This concern with indoctrination, or the assimilation of Western values by Aboriginal people, was driven by a parallel demand for self-determination. As Aboriginal rights activists contended, one of the most basic conditions of freedom was the right to "choose our own destiny",[24] and this could not be meaningfully achieved under a colonial system in which the very minds of indigenous people were subject to its power:

> No! We are not happy that we have to live like the white man, eating his kind of food, and wearing his kind of clothes. Some of us may think we want to live like that but that's only because we've been taught to want that. Our own tongues no longer speak the way they used to – now we sound like the white man when we talk. We used to have a beautiful way of life before the white man came along with his plonk and V. D. and his sick society. Now we have lost our peaceful way and we are even taught to be ashamed of it. It is too late for many of us to live the old of life way again – but we are not happy that it was stolen from us and we don't want this white man's life sitting on our backs like a big white dog eating out our hearts and minds.[25]

The 'right to choose' thus came to the forefront of criticism against school education, as activists pointed to the way in which schools provided no 'alternative' to Western culture and values which, in a framework of colonial power, constituted an act of individual indoctrination and collective cultural erasure, what was termed "mental genocide":

> Australia remains a colonised country, no less than it did 200 years ago. There are still two group of people, the coloniser and the colonised. The legal, social, political. and philosophical systems of the early colonisers remain in force today… By employing genocide and the assimilation (mental genocide) the coloniser of Australia have endeavoured to maintain a stranglehold over Aboriginal people… By acknowledging only white education systems, white legal systems, white religions, white philosophies, Australia today maintains a colonial mentality, a mentality that refuses the right of existence to any other way of being.[26]

Instead, knowledge of and pride in Aboriginal culture necessarily undermined colonial power by challenging the notion of Western cultural superiority, and it was only by resisting indoctrination into this belief that Aboriginal people could begin to take action against their oppression:

> [W]hen *we* politicize our children they will grow up with less fear and will be able to question oppression and exploitation. And they will be more committed to action, because they

---

[24] Mike Mansell, Many Nations Many Voices Public Forum, Sydney, 9 May 1987. In *Committee to Defend Black Rights Newsletter,* no. 5 (May 1987): 10.
[25] 'They're Only Gamin', Black Rights Committee, c. 1970s. Papers of Gordon Bryant MS 8256, Box 174, NLA.
[26] Kevin Tory, 'Sovereignty and Land Rights', *National Coalition of Aboriginal Organisations* (Sydney, c. 1985).

will see themselves as taking part in change. And finally, they will not be brainwashed as they are now, but brainwash-proof.[27]

The shared concern of both Aboriginal and women's rights activists with 'brainwashing', particularly through institutional education, reflects the extent to which both movements were operating within a discourse that centred the psychological self as the key site of political action, and thereby problematised the role of culture in shaping this self as a form of psychological violence. However, Aboriginal rights activists – echoing a Fanonian conception of colonialism – articulated this violence as the damage of individual personality *through cultural erasure.* As Fanon suggested, underlying the devaluation of indigenous culture was the claim that, without colonial domination, indigenous people would 'regress':

> When we consider the efforts made to carry out the cultural estrangement so characteristic of the colonial epoch, we realize that nothing has been left to chance and that the total result looked for by colonial domination was indeed to convince the natives that colonialism came to lighten their darkness. The effect consciously sought by colonialism was to drive into the natives' heads the idea that if the settlers were to leave, they would at once fall back into barbarism, degradation, and bestiality.[28]

The colonial social order was thus maintained by an investment in the myth of Western modernity and its claims to 'progress'. The erasure of indigenous culture was part of this broader logic of Western supremacy, which did not simply assume the inferiority of other ways of being, but defined humanity upon this same scale. Thus, Fanon claimed that

> colonialism is not simply content to impose its rule upon the present and the future of a dominated country. Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it.[29]

According to Fanon, it was this claim to Western cultural supremacy which foreclosed the possibility of a positive black selfhood; that is, from a psychoanalytic lens, the image of the 'primitive' indigenous subject was the necessary Other through which the settler subject

---

[27] Buchanan and Lacey, 'Who Will Educate Our Children?', 5.
[28] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington, 1st Evergreen Edition (New York: Grove Press, 1991), 209–10.
[29] Ibid., 209.

could recognise its own superiority. Within this relation, the possibility of a positive black self-image was impossible, and it was in this way that colonialism enacted psychological violence. As an example, Fanon pointed to the Antilles, at that time colonised by the French, and noted the sense of superiority instilled in Antilleans over their black Senegalese neighbours, a subjectivity which would necessarily be undermined by the experience of racial inequality:

> The black schoolboy in the Antilles, who in his lessons is forever talking about "our ancestors, the Gauls," identifies himself with the explorer, the bringer of civilization, the white man who carries truth to savages – all-white truth. There is identification – that is, the young Negro subjectively adopts a white man's attitude… the Antillean does not think of himself as a black man; he thinks of himself as an Antillean. The Negro lives in Africa. Subjectively, intellectually, the Antillean conducts himself like a white man. But he is a Negro. That he will learn once he goes to Europe; and when he hears Negroes mentioned he will recognize that the word includes himself as well as the Senegalese.[30]

Thus, as Fanon stressed, the effects of racial inequality and the existence of psychological neurosis in black people had to be understood in specifically *cultural* terms, or else miss the very purpose of the colonial system:

> [W]e can say that every neurosis, every abnormal manifestation, every affective erethism in an Antillean is the product of his cultural situation. In other words, there is a constellation of postulates, a series of propositions that slowly and subtly – with the help of books, newspapers, schools and their texts, advertisements, films, radio – work their way into one's mind and shape one's view of the world of the group to which one belongs. In the Antilles that view of the world is white because no black voice exists.[31]

In these terms, the individual psychological oppression of colonised people could not be understood separately from cultural erasure; it was through this erasure that Western colonial domination was maintained, and it was thus only through its renewal that liberation – both individual and collective – could be won.

Thus, like Aboriginal rights activists many years later, Fanon identified cultural production and transmission as a key site from which to initiate resistance, which, in line with psychoanalytic thought, was most effective during childhood development:

---

[30] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 114.
[31] Ibid., 118.

> I should like nothing more nor less than the establishment of children's magazines especially for Negroes, the creation of songs for Negro children, and, ultimately, the publication of history texts especially for them, at least through the grammar-school grades. For, until there is evidence to the contrary, I believe that if there is a traumatism it occurs during those years.[32]

As Fanon noted, this claim to culture was not simply a matter of asserting a collective identity but served an individual psychological purpose in offering a new, liberating black subjectivity: "The claim to a national culture in the past does not only rehabilitate that nation and serve as a justification for the hope of a future national culture. In the sphere of psycho-affective equilibrium it is responsible for an important change in the native".[33] It was this political discourse of the relationship between culture and the individual that underlined Aboriginal rights activists' demands for cultural survival. The assertion of an Aboriginal cultural identity was thus a claim for the 'disalienation' of Aboriginal Australians; in other words, it was the demand for an Aboriginal selfhood whose image was independent of the coloniser.

Land as Culture

The demands for cultural survival and the assertion of Aboriginal identity, which were central to Aboriginal rights activism in the 1970s and 1980s, can therefore be understood as engagements with intersecting contemporary discourses that problematised Western culture, in implicating its role both in individual psychological oppression generally, and colonial oppression specifically. This is most evident in the way that Aboriginal cultural identity was bound together with rights to land in this period: building on critiques of Western modernity, activists were able to assert the spiritual relationship of Aboriginal people to land as proof of the richness and value of Aboriginal culture and identity, in a way that would not have made sense prior to the problematisation of Western culture and its logics of modernity.

While Aboriginal rights activists had made earlier claims for preserving Aboriginal culture, the 1970s saw a shift towards the demand for cultural survival as a right. Reflecting increasingly widespread international norms around the rights of indigenous peoples, these claims asserted that, as indigenous Australians within a colonial context, Aboriginal people had the right to maintain their culture apart from the 'mainstream' of society. FCAATSI, which moved

---

[32] Ibid., 115.
[33] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 209.

to change its name to the National Aboriginal and Islander Liberation Movement (NAILM) in 1978, made this pluralist ethic clear in a proposal for NAILM's constitution:

> We wish to reaffirm here the right of Aboriginal and Island populations to experiment with and adopt their own self-governing, development and defence programmes. These policies should not be forced to correspond with national, economic and socio-political structures of the moment. Rather, the transformation of the dominant national society is not possible, if there are groups, such as Aborigines and Island people, who do not feel free to command their own destiny. This must be done in spite of the traditional well-trodden paths of the dominant national society.[34]

Accordingly, the primary principles of NAILM's constitution were:

> (i) To ensure the revival, resurgence, propagation [*sic*] and promotion of the universal right of Aboriginal and Torres Island culture, our cultural values and civilizations, to survive.
>
> (ii) To bring to light the common and collective heritage of Aboriginal and Islander brotherhood.[35]

Within this assertion of the universal right to culture was an implicit suggestion of the importance of cultural revival and group consciousness in achieving self-determination and Aboriginal liberation. As the preamble to the proposal inferred, it was the increasing awareness that Aboriginal individuals formed part of a collective Aboriginal people that drove their resistance to colonialism:

> Australian Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders must lead their own liberation movement otherwise it ceases to be liberation. When non-Aborigines and non-Islanders pretend to represent Aborigines and Islanders… a new colonial situation is established. This is yet another expropriation of the Aboriginal and Islander populations' inalienable right to determine their future.
>
> Within this perspective, it is important to emphasise in all its historical significance, the growing ethnic consciousness observable at present among Aboriginal and Islander societies throughout the continent. More of our peoples are assuming direct control over their defence against ethnocidal and genocidal policies of the national society.[36]

A clear relationship was drawn here between Aboriginal self-determination, resistance to colonialism and the strengthening of a collective Aboriginal identity. Calls for cultural revival were thus predicated on this understanding of resistance through reinforcement of collective cultural identity.

---

[34] NAILM, Proposed Constitutional Amendments, Papers of Joe McGinness MS3718, Box 3, AIATSIS.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.

At the same time, while claims for cultural survival were increasingly made in terms of rights, they were nevertheless grounded in an earlier discourse that assumed the more fundamental psychological need for individuals to belong to a group, which was by this period almost exclusively defined by culture rather than race. Thus, FCAATSI's policy on culture was framed as an attempt to secure the pride of individual Aboriginal people:

> Colonisation by whites of our land had destroyed most of our culture to the extent to where it is almost non-existent today. Our responsibility now is to rebuild what is left in order to regain what is lost, for a person without a claim to culture is a non-entity with no pride or dignity.[37]

More specifically, this linkage of individual pride to culture reflected an increasingly prominent discourse of the psychological self in terms of Eriksonian identity, which required both identification with the cultural values of its group, and recognition of this identification by the group – a realisation of self through group belonging. Thus, FCAATSI noted in 1968 that "there is a growth of 'Aboriginality', of the desire to identify as Aborigines and to find one's identity in such identification".[38] Calls for cultural revival likewise suggested the instinctive psychological desire of individuals to affirm their identity through culture:

> Attempts are being made in parts of Australia to revive and restore the culture of our forefathers… This cultural rebirth is a must if Aborigines are to have an identity and pride of race. What is hoped also is that there will be a chain reaction among the Aboriginal people to [*sic*] and be a spontaneous acceptance of the culture, especially now that the Aboriginal Nation is born. We are confident that the Aboriginal Culture will be a vital part of the Aboriginal Nation.[39]

The demand for the revival of Aboriginal culture thus reflected and reinforced a parallel discourse of identity that posited the innate human need for collective belonging.

It was this framing of culture as a psychological need, not just a legal right, which allowed for land rights to take on a new significance in Aboriginal rights activism. While demands for land rights in this period were certainly often made in legal and economic terms, the spiritual aspect of Aboriginal claims to land was almost always asserted in these claims. In fact, it was this emphasis on the spiritual importance of land that led to a move away from economic arguments, which had occurred far more frequently in the decades prior. As Gordon Bryant

---

[37] FCAATSI, Policy on Culture, 6 March 1978. Papers of Joe McGinness MS 3718, Box 2, AIATSIS.
[38] Quoted in Burgmann, *Power, Profit and Protest*, 56.
[39] Federation of United Aboriginals Councils Conference, Lismore, 29 Nov 1975. Records of the AUS MS 2412, Box 391, NLA.

contended: "Land rights for the Aboriginal people is not a materialist aspiration, but a spiritual need. Aboriginal people obtain spiritual refreshment from their land".[40] Thus, while activists did acknowledge the economic benefits of land rights, their emphasis remained on claiming right to land because of its centrality to Aboriginal identity:

> They will not acknowledge as consequential in the least, the intrinsic spiritual relationship with the land that makes the concept of ownership to an Aboriginal, far more profound than that of mere possession.
>
> They will not concede that which is known in the innermost soul of every Aboriginal, that the land is his spiritual temple, the very centre of his heritage, his culture, and his existence.
>
> As far as the State Governments are concerned, mining and business interests… are ruthlessly pursued in total disregard of the cultural heritage and basic human rights of the Aboriginal people.[41]

By contrasting the difference between white settler conceptions of land as an economic object, and Aboriginal understandings of land as a cultural and spiritual need, activists framed the demand for land as a right because of its existential significance to Aboriginal collective identity, and thus ultimately, to the selfhood of individual Aboriginal people. In this vein, the Northern Land Councils, campaigning against the Hawke government's proposed changes to the land rights model in 1985, claimed:

> As traditional Aboriginal people we feel you are wanting to take away the spirit life and power that existed before the whiteman came. In Aboriginal terms it is another way of killing us. The land is our "bone" not the flesh because it goes deeper than that. Cultural spirits control our land and if you take away the power to control this land you are taking away our spirit.[42]

In another submission, they noted how the importance of ancestral lands for Aboriginal people's wellbeing was such that they were determined to return to outstations, despite the poor conditions due to government negligence:

> The movement to outstations represents Aboriginal determination to repair the damage to their culture which was a result of the policy of forced assimilation. It exemplifies the desire of Aborigines to strengthen their cultural and spiritual ties to their traditional land.

---

[40] Gordon Bryant, Address given to ACTU Congress, 3 Sep 1971. Papers of Gordon Bryant MS 8256, Box 178, NLA.
[41] NAC, 'Noonkanbah: A struggle for rights', 8.
[42] N.T. Land Rights Campaign, Northern, Central and Tiwi Land Councils, 22 Feb 1985. Papers of Gordon Bryant MS 8256, Box 177, NLA.

It is attachment to traditional lands which sustains and nourishes the outstation movement. The land serves as a spiritual and economic base for the development of healthy and culturally satisfying lifestyles.[43]

In doing so, the relationship between Aboriginal people and the land was framed as *the* defining feature of Aboriginality. This was articulated as more than a simple claim to indigeneity, but as an assertion of the co-dependent, co-constitutive relationship between Aboriginal people and the land. This unique relationship was often expressed in characterising the land as a 'mother', or as the originary source. Thus, a letter to the *Black Protest Committee* newsletter, titled 'Cultural Revival Is Survival', asserted Aboriginal right to land and thereby cultural survival as "[t]he basic human right of every tribe, clan and individual, across our nation, living in harmony with the law of the land our mother since time immemorial".[44] Likewise, *Black Liberation,* reporting on the 1975 land rights conference in Cairns under the heading 'The Land is Our Mother', contended:

> "What rights have we got to the land?" We have got every right. We all know that the land is our Mother, The Trees, the dirt, the birds, everything on the land is put there to protect us, to look after us…
>
> Now brothers and sisters, think for a while – where is the land? Is it inside you? It is around you to protect you – to keep the pigs off your back. It *is* inside all of us. Don't ever think it's not.[45]

The claim to the existential significance of land for Aboriginal people was made explicit. By the same token, as the land protected Aboriginal people, Aboriginal people were endowed with particular responsibilities to protect the land, because of this mutually constitutive relationship:

> [T]he land… is our mother's and father's guts. It is their blood that flows in our veins, their bone structures and their love and affection and their caring and sharing and it is through them, our ancestors, that we exist today.
>
> The Sacred Sites to Aboriginal people is priceless. The land of Australia is priceless to us, the Aboriginal people…

---

[43] Northern, Central and Tiwi Land Councils, An open letter to ALP Caucus Members, 22 March 1985. Papers of Gordon Bryant MS 8256, Box 178, NLA.

[44] Kevin and Monica Wyman, Letters, *Black Protest Committee Newsletter* 1 no. 3 (Sep 1982).

[45] Cheryl Buchanan and Lionel Lacey, 'Conference in Cairns: The Land is our Mother', *Black Liberation,* no. 1 (Nov 1975): 1.

> It's our business and it's our right to speak out because the dreaming time went right
> through here from Fremantle. They started their journey from here, they returned back into their
> mothers. Those Sacred grounds where they came out of up there belong to the Aboriginal race.
> It's got to be protected.[46]

In this way, by framing land as a spiritual rather than simply material need, Aboriginal rights activists made a case for the significance and value of Aboriginal culture *because* and not in spite of its difference to Western culture and its logics of modernity.

In doing so, Aboriginal rights activists engaged with the critiques of modernity which had been in circulation for many decades, and which had come to the fore in the late 1960s. In particular, as earlier chapters have discussed, the 'rise' of culture as a category of knowledge from the 1930s was intimately related to concerns about the psychological, and therefore social, effects of modernity, particularly defined in terms of industrial capitalism. Thus, the critiques of Western culture offered by popular anthropological works such as those of Mead implicitly centred on cultural norms such as competitiveness, materialism, and excessive individualism or lack of social feeling. For instance, Mead approvingly described the Arapesh society of Papua New Guinea as an egalitarian and peaceful "social order that substitutes responsiveness to the concerns of others, and attentiveness to the needs of others, for aggressiveness, initiative, competitiveness, and possessiveness – the familiar motivations upon which our culture depends".[47] Mead likewise made this implicit critique in a comparison of North American and Manus culture:

> Like America, Manus has not yet turned from the primary business of making a living to the
> less immediate interest of the conduct of life as an art. As in America, work is respected and
> industry and economic success is the measure of the man. The dreamer who turns aside from
> fishing and trading and so makes a poor showing at the next feast, is despised as a weakling. Artists
> they have none, but like Americans, they, richer than their neighbours, buy their neighbours'
> handiwork. To the arts of leisure, conversation, story telling, music and dancing, friendship and
> love making, they give scant recognition.[48]

---

[46] Open Letter from the Fringedwellers of Swan Valley, 'Aboriginal Land Rights', *CARE Newsletter* no. 5 (June/July 1983).

[47] Mead, *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*, 15.

[48] Margaret Mead, *Growing Up in New Guinea* (New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1930), 8.

In this way, anthropological texts of this period reflected a concern with the alienation of modern life that both eroded communal feeling and also thwarted the 'fullness' of individual life.

Such critiques were not explicitly anti-capitalist, unsurprising given the increasing intolerance towards communism by Western nations in this period. However, they offered a discursive space in which capitalism could be problematised as a cultural issue causing psychological and thus social harm. It was this discourse that underpinned the more overt critiques of capitalism which gained prominence from the late 1950s, particularly from the Marxist Frankfurt School. Pointing to the role of consumerism in producing 'mass culture' and thus conformity, this discourse was more thoroughly anti-modern in its suspicion of technology, which had once seemed to offer the promise of individual freedom and was now revealed as complicit in its loss. In particular, where the capacity of technology to increase living standards was once lauded as a good, it was now theorised as a means by which the desire for freedom was replaced by the satisfaction of consumption. Thus, Marcuse suggested:

> The growing productivity of labor creates an increasing surplus product which, whether privately or centrally appropriated and distributed, allows an increased consumption – notwithstanding the increased diversion of productivity. As long as this constellation prevails, it reduces the use-value of freedom; there is no reason to insist on self-determination if the administered life is the comfortable and even the "good" life.[49]

In this way, the logics of modernity which drove consumerism were likewise implicated in the psychological alienation that thwarted individual freedom.

More specifically, it was technology's role in the rationalisation of human life – that is, the 'rational administration' of human life – that was understood as pivotal to this process of psychological domination. Turning again to Marcuse, he claimed:

> Technology has become the great vehicle of reification – reification in its most mature and effective form. The social position of the individual and his relation to others appear not only to be determined by objective qualities and laws, but these qualities and laws seem to lose their mysterious and uncontrollable character; they appear as calculable manifestations of (scientific)

---

[49] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 53.

rationality. The world tends to become the stuff of total administration, which absorbs even the administrators. The web of domination has become the web of Reason itself.[50]

In these terms, the cultural contingency of social relations undermined the claim of rationalisation as a social good, which was an integral aspect of earlier functionalist social sciences. Fanon went one step further in highlighting how the claims of modernity, with its encompassing logics of scientism, capitalism and rationalisation, were central to the legitimatisation of colonial government. Thus, the psychological alienation engendered by modernity was not a uniform process, but was racially inflected and, as a result, nothing less than the complete rejection of modernity's values was required to bring about liberation from colonialism. The demand for sovereignty by Aboriginal rights activists from the 1970s was thus more than a call for more or new kinds of rights – it was an explicit rejection of the legitimacy of colonial forms of governance and administration, and thus of the Western social order more generally, and it did so by engaging existing and longstanding concerns about the effects of industrial capitalism on human life, the flaws of a culture generated from such a social order, and fears that such a society was ultimately harmful to the individual.

The Case of Sovereignty

One of the clearest implications of the new discourse of cultural identity and its problematisation of Western culture for Aboriginal rights claims is the emergence of demands for Aboriginal sovereignty that arose from the late 1970s. What has largely been missed by the scholarship that details this rise, however, is the way that initial claims for Aboriginal sovereignty mobilised a discourse that problematised the modern values of rational administration which formed the basis of the settler state's claim to legitimacy.[51] In particular, as Aboriginal rights activists increasingly asserted the value of preserving Aboriginal culture, and as this assertion was woven into a new critique of colonial power, a space began to open for a more far-reaching critique of Western culture and thereby its wholesale rejection.

Building on the special relationship of Aboriginal people to land, activists suggested that the failure of the white settler culture to understand its obligations to nature necessarily placed

---

[50] Ibid., 172.
[51] The growing appreciation for Aboriginal culture as a counterpoint to modernity is acknowledged, though not tied to claims for sovereignty, in Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, 326; McGregor, *Indifferent Inclusion*, 129–34.

its legitimacy for governing in doubt. The National Coalition of Aboriginal Organisations, a short-lived body formed after the dissolution of the NAC by the Hawke government, called a conference on land rights in 1987, in anticipation of Bicentenary celebrations the following year. Pat Dodson, speaking at the conference as director of the Central Land Council, made this connection between the differing relationships to land held by Aboriginal and settler culture, and how this rendered settler law incapable of accommodating Aboriginal sovereignty:

> Is this not enough evidence of the genocide our people are suffering…? The land had quite literally been taken from under Aboriginal people, and the numerous massacres that took place by white settlers did nothing to win respect for colonial law. Reactionary forces today, in governments, mining and pastoral companies, and political parties continue to use the nonsense of the terra nullis [*sic*] argument to refuse to acknowledge Aboriginal prior ownership of the land, and thus their sovereignty. The Aboriginal view of the land, as something sacred, of holding the land in trust for future generations, is not admitted by these forces, who see land purely as a commodity.[52]

Likewise, FCAATSI noted the way that settler understandings of land eliminated the possibility of Aboriginal Australians becoming integrated under settler law without effectively submitting to cultural erasure:

> The political system that we live under is a Westminster System and through this has been created laws totally alien to Aboriginal peoples and their laws. The constitution has no section where rights are granted to the Aboriginal people. It also has no respect for their ownership of this land, it has only made them "British subjects". Both major parties operate within the confines of these guidelines laid down by the constitution which in my opinion is racist and determental [sic] to minority groups such as us.[53]

Furthermore, the inability of settler culture and law to conceive of land as anything but a commodity was presented as proof of the illegitimacy of settler sovereignty, since its form of governing could only bring destruction both to its territory and its people:

> It is time to organize against the pigs who are killing us, killing our minds. We care for the land, the trees and the animals. When we kill meat we eat it all up. We don't chop down the trees. We only use dead wood for fire. The white man tears the ground up for his own good or to kill

---

[52] Peter Limb, 'Aboriginal Leaders Stand Firm', *CARE Newsletter,* no. 82 (March/April 1987): 26.
[53] FCAATSI Draft Policy on Political Parties, c. 1970s. Papers of Joe McGinness MS 3718, Box 2, AIATSIS.

people. They dig and blast the rocks and ground. To me this brings death. How can the spirit of the earth love these people?[54]

For this reason, while many claims to sovereignty stressed the prior existence of Aboriginal peoplehood before invasion, these claims did not simply react to the legal construct of *terra nullius* and argue in terms of settler law, but went further in suggesting that this prior existence – the durability and longevity of Aboriginal culture which was the result of its relationship to land – justified the rejection of settler law for Aboriginal sovereignty. Thus, Dodson, speaking once again for the Aboriginal organisations of Central Australia, responded to proposals for a treaty in 1981 by highlighting, first, the incommensurability of Aboriginal and settler law, and second, the particular capacity of Aboriginal culture to provide a form of government that was both enduring and sustainable:

> It is impossible for us as people who continue to exercise our law to agree to a white law taking precedence over it. It is also impossible for the two laws to be mixed as they are based upon completely different cultural premises…
>
> We assert that Aboriginal people have lived in the continent now known as Australia since the beginning of time in complete harmony with all things natural.
>
> Tribal groups making up the Aboriginal nation occupied the entire continent and Tasmania and governed it under law according to our religion which enabled our society to function effectively… for at least 40,000 years before the arrival of the European invaders.[55]

Likewise, the resilience and fitness of Aboriginal law was contrasted with the insubstantiality, and thus inaptitude, of settler law:

> Since time began Aboriginal Laws never change – but whiteman's law changes everytime a Government changes or changes its mind.[56]

In this way, Aboriginal rights activists made demands for Aboriginal sovereignty in terms of both the failures of settler government and the strengths of Aboriginal culture and law. As the members of the Yugngora community stressed in their objection to the mining development at Noonkanbah, it was Aboriginal culture and law that provided the knowledge

---

[54] Lionel G. Lacey, 'The Liberation Struggle: It is time to organize', *Black Liberation* 2, no. 1 (Apr 1976): 3.

[55] Pat Dodson, on behalf of Central Australian Aboriginal Organisations, 'Makarrata: The Central Australian Response', *CLC Land Rights News*, no. 15 (c. 1981): 12.

[56] N.T. Land Rights Campaign, Northern, Central and Tiwi Land Councils, 22 Feb 1985. Papers of Gordon Bryant MS 8256, Box 177, NLA.

for governing the land and its people in the right way, and which therefore legitimated Aboriginal ownership of the land:

The government says it's not a sacred site: how does the government know that? We were born in this country and we know it's a very important place.

We know the land. We were born from this earth and that's how we know. We want our kids to live the same way when we are passed, by the sacred sites, by the law, by the land.

This land, we didn't find it today: it's been used by the old people for a long time. We're looking for that land to be used by the kids again. So we don't want the government to push us round. We want to live in the same place where we were born.

We've got laws for every meat and every fruit in the land. The Europeans don't know. We can't let the miners come in to wreck our place, then the fish, the snake, the goanna and the fruit won't come back after the wet season...

The government says they own the land. We say the government is not owning any land. This place belongs to aboriginal people.[57]

Aboriginal rights activists also challenged settler sovereignty by pointing to another feature of Aboriginal culture that was distinct from settler law. At a forum on self-determination in 1987, Shane Houston spoke on behalf of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Organisation, and enumerated the ways in which settler forms of government had impacted Aboriginal health. One of his key points was that Aboriginal society which was fundamentally structured by a collectivist ethos, and the imposition of individualist values and forms of government by the settler state had proved incredibly harmful to Aboriginal wellbeing:

The changes which have been imposed upon indigenous people have raised new issues for us. One such issue is the issue of individualism and its relation to the rights and position of the community. The introduction of individualism, in the occidental context, has affected our customs. It has been used to disrupt our ways, it has been used to fragment out life, our kinship systems, our values, our laws, our institutions of marriage, our economics, education, health-care systems and justice.

Importantly, another issue of central concern is the repression of our indigenous philosophies and practices of government, and the imposition of alien systems of government on

---

[57] Press Release by Chairmen of Yugngora community, 7 March 1980. Quoted in *Care Newsletter,* no. 18 (March 1980): 13.

168

our peoples and our communities. This has impacted on our ways of governing ourselves or deciding for ourselves.[58]

As Houston inferred, the individualist values of settler culture were incommensurable with the collectivist ethos of Aboriginal culture, and the imposition of the former was intrinsically destructive to the latter. The NAILM also highlighted the significance of collectivism to Aboriginal culture, and claimed it was vital to preserve this ethos from destruction in order to strengthen collective cultural belonging, and thereby create more effective political resistance:

> (iii) To recognise that the only viable political ideology in our historical and contemporary existence is the political ideology of our Aboriginal and Islander spiritual communalism and unity.
>
> This ideology is historically our cultural heritage of our common spiritual relationship with the land; our common historical experiences at the hands of colonial oppression; our common concern for one another; our sense of belonging together; our sense of social justice, economic progress and viability for all; and the indigenous Aboriginal and Islander political process of participatory democracy.[59]

This assertion of the importance of collectivism in Aboriginal culture reflected a wider understanding of Aboriginal peoplehood as a pre-determined or pre-ordained collectivity (which was implied by its unique relationship to land). As Houston continued, this collectivism was fundamental to Aboriginality, and was fundamentally oppositional to settler culture:

> Despite oppression and attempts at indoctrination in colonialists [sic] schools, our inherent belief that the members of our communities collectively have the right to rule, that an individual's responsibility and right is to protect himself by guarding this collective right, remains.
>
> The concept and practice of collectivism, or community… reflects the authority of the people. Their authority comes from our creator as a collective entity.[60]

This framing of Aboriginal culture as distinct from settler culture due to its special relationship to land as well as its collectivist ethos provided a critique of settler sovereignty which engaged the longstanding ambivalence towards modernity which came to fore in this period. Building on the rejection of claims that Western culture was superior, Aboriginal rights activists began

---

[58] Shane Houston, Self Determination: Indigenous People Speak Regional Forum, Melbourne, 29 June 1986. In *AAL INC Newsletter* (April 1987): 8-9.

[59] NAILM, Proposed Constitutional Amendments. Papers of Joe McGinness MS 3718, Box 3, AIATSIS.

[60] Shane Houston, Self Determination: Indigenous People Speak Regional Forum, Melbourne, 29 June 1986. Quoted in *AAL INC Newsletter* (April 1987): 8-9.

to assert the superiority of Aboriginal culture *over* Western culture *because* it held values antithetical to modernity. In particular, activists highlighted the encouragement of competition and lack of empathy as a failing of settler culture:

> They work hard to live by the white man's standards, but they lack the spirit of competition, the required ruthlessness of the pale brothers. They refuse to rise on the social ladder at the expense of others.
>
> These complacent, satisfied people, called the Australian Aborigines, had until the advent of whities, a social structure and way of living envied by a great many people. Yet these same people seek to destroy this because they are unable to attain this form of living themselves.[61]

As this passage suggests, the Aboriginal ethos of collectivism was something to be envied, unlike the 'ruthlessness' of individualism. Likewise, the notion that Western culture was superior because it encouraged development and progress was deemed a falsehood when compared to its inability to provide the kind of sustainable life achieved by Aboriginal culture:

> In our schools children are taught that the Western way of life is the superior one… All they learn about is that Captain Cook discovered Australia and how whites have done so much to 'improve' this country, yet this is all lies. The real history of Australia is that of the Aboriginal people who have lived here for thousands of years, in harmony with each other and the environment around them; which is something white society has never achieved.[62]

This rejection of modern development was made more explicit in critiques of Western conceptions of land, and nature more generally, as exploitative and materialistic. By contrast, it was Aboriginal culture which offered a better conception of how people could relate to land, and the preservation of Aboriginal culture was thus posited as beneficial to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people alike. As a pamphlet produced for National Aborigines' Day in 1971 claimed, it was "the strengths of [Aboriginal] culture, with its stress on spiritual and human values, discounting the material ones around us" that allowed for "saner conservation policies for the land and its wildlife".[63] Thus, calls for land rights also stressed the preferability of Aboriginal government of land over that of the settler government, which was by its nature beholden to exploitative interests:

---

[61] Editor, 'What Does the Future Hold?, *The Koorier* 1, no. 9 (1969): 6.
[62] Aboriginal Land Rights Committee, 'Blacks Demands '76', Melbourne, 1976. Records of the AUS MS 2412, Box 391, NLA.
[63] National Aborigines' Day Observance Committee, Sydney, 1971. National Aborigines' Day ephemera, NLA.

The Aboriginal people will watch over the mineral wealth of Australia, protecting it from overseas exploiters and the so-called Australians who would sell us out. We will battle to protect our mineral wealth for the benefit of future generations of all Australian people.[64]

Thus, Aboriginal culture and its values for governing were framed as superior to that of the settler government, whose legitimacy was undermined by its inability to truly govern for all. Calls for Aboriginal sovereignty thus reflected not only a growing legalism in rights-claiming, but also the development of a discourse of cultural collective belonging as resistance to colonial erasure and which, together with the problematisation of Western culture, opened a space for Aboriginal rights activists not only to demand the right to cultural survival, but also to reject settler culture and its forms of governing in preference for their own.

Conclusion

As with the women's rights movement, Aboriginal rights-claiming during this period can be understood in terms of emerging discourses of selfhood that denaturalised the relationship between self and society and reconfigured it in terms of power. However, while the claims made by the two movements were animated by a repudiation of this power, and were both made in terms of psychological violence, Aboriginal rights claims specifically engaged a discourse that brought knowledges of the self as a cultural product together with problematisations of Western culture's claim to universality in order to articulate psychological violence in terms of cultural erasure. This was particularly enabled by the coalescing of longstanding anxieties about modern life into explicit rejections of modernity and its terms of rationalisation and scientism, critiques which opened a space not only for more obvious claims to cultural identity, but also demands for land and sovereignty too.

Thus, the development of Aboriginal rights-claiming over the twentieth century can be understood not simply in terms of an increasingly particularist, or indeed separatist, ethic. Rather, as this chapter has demonstrated, earlier discourses that placed group belonging at the heart of individual selfhood allowed for the maintenance of this group to be articulated as a form of resistance within newer discourses that reconceived Western culture and its claim to universality as an act of power. Moreover, thinking through this politicisation of

---

[64] Black Protest Committee, Support Cultural Revival Festival poster, Brisbane, 1982. NLA.

Western culture and the response to it in terms of cultural identity as resistance also highlights how this discourse was able to accommodate claims to land and sovereignty, in ways that have been largely unrecognised. Ultimately, then, this chapter suggests that the kinds of political demands made possible by the mobilisation of identity within Aboriginal rights-claiming were both more numerous and more varied than existing scholarship allows.

Discussion

The aim of this thesis was to reconsider current accounts of identity politics through a historicisation of the discourse of identity. As my research has demonstrated, the discourses of self and society through which 'identity' developed offered new ways of making political claims and, in this chapter, I want to fold these logics back into existing discussions about the effects of a politics of identity. Specifically, this chapter will consider three broad logics of selfhood that were mobilised in activists' rights claims – that it was a psychological self, an intersubjective self, and a cultural self – and think through the kinds of political possibilities they created for activists. However, in order to do so, I want to suggest that what underlines these claims about self is an ethic of authenticity, and identifying this ethic allows us to more easily theorise what problem the discourse of identity claimed to resolve and how.

Questions of authenticity are of course not new to discussions of identity politics. In particular, Taylor's seminal work "The Politics of Recognition" is often a starting point for defining and theorising the relationship between authenticity and identity, and it is thus worth exploring his thinking in some detail. For Taylor, the modern subject must be understood as the product of a gradual interiorisation of selfhood and what he identifies as an ethics of authenticity is derived from this new significance of the inner self, in concert with a reaction against the mechanism and rationalisation of modern life which he attributes to the Romantics. Taylor, like most other historians of authenticity, points to Rousseau as one of the earliest proponents of this ethic, in his insistence that nature was the source of moral good, while society, in encouraging the individual to follow social rather than natural dictates, was a corrupting force on the self's capacity to know this good. Thus, in Rousseau's terms, it was not the cultivation of rational thought but the authentic inner self that allowed one to perceive what nature had marked as good.[1] This understanding of nature was fundamental to the Romantics, who moreover theorised authenticity as an *expressive* act; that is, the authentic self had to be *realised*, made real through action and expression, and was, therefore, an ongoing creation. This expressive authenticity not only suggests that each individual is different but that this difference means each has an original path to live, and that

---

[1] Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 370; Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity*, 73.

it is furthermore a moral imperative to fulfil this original path, to realise one's individuality. We thus arrive at the modern ethics of self-fulfilment, self-realisation or, in other words, authenticity.

For Taylor, tracing this history of selfhood forms part of his broader project of defending the ethics of authenticity, which he believes is a worthwhile, though presently corrupted, moral ideal.[2] However, in this chapter, I wish to continue thinking about the ethic of authenticity specifically as a historical discourse rather than a normative ideal, in order to theorise identity as a historical rather than simply a metaphysical object. If we take the discourse of identity as discursively bounded by an ethic of authenticity, a number of key points can be made about the kinds of political effects it has produced. First, this discourse was always bound up with psychological ideas about human sociability, and thus both naturalised and politicised the need for recognition through which activists could demand equality. Second, this authentic self was understood as profoundly intersubjective, but this did not lead to attempts to recover some autonomous self, but rather politicised it as a demand for more ethical social relations. Third, the linking of this self to culture politicised agency as a cultural product, and likewise problematised the colonial claim that agency was uniquely produced by Western culture alone. Ultimately, each of these political effects problematises existing theoretical claims that the politics of such a self is atomistic, depoliticising and reifying.

The Authentic Psychological Self

One of the key points to be made is the way in which the ethic of authenticity underlined the discourses of selfhood produced by the social and psychological sciences in this period, which were at their core concerned with the maintenance of democratic society. As earlier chapters outlined, the rise of these new fields of knowledge during the twentieth century was intimately linked with apparent challenges to democracy posed by the social changes occasioned by industrial capitalism, as well as political changes in the election of fascist and communist regimes, articulated in the language of 'alienation' and 'conformism' respectively. This relationship between the social sciences and democratic imperatives has been well-covered by the existing literature, however, what has been missed by these accounts is the

---

[2] Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 23.

way that these longstanding twin concerns regarding alienation and conformism stemmed not only from liberal discourses of the rational, autonomous self, but also from the moralisation of the authentic self, which condemned any life that was not ultimately bent towards the fulfilment of one's individuality, but which *also* posited this authentic self as the ground of equal, democratic social relations.

For instance, scholarship on 'the self' has approached this question of the relationship between the social sciences and democratic ideals from a number of standpoints. There are first those who might be said to work in the classical intellectual history tradition, who identify in particular the growth of psychological discourse, or 'therapeutic culture', during this period, which has rendered modern subjects atomistic and narcissistic, threatening social fragmentation and the decay of the public sphere. Rieff was the earliest of these critics, in suggesting that the substitution of a religious for a therapeutic culture has rendered individual commitment to communal causes not only obsolete but suspect, as the curtailment of freedom by authority.[3] Likewise, Lasch scathingly referred to a "culture of narcissism" in which people abandoned collective life and instead "retreated to purely personal pre-occupations", encouraged by a therapeutic culture that redefines social ills in terms of personal problems.[4]

However, the history of rights-claiming examined by this thesis suggests a less straightforward relationship between the ascendance of the psychological self and a disengagement from community. In particular, when we consider the discourses of self through which rights claims were being made, there is a clear understanding of this self as socially constituted; more than this, it is the very fact of this awareness that brings the self into political contestation. For both Aboriginal and women's rights groups over this period, the problematisation of the earlier liberal model of the disengaged, rational self by new scientific knowledges underlines the rearticulation of their demands. Furthermore, these new demands do not inscribe an atomistic, apolitical discourse of the so-called 'therapeutic' self; rather, they invoke the authentic self, one whose individuality is guaranteed by their immersion in community. As I

---

[3] Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic*.
[4] Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*, Revised edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1991), 4.

will suggest, this authentic self was produced by the social and psychological sciences during this period as an answer to the 'problem' of democracy in modern life.

While it is commonplace to note that identity politics has historically been driven by discourses of authenticity, self-expression and self-realisation,[5] it is rarely acknowledged how these discourses themselves were underlined by logics which linked authenticity and the development of the individual to broader democratic imperatives.[6] More specifically, these discourses were building on the earlier conceptualisation of selfhood and culture that consistently centred the authentic self as a precondition of human sociability and thus democratic capacity. Erikson's mature identity was tolerant of difference and committed to the duties of citizenship. For Allport, the mature personality eschewed conventionality for a creative life, but in doing so would "embrace a higher moral code".[7] Maslow's self-actualised individual understood their interdependent relationship to the world and were thus 'other-directed' and strove to contribute to their community.

As my thesis demonstrates, it was precisely the claim made by these scientific discourses of the self to solve the tension between the individual and the social that proved so congenial to the early rights claims of both Aboriginal and women's rights activists. As we have seen, women's rights activists both before and during the advent of 'identity politics' made claims for rights to the personality not only in the name of authentic individuality but also in the name of subsequent authentic – and thus equal – social relations, and this becomes evident when we consider the extent to which their discourses of selfhood engaged contemporary social and psychological knowledges. This logic carried through from the early calls for marriage as an equal, 'fulfilling' partnership, to the later demands for the transformation of sex roles in order to secure free personalities and thus detoxify existing gender relations. In

---

[5] Taylor, 'The Politics of Recognition'; Kwame Anthony Appiah, 'Identity, Authenticity, Survival: Multicultural Societies and Social Reproduction', in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann and Charles Taylor (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 149–63; Fraser, 'Recognition without Ethics?'; Markell, *Bound by Recognition*; Moran, *Identity and Capitalism*; Phelan, *Identity Politics*, 42.

[6] But see Rose, *Governing the Soul*, 110, 258; Rose, *Inventing Our Selves*, 22; Farrell, *The Spirit of the Sixties*, 206; Cushman, *Constructing The Self, Constructing America*, 258; Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology*, 239–65.

[7] Ian A. M. Nicholson, *Inventing Personality: Gordon Allport and the Science of Selfhood* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2003), 339.

both cases, the transformation of the self was not framed simply as an individual good but also a social one.

Likewise, the Aboriginal rights movement, in its demand for the right to culture, engaged with new concepts of culture that took up psychological precepts of individual selfhood and group affirmation, and placed culture at the heart of this exchange. Thus, demands for cultural identity also mobilised a discourse of authentic selfhood through cultural survival as a prerequisite for authentic, equal relations across cultures. Early claims for cultural pride as fostering civic responsibility shifted to new demands for cultural identity as paramount for decolonisation, and thus for a reconciliation between Aboriginal and settler Australia. The complexity of the discourses of self engaged by these activists is more easily recognised when we consider how they were constituted by particular scientific knowledges which were always imbricated in the project of defending democratic society.

The socially-oriented aspect of the discourse of the authentic self offers one way to rethink identity politics today: specifically, it makes the claim for democratic equality on very particular grounds. One of the key debates about identity politics regards its assertion of the right to recognition, and whether this right is either normatively or politically justified. As I recounted earlier, one of the biggest proponents of this right is Taylor, whose history of authentic selfhood is precisely aimed to prove its importance as a contemporary moral ideal, thus upholding the claim that a lack of recognition, or misrecognition, can cause serious harm to the individual.[8] Honneth is another noted defender of the right to recognition, and echoes Taylor in claiming that "denial of recognition is injurious because it impairs... persons in their positive understanding of self – an understanding acquired by intersubjective means".[9] These defences will be very familiar to my readers, repeating as they do the claims made by psychologists decades ago.

However, in treating identity as a metaphysical object only, these scholars look to philosophical insights, particularly Hegel's work on subjectivity, to make these claims. Neither

---

[8] Taylor, 'The Politics of Recognition', 25.
[9] Axel Honneth, 'Integrity and Disrespect: Principles of a Conception of Morality Based on the Theory of Recognition', *Political Theory* 20, no. 2 (May 1992): 188–89.

think through the implications of how this right to recognition, as well as their own engagements with it, are also working within a specific historical discourse of the self as a *psychological*, as well as authentic, being. Why this matters becomes evident when we consider one of the strongest critiques of their argument, made by Fraser. For Fraser, the approach taken by Taylor and Honneth renders recognition a matter of ethics rather than justice; that is, a matter of the good life rather than moral rights. This in turn problematises claims for recognition because they must involve "qualitative assessments of the relative worth of various cultural practices, traits and identities, they depend on historically specific horizons of value, which cannot be universalized".[10] Instead, Fraser suggests "eschewing psychologization" and understanding recognition as a matter of justice, what she defines as equal participatory status or participatory parity:

> Conceiving misrecognition as status subordination, it locates the wrong in social relations, not in individual or interpersonal psychology. To be misrecognized, in this view, is not simply to be thought ill of, looked down on, or devalued in others' conscious attitudes or mental beliefs. It is rather to be denied the status of a full partner in social interaction and prevented from participating as a peer in social life.[11]

It is important to note that Fraser, as well as Taylor and Honneth, are working within normative political theory, and all three are thus concerned with identity politics as it relates to norms of governing, while I am concerned with it as a way of doing politics. Nevertheless, I contend that Fraser's suggestion of a de-psychologised, morally-derived right of recognition fundamentally misunderstands how identity politics and its claim for recognition works; that is, what this claim for recognition *does*. What Fraser assumes in her formulation of recognition as justice is that the claim to equal participation is acknowledged, or is 'intelligible' in Foucaultian terms, which is necessary in order for subordination to be understood as unjust:

> What makes misrecognition morally wrong, in this view, is that it denies some individuals and groups the possibility of participating on a par with others in social interaction. The norm of participatory parity invoked here is nonsectarian in the required sense. It can justify claims for recognition as normatively binding on all who agree to abide by fair terms of interaction under conditions of value pluralism.[12]

---

[10] 'Recognition without Ethics?', 28.
[11] Ibid., 27.
[12] Ibid., 26.

However, in taking a normative approach, Fraser has effectively put the cart before the horse in suggesting that claims for equality are always already recognised as just, when the first moment of politics is instead the act of revealing as unjust that which was previously conceived as just.[13] Historically, and even contemporaneously, those in power have *not* recognised the equality of those being oppressed, because of the way this inequality has been normalised and naturalised, and without this the injustice of oppression cannot make sense.

Conversely, one of the reasons identity politics could make a claim for the equality of its claimants is precisely due to its appeal to scientific knowledges, which equalised all human subjects as psychological beings, with universal, normal and natural needs for recognition, and posited this as an objective, provable fact.[14] As Thompson has suggested, Fraser's critique of recognition as a non-generalisable ethical claim can be countered by positing a mode of self-realisation that is based on universal conditions, and this is precisely what the scientific discourse of identity offered.[15] Likewise, as I have demonstrated, the claim for equality made by the demand for recognition was never solely made in terms of individual rights but also as a social need. Within this framework, the norm of individuality could be naturalised as a human trait and also politicised as a condition of social stability. Fraser's suggestion that the politics of recognition can be rescued from the psychologisation of identity is thus missing the point that the claim to equality residing in the right to recognition has historically rested on its appeal to scientific, objective knowledges of the relationship between the psychological self and democratic society, and through which equal, authentic, *ethical* social relations could be interpellated as a human need, and thereby politicised as a human right.

The Authentic Intersubjective Self

If we consider identity politics in historical terms as the mobilisation of the discourse of authentic (psychological) selfhood, it also becomes possible to rethink identity politics as a reimagining of freedom and equality. In light of the new knowledges of the individual and

---

[13] I am following Rancière's approach to 'the political' here. See Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

[14] We might consider how the post-truth, post-expert age is problematising this claim.

[15] Simon Thompson, *The Political Theory of Recognition: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge UK: Polity Press, 2006), 38.

social relations produced during this period, liberal understandings of agency were profoundly problematised, and demanded reconceptualisation. As numerous scholars have noted, beginning with Freud and his revelation of the unconscious motivations of human action, the very possibility of the liberal model of rational, autonomous selfhood was brought sharply into question throughout the course of the twentieth century.[16] What was *also* problematised, however, was the ethic of authenticity, which relied upon the possibility of an inner, true self, who was free and self-determining precisely because it was internally rather than externally derived. However, as the external environment became increasingly central to scientific and popular conceptions of selfhood, this conception of freedom had to be rethought. The discourses of rights-claiming in this thesis show us what this looked like.

One of the important points to be highlighted about the activists of both movements and across both time periods is that, in responding to the problematisation of the free self, activists did not reject the interrelatedness of individuals, or try to recover the possibility of liberal autonomy; rather, their demands consistently affirmed the claim that individuals were mutually constituted within culture. It was in fact precisely this mutuality that was seen to legitimate their claims for equality. Thus, as the early women's rights movement noted, the psychological relationship between mother and child was pivotal to society more largely. Likewise, the Aboriginal rights movement pointed to the way that Aboriginal selfhood was inextricably tied to white views of Aboriginality as a reason for changing those views. The increasingly intersubjective understanding of selfhood in this period allowed these groups to make stronger claims upon others, since personal relations now became the grounds for authentic selfhood.

It is interesting to compare this historical approach to identity with contemporary critiques of identity, which theorise the intersubjective nature of identity as a problem. Exemplary of the first approach is Butler, whose early work on the performativity of gender identity has profoundly influenced subsequent feminist scholarship on identity. Building on Foucault's

---

[16] Zaretsky, *Secrets of the Soul*; Anthony Elliott, *Subject to Ourselves: An Introduction to Freud, Psychoanalysis, and Social Theory* (Cambridge, Mass: Polity Press, 1996); Stuart Hall, 'Who Needs Identity?', in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (London, 2011), 1–17; Trilling, 'Authenticity and the Modern Unconscious'; Rose, *Governing the Soul*; Cushman, *Constructing The Self, Constructing America*.

theory of subjectification, in which becoming a subject also necessarily entails becoming subject to power, Butler suggests that the process of recognition is always a form of symbolic violence, since it is an attempt to identify and thus 'fix' that which has no ultimate fixed ground; and yet, despite this fundamental, inescapable misrecognition, the subject nevertheless responds to being 'named' in this way, because it is only by doing so that it can enter into social relations, and thus gain the possibility to act. As Butler contends: "Called by an injurious name, I come into social being, and because I have a certain narcissism that takes hold of any term that confers existence, I am led to embrace the terms that injure me because they constitute me socially".[17] Within this poststructuralist conception of identity, the politics of recognition inadvertently reinscribes its subjects within regimes of power and is thereby unable to offer a truly emancipatory political solution.

It is this concern with the relational character of identity as an instantiation of power that underlines critiques of identity, both from within poststructuralism and without. What unites critics of identity politics is thus an assumption that this relationality is a *problem,* more specifically because, through the discourse of authentic selfhood, this relationality is itself elided through the naturalisation of identity. As McNay notes, for instance, proponents of the politics of recognition such as Taylor, and those taking a Habermasian approach such as Benhabib, offer a communicative model of recognition that assumes the evenness of speech acts, and elides the fact that language itself is implicated in systems of power. Thus, while Taylor stresses the dialogical nature of selfhood, he does not account for how this 'dialogue' is neither neutral nor natural.[18] In other words, for critics such as McNay, identity cannot be rescued by pointing to its intersubjective nature; it is not enough to stress the relationality of identity when this very relationality is structured by power.

Yet, when we consider the way that activists engaged with discourses of authentic selfhood, they present a very different view of identity politics and this is because, as is the contention of my thesis, 'identity politics' was a historical response to the rise of new knowledges asserting the profoundly intersubjective, and thus *political*, nature of human identity and

---

[17] Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 104.
[18] McNay, *Against Recognition*, 62.

social relations. Thus, the increasingly central place of 'personality' in women's rights claims reflected the growing understanding that this personality was socially and culturally constructed, and was, therefore, subject to power. Aboriginal rights activists likewise stressed the cultural construction of selfhood as an act of power, both regulatory and emancipatory. In fact, as my research has demonstrated, the critique of 'power' was central to the activist claims of both groups. Thus, despite the general assertion that "naturalising recognition as a psychological process elides the power dynamics inherent in the process of recognition",[19] my research suggests that a psychological understanding of recognition did not simply lead activists to conceptualise inequality as a matter of private, personal relations. Rather, the claim to universal authentic selfhood contained in the discourse of recognition created space for a politicisation of social relations and a demand for their transformation.

This point is also relevant to critiques of recognition as a politics of 'suffering', which proponents suggest is an ethical good fostering more 'other-directed' political subjects. Most famous of these is Nussbaum, who suggests that political solidarity can be achieved by stressing the common vulnerability that all humans share, and that political action will follow when subjects learn to feel empathy for the suffering of others.[20] However, as a number of scholars have noted, this ethical turn, in stressing, compassion, empathy or even obligation for the Other as the grounds for politics, evacuates power from this relation and renders the self as a bystander in the Other's oppression.[21]

As an alternative, some theorists suggest rethinking what is sometimes termed a politics of 'vulnerability' that emphasises the role of the Self in reproducing power within the process of

---

[19] Ibid., 24.

[20] Martha C. Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life*, 1st ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997).

[21] Elizabeth V. Spelman, *Fruits of Sorrow: Framing Our Attention to Suffering* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998); Lilie Chouliaraki, *The Ironic Spectator: Solidarity in the Age of Post-Humanitarianism* (Cambridge ; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013); Kathleen Woodward, 'Calculating Compassion', in *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*, ed. Lauren Berlant (New York: Routledge, 2004), 59–86; Elisabeth Porter, 'Can Politics Practice Compassion?', *Hypatia* 21, no. 4 (2009): 97–123; Paul Hoggett, 'Pity, Compassion, Solidarity', in *Emotion, Politics and Society*, ed. Simon Thompson, Paul Hoggett, and Simon Clarke (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2006), 145–61.

recognition.[22] For instance, Butler's later work moved towards a more conciliatory attitude towards identity, positing instead that the task of critical theory is to distinguish between those norms of recognition that make life 'liveable' and those that do not.[23] However, her framework for determining these norms is itself based on a universalist norm; as Lloyd notes, Butler proceeds from a metaphysical assumption, based on Spinoza's notion of *conatus*, of some intrinsic desire within humans to exist, a claim that seems to undermine Butler's own critique of ontological universals and likewise posits the ethics of recognition as a metaphysical imperative. Thus, Lloyd suggests that

> to demonstrate that the desire to exist is a thoroughly social rather than metaphysical desire (or, even, one simply affected by social arrangements) Butler must… address the historicity of this idea. She has to examine the actual historical conditions of its emergence. She needs, in other words, to minimize what might be thought of as her quasi-Derridean impulse to explore ontological conditions of possibility… and to maximise the Nietzschean-Foucauldian imperative to examine precisely the kinds of assumptions this desire is predicated upon, the discourses it is locked into, the norms that configure it (and that it configures) and the implications it has for particular practices.[24]

My thesis precisely historicises the terms on which Butler theorises ethics, by noting that the ethical imperative to 'be' was universalised and also politicised through the discourse of identity and its ethic of authentic selfhood. Thus, I want to suggest that, when we consider the historical deployment of claims for recognition what we see is, in fact, the enactment of such a 'politics of vulnerability', which both stressed the ethical imperative of recognition, but also politicised it, linking psychological discourses of recognition as an objective process to new understandings of society as structured by power, and culture as mediating this power.

This critique of 'misrecognition' is also extended in another direction by scholars who point to the way that posing misrecognition as a psychological harm is ultimately politically dangerous. As work on the politics of emotion suggests, the very idea that emotions are

---

[22] Kelly Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); Markell, *Bound by Recognition*; Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London ; New York: Verso, 2006).

[23] See, e.g., *Precarious Life*; *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

[24] Moya S. Lloyd, 'Towards a Cultural Politics of Vulnerability: Precarious Lives and Ungrievable Deaths', in *Judith Butler's Precarious Politics: Critical Encounters*, ed. Terrell Carver and Samuel A. Chambers (London: Routledge, 2008), 104–5.

natural, spontaneous and authentic elides the way that the experience of suffering is itself culturally and socially structured, and that the communication of this suffering is always a political act.[25] This point underlines Fraser's critique of the 'psychologisation' of recognition since, in reducing injustice to 'authentic' feelings of injury, it becomes impossible to adjudicate between different claims for justice.[26] For Wendy Brown, one of the most salient effects of this politicisation of suffering by identity politics is that it creates identities based on injury, or "wounded attachments", which reinscribe rather than challenge the structures of domination they are critiquing. Through Nietzsche's concept of *ressentiment*, Brown explains:

> Identity politics structured by *ressentiment* reverse without subverting this blaming structure: they do not subject to critique the sovereign subject of accountability that liberal individualism presupposes, nor the economy of inclusion and exclusion that liberal universalism establishes. Thus, politicized identity that presents itself as a self-affirmation now appears as the opposite, as predicated on and requiring its sustained rejection by a "hostile external world".[27]

I would suggest that this is an unnecessarily reductive account of what identity politics can do, which becomes clear when we apply it to the history of claims-making that I have traced in this thesis. For instance, as I have demonstrated, the problematisation and subsequent rejection of the liberal sovereign subject has been fundamental to the politics of identity, which not only presupposed a psychologically-informed intersubjective self but also politicised this self in demanding equality based on ethical social relations. Likewise, the claim that identity politics is animated by a desire for liberal universal inclusion into a "white masculine middle class ideal"[28] chimes oddly with the explicitly revolutionary critique offered by activists, whose attempts to think through their identities in terms of power, and subsequent demands for 'cultural survival' or 'woman-identified women', cannot be so easily dismissed as attachments to some historical injury. In characterising identity politics as reactionary, a desire for revenge that simply reinscribes existing power relations, it seems

---

[25] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*; Lauren Berlant, ed., *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004); McNay, *Against Recognition*.
[26] Fraser, 'Recognition without Ethics?', 32.
[27] Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*, 70.
[28] Ibid., 61.

Brown's ultimate concern is that such a politics forecloses the possibility of futurity and collective political change, as she asks "What if we sought to supplant the language of 'I am'… with the language of 'I want this for us?'"[29] As I argue, however, it was precisely the implication of identity within power relations which prompted the politicisation of the relationship between the 'I' and the 'us'.

What limits these accounts is an overgeneralised approach to the term 'misrecognition' and the grounds on which it has become politicised; specifically, misrecognition does not simply name 'suffering', as Brown or Taylor have it, nor does it politicise this suffering in general terms, such as creating low 'self-esteem' or 'self-respect', as Honneth or Fraser approach it. Rather, misrecognition has been politicised through the ethic of authenticity because of the claim that it produces subjects who are not *psychologically free.* Once again, the historical development of identity as a psychological discourse becomes useful for analytical clarity: specifically, this discourse, animated by a commitment to democratic equality, reconceptualised agency as the capacity to *presume equality with other human beings*, where equality means the universal right and ability to act. The psychological conceptions of wholeness, self-esteem and self-respect which were produced in this period reflect this specific understanding of selfhood as both predisposed towards agency and autonomy, but also highly susceptible to external factors that suppress this natural process. In these terms, recognition was specifically implicated in power structures, and the categories through which subjects could be recognised were not arbitrary but reflected a system that was invested in denying them political agency. It was in this way, for instance, that Aboriginal rights activists could frame assimilation as genocide; the kind of 'recognition' offered by assimilation could be seen as a fundamental act of dis-identification in refusing to permit a free Aboriginal subjectivity. Likewise, women's rights activists' refusal to accept patriarchal forms of identification stemmed from an understanding that regimes of recognition were themselves framed by power, which acted specifically to stymy women's capacity for action.

---

[29] Ibid., 75.

It was for this reason that recognition and authentic identity were not simply politicised, but became politically *essential*, as the very grounds on which subjects could act politically. The demand for authentic selfhood was always related to this understanding of authenticity as a *condition* of agency, as well as its end state. As both Aboriginal and women's rights activists contended, the very point of 'brainwashing' was to produce psychologically unresisting, politically compliant selves. To reduce the demand for recognition made by identity politics to abstract notions of 'suffering' misses this fundamental political claim. In outlining this historical relationship between identity, recognition and agency, I thus want to suggest that one way of thinking about the new importance of the authentic self from the late 1960s onwards, rather than a simple turn towards narcissistic individualism, is in the politicisation of vulnerability as a call to reimagine how social relations might be transformed into relations of freedom.

The Authentic Cultural Self

This brings me to the final point of this thesis, which is about reconsidering the engagement of culture by identity politics. As Brubaker and Cooper have complained, one of the problems with 'identity' as a critical category is its sheer breadth, particularly as it can be applied to both individuals, and to groups.[30] The notion of cultural identity, in particular, has attracted much criticism, since the demand for recognising some authentic 'cultural identity' seems incompatible with individual freedoms, and also produces a reified conception of culture. I want to add some clarity to this debate by rethinking 'cultural identity' through the terms of agency and ethical relations that I have set out above. Specifically, I want to suggest that claims for the recognition of cultural identity can be understood in terms of the recognition of agency without which equal, ethical relations cannot occur, which is often taken as a theoretical norm but which I want to think through as a political claim.

In comparison to this approach, both proponents and opponents of the 'recognition of cultural identity' largely consider this issue through a normative evaluation of culture and its potential for either enriching or constraining the individual subject. Proponents such as Taylor

---

[30] Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, 'Beyond "Identity"', *Theory and Society; Dordrecht* 29, no. 1 (February 2000): 1–47.

and Will Kymlicka point to culture as a resource, a system of meaning-making through which individuals are able to make choices, or to build the ethical values that drive their actions. They thus defend the right of an individual to their own culture. As critics of this position note, however, neither of these scholars can justify why this should entail the preservation of *specific* cultures, nor can they account for the fact that many individuals do not 'fit' neatly into discrete cultural categories. Rather, these scholars simply take as self-evident that everyone 'has' a culture, and thus a corresponding right to it.

It is this definition of identity as a collective category that is most critiqued by scholars, since it is understood as a reifying impulse, both in compelling subjects to 'fix' themselves to certain categories in order to be recognised, where these categories themselves are products of power, as well as in positing certain identities as more 'authentic' than others such that, for instance, only some form of 'womanhood' or 'Aboriginality' is considered 'true'. The primary objection to the recognition of cultural identity stems from a concern that this imperative to be recognised through a cultural group thus threatens diversity *within* this group, by excluding those who do not conform.[31] Appiah calls this the Medusa Syndrome, where

> the politics of recognition… can seem to require that one's skin color, one's sexual body, should be politically acknowledged in ways that make it hard for those who want to treat their skin and their sexual body as personal dimensions of the self, [32]

pointing to the way that the ossification of collective identity categories actually contradicts the ethics of individual authenticity. Critics such as Benhabib and Appiah thus propose a culturally-sensitive universalism as a solution, one which produces a cosmopolitan subject whose identity is rooted – historically and socially located – but unbounded, and thus cannot act as a mechanism of reification and exclusion.[33]

This approach to cultural identity as a homogenising, exclusionary category often focuses on the ontological status of culture and identity, while eliding the political process of

---

[31] While there is no doubt, historically speaking, that this imperative of authenticity can be powerful and harmful, I want to argue that we cannot reduce the effects of demands for cultural recognition to this imperative alone, which is particularly tempting to do since the majority of influential contemporary critiques of identity are historical responses to this problem.

[32] Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity*, 110.

[33] Benhabib, *Another Cosmopolitanism*; Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity*. See also Parekh, *A New Politics of Identity*.

identification that underlines claims to cultural identity. That is, while theorisations of cultural identity acknowledge the extent to which identity is a two-way process of creation, rarely do they consider seriously how the involvement of subjects in their own identity-construction is not simply a one-directional reaction to external conditions but is also a form of participation in those conditions, and thereby politically productive. Thus, despite a professed concern with the autonomy of individuals, this scholarship rarely theorises claims to cultural identity in terms of subjects who make political interventions. Hekman describes this as making a "power move", that is, a public act of identification that positions itself within power structures in a particular way, but also with a particular intent.[34] This is how we might consider the demand for cultural identity and so ask the question: what political claim does a subject make when they identify with a culture and demand that this relationship is recognised?

Thus, we can rethink the claim for recognition of cultural identity as just such an intervention, one that is intended to highlight a specifically anti-colonial problematisation of the relationship between agency and culture. As this thesis suggests, the concept of culture as a resource for identity is part of a particular discourse of identity, which likewise invokes specific understandings of agency and freedom. Specifically, my research has demonstrated that both anthropologists and the psychologists informed by their work were pivotal to redefining 'culture' as 'cultures' and, in so doing, placed culture at the heart of the development of the authentic self, who was understood as 'free' insofar as their self was able, through cultural knowledge, to identify with their social role. I want to suggest that identification with a culture, when understood as a discursive political claim rather than a psychological process, ultimately relates back to this logic of recognising individual agency, rather than the assertion of some moral cultural relativity; it is not the demand for affirming the 'values' of 'a culture' (whatever those are), but affirming the agency of the individual self which has been shaped by that culture. It is thus ultimately a demand for the recognition of difference upon which individual agency and thus equal political participation must rest.

In particular, the engagement of culture by rights-claiming discourses is fundamentally related to the historical development of the concept of culture and its imbrication in

---

[34] Hekman, *Private Selves, Public Identities*, 89.

psychological discourses of selfhood. As my thesis has demonstrated, the twentieth century saw the naturalisation of group belonging as a psychological necessity for the individual while, concurrently, the 'cultural turn' increasingly came to define human groups in terms of culture rather than race. It was the coming together of these ideas that produced a new ethical imperative for culture as a source of identity, with all the psychological import of this concept: namely, not simply self-knowledge, but self-esteem, self-respect and self-acceptance, the preconditions of agency. The political act of identification with culture thus reflects a discourse in which culture has come to be understood as the foundation of the psychological self and which suggests that, if all subjects are ultimately cultural beings, their agency is likewise a cultural (and culturally specific) construct.

To say that agency is culturally specific is to suggest that the development of agency is not restricted to any one culture, and it was through this conception of culture as the source of agency that new understandings of social relations as power were popularised, and the right to cultural pride and cultural survival could be articulated specifically as a political act. The critiques of colonialism and white supremacy that pervaded activists' claims from the late 1960s were built on an understanding that white colonialist power was enacted through its insistence that agency could only be attained within its own cultural structures. This was central to Fanon's conception of colonial domination, as distinct from racial domination; where the latter denied the capacity for agency on biological grounds, the former did so on cultural ones. For Fanon, then, Hegelian 'recognition' by the white gaze was no form of emancipation, because it ultimately reinscribed the racialized difference between White and Other in locating the provenance of agency in white culture alone. This was explicitly recognised by Aboriginal activists, whose earlier demands for cultural pride as an ethical good could now be articulated as a political demand, as an act of resistance to power. To identify with Aboriginal identity, then, was a political assertion because it brought together two previously incommensurable subjects, the Aboriginal and the agentic self.

This is an important distinction to make since normative theories of individual and cultural rights, which often centre recognition of agency as a central norm of political equality, elide the way that the assertion and enactment of this norm is a result of political contestation, and not simply theoretical deliberation. For instance, Honneth's theory of recognition suggests

that respect for the Other is derived from a recognition that this Other is capable of rational autonomy, and thus can take responsibility for their actions. As my thesis suggests, however, activists' demands for cultural identity were premised on an understanding that this *political* process of recognition was overdetermined by colonial power. The issue at heart of their demand, then, was the denial that Aboriginal culture was capable of producing agency within its members, and that the only way for Aboriginal people to be recognised as political actors and thus admitted into political life was through assimilation to white colonial culture. These demands for cultural identity thus exceeded the usual characterisations of 'cultural recognition' – as affirmation of certain 'authentic' beliefs or values – because they were ultimately asserting that, if we understand individual identity and thus agency as a product of culture, it follows that recognition of an individual's agency must be accompanied by a recognition of the culture through which this agency has been constructed. Theorisations of the demand for cultural identity that proceed by taking the recognition of agency as a theoretical norm thus miss the way that it is this very norm that is under contestation in the demand for cultural recognition.

This conception of cultural identity does not require positing it as an exhaustive condition: that is, it does not entail subscribing to some fixed 'culture' and its proscribed 'values'. As numerous scholars have suggested, the notion that 'culture' can explain all of an individual's beliefs and thus actions, and that the members of a culture will necessarily share these beliefs, is to reproduce a falsely static notion of culture.[35] But in understanding cultural identity in terms of a political act of identification, we can both posit that culture is a frame of meaning-making, and also that individuals who identify with this culture do not necessarily make meaning in the same way. What makes this recognition of culture as meaning-making *political*, however, is specifically its intervention into a discourse that ties culture to agency. As a political claim, then, the demand for cultural identity attempts to subvert the hegemony of colonial whiteness and its discrediting of other cultures – other frames of meaning-making – as incapable of producing agentic subjects. As an ethical claim, it thus asserts that one

---

[35] Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture*; Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity*, chap. 4; Fraser, 'Recognition without Ethics?', 24.

cannot take seriously the other's agency unless one accepts that their differing cultural background is capable of producing agency.

Conclusion

One of the overarching criticisms of identity politics by scholars from a variety of disciplines is that it is inherently atomising, depoliticising and reifying. While I am sympathetic to other critiques of identity politics – say, its congeniality to capitalist imperatives of consumption, or its co-optation by the state – it is this particular claim about identity politics that my thesis brings into question. In particular, while my research suggests that identity was indeed politicised in terms of the recovery of some natural, authentic self, the logics of this discourse are in fact part of a problematisation and thus politicisation of the self and social relations that ultimately encouraged the instability of categorical norms. This is something different from the suggestion that instability – fluidity, contingency, hybridity – must become the new norm. Instead, we can see that an insistence on the political nature of identity formation, on its implication in power, was achieved *through* and not *against* the discourse of authentic selfhood. That is, what such critiques fail to note is the very way such an understanding of identity allows it to be politicised. Thus, while many critiques of authentic identity suggest that it naturalises and 'fixes' selfhood, obscuring the role of power in its creation, from a historical perspective we can see that authentic identity has been politically powerful *because of* its capacity to question the role of power in forming subjectivities, and for offering a stance towards identity as something that can be changed.[36]

The ethic of authenticity underlining identity politics in this period can thus be understood as animating the very conditions for resistance or agency outlined by Butler; that is, the very inexhaustibility of authentic selfhood allows those who have been 'fixed' by power within certain identities to reject these categories for what is more 'real', and this is a discursive effect *regardless of the ontological status of this 'real self'*. Thus, while I do not wish to deny that historically, identity categories have worked to homogenise and exclude, the demand for recognition, which cannot be exhausted by these categories, always seeks to broaden them.

---

[36] Allison Weir, 'Who Are We?: Modern Identities between Taylor and Foucault', *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 35, no. 5 (June 2009): 539–40.

In other words, much of the theoretical critique of identity suggests its claim to authentic selfhood is false, *and frames this as a flaw,* where I contend that it is precisely the impossibility of the claim that animates it and makes the discourse *work*. In this way, approaching identity politics and its imperative of authenticity historically as a discourse, rather than a 'truth' to be captured by theory, allows us to better appreciate its operation and the way it has both created as well as closed down the possibilities for making political claims.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to rethink the question of how identity politics works, by offering a historical analysis of identity as a discourse. Proceeding from a poststructuralist approach that theorised the political effects of discourse in terms of the kinds of claims that are made sayable, it considered claims for women's rights and Aboriginal rights from the 1930s to the 1980s in order to trace the discourses of self and society that underlined them. In doing so, it demonstrated the historical contingency of identity as a particular constellation of logics, whose interactions produced different possibilities for claims-making across the two movements. In particular, my analysis demonstrated how earlier functionalist understandings of the self and society structured women's rights claims in terms of the healthy personality and its importance to democratic society, while Aboriginal rights activists instead made demands around this healthy personality in terms of its relationship to group belonging. It also suggested that the 'cultural turn' had significant political effects for both movements in denaturalising and politicising the social order as a product of power, and likewise problematising the identity produced by this culture. For women's rights activists, this was articulated as a demand for transforming culture to produce more free identifications, while for Aboriginal rights activists this allowed for a rejection of colonial culture and assertion of Aboriginal cultural identity as necessary for individual freedom.

Thinking through these political effects in terms of what they tell us about how identity politics works, this thesis offered a number of contributions to existing theoretical debates. It suggested first that current debates around identity as a demand for recognition are limited because they fail to think through its fundamental logic as a claim to psychological selfhood that universalises and naturalises the capacity for political action. Second, it argued that critiques of identity around the falseness of its claim to some essential, authentic self do not account for the way this self is also able to be mobilised as an intersubjective self whose relationality to others produces an ethical imperative through which to make political demands. Finally, it suggested that debates around the right to cultural identity as a demand for state-imposed 'authentic cultural values' do not adequately address the complexity of this claim, which is mobilised within an anti-colonialist framework that affirms the capacity of all individuals to attain political agency within and not against their identification with culture.

In so doing, this thesis ultimately demonstrated the fruitfulness of a method that historicises political claims to identity, rethinking a purely theoretical approach that often reduces the complexity and indeterminacy of its effects.

There are a number of limitations to my project that are worth acknowledging. The most significant is the way that the historical discourses of selfhood were handled by the thesis. First, tracing broad historical change in this manner often required brevity in outlining the historical development of these discourses, which did not do justice to their complexity, or to the nature of their relationships to one another. Since one of the main contentions of this thesis is to treat the history of discourses seriously, this issue is not insignificant. While I reaffirm the value of doing comparative analyses such as this thesis offers, in retrospect, analysing the claims of two movements while also locating them within histories of selfhood would perhaps have been better achieved over two projects instead of one. Expanding on the modest step taken by this thesis and providing a more thorough account of these discourses of self and their relationship to these movements would be a worthwhile project in future.

Furthermore, a lack of scholarship on the cultural impact of the social sciences in Australia meant that I centred works focusing on the history of their development in the USA and UK. While this itself suggests an interesting avenue of inquiry, in tracing the transnational flows of scientific information and their varying local impacts, it nevertheless means that I cannot with any authority make claims for the specificity of the effects that I have outlined to the Australian context. Thus, while I have tried where possible to refer to Australian sources when outlining discourses of selfhood, there is nevertheless a sense of discontinuity between my analyses of Australian political demands and international histories of the self. Overall, there was a distinct lack of 'place' in the thesis, which is unfortunate since I do think the specifics of place can reveal much about the differing possibilities of discourse and are thus worth investigating, both on a national and international level. A history of 'the self' as it developed in Australia would not only fill a gap in the literature, but also offer more points of comparison for thinking through identity politics and is thus an important area for future research. This is particularly relevant since the majority of scholarship on identity politics is also centred on experiences in the US and UK.

Ultimately, this thesis neither advocates for nor opposes identity politics, but simply asks for greater recognition of the diversity of its effects. If we are to take seriously the oft-cited claim that discourse is not deterministic, and that all discourses contain within them the conditions for change, then this call becomes self-evident. If our theorisations of identity politics are to be truly critical – that is, if they are to offer positive interventions in the world – they must reckon with this diversity and, as this thesis suggests, one way we can do so is to recognise that identity has a history.

Bibliography

Archival Collections

Papers of Barry Christophers MS 7992, NLA.

Papers of Bessie Rischbieth MS 2004, NLA.

Papers of Charles Duguid MS 5068, NLA.

Papers of Edna Ryan MS 9140, NLA.

Papers of Gordon Bryant MS 8256, NLA.

Papers of Jessie Street MS 2683, NLA.

Papers of Joan Kingsley-Strack MS 9551, NLA.

Papers of Joe McGinness MS 3718, AIATSIS.

Papers of Julia Ryan MS 9361, NLA.

Papers of Ruby Rich MS7493, NLA.

Records of the Australian Federation of Business and Professional Women Z517, NBAC.

Records of the Australian Federation of Graduate Women MS 9592, NLA.

Records of the Australian Federation of Women Voters MS 2818, NLA.

Records of the Australian Union of Students MS 2412, NLA.

Records of the Australian Women's Charter MS 2302, NLA.

Records of the Melbourne Trades Hall Equal Pay Committee (1978.0110), UoMA.

Records of the National Council of Women, 1924-1990 MS 7583, NLA.

Records of the Union of Australian Women Federal Office Z236, NBAC.

Records of the Women's Electoral Lobby (1974.0094), UoMA.

Published Sources

Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. New York: Routledge, 2013.

Alcoff, Linda. 'The Problem of Speaking for Others'. *Cultural Critique*, no. 20 (1991): 5–32. https://doi.org/10.2307/1354221.

———. 'Who's Afraid of Identity Politics?' In *Reclaiming Identity: Realist Theory and the Predicament of Postmodernism*, edited by Paula M. L. Moya and Michael R. Hames-García, 312–44. Berkeley ; Los Angeles ; London: University of California Press, 2000.

Allen, Judith. 'Cultural Genealogies of Anovulation: Revisiting Abortion, The Pill and Feminist Sexual Politics'. In *Feminism and the Body: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, edited by Catherine Kevin, 8–28. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009.

Allen, Pamela. 'Free Space'. In *Radical Feminism*, edited by Anne Koedt, Ellen Levine, and Anna Rapone, 271–79. New York: Times Books, 1973.

Allport, Gordon Willard. *Becoming; Basic Considerations for a Psychology of Personality*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955.

Anderson, Warwick. *The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health and Racial Destiny in Australia*. Carlton South, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2002.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera*. 3rd ed. San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 2007.

Appiah, Kwame Anthony. 'Identity, Authenticity, Survival: Multicultural Societies and Social Reproduction'. In *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, edited by Amy Gutmann and Charles Taylor, 149–63. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994.

———. *The Ethics of Identity*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010.

Arnade, Chris. 'What Do Donald Trump Voters Really Crave? Respect'. *The Guardian*, July 2016. http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/jul/30/what-do-donald-trump-voters-want-respect.

Arrow, Michelle. '"Everyone Needs a Holiday from Work, Why Not Mothers?" Motherhood, Feminism and Citizenship at the Australian Royal Commission on Human Relationships, 1974–1977'. *Women's History Review* 25, no. 2 (March 2016): 320–36. https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2015.1083225.

Attwood, Bain. *Rights for Aborigines*. St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2003.

Attwood, Bain, and Andrew Markus. *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights: A Documentary History*. St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1998.

———. *Thinking Black: William Cooper and the Australian Aborigines' League*. Canberra, ACT: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2004.

Badmington, Neil. *Alien Chic: Posthumanism and the Other Within*. London: Routledge, 2004.

Banet-Weiser, Sarah. *AuthenticTM: The Politics of Ambivalence in a Brand Culture*. New York: New York University Press, 2012.

Baumeister, Roy F. 'How the Self Became a Problem: A Psychological Review of Historical Research'. *Journal of Personality* 52, no. 1 (January 1987): 163–76.

———. *Identity: Cultural Change and the Struggle for Self*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Becker, Dana. *The Myth of Empowerment: Women and the Therapeutic Culture in America*. New York: New York University Press, 2005.

Beilharz, Peter. 'Tocqueville in the Antipodes? Middling through in Australia, Then and Now'. *Thesis Eleven* 65, no. 1 (May 2001): 51–64. https://doi.org/10.1177/0725513601065000004.

Bendle, Mervyn F. 'The Crisis of "Identity" in High Modernity'. *The British Journal of Sociology* 53, no. 1 (March 2002): 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/00071310120109302.

Benhabib, Seyla. *Another Cosmopolitanism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

———. *Situating the Self: Gender, Community, and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics*. New York: Routledge, 1992.

———. *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002.

Berger, Peter L. 'Sincerity and Authenticity in Modern Society'. *The Public Interest* 31 (Spring 1973): 81–90.

Berlant, Lauren, ed. *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Bevege, Margaret, Margaret James, and Carmel Shute, eds. *Worth Her Salt: Women at Work in Australia*. Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1982.

Bickford, Susan. 'Anti-Anti-Identity Politics: Feminism, Democracy, and the Complexities of Citizenship'. *Hypatia* 12, no. 4 (November 1997): 111–31. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.1997.tb00300.x.

Blouin, Francis X., and William G. Rosenberg. *Archives, Documentation, and Institutions of Social Memory: Essays from the Sawyer Seminar*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007.

Boughton, Bob. 'The Communist Party of Australia's Involvement in the Struggle for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Rights 1920-1970'. In *Labour & Community: Proceedings of the Sixth National Conference of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History*, edited by Robert Hood and Ray Markey, 37–46. Wollongong, NSW: Dept. of Economics, University of Wollongong, 1999.

Bourke, Helen. 'Social Scientists as Intellectuals: From the First World War to the Depression'. In *Histories of Australian Sociology*, edited by John Germov and Tara Renae McGee, 145-169. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2005.

———. 'Sociology and the Social Sciences in Australia, 1912-1928'. *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology* 17, no. 1 (March 1981): 26–35. https://doi.org/10.1177/144078338101700105.

Bowden, Brett. *The Empire of Civilization: The Evolution of an Imperial Idea*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.

Braidotti, Rosi. *The Posthuman*. Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity, 2013.

Brett, Judith. *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People*. Chippendale, NSW: Macmillan Australia, 1992.

Broome, Richard. *Fighting Hard: The Victorian Aborigines Advancement League*. Canberra, ACT: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2015.

Brown, Wendy. *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Brubaker, Rogers, and Frederick Cooper. 'Beyond "Identity"'. *Theory and Society; Dordrecht* 29, no. 1 (February 2000): 1–47. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1007068714468.

Buhle, Mari Jo. *Feminism and Its Discontents: A Century of Struggle with Psychoanalysis*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Burgmann, Verity. *Power and Protest: Movements for Change in Australian Society*. St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1992.

———. *Power, Profit and Protest: Australian Social Movements and Globalisation*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2003.

Buss, Allan R. 'Humanistic Psychology as Liberal Ideology: The Socio-Historical Roots of Maslow's Theory of Self-Actualization'. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 19, no. 3 (July 1979): 43–55. https://doi.org/10.1177/002216787901900309.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*. New York: Routledge, 1993.

———. 'Burning Acts: Injurious Speech'. *The University of Chicago Law School Roundtable* 3, no. 1 (January 1996).

———. *Gender Trouble*. London: Routledge, 1990.

———. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London ; New York: Verso, 2006.

———. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.

———. *Undoing Gender*. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Calhoun, Craig. '"New Social Movements" of the Early Nineteenth Century'. *Social Science History* 17, no. 3 (1993): 385–427. https://doi.org/10.2307/1171431.

———, ed. *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*. Oxford, UK ; Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1994.

Campbell, Colin. *Easternization of the West: A Thematic Account of Cultural Change in the Modern Era*. Boulder, Colo.: Routledge, 2008.

Caplan, Jane. 'Postmodernism, Poststructuralism, and Deconstruction: Notes for Historians'. *Central European History* 22, no. 3–4 (September 1989): 260–78. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008938900020483.

Carlson, Bronwyn. *The Politics of Identity: Who Counts as Aboriginal Today?* Canberra, ACT: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2016.

Carver, Terrell and Samuel A. Chambers, eds. *Judith Butler's Precarious Politics: Critical Encounters*. London: Routledge, 2008.

Chakraborty, Mridula Nath. 'Wa(i)Ving It All Away'. In *Third Wave Feminism*, edited by Stacie Gillis, Gillian Howie, and Rebecca Munford, 101–13. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230593664_8.

Chasin, Alexandra. *Selling Out: The Gay and Lesbian Movement Goes to Market*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001.

Chesterman, John. *Civil Rights: How Indigenous Australians Won Formal Equality*. St. Lucia, QLD: University of Queensland Press, 2005.

Chouliaraki, Lilie. *The Ironic Spectator: Solidarity in the Age of Post-Humanitarianism*. Cambridge ; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013.

Clark, Jennifer. *Aborigines & Activism: Race & the Coming of the Sixties to Australia*. Crawley, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 2008.

Cloud, Dana. *Control and Consolation in American Culture and Politics: Rhetoric of Therapy*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1998.

Cole, Anna, Victoria Haskins, and Fiona Paisley, eds. *Uncommon Ground: White Women in Aboriginal History*. Canberra, ACT: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2005.

Coleborne, Catharine, and Dolly MacKinnon. *Madness in Australia: Histories, Heritage and the Asylum*. St. Lucia, QLD: University of Queensland Press, in Association with the API Network and Curtin University of Technology, 2003.

Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Collins, Steven, Michael Carrithers and Steven Lukes, eds. *The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History*. Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Collyer, Fran. 'The Birth of a Speciality: The Sociology of Health and Medicine in Australia'. *Health Sociology Review* 21, no. 1 (March 2012): 116–30. https://doi.org/10.5172/hesr.2012.21.1.116.

Connell, Raewyn. 'Setting Sail: The Making of Sociology in Australia, 1955–75'. *Journal of Sociology* 51, no. 2 (June 2015): 354–69. https://doi.org/10.1177/1440783314532174.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color'. *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–99. https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039.

Crozier, Michael. 'Society Economised: T.R. Ashworth and the History of the Social Sciences in Australia'. *Australian Historical Studies* 33, no. 119 (April 2002): 125–42. https://doi.org/10.1080/10314610208596205.

Curthoys, Ann. 'Doing It for Themselves: The Women's Movement since 1970'. In *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, edited by Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans, 425–29. Sydney: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1992.

Curthoys, Barbara, and Audrey McDonald. *More Than a Hat and Glove Brigade: The Story of the Union of Australian Women*. Sydney: Bookpress, 1996.

Cushman, Philip. *Constructing The Self, Constructing America: A Cultural History Of Psychotherapy*. Cambridge, Mass.: Da Capo Press, 1996.

Damousi, Joy. 'Australian Medical Intellectuals and the Great War'. *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 53, no. 3 (2007): 436–50. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8497.2007.00468.x.

———. 'Building "Healthy Happy Family Units": Aileen Fitzpatrick and Reuniting Children Separated by the Greek Civil War with Their Families in Australia, 1949–1954'. *The History of the Family* 22, no. 4 (October 2017): 466–84. https://doi.org/10.1080/1081602X.2016.1275738.

———. *Freud in the Antipodes: A Cultural History of Psychoanalysis in Australia*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2005.

———. 'Marching to Different Drums: Women's Mobilisations, 1914-1939'. In *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, edited by Raymond Evans and Kay Saunders, 350–75. Sydney: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1992.

Danziger, Kurt. *Naming the Mind: How Psychology Found Its Language*. London: SAGE Publications, 1997.

Darnell, Regna and Frederic W. Gleach, eds. *Historicizing Theories, Identities, and Nations*. Lincoln ; London: University of Nebraska Press, 2017.

Davis, Angela Y. *Women, Race, & Class*. New York: Vintage, 1983.

Deburg, William L. Van. *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965-1975*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

DeCarvalho, Roy Jose. 'Gordon Allport and Humanistic Psychology'. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 31, no. 3 (1991): 8–13.

DeKoven, Marianne. *Utopia Limited: The Sixties and the Emergence of the Postmodern*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

Duggan, Lisa. *The Twilight of Equality?: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2003.

Dworkin, Dennis L. *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain: History, the New Left, and the Origins of Cultural Studies*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1997.

Ellingsen, Peter J. *A History of Psychoanalysis in Australia : From Freud to Lacan*. Kew, VIC: PsychOz Publications, 2013.

Elliott, Anthony. *Subject to Ourselves: An Introduction to Freud, Psychoanalysis, and Social Theory*. Cambridge, Mass: Polity Press, 1996.

Elshtain, Jean Bethke. *Democracy On Trial*. New York: Basic Books, 1995.

Erikson, Erik H. 'The Problem of Ego Identity'. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 4 (1956): 56–121. https://doi.org/10.1177/000306515600400104.

Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Translated by Charles Lam Markmann. London: Pluto Press, 2008.

———. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Translated by Constance Farrington. 1st Evergreen Edition. New York: Grove Press, 1991.

Farrell, James J. *The Spirit of the Sixties: The Making of Postwar Radicalism*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Featherstone, Lisa. *Let's Talk About Sex: Histories of Sexuality in Australia from Federation to the Pill*. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011.

———. 'Sexy Mamas? Women, Sexuality and Reproduction in Australia in the 1940s'. *Australian Historical Studies* 36, no. 126 (October 2005): 234–52. https://doi.org/10.1080/10314610508682922.

———. 'Surveying the Mother: The Rise of Antenatal Care in Early Twentieth-Century Australia'. *Limina* 10 (2004): 16–31.

Featherstone, Mike, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson, eds. *Global Modernities*. London ; Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1995.

Foucault, Michel. *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. Translated by Richard Howard. 1st ed. New York: Vintage, 1988.

———. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*. Edited and translated by Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon Books, 1980.

———. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. Translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Pantheon, 1972.

———. *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction'*. Translated by Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage, 1990.

Fraser, Nancy. 'Recognition without Ethics?' *Theory, Culture & Society* 18, no. 2–3 (June 2001): 21–42. https://doi.org/10.1177/02632760122051760.

Fraser, Nancy, and Linda Nicholson. 'Social Criticism without Philosophy: An Encounter between Feminism and Postmodernism'. *Theory, Culture & Society* 5, no. 2–3 (June 1988): 373–94. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276488005002009.

Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique*. New York: Dell, 1963.

Fromm, Erich. *The Sane Society*. London: Routledge, 1956.

Füredi, Frank. *Therapy Culture: Cultivating Vulnerability in an Uncertain Age*. London ; New York: Routledge, 2004.

Fuss, Diana. *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference*. London; New York: Routledge, 1989.

Garton, Stephen. *Medicine and Madness: A Social History of Insanity in New South Wales 1880-1940*. Kensington, NSW: University of New South Wales Press, 1988.

Gerhard, Jane. *Desiring Revolution: Second-Wave Feminism and the Rewriting of Twentieth-Century American Sexual Thought*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.

Germov, John and Tara Renae McGee, eds. *Histories of Australian Sociology.* Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2005.

Gillis, Stacie, Gillian Howie, and Rebecca Munford. *Third Wave Feminism*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230593664_8.

Gitlin, Todd. *The Twilight of Common Dreams: Why America Is Wracked by Culture Wars*. Reprint edition. New York: Holt Paperbacks, 1996.

Gitre, Edward J. K. 'Importing Freud: First-Wave Psychoanalysis, Interwar Social Sciences, and the Interdisciplinary Foundations of an American Social Theory'. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 46, no. 3 (June 2010): 239–62. https://doi.org/10.1002/jhbs.20439.

———. 'The Great Escape: World War II, Neo-Freudianism, and the Origins of U.S. Psychocultural Analysis'. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 47, no. 1 (2011): 18–43. https://doi.org/10.1002/jhbs.20455.

Gleason, Philip. 'Identifying Identity: A Semantic History'. *The Journal of American History* 69, no. 4 (1983): 910–31. https://doi.org/10.2307/1901196.

Goodall, Heather. *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales, 1770-1972*. Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2008.

Grimshaw, Patricia. 'Colonising Motherhood: Evangelical Social Reformers and Koorie Women in Victoria, Australia, 1880s to the Early 1900s'. *Women's History Review* 8, no. 2 (June 1999): 329–46. https://doi.org/10.1080/09612029900200203.

———. 'Gender, Citizenship and Race in the Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Australia, 1890 to the 1930s'. *Australian Feminist Studies* 13, no. 28 (October 1998): 199–214. https://doi.org/10.1080/08164649.1998.9994910.

Grimshaw, Patricia, Ellen Warne, and Shurlee Swain. 'Constructing the Working Mother: Australian Perspectives, 1920-1970.' *Hecate* 31, no. 2 (2005): 21–33.

Grogan, Jessica Lynn. 'A Cultural History of the Humanistic Psychology Movement in America'. Ph.D., The University of Texas at Austin, 2008.

Guignon, Charles B. *On Being Authentic*. London ; New York: Routledge, 2004.

Gutmann, Amy and Charles Taylor, eds. *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994.

Hacking, Ian. *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998.

Haebich, Anna. *For Their Own Good: Aborigines and Government in the Southwest of Western Australia, 1900-40*. Nedlands, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 1988.

Hall, Stuart, ed. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London ; Thousand Oaks, CA; New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1997.

———. 'The Work of Representation'. In *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, edited by Stuart Hall, 13–75. London ; Thousand Oaks, CA; New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1997.

———. 'Who Needs Identity?' In *Questions of Cultural Identity*, edited by Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, 1–17. London: SAGE Publications, 2011. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446221907.

Hall, Stuart and Paul du Gay, eds. *Questions of Cultural Identity*. London: SAGE Publications, 2011. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446221907.

Hames-García, Michael R. '"Who Are Our Own People?": Challenges for a Theory of Social Identity'. In *Reclaiming Identity: Realist Theory and the Predicament of Postmodernism*, 102–33. Berkeley ; Los Angeles ; London: University of California Press, 2000.

Hampton, Jean. *Political Philosophy*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1997.

Handler, Richard. *Critics Against Culture: Anthropological Observers of Mass Society*. Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005.

Haskins, Victoria. '"Lovable Natives" and "Tribal Sisters": Feminism, Maternalism, and the Campaign for Aboriginal Citizenship in New South Wales in the Late 1930s'. *Hecate* 24, no. 2 (1998): 8–21.

Hayles, N. Katherine. *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

Hegeman, Susan. *Patterns for America: Modernism and the Concept of Culture*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999.

Heijden, Hein-Anton, van der, ed. *Handbook of Political Citizenship and Social Movements*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2014.

Heinze, Andrew R. 'Schizophrenia Americana: Aliens, Alienists, and the "Personality Shift" of Twentieth-Century Culture'. *American Quarterly* 55, no. 2 (June 2003): 227–56. https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2003.0015.

Hekman, Susan J. *Private Selves, Public Identities: Reconsidering Identity Politics*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004.

Hellman, John. *Emmanuel Mounier and the New Catholic Left, 1930-1950*. Toronto ; London: University of Toronto Press, 1981.

Hemmings, Clare. *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

Herman, Ellen. 'Psychology as Politics: How Psychological Experts Transformed Public Life in the United States, 1940-1970'. Ph.D., Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University, 1993.

———. *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

Hesford, Victoria. 'The Politics of Love: Women's Liberation and Feeling Differently'. *Feminist Theory* 10, no. 1 (April 2009): 5–33. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700108100390.

Hess, Michael. 'Black and Red: The Pilbara Pastoral Workers' Strike, 1946'. *Aboriginal History* 18, no. 1/2 (1994): 65–83.

Hobsbawm, Eric. 'Identity Politics and the Left'. *New Left Review*, no. 217 (1996): 38–47.

Hoffman, Edward. *The Drive For Self: Alfred Adler And The Founding Of Individual Psychology*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co, 1994.

———. *The Right to Be Human: A Biography of Abraham Maslow*. Revised, Updated, Subsequent edition. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1999.

Hoffman, Louise E. 'From Instinct to Identity: Implications of Changing Psychoanalytic Concepts of Social Life from Freud to Erikson'. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 18, no. 2 (April 1982): 130–46. https://doi.org/10.1002/1520-6696(198204)18:2<130::AID-JHBS2300180203>3.0.CO;2-Z.

Hoffman, Stefan-Ludwig, ed. *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Hoggett, Paul. 'Pity, Compassion, Solidarity'. In *Emotion, Politics and Society*, edited by Simon Thompson, Paul Hoggett, and Simon Clarke, 145–61. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2006.

Holland, Alison. 'Compelling Evidence: Marriage, Colonialism and the Question of Indigenous Rights'. *Women's History Review* 18, no. 1 (February 2009): 121–36. https://doi.org/10.1080/09612020802608082.

———. 'Wives and Mothers like Ourselves? Exploring White Women's Intervention in the Politics of Race, 1920s-1940s'. *Australian Historical Studies* 32, no. 117 (October 2001): 292–310. https://doi.org/10.1080/10314610108596166.

Hollinger, David A. *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism*. New York: Basic Books, 2006.

Holmes, Katie. '"Spinsters Indispensable": Feminists, Single Women and the Critique of Marriage, 1890–1920'. *Australian Historical Studies* 29, no. 110 (April 1998): 68–90. https://doi.org/10.1080/10314619808596061.

Honneth, Axel. 'Integrity and Disrespect: Principles of a Conception of Morality Based on the Theory of Recognition'. *Political Theory* 20, no. 2 (May 1992): 187–201. https://doi.org/10.1177/0090591792020002001.

———. 'Recognition or Redistribution?' *Theory, Culture & Society* 18, no. 2–3 (June 2001): 43–55. https://doi.org/10.1177/02632760122051779.

Hood, Robert and Ray Markey, eds. *Labour & Community: Proceedings of the Sixth National Conference of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History*. Wollongong, NSW: Dept. of Economics, University of Wollongong, 1999.

hooks, bell. *Ain't I a Woman*. London: Pluto Press, 1987.

Hudson, Wayne. *Australian Religious Thought*. Clayton, VIC: Monash University Publishing, 2016.

Illouz, Eva. *Cold Intimacies: The Making of Emotional Capitalism*. Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2007.

———. *Saving the Modern Soul: Therapy, Emotions, and the Culture of Self-Help*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.

Imber, Jonathan B., ed. *Therapeutic Culture: Triumph and Defeat*. New Brunswick, N.J. ;

London: Transaction Publishers, 2004.

Ion, Judith. 'Unravelling Our Past: Questions of Feminism, History and Memory'. *Australian Feminist Studies* 13, no. 27 (April 1998): 107–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/08164649.1998.9994894.

Jamison, Andrew, and Ron Eyerman. *Seeds of the Sixties*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

Johnson, Lesley. '"As Housewives We Are Worms": Women, Modernity and the Home Question'. *Cultural Studies* 10, no. 3 (October 1996): 449–63. https://doi.org/10.1080/09502389600490271.

Johnson, Miranda C. L. *The Land Is Our History: Indigeneity, Law, and the Settler State*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Johnson, Pauline. 'The Quest for the Self: Feminism's Appropriation of Romanticism'. *Thesis Eleven* 41, no. 1 (May 1995): 76–93. https://doi.org/10.1177/072551369504100106.

Jones, Frederic Wood. *Australia's Vanishing Race.* Sydney, 1934.

Jones, Megan. 'Historicising Feminist Knowledge: Notes toward a Genealogy of Academic Feminism of the 1970s'. *Australian Feminist Studies* 13, no. 27 (April 1998): 117–28. https://doi.org/10.1080/08164649.1998.9994895.

Kaplan, Gisela T. *The Meagre Harvest: The Australian Women's Movement, 1950s-1990s*. St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1996.

Kauffman, L. A. 'The Anti-Politics of Identity'. In *Identity Politics in the Women's Movement*, edited by Barbara Ryan, 23–34. New York: New York University Press, 2001.

Kevin, Catherine. 'Maternity and Freedom: Australian Feminist Encounters with the Reproductive Body'. *Australian Feminist Studies* 20, no. 46 (March 2005): 3–15. https://doi.org/10.1080/0816464042000334492.

———. 'Subjects for Citizenship: Pregnancy and the Australian Nation, 1945-2000'. *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* 12, no. 1/2 (2006): 131–42.

———. ed. *Feminism and the Body: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009.

Kirschner, Suzanne R. *The Religious and Romantic Origins of Psychoanalysis: Individuation and Integration in Post-Freudian Theory*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Koedt, Anne, Ellen Levine, and Anna Rapone, eds. *Radical Feminism*. New York: Times Books, 1973.

Kukathas, Chandran. *The Liberal Archipelago: A Theory of Diversity and Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Kymlicka, Will. *Liberalism, Community, and Culture*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.

Lake, Marilyn. 'Childbearers as Rights-Bearers: Feminist Discourse on the Rights of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Mothers in Australia, 1920–50'. *Women's History Review* 8, no. 2 (1999): 347–363.

———. 'Colonised and Colonising: The White Australian Feminist Subject'. *Women's History Review* 2, no. 3 (September 1993): 377–86. https://doi.org/10.1080/09612029300200035.

———. 'Female Desires: The Meaning of World War II'. *Australian Historical Studies* 24, no. 95 (October 1990): 267–84. https://doi.org/10.1080/10314619008595846.

———. 'Feminism and the Gendered Politics of Antiracism, Australia 1927–1957: From Maternal Protectionism to Leftist Assimilationism'. *Australian Historical Studies* 29, no. 110 (April 1998): 91–108. https://doi.org/10.1080/10314619808596062.

———. *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism*. St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1999.

———. 'Personality, Individuality, Nationality: Feminist Conceptions of Citizenship 1902–1940'. *Australian Feminist Studies* 9, no. 19 (March 1994): 25–38. https://doi.org/10.1080/08164649.1994.9994723.

———. 'State Socialism for Australian Mothers: Andrew Fisher's Radical Maternalism in Its International and Local Contexts'. *Labour History*, no. 102 (2012): 55–70. https://doi.org/10.5263/labourhistory.102.0055.

———. 'The Independence of Women and the Brotherhood of Man: Debates in the Labour Movement over Equal Pay and Motherhood Endowment in the 1920s'. *Labour History*, no. 63 (November 1992): 1–24. https://doi.org/10.2307/27509136.

Landry, Donna and Gerald MacLean, eds. *The Spivak Reader*. London: Routledge, 1996.

Lasch, Christopher. *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*. Revised edition. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1991.

Lasch-Quinn, Elizabeth. 'Liberation Therapeutics: From Moral Renewal to Consciousness-Raising'. In *Therapeutic Culture: Triumph and Defeat*, edited by Jonathan B. Imber, 3–18. New Brunswick, N.J. ; London: Transaction Publishers, 2004.

Leonhardt, David. 'Who's Campaigning on Identity Politics?' *The New York Times*, May 2018.

Lewis, Milton James. *Managing Madness: Psychiatry and Society in Australia 1788-1980*. Canberra: AGPS Press, 1988.

Lilla, Mark. 'The End of Identity Liberalism'. *The New York Times*, November 2016. https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/20/opinion/sunday/the-end-of-identity-liberalism.html.

Lloyd, Moya. *Beyond Identity Politics: Feminism, Power and Politics*. London: SAGE Publications, 2005.

Lloyd, Moya S. 'Towards a Cultural Politics of Vulnerability: Precarious Lives and Ungrievable Deaths'. In *Judith Butler's Precarious Politics: Critical Encounters*, edited by Terrell Carver and Samuel A. Chambers, 92–106. London: Routledge, 2008.

Lowney, Kathleen. *Baring Our Souls: TV Talk Shows and the Religion of Recovery*. New York: Routledge, 1999.

Madsen, Ole Jacob. *The Therapeutic Turn: How Psychology Altered Western Culture*. Hove, East Sussex: Routledge, 2014.

Magarey, Susan. 'Sisterhood and Women's Liberation in Australia'. *Outskirts* 28 (May 2013). http://www.outskirts.arts.uwa.edu.au/volumes/volume-28/susan-magarey.

Manganaro, Marc. *Culture, 1922: The Emergence of a Concept.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002.

Mann, Susan Archer, and Ashly Suzanne Patterson, eds. *Reading Feminist Theory: From Modernity to Postmodernity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Marcuse, Herbert. *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. London ; New York: Routledge Classics, 2002.

Markell, Patchen. *Bound by Recognition*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003.

Markus, Andrew. *Blood from a Stone: William Cooper and the Australian Aborigines' League*. Sydney: Unwin Hyman, 1989.

Maslow, Abraham H. *Motivation and Personality*. New York: Harper and Row, 1970.

———. *Toward a Psychology of Being*. New York: J. Wiley & Sons, 1999.

Mauss, Marcel. 'A Category of the Human Mind: The Notion of Person; the Notion of Self'. In *The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History*, edited by Steven Collins, Michael Carrithers, and Steven Lukes, translated by W. D. Halls, 1–25. Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

McCallum, David. *Personality and Dangerousness: Genealogies of Antisocial Personality Disorder*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

McGregor, Russell. 'Another Nation: Aboriginal Activism in the Late 1960s and Early 1970s'. *Australian Historical Studies* 40, no. 3 (September 2009): 343–60. https://doi.org/10.1080/10314610903105217.

———. 'Assimilationists Contest Assimilation: T G H Strehlow and A P Elkin on Aboriginal Policy'. *Journal of Australian Studies* 26, no. 75 (January 2002): 43–50. https://doi.org/10.1080/14443050209387802.

———. *Indifferent Inclusion: Aboriginal People and the Australian Nation*. Canberra, ACT: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2011.

———. 'Nation and Assimilation: Continuity and Discontinuity in Aboriginal Affairs in the 1950s'. In *Modern Frontier: Aspects of the 1950s in Australia's Northern Territory*, edited by Julie T. Wells, Mickey Dewar, and Suzanne Parry, 17–31. Darwin, NT: Charles Darwin University Press, 2005.

———. 'Protest and Progress: Aboriginal Activism in the 1930s'. *Australian Historical Studies* 25, no. 101 (October 1993): 555–68. https://doi.org/10.1080/10314619308595936.

———. 'The Concept of Primitivity in the Early Writings of A.P. Elkin'. *Aboriginal History* 17, no. 1/2 (1993): 95–104.

McLaughlin, Neil. 'How to Become a Forgotten Intellectual: Intellectual Movements and the Rise and Fall of Erich Fromm'. *Sociological Forum* 13, no. 2 (1998): 215–46.

McNay, Lois. *Against Recognition*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008.

———. 'Self as Enterprise: Dilemmas of Control and Resistance in Foucault's The Birth of Biopolitics'. *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no. 6 (November 2009): 55–77. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276409347697.

Mead, Margaret. *Growing Up in New Guinea*. New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1930.

———. *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*. London ; Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977.

Medovoi, Leerom. *Rebels: Youth and the Cold War Origins of Identity*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.

Melleuish, Gregory. *Cultural Liberalism in Australia: A Study in Intellectual and Cultural History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

———. 'Liberal Intellectuals in Early Twentieth Century Australia: Restoring the Religious Dimension.' *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 35, no. 1 (April 1989): 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8497.1989.tb00001.x.

Melucci, Alberto. 'The Symbolic Challenge of Contemporary Movements'. *Social Research* 52, no. 4 (1985): 789–816.

Meyer, Donald. *The Positive Thinkers: A Study of the American Quest for Health, Wealth and Personal Power from Mary Baker Eddy to Norman Vincent Peale*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 2013.

Meyerowitz, Joanne. '"How Common Culture Shapes the Separate Lives": Sexuality, Race, and Mid-Twentieth-Century Social Constructionist Thought'. *The Journal of American History* 96, no. 4 (2010): 1057–84.

Millett, Kate. *Sexual Politics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2016.

Molloy, Maureen. *On Creating a Usable Culture: Margaret Mead and the Emergence of American Cosmopolitanism*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008.

Moran, Marie. *Identity and Capitalism*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2014.

———. 'Identity and Identity Politics: A Cultural Materialist History'. *Historical Materialism* 26, no. 2 (2018).

Moskowitz, Eva S. *In Therapy We Trust: America's Obsession with Self-Fulfillment*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.

Moya, Paula M. L. and Michael R. Hames-García, eds. *Reclaiming Identity: Realist Theory and the Predicament of Postmodernism*. Berkeley ; Los Angeles ; London: University of California Press, 2000.

Moyn, Samuel. *Christian Human Rights*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015.

———. 'Personalism, Community, and the Origins of Human Rights'. In *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Stefan-Ludwig Hoffman, 85–106. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Mukherjee, Roopali, and Sarah Banet-Weiser. *Commodity Activism: Cultural Resistance in Neoliberal Times*. New York: New York University Press, 2012.

Murphy, John. *Imagining the Fifties: Private Sentiment and Political Culture in Menzies' Australia*. Sydney: Pluto Press, 2000.

Myerson, Abraham. *The Nervous Housewife*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1920.

Narayan, Uma. *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions, and Third-World Feminism*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Nicholson, Ian A. M. '"A Coherent Datum of Perception": Gordon Allport, Floyd Allport, and the Politics of "Personality"'. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 36, no. 4 (September 2000): 463–70.

———. *Inventing Personality: Gordon Allport and the Science of Selfhood*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2003.

Nicholson, Linda. *Identity Before Identity Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Nolan, James L. Jr. *The Therapeutic State: Justifying Government at Century's End*. New York: New York University Press, 1998.

Nussbaum, Martha C. *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1997.

Oliver, Kelly. *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2001.

Paisley, Fiona. 'Citizens of Their World: Australian Feminism and Indigenous Rights in the International Context, 1920s and 1930s'. *Feminist Review*, no. 58 (1998): 66–84.

———. *Loving Protection?: Australian Feminism and Aboriginal Women's Rights, 1919-1939*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000.

———. 'White Women in the Field: Feminism, Cultural Relativism and Aboriginal Rights, 1920–1937'. *Journal of Australian Studies* 21, no. 52 (January 1997): 113–25. https://doi.org/10.1080/14443059709387302.

Parekh, Bhikhu. *A New Politics of Identity: Political Principles for an Interdependent World*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Patterson, Richard North. 'How Democrats Can Beat Trump's White Identity Politics'. *Huffington Post*, May 2018. https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/opinion-patterson-identity-politics_us_5a7391a6e4b01ce33eb12c61.

Phelan, Shane. *Identity Politics: Lesbian Feminism and the Limits of Community*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 1989.

Piore, Michael J. *Beyond Individualism – How Social Demands of the New Identity Groups Challenge American Political & Economic Life*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995.

Porter, Elisabeth. 'Can Politics Practice Compassion?' *Hypatia* 21, no. 4 (2009): 97–123. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2006.tb01130.x.

Quartly, Marian. 'Defending "The Purity of Home Life" Against Socialism: The Founding Years of the Australian Women's National League'. *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 50, no. 2 (2004): 178–93. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8497.2004.00331.x.

Quartly, Marian, and Judith Smart. *Respectable Radicals : A History of the National Council of Women Australia, 1896-2006*. Clayton, Victoria: Monash University Publishing in conjunction with the National Council of Women of Australia, 2015.

Rancière, Jacques. *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.

Read, Peter. 'Cheeky, Insolent and Anti-White: The Split in the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders—Easter 19701'. *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 36, no. 1 (1990): 73–83.

Reiger, Kerreen. 'Reconceiving Citizenship: The Challenge of Mothers as Political Activists'. *Feminist Theory* 1, no. 3 (December 2000): 309–27. https://doi.org/10.1177/14647000022229254.

———. 'The Coming of the Counsellors: The Development of Marriage Guidance in Australia'. *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology* 23, no. 3 (December 1987): 375–87. https://doi.org/10.1177/144078338702300304.

Reynolds, Henry. *Dispossession: Black Australians and White Invaders*. North Sydney, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1989.

———. *Frontier: Aborigines, Settlers and Land*. St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1996.

Rieff, Philip. *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith after Freud*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

Riley, Denise. *'Am I That Name?': Feminism and the Category of 'Women' in History*. London: MacMillan, 1982.

Robinson, Shirleene and Julie Ustinoff, eds. *The 1960s in Australia: People, Power and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012.

Rogers, Carl. *A Way of Being*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1980.

———. *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961.

Rorty, Richard. *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Rose, Nikolas. *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self*. 2nd ed. London: Free Association Books, 1999.

———. *Inventing Our Selves: Psychology, Power, and Personhood*. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

———. *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1999.

———. 'Psychology as a Social Science'. *Subjectivity* 25, no. 1 (2008): 446–462.

Rossinow, Douglas C. *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America*. New York ; Chichester: Columbia University Press, 1998.

Ryan, Barbara. *Identity Politics in the Women's Movement*. New York: New York University Press, 2001.

Salamone, Frank A. 'Ruth Benedict: Synergy, Maslow, and Hitler'. In *Historicizing Theories, Identities, and Nations*, edited by Regna Darnell and Frederic W. Gleach, 87–106. Lincoln ; London: University of Nebraska Press, 2017.

Saunders, Kay, and Raymond Evans, eds. *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*. Sydney: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1992.

———. 'No Place Like Home: The Evolution of the Australian Housewife'. In *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, edited by Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans, 175–96. Sydney: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992.

Sawer, Marian. *Making Women Count: A History of the Women's Electoral Lobby*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2008.

———. *The Ethical State?: Social Liberalism in Australia*. Carlton, VIC: Melbourne University Press, 2003.

Schlesinger, Arthur Meier. *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998.

Scholl, Christian. 'The New Social Movement Approach'. In *Handbook of Political Citizenship and Social Movements*, edited by Hein-Anton van der Heijden, 233–48. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2014.

Schultz, Duane P., and Sydney Ellen Schultz. *A History of Modern Psychology*. Boston: Cengage Learning, 2015.

Scott, Dorothy, and Shurlee Swain. *Confronting Cruelty: Historical Perspectives on Child Protection in Australia*. Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 2002.

Scott, Joan W. 'The Evidence of Experience'. *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 4 (1991): 773–97.

Scrimgeour, Anne. '"To Make It Brilliantly Apparent to the People of Australia": The Pilbara Cooperative Movement and the Campaign for Aboriginal Civil Rights in the 1950s'. *Journal of Australian Studies* 40, no. 1 (January 2016): 16–31. https://doi.org/10.1080/14443058.2015.1120764.

Sen, Amartya. *Development as Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Shapiro, Fred R. 'Historical Notes on the Vocabulary of the Women's Movement'. *American Speech* 60, no. 1 (1985): 3–16. https://doi.org/10.2307/454643.

Simic, Zora. 'Butter Not Bombs: A Short History of the Union of Australian Women'. *History Australia* 4, no. 1 (June 2007): 7.1-7.15. https://doi.org/10.2104/ha070007.

Simonds, Wendy. *Women and Self-Help Culture: Reading between the Lines*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992.

Smart, Judith. 'Feminists, Flappers and Miss Australia: Contesting the Meanings of Citizenship, Femininity and Nation in the 1920s'. *Journal of Australian Studies* 25, no. 71 (January 2001): 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1080/14443050109387716.

———. '"For the Good That We Can Do": Cecilia Downing and Feminist Christian Citizenship'. *Australian Feminist Studies* 9, no. 19 (March 1994): 39–60. https://doi.org/10.1080/08164649.1994.9994724.

Spelman, Elizabeth V. *Fruits of Sorrow: Framing Our Attention to Suffering*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1998.

Spence, W. G. *Australia's Awakening: Thirty Years in the Life of an Australia Agitator*. Sydney: The Worker Trustees, 1909.

Spivak, Gayatri C. 'In a Word: Interview'. *Differences* 1, no. 2 (1989): 124–56.

———. 'Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography'. In *The Spivak Reader*, edited by Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean, 203–36. London: Routledge, 1996.

Stocking, George W. Jr. *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology*. New York: Free Press, 1968.

Surin, Kenneth. *Freedom Not Yet: Liberation and the Next World Order*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.

Susman, Warren. *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.

Swain, Shurlee. '"I Am Directed to Remind You of Your Duty to Your Family'': Public Surveillance of Mothering in Victoria, Australia, 1920–40"'. *Women's History Review* 8, no. 2 (June 1999): 247–59. https://doi.org/10.1080/09612029900200210.

Taffe, Sue. 'Aboriginal Rights and Justice Campagins: A People's History'. In *The 1960s in Australia: People, Power and Politics*, edited by Shirleene Robinson and Julie Ustinoff, 217–36. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012.

———. *Black and White Together FCAATSI: The Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, 1958-1973*. Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2005.

Taylor, Charles. *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1989.

———. *The Ethics of Authenticity*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991.

———. 'The Politics of Recognition'. In *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, edited by Amy Gutmann and Charles Taylor, 25-73. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994.

Thompson, Simon. *The Political Theory of Recognition: A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006.

Thompson, Simon, Paul Hoggett, and Simon Clarke, eds. *Emotion, Politics and Society*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2006.

Thomson, Mathew. *Psychological Subjects: Identity, Culture, and Health in Twentieth-Century Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Traub, James. 'The Party of Hubert Humphrey'. *The Atlantic*, April 2018. https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/04/did-hubert-humphrey-doom-the-democratic-party/557282/.

Tregenza, Ian. 'Are We "All Socialists Now"? New Liberalism, State Socialism and the Australian Settlement'. *Labour History*, no. 102 (2012): 87–98. https://doi.org/10.5263/labourhistory.102.0087. .

Tregenza, Ian, and Marnie Hughes-Warrington. 'State and Civilization in Australian New Idealism, 1890-1950'. *History of Political Thought* 29, no. 1 (2008): 89–108.

Trilling, Lionel. 'Authenticity and the Modern Unconscious'. *Commentary* 52, no. 3 (September 1971): 39–50.

———. *Sincerity and Authenticity*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1972.

Weir, Allison. 'Who Are We?: Modern Identities between Taylor and Foucault'. *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 35, no. 5 (June 2009): 533–53. https://doi.org/10.1177/0191453709103426.

Wilson, D. M. 'Different White People: Communists, Unionists and Aboriginal Rights 1946-1972'. Ph.D., Hobart: University of Tasmania, 2013.

Wolfe, Cary. *What Is Posthumanism?* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

Wood, Linda Sargent. *A More Perfect Union: Holistic Worldviews and the Transformation of American Culture after World War II*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195377743.001.0001.

Woodward, Kathleen. 'Calculating Compassion'. In *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*, edited by Lauren Berlant, 59–86. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Wright, Katie. *The Rise of the Therapeutic Society*. Washington, DC: New Academia Publishing, 2011.

Wrong, Dennis Hume. *Reflections on a Politically Skeptical Era*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 2003.

Young, Iris Marion. 'Gender as Seriality: Thinking about Women as a Social Collective'. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 19, no. 3 (April 1994): 713–38. https://doi.org/10.1086/494918.

———. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990.

Young, Pam. *Daring to Take a Stand: The Story of the Union of Australian Women in Queensland*. Brisbane: Pam Young, 1998.

Zaretsky, Eli. *Political Freud: A History*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015.

———. 'Psychoanalysis and the Spirit of Capitalism'. *Constellations* 15, no. 3 (September 2008): 366–81. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8675.2008.00497.x.

———. *Secrets of the Soul: A Social and Cultural History of Psychoanalysis*. New York: Vintage, 2005.

———. 'The Birth of Identity Politics in the 1960s: Psychoanalysis and the Public/Private Division'. In *Global Modernities*, edited by Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson, 244–59. London ; Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1995.

Zurn, Christopher F. 'Identity or Status? Struggles over "Recognition" in Fraser, Honneth, and Taylor'. *Constellations* 10, no. 4 (December 2003): 519–37. https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1351-0487.2003.00351.x.