

Using History as An Evaluation Tool

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Outline of Presentation

This talk

- Raises the issue of problem definition in relation to Australian Indigenous disadvantage
- Develops a model through exploration of attitudes to Aboriginal people from the earliest European settlers to the twentieth century
- Proposes a framework based on the model for evaluation of Indigenous programs
 - Presents 3 brief applications of evaluation framework.
- Concludes with some suggested directions for change in Indigenous policy evaluation.

Acknowledged Role of History

- Altman and Nieuwenhuysen 1979: “the current situation is, of course, the product of the past”
- Altman & Sanders 1991: “persistently poor mainstream employment outcomes... reflect the historical legacy of entrenched structural disadvantage in an increasingly competitive labour market”
- Hunter 2000: Indigenous disadvantage “may be partially explained by Australia’s history of appropriation of Indigenous peoples’ lands and property, and the suppression of their traditional lifestyles”

From there, nowhere...

- Recognition of the role of history in the development of Indigenous disadvantage has not led to thorough analysis of history's legacy.
- My research shows that programs established to address Indigenous disadvantage were doomed to fail,
 - because the lessons of history have not been learned, and
 - because of the narrow way in which the problem has been defined:
 - Based on assumptions not evidence, quantitative focus, no/little Aboriginal input
- An examination of history can lead us in a new direction.

Colonisers' Attitudes to Aborigines in Australia...

- The Aborigines were expected to learn the 'habits of industry' and begin to transform themselves into peasant farmers, the necessary next step in their evolution towards civilised humankind

(Morris 1973; McGregor 1997; Bridges 1968).

- But they were not expected to pick up an understanding of appropriate reward for effort, or a desire to learn higher level skills needed to take an equal place in the white economy.
 - The colour of their skin and their failure to cultivate the land made this an impossibility.

Applied to Aborigines in Australia

- Early attempts to 'civilise' Aborigines failed
 - In the thinking of the time this could only be seen as confirmation of their inferiority, **not** as a legitimate choice of their traditional culture and way of life over an imposed and, in Aboriginal terms, inferior system.
- The white solution to the 'Aboriginal problem' was to herd the Aborigines into reserves and to regulate every aspect of their lives, including in relation to the labour extracted from them and the payment they received for that labour.

(Butlin 1993; Pope 1988; Castle & Hagan 1998; Rowley 1970).

The Lessons from History

- Analysis of history shows that everything that was done to Aborigines from the early nineteenth century into the late twentieth was based on continuing beliefs about :
 - Aboriginal inferiority
 - Aboriginal incapacity and irresponsibility
 - The need for white intervention
 - Disregard for Aboriginal understandings, values, choices

➤ 4 'invariant element' model

4 'invariant element' model:

1 Inferiority

- Intellectual incapacity
 - Aborigines were considered incapable of rational thought

- Blacks as savages
 - Black people were seen to be dirty, smelly, diseased, drunken, immoral

4 'invariant element' model:

2 Laziness, irresponsibility

- Aborigines were seen as
 - lazy, lacking willingness to work
 - unreliable in terms of quality of work and stability
 - untrustworthy and irresponsible, needing close supervision.
- This led to treatment including
 - Separate processes for controlling and disciplining Aborigines.
 - Separate processes for rewarding Aborigines, withholding of monetary rewards.

4 'invariant element' model:

③ Need for white intervention

- ❑ In the early days this meant:
 - Civilising – 'improving' condition of natives
 - Christianising
 - Teaching of 'industrious habits'
- ❑ In today's language we hear about Aboriginal 'advancement', making them 'work ready'
 - We're still telling them to be more like us.

4 'invariant element' model:

④ **Disregard for Indigenous Understandings, Values and Choices**

- This has underpinned all Indigenous policy since colonisation
 - 'Aboriginal problem' and its resolution defined without Aboriginal input
 - Aborigines required to renounce their own beliefs and ways
 - Misunderstandings or misinterpretations of Aboriginal culture or actions
 - Imputation of Aboriginal viewpoint

So what's the point?

- These beliefs and ways of acting towards Indigenous Australians contain the seeds of policy failure within them
 - If you believe these things, however consciously or sub-consciously, and base policy on them, you will not be able to develop policy which will work!
- Evaluation of Indigenous policy must start with the nature of the policy itself, as well as its implementation and outcomes.

Three ways to use framework:

1. Directly analyse content of policy or other relevant documents:
 - ◆ to determine whether a particular policy or approach to indigenous disadvantage implicitly contains notions of
 - ◆ Aboriginal inferiority,
 - ◆ laziness, incapacity, irresponsibility
 - ◆ need for improvement
 - ◆ founded on
 - ◆ a disregard for the Aboriginal viewpoint.

Application of First Form: CDEP

- Inferiority reflected in:
 - 'Work for dole' assumes low skill jobs and no career paths
- Laziness, irresponsibility reflected in:
 - Pay based on welfare not IR system
- Need for white intervention reflected in:
 - The problem (Aboriginal unemployment) and its solution (job creation) are seen to be matters for white intervention
- Disregard for Aboriginal viewpoint reflected in:
 - Watering down of original twin aims of **community development** and **employment**

Three ways to use framework:

2. A set of criteria based on the reverse of the invariant element, that is in positive terms, can be used, ie Aborigines as:

- ◆ **Equal** instead of inferior
- ◆ **Able to take responsibility** instead of being seen as incapable, irresponsible
- ◆ **Having the solutions**, not needing whites to tell them what to do.

◆ BASED ON

- ◆ **Respect for Indigenous ways** of doing things instead of ignoring Indigenous views and choices

Application of Second Form: SRA Policy

Equality:

- ◇ It treats Aboriginal communities as a partner in the program,
 - ◇ but *equal*???
- ⊗ It implicitly aims to make Indigenous communities more like white ones,
 - ⊗ ie 'better'.

Application of Second Form: SRA Policy

Capacity and responsibility:

- ✓ Aboriginal implementation central to it, although there was an element of coercion
- ✗ Some SRAs related to the provision of facilities (eg swimming pools) conditional on unrelated activities of Aboriginal people.
- ✗ White communities are not required to prove themselves in the same way to obtain basic services such as petrol pumps.

Application of Second Form: SRA Policy

Aboriginal definitions and solutions:

- ✓ Aboriginal definition of issue and implementation of solutions was central to it
- ✗ It was based on a non-Indigenous planning process
- ✗ It was subject to non-Indigenous decision making processes about the value of projects.

Application of Second Form: SRA Policy

Respect for Aboriginal values, choices

- ✓ Accommodated Aboriginal culture
 - some projects focus on transmission of culture to young Indigenous people.
- ❖ Policy originated from a group of Aborigines reading the political climate
 - It worked for them but was then applied across the board as if it could address fundamental inequities

➤ **Conclusion: SRA Policy fails**

Three ways to use framework:

3. A Streamlined Model based on the concepts of **exclusion** and **inclusion**.
 - **Exclusion** reflects all the above 'invariant elements'
 - **Inclusion** reflects their opposites

Exclusion v Inclusion

- **Exclusion** is based on belief in :

- Aboriginal inferiority
- Aboriginal incapacity

- Need for white intervention

- Disregard for Aboriginal viewpoint

- **Inclusion** is based on belief in:

- Aboriginal equality
- Aboriginal ability to recognise and find solutions to problems

- Importance of supporting Aboriginal solutions

- Respect for Aboriginal viewpoint

Application of Third Form: NT Intervention

- The Federal Government's intervention into NT Indigenous communities was announced on 21 June 2007.
- The elements of the intervention were supposed to add up to a program to stop rampant child abuse in Aboriginal communities.

Elements of the NT Intervention

- Grog forbidden in 60 communities for six months
- Ban on sales, possession, transportation and consumption of takeaway alcohol across NT
- Compulsory health checks for children (later voluntary)
- Banning of pornography
- Army and police to restore law and order

Elements of the NT Intervention

- Abolition of CDEP
- Abolition of permit system
- Quarantining of 50% of welfare payments
- Control taken of communities through five year leases, ostensibly to ensure improved housing
- Community councils pushed aside and government appointed managers installed
- Compulsory school attendance even in the absence of facilities.

Inclusion or exclusion?

- The Intervention was announced and implementation commenced without consultation with Indigenous people or any attempt to find out what was already being done.
 - The underlying assumptions are:
 - Aboriginal incapacity, need for white intervention, disregard for Indigenous views

= EXCLUSION

Inclusion or Exclusion?: The Elements

- Abolition/banning of grog, pornography
- Compulsory health checks
- Extra police, army:
 - Assumptions:
 - Irresponsibility
 - White intervention
 - Although some of these are things which Aboriginal people may want, they were introduced without consultation and with compulsion

= EXCLUSION

Inclusion or Exclusion?: The Elements

- Abolition of CDEP
- Abolition of permit system
- Sidelining of Aboriginal controlled Councils
- Compulsory leasing of Aboriginal land
 - All these relate to Aboriginal-initiated and negotiated ideas adopted/supported by Governments;
 - under intervention they're curtailed without Indigenous agreement and against advice

= EXCLUSION

Inclusion or Exclusion?: The Elements

- Quarantining of 50% of welfare payments
- Compulsory school attendance
 - These carry a clear implication that ALL Aborigines are irresponsible and will only do the right thing if under the direct control of non-Indigenous people.

= EXCLUSION

How do we get to **INCLUSION**?

- Treat Aboriginal people as equals
- Respect Aboriginal culture and ways
- Stop blaming Aboriginal people for our mistakes and their consequences
- Give credit where it's due
- Support Aboriginal initiatives without taking over.

SORRY: a good start?

Sorry...

