Politicization of schizophrenia

SUMAN FERNANDO
Honorary Professor in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities
London Metropolitan University, United Kingdom
(formerly consultant psychiatrist at Chase Farm Hospital, Enfield)

http://www.sumanfernando.com
Cultural studies from Birmingham

Hutchinson in association with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies
University of Birmingham 1982

Macmillan 1978

The Empire Strikes Back
Race and racism in 70s Britain

Policing the Crisis
Mugging the State and Law and Order
RACIAL AND CULTURAL ISSUES IN ENGLAND
(reported since the 1980s and still evident)

Black / Ethnic Minorities more often:

- Diagnosed as schizophrenic
- Compulsorily detained under M. H. Act
- Admitted as ‘Offender Patients’
- Held by police under S. 136 of M. H. Act
- Transferred to locked wards
- Not referred for ‘talking therapies’
  (and find these therapies do not ‘make sense’)

(similar lists in various reports over the years)
Talk about

... Lack of cultural sensitivity ..... attitudes towards ‘the other’ (the outsider) ... limitations of the diagnostic system, especially failure to address spirituality ... of psychological theories and treatments being out of sync with ‘other cultures’.

... Institutional racism ... racism in psychiatric practice...of psychiatry & psychotherapy being harmful or even dangerous ..

Later ... of sectioning and ‘schizophrenia’ label being forms of oppression reminiscent of slavery ... And reports noted ‘circles of fear’ ..

A sort of ‘critical psychiatry and mental health’ was being voiced and developed

Discourse in the 1980s onwards

‘Over-representation issue’

Being seen as black attracts a diagnosis of ‘schizophrenia’, sectioning, heavy medication and loss of liberty—felt by many black British people as a social-political oppression

Several books, e.g. Aliens and Alienists (Litlewood and Lipsedge, 1982) & Race and Culture in Psychiatry (Fernando, 1988) in the 1980s; and official inquiries (e.g. on deaths in custody and over-medications of black people).
MRC “Aesop study”
Age-standardized rates of diagnosis per 100,000 per year among all referrals aged 16-64 with first ‘psychotic’ symptoms South-East London, Nottingham and Bristol (1997-9)  
[Fearon et al. (2006) Psychological Medicine, 36: 1541-1550]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>All Psychosis</th>
<th>Narrow schizophrenia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White British</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Caribbean</td>
<td>140.8</td>
<td>70.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black African</td>
<td>80.6</td>
<td>40.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Stop and Search: 2013

Ethnic Group Ratios for London Metropolitan Police: Section 60 (suspicionless)

Ref: [http://www.stop-watch.org/your-area/area/metropolitan](http://www.stop-watch.org/your-area/area/metropolitan)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Ratios</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White: Black</td>
<td>1: 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White: Asian</td>
<td>1: 1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White: Mixed</td>
<td>1: 3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White: Other</td>
<td>1: 1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### BRITISH CITIZENS IN PRISON IN ENGLAND & WALES 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% In Prison</th>
<th>% In General population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>73.8</td>
<td>88.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black / Black British</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian / Asian British</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** 13% of all prisoners are Muslims (4% in general population)

## SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS
### 2009-10 ETHNIC STATISTICS
As percentage of all school-age children in each ethnic group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Fixed period</th>
<th>Permanent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White British</td>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Caribbean</td>
<td>10.84</td>
<td>.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black African</td>
<td>5.37</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Other</td>
<td>8.27</td>
<td>.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ref:
Understanding “schizophrenia”
The black experience in Euro-America
Globalization of the Western Mind

CRAZY LIKE US
The Globalization of the Western Mind

ETHAN WATTERS
Globalization of psychiatry

Routledge, 2014

Palgrave Macmillan 2014
The power of psychiatry: the struggle against racism

Routledge, 2003

Cultural Diversity, Mental Health and Psychiatry
THE STRUGGLE AGAINST RACISM
Suman Fernando

Palgrave Macmillan 2010

MENTAL HEALTH, RACE AND CULTURE

SUMAN FERNANDO
THIRD EDITION
European values on ‘freedom’ and ‘race’
Post-Enlightenment

‘The concept of freedom did not emerge [in the Enlightenment] in a vacuum. Nothing highlighted freedom—if it did not create it—like slavery’ (Morrison, 1993, p. 38)

The work of major thinkers of the Enlightenment (including Hume, Kant and Hegel) ‘reveal [that] “reason” and civilization became almost synonymous with “white” people and northern Europe while unreason and savagery were conveniently located among the non-whites, the “black, the “red”, the “yellow” outside Europe’ (Eze, 1997, p. 5).

Enlightenment values on ‘freedom and ‘race’

First published 1992

First published 1997
THE PROTEST PSYCHOSIS
HOW SCHIZOPHRENIA BECAME A BLACK DISEASE
JONATHAN M. METZL
Author of Primary in the Church
Thank you!

https://www.sumanfernando.com