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**Blankets, Brass Tags and Bungalows:
The Role of Population Data Systems in Historical Aboriginal Affairs in
Northern Territory, Australia¹**

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Introduction

On 8th January 1912, “An Ordinance Relating to Aboriginals” in the Northern Territory of Australia was published in the Commonwealth of Australia Gazette which stated: “Without limiting or affecting any other powers conferred upon him by the Act, the Chief Protector shall of entitled at any time to undertake the care, custody, or control of any aboriginal or half-caste if in his opinion it is necessary or desirable in the interests of the aboriginal or half-caste for him to do so” (Commonwealth of Australia, 1912, 16). Baldwin Spencer, Chief Protector of Aboriginals 1911-1912 interpreted the Act accordingly: “No half-caste children should be allowed to remain in any native camp” (McDonald, 1995, 9). In the next fifty years, perhaps on the order of two out of three children of Aboriginal descent were removed under the authority of this and subsequent legislation (McDonald, 1995, xiii).

This paper documents the role of population data and information systems in Aboriginal policy and administration in early Commonwealth Australia and in particular, programs of forced removal of Aboriginal children throughout the Northern Territory. These programs encompassed comprehensive population control and ultimately cultural genocide of most Indigenous Australians and communities. The 1997 government report, *Bringing Them Home*, states “with confidence ... that not one Indigenous family has

escaped the effects of forcible removal... nationally... between one in three and one in ten Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families and communities in the period from approximately 1910 to 1970” (Commonwealth Government, 1997, 36).

Organization of Paper

The paper begins with background on scholarship on the role of population data and data systems human rights abuses, the links between data systems and the mistreatment of vulnerable populations in the past, and the significance of research generally and in the context of Australia. Second, we set out a framework considering the role of population data systems in human rights abuses as background to the development of specific objectives for research on the treatment of Aborigines in Australia. Third, we establish the political and social context of the study by presenting the perspectives and policies concerning Indigenous populations in the Colony (and State) of South Australia and then in the early Commonwealth. Fourth, we examine the Northern Territory as a case study by (i) documenting the existence of population data and information systems in Aboriginal administration, and (ii) revealing the connections between the collection and analysis of population data and the population control, hence, human rights violations of Indigenous Australian persons, families and communities. The time frame of analysis begins with the genesis of a national perspective on Aboriginal affairs at the point of Federation and draws to an imprecise conclusion at the point in the 1950s with the shift from Aboriginal policy to a model of social welfare by which people in need of government assistance and intervention were to be identified. The paper concludes with perspectives concerning the role of population data systems in

Aboriginal affairs, policy and programs in Commonwealth Australia during this period. Also underscored is the relevance of the results for contemporary discussions of the relationships among demography, population data and statistics, and human rights and welfare.

Background and Significance

The history of Australian policies towards Indigenous persons and populations must be traced through public, private and parochial practices of government officials, police and patrolmen, missionaries and station managers operating within a range of government authorities. This history has been and continues to be richly documented and critically understood both nationally and within the region of the Northern Territory (See, for example, Rowley, 1972a-c; 1978; Chesterman and Galligan, 1997; Haebich 2000, Rowse, 1998; Powell, 2001; Reynolds, 1989, 1998; Tatz, 1999). We draw upon this literature in seeking to establish the social and policy context for statistical practices and programs. In the space of this paper, however, ours remain only a selective summary, however, of the evolving critical geographies of the region during this period.

Prior to federation in 1901, each British colony exercised its own set of practices to 'protect,' manage, and control Aboriginal peoples. Even after the formation of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901, policies, hence administrative practices, concerning Aborigines were the prerogative of each federated state, with authority for Aboriginal policy being assumed by the national government only as recently as 1967. Thus complete understanding of the role of population data systems in the violation of the rights of Australian Aborigines must derive from study of the policies and practices

implemented within individual states, and, for the Northern Territory, by the Commonwealth government.

The research builds on prior research conducted by Kraly and McQuilton, on the role of population data and statistical systems in Aboriginal affairs in colonial and early federation Victoria (Kraly and McQuilton, 2005). That research found a prominent use of population data systems in Aboriginal affairs among the Australian Victorians, ranging from the simple need to establish numbers to ensure that the distribution of blankets and rations was conducted in an orderly (and economical) manner to the early decision taken to forcibly relocate Aboriginal people to designated reserves, and then to exclude persons of part-Aboriginal descent from those same reserves in order promote ‘assimilation.’

This paper will begin to answer the question raised by Seltzer and Anderson (2003) as to whether administrative and statistical practices in Victoria were replicated elsewhere in Australia. There were differences in Aboriginal policy and programs among the colonies, and after 1901, states and territories (see Haebich 2000). For example whilst policy in Victoria actively pushed 'half-castes' into the European community, policy in other colonies and states relocated Aboriginal people onto government reserves, aggressively and persistently removed children from their families and buried their past, and, in the case of Northern Territory, experimented with the use of "dog tags" for personal and group identification.

The Northern Territory provides a critical comparison to state of Victoria. As shown in **Figure 1**, at the turn of the 20th century, Northern Territory and Queensland had the largest Aboriginal populations in the new commonwealth, 23,363 and 26,670, respectively (Chesterman and Galligan, 1997, 63-64). At this time an increasing

number of Aboriginal families were gravitating to camp life on the margins of the two largest settlements in the territory, Darwin and Alice Springs. Implementing the *social Darwinian* philosophy Commonwealth officials sought both to prevent miscegenation through segregation and forced settlement as well as to promote assimilation of those persons of mixed Aboriginal descent. This latter principle became manifest through the practice of forcibly removing Aboriginal ‘half-caste’² children from their families and placing them in government institutions, missions or individual families for re-education within white Australian society. Among the largest government institutions to which children were ‘rescued’ in Northern Territory were the Kahlin ‘Half-caste’ Home in Darwin and The Bungalow in Alice Springs; many church missions also ran homes for part-Aboriginal children. **Figure 2** places locations of the major institutions in Australian to which children of part-indigenous ancestry were removed and raised (from MacDonald, 1995, xv). As mentioned above, it is estimated that between 1912 and the end of the official policy of removal in 1953, two out of three part-Aboriginal children in Northern Territory were taken from their families for some period of their young lives (MacDonald 1995, xiii).

In conducting this inquiry we seek to contribute to growing scholarly literature on the role of population data systems in human rights violations (see Seltzer 1998, 2001; Seltzer and Anderson 2001, 2002, 2003). This area of scholarship is both basic and applied: it is important to document the record of uses of social demographic statistics that contribute to both the public good as well as the control or misuse of vulnerable

² The terms, ‘half-caste’, ‘quadroons,’ ‘octoroons,’ ‘coloureds,’ among others are used throughout the historical literature of Australia. A good deal of the language concerning Aboriginal policy and management, in addition to the accounts of appalling acts of violence toward Aboriginal people, is unsettling and can be deeply disturbing to the reader. For this we apologize.

populations; it is also important to reflect upon prior abuses in order to development safeguards to prevent misuse of population data and data systems in the future. As Seltzer has stated: “Forthrightness about the past is an important element in both strengthening ethical awareness and in building a network of other defenses against possible future misuses” (2000).

To date, research has revealed the critical role played by population data systems for purposes of “forced migration, internment, genocide and crimes against humanity” (Seltzer 2000, 2). Relevant examples of published research have been summarized by Seltzer and Anderson (2003). Population registers and demographic accounting schemes were used in several significant circumstances throughout the Holocaust. In Germany and Poland, population registration systems were initiated specifically to serve the goals of the Nazis for population control of Jews and other groups identified as undesirable. In other countries, notably the Netherlands, population registration systems were in place prior to the Nazi occupation but were subsequently expanded to support the identification of Jews and Gypsies (Seltzer and Anderson 2001). During this same era, in response to the bombing of Pearl Harbor, U.S. Census Bureau officials provided U.S. military personnel with population tabulations for persons of Japanese ancestry in the United States as well as the number of Japanese Americans enumerated in the 1940 census within individual census blocks (the smallest geographic unit available in census operations) in cities on the West Coast. The provision of these latter data supported operations to evacuate and ultimately intern Japanese Americans during the remainder of the second world war (see Seltzer and Anderson 2000).

Perhaps most relevant to this present case study concerning 19th Aboriginal policy and statistical practices in Australia is Seltzer's examination of population data systems implemented for Native Americans during the 19th century. As we will see below, the use of census enumeration of Native Americans finds parallels with several practices in the management of Australia Aborigines in the state of Victoria and the Northern Territory in early Federation Australia, with the most obvious example being Section 127 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia which, until the Referendum of 1967, required the exclusion of Aboriginal persons from the counts of the Australian national population or individual states.

The U.S. Constitution also specifies that decennial census shall enumerate the population "omitting in such enumerations Indians not taxed" (cited in Seltzer, 1999, 24). During the first half of the 19th century this stipulation was interpreted by U.S. census officials as referring to "Indians who did not pay taxes, who lived on Indian reservation or who continued to sustain tribal relations" (Seltzer, 1999, 1). By the census of 1870, however, the policy of excluding Native Americans from the census had shifted to that of inclusion. This change in statistical policy reflected both the authority of the Francis Walker, commissioner of the 1870 census and the federal move to "solve the Indian problem" (Seltzer, 1999, 5). Walker expanded census enumeration to include Indians in the *de facto* population count of the United States. Indians

...should, of course, appear separately, so the provisions of the Constitution ... may be carried out; but they should appear, nevertheless, as a constituent part of the population of the country viewed in the light of all social, economical, and moral principles. An Indian not taxed should, to put it on the lowest possible ground, be reported in the census just as truly as the vagabond or pauper of the white or colored race. The fact that he sustains a vague political relation is no reason why he should not be recognized as a human being in a census which

counts even the cattle and the horses of the country (quoted in Seltzer 1999, 6).

Seltzer also reveals Walker's perspective on the "Indian question":

"What shall be done with the Indian as an obstacle to the national progress: What shall be done with him when, and so far as, he ceases to oppose or obstruct the railways and the settlement?" Walker's answer to the first question was to put the less aggressive tribes onto reservations by 'the slow wasting-away of their means of subsistence' (342), temporizing, avoiding a general Indian way, but using force when required. His answer to the second question was essentially a semi-permanent system of *apartheid*, with whites forbidden to enter and Indians forbidden to leave (except under highly controlled circumstances) one or two "grand reservations" west of the Mississippi [364-375] (Seltzer 1999, 6-7).

Seltzer also considers a second set of census operations employed by the U.S. government in the management of Indian affairs in the 19th century. In the process of establishing and implementing treaties with Indian tribes and nations, special censuses as well as annual enumeration and registration programs were conducted by the federal agents and military personnel. The Treaty of 1817 between the U.S. government and the Cherokee Nation is believed to be the first treaty requiring a census of members of the nation. The purpose of the census was to specify the amount of Cherokee nation land along the Arkansas River to be ceded to the United States:

The Cherokee Nation has agreed to cede to the United States ... land agreeable to [the] numbers ... [of] Cherokees on the Arkansas [divided by] the whole number of the Nations, [times] the whole quantity of land owned by the Cherokee East of the Mississippi. The United States bind themselves to convey to the Cherokee on the Arkansas acre for acre so to be ceded, including the quantity ceded by the Nation [in the past] (Bassett 1927, II:307, letter from then General Andrew Jackson to Brigadier-General John Coffee) (quoted by Seltzer 1999, 10).

Seltzer determined that of 367 treaties ratified by the U.S. government through 1968, 54 or 15 percent included some requirement for census enumeration or registration. The uses of the census enumeration included the "apportionment of land and per capita-based annuities and other benefits, the determination of the number of seats individual tribes

and bands of Indians were to be allocated on Tribal Councils, and the provision of population data needed for routine planning purposes as well as to assist Indian removal and resettlement programs” (11). Several treaty censuses were implemented directly following the Indian Removal Act of 1830 to facilitate the forced expulsion of East Cherokee, Choctaw and Creek Indians from regions east of the Mississippi River (11-12).

Finally, Seltzer documents the role of non-treaty censuses in control and management of Native Americans. One illustration from the San Carlos Indian Reservation in Arizona finds parallels in the management of Aborigines in Northern Territory of Australia in the early decades of federation:

In 1884 a complete census had been made, the tribes being enumerated under their head chiefs and each camp of Indians of the same tribe under its head man. Brass tags of different shapes with one shape for each tribe had been provided. The band or subdivision of a tribe was designated by a letter of the alphabet, and each member of the band had his number, stamped by the provost officer on the tag of the proper shape and given to each Indian whose name was recorded in books kept for the purpose. Each man was required to wear his tag at all times and to produce it when called upon by the proper officer. Any failure to comply with these regulations was severely punished, and in a short time the system worked to the perfection I found it on my arrival (Eliot 1948, 98, quoted in Seltzer 1999, 12).

In focusing on the role of demographic data in Australian Aboriginal affairs this paper contributes to both the construction of a comprehensive historical record regarding the use of population data systems as well as the provocation of professional discourse concerning the ethical dimensions of the collection, analysis and use of population data in social programs and policy formation. It should also be noted that this is not a new story: there is common knowledge in Australia -- from both academic and oral histories -- about statistics, head counts and registration of Indigenous Australians. Here we will document this ‘common’ knowledge within the context of public policy and

administration, and relate the collection of population data and population data systems in Australian Aboriginal affairs to principles of ethical practices in social statistics. Given the ongoing discussions in Australia concerning reconciliation between the Commonwealth and the original occupants of the continent, research serving to set the record straight would seem valuable.

Conceptual Framework and Analytic Approach

Within the growing literature concerning ethical dimensions of population data systems, the concept of human rights abuse has been operationalized to include “forced migration, internment, genocide and crimes against humanity (Seltzer and Anderson, 2001, 483). In this context the concept of human rights is consistent with the comprehensive perspective on genocide adopted by the United Nations. Genocide is inherent in:

...any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national ethnical, or racial or religious group:

- a. killing members of the group;
- b. causing bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- c. deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- d. imposing measures intended to prevent birth within the group;
- e. forcibly transferring children of the group to another group (Commonwealth Government, 1997, 212).

In the view of genocide scholar, Colin Tatz, each dimension of genocide conceptualized by the United Nations is evidenced in the history of Australian Aborigines under colonial and federated governments (Tatz, 1999; see also Palmer, 1998). The very process of colonization resulted in de facto genocide of the Aborigines of Australia throughout the 19th century. Violence, disease and starvation, loss of habitat and ecological change, all

aspects of dispossession resulted in loss of life and severe population decline. Cultural genocide is indisputable. The occurrence of forced settlement, restriction of population and mobility, restriction of personal freedoms such marriage and family formation as well as economic activity are also relevant in considering human rights violations within Aboriginal communities in Australia.

Following Seltzer and Anderson a population data system is conceptualized as: (a) one-time comprehensive data-gathering operations such as regular population censuses or special censuses, (b) one time or periodic inquiries carried out on a sample basis, or (c) comprehensive administrative reporting systems, with or without a major statistical component, such as national population registration systems, that attempt to maintain a continuous record, including current address, for each member of the population, or well-defined population subgroups and thus include censuses, surveys, registration systems and other systems to track the movement and characteristics of individuals (2002, 483). The benefits of population censuses and surveys for the administration, planning and evaluation of public works and social programs are well articulated. For example, the promotion of the 2001 Census of Australia presented in many popular venues the value of population data for community development and ultimately individual well being. Less well known, however, even among demographers or population scientists, are the misuses of population data and data systems for population control.

Two sets of concepts are useful to consider in the use of population data system in Aboriginal policy and programs in Australia. First, Seltzer and Anderson direct us to four types of uses of population data and resources:

(a) the use of macrodata, that is, the use of compiled statistical results in terms of large aggregates and geographic units; (b) the use of mesodata, that is, the use of compiled statistical results for very small geographic units; (c) the use of unprotected microdata, that is, the use of information (for example, identification number or name and address, along with related information that identifies an individual as a member of a vulnerable group; and (d) the use of other material, staff, services, and expertise provided by the population data system, particularly the national statistical service (2001, 484).

We explore the use these forms of population data in Aboriginal affairs in the Northern Territory. Seltzer and Anderson note that there is general professional consensus about the need to restrict access to microdata by political and military interests. As we shall see in the case of Aboriginal administration in the Northern Territory, individual records were part and parcel of reporting requirements of Protectors of indigenous persons, families and communities in implementing their interpretation of the Aboriginals Ordinance.

Our analytic focus is on the role of data systems in at least five areas of population regulation which raise critical issues of human rights: (i) control of the geographic mobility of Aborigines within and beyond the Australian continent; (ii) forced removal of Aborigines to government sponsored reserves (including those reserves run by religious organizations but receiving funds from the government); (iii) removal of part Aboriginal children from their parents for education and training both for purposes of assimilation into European society and also for ‘service’ in the white community; (iv) restriction and regulation of marriages between Aborigines and persons of part Aboriginal descent as well as white persons; and (v) regulation of work and employment.

Across these areas of Aboriginal policy and administration research is guided by the following questions similarly posed for the case of Victoria: (1) Was a population

data system employed in the development and implementation of the policy or program?

(2) What was the nature of the data system and how was the system organized and resulting data collected and disseminated? (3) How population data and statistical reports inform policy making in the area of Aboriginal affairs? (5) What were the perspectives of administrators regarding the collection and use of population data concerning the ‘protection and management’ of Aborigines?

The method of data collection is primarily archival research of government documents. These documents will represent both primary and secondary sources, that is, both original legislative and administrative policy documents that have relevance for the establishment of population data systems and their maintenance, as well as the review of printed government reports of data collection activities. The government archives (and their locations) and printed reports used thus far in this research include the following: National Archives of Australia in Canberra (A.C.T. (Australian Capital Territory), Darwin, Adelaide and Perth, National Library of Australia, Northern Territory Archives Service (Darwin), State Library of Northern Territory (Darwin), and the State Records of South Australia (Adelaide). Research and analysis has also benefited from the expertise of professional archivists in tracing governmental oversight of the Northern Territory during the transition in 1911 from South Australia to the Commonwealth.

The Context of Public Policy and Administration of Aboriginal Affairs

Between 1864 and 1911, the Northern Territory was within the auspices of the colony, and after Australian federation in 1901, state of South Australia. During the 19th century the Protector of Aborigines was the legal guardian of orphaned Aboriginal

children in the colony. While several mission schools existed in the colony, including Hermannsburg Mission (1877) and the Daly River Mission (1889) in the Northern Territory, the authority of the Chief Protector to remove children was not widely implemented (Haebich, 2000, 149). In the 1890s, interest by government administrators in the north turned to the growing population of ‘half-caste children’ particularly in the vicinity of Darwin. Calls for legislation to ‘protect’ children of mixed descent through removal and care in missions were rejected in the southern parliament in part on the view that the situation in the Northern Territory regarding Aboriginal affairs was ‘peculiar’ (Austin, 1993, 35). But Government Residents and administrators persisted in raising concern over the welfare and numbers of ‘half-caste children,’ advocating removal of children from their Aboriginal mothers to missions for care and education. In 1908, separate bills for South Australia and the Northern Territory were introduced; in 1910, legislation for the Northern Territory was passed and become policy when administration of the Territory shifted to the Commonwealth government in 1911.

Using Queensland’s Aboriginal Protection and Restriction on the Sale of Opium Act of 1897 as a model, the Aboriginals Ordinance 1911 established the authority of the Commonwealth government over the life of essentially all persons of Aboriginal descent in the Northern Territory. Haebich underscores the significance of the Commonwealth law:

The passing of the Aboriginals Ordinance 1911 marked the official shift in the Northern Territory from ‘pacification and dispersal’ to protection through authoritarian control. In the same year the federal government took over Aboriginal affairs and the seat of power move to even more distant bureaucracies in the south [i.e., from Adelaide to Canberra] with little understanding of conditions in the Territory (Haebich, 2000, 191)

The Ordinance applied to:

- (a) An aboriginal native of Australia or of any of the island adjacent or belonging thereto; or
- (b) A half-caste who lives with such an aboriginal native as wife or husband; or
- (c) A half-caste who, otherwise than as wife or husband of such an aboriginal native, habitually lives or associates with such aboriginal natives; or
- (d) A half-caste child whose age does not apparently exceed sixteen years shall be deemed to be an aboriginal within the meaning of this Act and of every Act passed before or after this Act, unless a contrary intention appears.

In this section the term 'half-caste' includes any person either but not both of whose parents is or was an aboriginal, and any child of any such person. (quoted in Austin, 1993, 37).

The Ordinance established the administrative apparatus for Aboriginal affairs in the Territory by creating the Aboriginals Department headed by a Chief Protector, Guardianship was no longer restricted to Aboriginal children who were orphaned: the Chief Protector of Aborigines was the legal guardian of all aboriginal children, thus including children of mixed descent, to age 18 and later, age 21. Local administration of policy was delegated to Protectors, usually police, who served as local guardians (Austin, 1993, 37). In implementing the Ordinance, Protectors had authority over the residence and mobility, marriage and parenthood, work and employment, and interaction with non-Aboriginals, Europeans, and in Darwin, Asians. The authority of the government in the form of the Chief Protectors for removals and custody of Aboriginal persons was clear:

4. Any person having the custody or control of any aboriginal or half-caste or on whose premises any aboriginal or half-caste is living shall, on demand in writing by the Chief Protector, deliver the aboriginal or half-caste, or take all reasonable steps in his power to facilitate the delivery of the aboriginal or half-caste, into the custody of the Chief Protector or into the custody of a Protector or police officer authorized by the Chief Protector to receive the aboriginal or half-caste into his custody, and if he fails to do so shall be guilty of an offence against the Act.

5. (1.) The Chief Protector may by writing authorize any police officer to take into his custody any aboriginal or half-caste.

(2.) The police officer so authorized may enter any premises where the aboriginal or half-caste is or is supposed to be and may take him into his custody.

(3.) A police officer who has taken any aboriginal or half-caste into his custody in pursuance of this section shall deal with the aboriginal or half-caste in accordance with the instructions of the Chief Protector.

(4.) Any person on whose premises any aboriginal or half-caste is shall, on demand by a police officer acting under this section and on production of his authority, facilitate, by all reasonable means in his power, the police officer in taking the aboriginal or half-caste into his custody.

6. (1.) Where any Protector or police officer has reason to believe that any aboriginal or half-caste is not being properly treated by any person having custody or control of such aboriginal (whether as employer or otherwise), he may remove such aboriginal or half-caste from the custody or control of such person.

... (cited in MacDonald, 1995, 13).

Similarly, employment and compensation among Aboriginal workers was regulated

under the Ordinance:

The Chief Protector may undertake the general care, protection and management of the property of any aboriginal or half-caste and may –

I. Take possession of, retain, sell, or dispose of and give a valid title to any such property, where real or personal;

II. In his own name sue for, recover, or receive any money or other property due or belonging to or held in trust for the benefit of any aboriginal or half-caste, or damages for any conversion of or injury to any such property;

III. Exercise, in the name of any aboriginal or half-caste, any power which the aboriginal or half-caste might exercise for his own benefit;

IV. In the name and on behalf of the aboriginal or half-caste, appoint any person to act as attorney or agent for any purposes connected with the property of such aboriginal or half-caste ... (Quoted in Austin, 1993, 38).

Wages were paid to the Protectors who then made decisions about the schedule and form of compensation, for example, in kind versus cash. ‘Suitable’ employers were licensed by the Chief Protector. Aboriginal women and non-Aboriginal men were prohibited from marrying without written permission. The Ordinance also regulated the population mobility of all persons in the Territory, prohibited Aborigines from coming in proximity to white settlements, and non-Aboriginals from being in close proximity to Aboriginal camps (Austin, 1993, 38).

In spite of the statutory authority of the Chief Protector in the affairs of persons of both full and mixed Aboriginal descent, Aboriginal policy in the Northern Territory was focused largely on the ‘half-caste’ population during the first decades of the century. Social Darwinism continued to guide popular perspectives on the doomed fate of the full-blood Aboriginal population. The future population of mixed Aboriginal and European descent, however, was viewed through conflicted and contested lens among academics, social reformers, policy-makers and the public (see Austin, 1993, ch. 1; Haebich, 2000). As mentioned above, growth of ‘half-caste’ population in and around Darwin, and increasingly on the streets of Stuart (renamed Alice Springs in 1933) in Central Australia, continued to raise concern among government officials. The Aboriginals Ordinance 1918 extending the control of the Aborigines Department over the ‘half-caste’ population, which was now legislatively defined to include ‘quarter-caste’ or ‘quadroons.’ Particular concern focused on ‘half-caste’ girls who, under the 1918 ordinance, were to remain under the guardianship of the Chief Protector for their entire life. Haebich makes the following observation about the focus of the legislation of the Northern Territory:

While the Northern Territory ordinances of 1911 and 1918 were closely based on the Queensland and Western Australian models, their implementation reflected local concerns. ‘Full-bloods’ were left largely to the control of pastoralists and missions, or to their own devices on large inviolable reserves until the 1950s. This reflected the inordinate power of the pastoralists as *the* major industry in a region experiencing serious difficulties establishing a viable and varied economy. Pastoralists would brook no interference in their system of Aboriginal labour and, like their counterparts in Western Australia, would not hear of a minimum cash wage for their workers.

The focus of the Northern Territory administration was almost exclusively on the ‘coloured’ population. It adopted a two-pronged approach: to control the size and composition of this population, largely through punitive controls over Aboriginal women, and to create a viable labour force, by removing ‘mixed race’ children from their families to be trained in institutions in a ‘hazy and barely articulated concept of economic assimilation’ (2000, 191-192).

As noted in the introductory paragraph of this paper, Chief Protector Baldwin Spencer used the Aboriginals Ordinance to implement the view that children of part-Aboriginal, and hence, part-European descent could be raised to a white, and thus civilized, Australian standard. While there was contention among subsequent government officials, notably Dr. Cecil Cook, Chief Protector of the Northern Territory 1927-1939, concerning the role of religious missionaries and mission school in the process of education and assimilation, the model of ‘protecting’ ‘half-caste’ children was that of institutionalization in schools and group homes, much like the missions that be founded throughout Australia to ‘rescue’ Aborigines and Aboriginal children. Under the auspices of the Aboriginals Ordinance, ‘half-caste’ children were to be removed to government institutions and missions throughout the territory. Among the largest government institutions to which children were ‘rescued’ in Northern Territory were the Kahlin ‘Half-caste’ Home in Darwin (1913) and The Bungalow in Alice Springs (1914); many church missions also ran homes for part-Aboriginal children. By the mid-1930s, seven missions were in operation, most located along the north coast, far away from the violence of Darwin. The department at times also sought to move light colored ‘half-castes’ out of the ‘sin sodden north’ to families in South Australia.

In 1920 a Royal Commission convened to investigate Aboriginal administration in the Northern Territory and conditions within the ‘half-caste population found inefficiency and evidence of corruption in trust funds and employment of Aboriginal workers. Uneven leadership and contested vision, put kindly, in the Aborigines Department resulted little movement in the areas of either welfare of Aborigines or training of persons of part Aboriginal descent during the 1920s. Public and private

outrage over conditions within the government homes in Darwin and in Alice Springs resulted in further calls for inquiry and reform from officials in the south, and increasingly, Aboriginal interest groups in the north. In 1927 the Commonwealth Government commissioned J.W. Bleakley, Chief Protector in Queensland, to prepare a report on Aboriginal affairs and administration in the Northern Territory. Bleakley's findings identified, yet again, the failure of government to effectively or adequately address the Aboriginal problem, again conceptualized largely as one of the growing 'half-caste' population, in the Territory.

The appointment of Dr. Cecil Cook as Chief Protector in 1927 brought a vision of conservative progressivism to Aboriginal affairs in the Territory (see Austin, 1993, chs. 1 and 6). Cook, a physician trained in tropical medicine and epidemiology, came to the office of Chief Protector after conducting research on infectious diseases in equatorial regions of the Commonwealth. In addition to his training in medicine and public health, he brought to his position strongly held social perspectives regarding Indigenous persons and families in Australia. Cook believed deeply in the potential for 'half-caste children to be 'assimilated' into white society; he promoted raising wages for part-Aboriginal workers. Cook also sought to promote a program of eugenics by which Aboriginal racial characteristics (culture and colour) would be 'bred out' of the population through the marriage of 'half-caste' girls with white Australian men. The following statement by Cook captures many dimensions of his social philosophy and perspectives on the 'half-caste' problem in the Northern Territory:

To treat the Half-Caste as a white, educating him to compete on equal terms with the white citizen. In this way there will be little opportunity of the Half-Caste controlling the labour market except on the ground of merit... [Moreover] By elevating the girls to white standard it will be possible to marry an increasing

number to white settlers whilst the boys could be safely removed to centres of denser white population where they would be competent to take work on the same basis as white men, thereby reducing the coloured population of the Territory and very appreciably diminishing the coloured birth rate (NAA CRS A1 33/479).

Cook consistently expressed his concern about population growth among the 'coloured' population of the Northern Territory and used stark images to communicate the issue to politicians and interests in both the south and the north:

In the Territory...the preponderance of coloured races, the prominence of coloured alien blood and the scarcity of white females to mate with the white male population, creates a position of incalculable future menace to purity of race in tropical Australia, and the Federal Government must so regulate its territories that the multiplication of multicolour humanity by the mating of Half-caste with alien coloured blood shall be reduce to a minimum. Halfcaste females in centres of population where alien races are prominent unfortunately exceed males in number. If this excess is permitted to mate with alien blood, the future of this country may very well be doomed to disaster. Elevate the Halfcaste to the standard of the white, with a view to his ultimate assimilation, encouraging the mating of the white male and halfcaste female, thereby gradually eliminating colour and reducing one contributory factor in the breeding of Halfcastes" (quoted in Austin, 1993, 133-134).

As will be discussed below, concerns over race, colour and Aboriginality were starkly evident in bureaucratic practices. Austin notes:

The increasing concern during the 1930s is demonstrated by the almost comic fretting about the nature of the racial mix in school children. In annual reports to 1928, it was sufficient to record the number of 'half-caste' and 'quadroon' children in the schools, but also to differentiate the number of 'Malay half-castes.' Between 1933 and 1937, however, the school population included 'octoroon', 'quadroon', 'European Aboriginal', 'Afghan-Aboriginal', 'Afghan-half-caste-Afghan', 'Chinese-Aboriginal', 'half-caste-half-caste', 'half-caste-Chinese-half-caste', 'half-caste-Chinese-Aboriginal', 'Malay-half-caste', 'Aboriginal-half-caste' and Cingalese half-caste' children (Austin, 1993, 134).

Finally, during the 1930s, the pace of child removals to government homes intensified, with numbers increasing by 70 percent (Haebich, 2000, 195).

Also during the decade, calls for reform in national, i.e., Commonwealth, policies regarding Aborigines were expressed from humanitarian groups and Aboriginal interest

groups. The focus of the Territory's Chief Protector on part-Aboriginals rather than the larger Aboriginal population was one source of criticism; inconsistency in policies, administration and ultimately treatment of indigenous persons and communities was another. In 1937 the first conference of state and Commonwealth administrators and ministers in the area of Aboriginal affairs convened. Commonwealth authority in Australian Aboriginal policy did not result from this venue.

The end of the 1930s did bring an end to official efforts at biological assimilation of part-Aboriginal persons in the territories of the Commonwealth. In the Northern Territory, a 'new deal' for 'half-castes' was forwarded and represented as a new commitment to Aboriginal affairs in the region which embodied principles social and economic assimilation to the form of white Australian families (see Haebich, 2000). Principles of social assimilation, however, were implemented using old forms of institutionalization, with part-Aboriginal children often removed to mission homes and schools supported with insufficient government funds. As will be shown below, patrol officers of the Native Affairs Branch continued their role as 'protectors' by documenting the location and situation of 'half-caste' children throughout the Territory.

We will begin to bring closure on this discussion of the policy context of Aboriginal Affairs in the Northern Territory by considering the implications to two changes in Commonwealth policies concerning Aborigines that were introduced in 1953. In that year, as a result of amendments to the Aborigines Ordinance, persons of mixed Aboriginal descent were granted exemption and thus awarded Australian citizenship. With this came permission to vote as Commonwealth (but not necessarily, state) citizens. The Northern Territory Welfare Ordinance was also passed by the Commonwealth in the

same year (although ‘proclaimed’ in 1957 (Macleod, 1997, 27)). Under the ‘Need’ replaced race as a basis for guardianship by the government. Persons were declared ‘Wards of State’ under the Welfare Ordinance if they were “deemed incapable of exercising the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and in need of ‘special care and assistance” (Haebich, 2000, 461). A ‘Register of Wards’ was to be compiled and gazetted as a basis for implementing programs, again based on the model of institutionalized training and acculturation, with the goal of producing Australian citizens. Persons not permitted to vote, including full-blood Aborigines, became Wards of the under the Welfare Ordinance. And to be sure, part-Aboriginal persons were most vulnerable to declared wards under the Ordinance. Wards were restricted in travel, required permission to marry, could not consume alcohol. In his memoir, *Patrol in the Dreamtime*, Colin Macleod, a patrol officer in the Welfare Branch recalls:

The words Aborigine or Aboriginal did not at any stage appear in the Ordinance. Many people, particularly outside the Welfare Branch, but also many within it, considered the term ‘Ward’ both contrived and insulting to Aborigines.

It was legalistic slight of hand. Almost all full-blooded Aborigines were to be gazetted in a register that was maintained by staff of the Welfare Branch. As the new ordinance could not be proclaimed until there was a Register of Wards all our efforts were put into compiling the Register. ...

Neither race nor colour could be used as criteria; in theory, gazettal depend on a person’s lifestyle. One wonders who the drafters thought they were fooling” (1997, 27-28).

Finally, in 1962, in response to the recommendations of the Select Committee on Aboriginal Voting Rights, the Commonwealth government took action to extend voting rights to all persons of Aboriginal descent. While several states had made provisions for indigenous persons to voting in state elections prior to this federal act, the extension of the franchise to all Aboriginal people in Australia was a “potent symbolic act” (Haebich, 2000, 448). Through a national referendum in 1967 two sections of the Commonwealth

Constitution were amended: Section 127 which “excluded Aborigines from being counted in the national census” was repealed; section 51(26), which constrained the federal government from enacting laws pertaining to Aboriginal people within states, was amended. These two changes eliminated the “last remaining vestiges of formal discriminatory federal legislation . . . found in the Australian Constitution of 1901” (Haebich, 2000, 452).

Population Data Systems and Aboriginal Administration in the Northern Territory

In our research of published and unpublished government documents concerning Aboriginal administration in the Northern Territory during the era prior to the 1967 Referendum, we find a pervasive role of demographic data and population registration in the ‘control and protection’ of Aboriginal people and communities. The phrase, ‘protection and control,’ is used deliberately, for these two policy goals persist throughout the period of research, and effectively throughout the history of white Australia. As in Victoria, counts and lists of persons receiving rations were a regular part of social administration concerning Aborigines in the Northern Territory.

The Northern Territory Administrator’s Reports in the 1890s document the mission of the Chief Protectors to provide sustenance for Aboriginal persons and families in need. Records of the distribution of blankets and foodstuffs to individuals abound in correspondence files of the office and administrator. An example of such documentation³

³ All archival material presented in this paper has been examined and is accessible for public use under the (Australian) Archives Act of 1983. Regardless of the distance of time and open access to government records, however, the authors have taken seriously the publication of names of individual Indigenous Australians. In the end, we were guided by advice of the Australian Archives, ACT Regional Office concerning the sensitivity of Commonwealth records concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People: “Knowledge of the existence and nature of such statements [included in records] can have a

is shown in **Figure 3** for 1909, just preceding the transfer of the administration of the Territory from South Australia to the Commonwealth. The regulation of lives is also evident in correspondence files of the administration. Communication with the Chief Protector concerning the placement and re-location of Aboriginal children is detailed in administrative files. Shown in **Figure 4**, for example, is a letter from an inspector documenting the ‘disposal’ of children from a mission home. **Figure 5** illustrates the paper trail of a white man seeking the permission of the Chief Protector under the authority of the Northern Territory Aboriginals Ordinance 1911 to marry an Aboriginal woman.

In our attempt in systematically documenting the use of population data and data systems in Aboriginal affairs and administration in the Northern Territory, we have sought to group data systems using concepts of micro, meso and macro-data in relation to the general approach to population data collection (e.g., population registration versus censuses). Because many of the data collection programs are functionally interrelated, classification according to these standard categories is not consistently clear-cut. For example, this is evident in census-taking activities linked to the construction of the Register of Wards, a population registration system, to be discussed below.

Micro-level Information: Personal Identification

The following request to implement a program of personal identification of Aboriginal persons, as an illustration of perhaps the most ‘micro’ of population data systems, illustrates many of the themes outlined in the preceding section on policy as

positive effect, revealing otherwise hidden facts about situations and allowing for refutation and reinterpretation” (Fraser, 1993, xii).

well as public perspectives concerning Aboriginal affairs in the Northern Territory, and also anticipates many of the themes of population data systems which follow. In 1911, the Chief Protector and Chief Medical Inspector for the Northern Territory, Herbert Basedow, made the following request to the Commonwealth Minister for External Affairs to tattoo Aboriginals in the region:

To the Hon. The Acting-Minister for External Affairs.

For reasons which I shall more clearly define in my scheme of Aboriginal Protection and Control, it is essential that we adopt some ready means of permanent individual identification. Each aboriginal must have his own and private mark which will be registered in the Government records of the Aborigines Department.

Methods depending on finger prints and photography, although of great value in criminal investigations, are too cumbersome for quick and easy identification when large numbers of individuals are to be dealt with. I propose to adopt these in addition to some other more practical and simpler method.

German criminal investigation department have quite lately tried a process of injecting liquid paraffin under the skin, in the shape of any conventional mark decided upon. ... It is stated to be permanent, but it is too recent to permit of any recommendation as to its practicability. I would hardly think it suitable for application in the case of Australian aborigines.

The ordinary process of tattooing, as practiced by various native races, sailors, bushman, etc., need not be considered here.

The skin of the Australian aboriginal has a peculiarity which in the European is rare and regarded as abnormal. When the skin of a white man is cut or otherwise damaged, the wound soon forms a scab, which after some time drops off, leaving nothing but a red mark to indicate the spot. Later, the reabsorption of minute bloodvessels does away with the red colour and leaves the skin blanched and in practically the same condition as before the injury was inflicted. Not so with the Australian aboriginal. When portion of the skin is injured, the wound granulates in a prolific manner, resulting in prominent elevated scars. When making the deep transverse gashes across his chest, abdomen and limbs during tribal ceremonies, the aboriginal often increases the effect by throwing sand ochre and ashes into the wound.

It is this natural property of the aboriginal's skin which I propose to make use of when assigning to each native his mark of recognition. A slight lesion of the superficial skin will be all that is necessary. This can be done in an absolutely painless way and without disfigurement. The space occupied by the mark need not exceed one or two square inches and would be chosen in quite an inconspicuous position.

I respectfully suggest that you allow to adopt this simple system of aboriginal identification, as without it my work would be considerable handicapped if not impossible.

(Sgd.) H. Basedow
Chief Protector and Chief Med. Inspector

6/5/11

(NAA A1/15 11/8795)

The terse reply from the Acting-Secretary to the Minister of External Affairs came just one week later:

Melbourne, 13th May, 1911

Sir,

I have honour, by direction, to acknowledge the receipt of your memorandum of the 6th instant, and to inform you the Minister is unable to approve the suggestion contained therein for the marking of natives.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant

Acting-Secretary

(NAA A1/15 11/8795)

The negative response from the southern government was swift, but the intent and assumptions of the administrator in the north are telling. The recognition of practices in Germany is chilling. The Chief Protector anticipates a large and ongoing problem by stating the need for 'permanent' identification for use by the 'government' for dealing with 'large numbers' of people; it is his, that is, the administration's role to assign the mark of recognition; and marking will make 'his' job, presumably of protection and control, feasible.

In 1932, however, a similar approach to facilitate efficiency and control was introduced by Chief Protector Cecil Cook. He implemented the use of brass tags as a means to personally identify Aborigines in Darwin. Criticism from activists and advocates on behalf of the Aboriginal population was anticipated, but officials saw

greater administrative benefit in regulating the employment of Aboriginal workers in Darwin and controlling and monitoring their movement in the city and the Kahlin Compound. The Commonwealth Department of Home Affairs agreed in the following memorandum (32/1067) of 2 February 1932:

METAL DISCS FOR ABORIGINALS

The Administrator of the Northern Territory asks that a quotation by [be] obtained from the Defence Department for the supply of brass discs containing identification numbers for issue to aboriginals in town districts employed under licence and agreement.

He states that the Chief Protector of Aboriginals desires these discs in order to secure greater control over the employment of aboriginals and to check the employees entering and leaving the Compound.

It will be necessary to obtain further particulars from the Administrator in regard to the size, number, wording etc. of the discs, but before any action is taken in the matter, it seems desirable that the Minister should indicate whether he approves of the suggestion.

All aboriginals employed in the town of Darwin must be in the Compound between the hours of 7 p.m. and 6 a.m., unless special permission to remain on the premises of the employer has been given by a Protector.

Although the issue of identification discs might be objected to by some of the Societies interested in the welfare of aboriginals on the ground that the practice is degrading to the aboriginal, it is felt that the Chief Protector would not recommend the adoption of this course unless he had good grounds for doing so in the interests of the aboriginals themselves.

Personally I see no objection to the practice. There must be times when it is extremely difficult for the Chief Protector or the Superintendent of the Compound to make an accurate check on the inmates of the Compound in order to ensure that none of them is roaming about the town at night and indulging in practices detrimental to their welfare, such as drinking of liquor, opium smoking, etc.

(NAA A1/15 34/4166)

Chief Protector Cook chose the disc (shown in **Figure 6**) to be most acceptable given probable criticisms of the system as an ‘improving innovation in Aboriginal Administration’:

His Honour,
The Administrator of the
Northern Territory,
DARWIN

Employment of Aborigines.

With reference to memorandum No.32/1067 of the 27th April, 1932, from the Department of the Interior, it is recommended that of the sample tokens forwarded the second, that is the dull one with the border like a medal and numbered back and front, be selected.

Whilst it is recognized that this disc is more expensive than the other; it is considered preferable on the ground of its better appearance. It is not improbable that the introduction of this system will, like every other improving innovation in Aboriginal Administration, be met with a deal of public criticism and it is not improbably that comparison will be drawn to registration under the Dogs Registration Ordinance. Whilst such an objection could not of course be seriously entertained the issue of a disc, to the appearance of which no exception can be taken, is calculated largely to disarm criticism of this nature and this advantage is considered sufficient to offset the additional cost of £2 per 500.

(C.E. Cook).
Chief Protector of Aborigines.

(NAA A1/15 34/4166)

The discs were issued Aboriginal workers in Darwin later that year, drawing attention in the national press (**Figure 7**). The ‘innovation’ did not appear to be effective, however, as noted in this note in *The Northern Standard*, 6 March 1934:

Some 12 months ago the Aboriginal Department issued to practically every aboriginal within the township of Darwin a copper medal with an identification number but like many other innovations by the Administration the novelty has worn off; it is now difficult to find an abo with the “dog number” emblem of compound respectability.

(NAA A1/15 34/4166)

While the Register of Wards will be discussed in more detail below, it is appropriate to note that another form of bodily identification, fingerprinting, and in passing, photography, was entertained by government authorities. In a memorandum (22 December, 1954) concerning the implementation of the Welfare Ordinance of the 1953, the Administrator of the Northern Territory commented:

2. I have set out below the action which has already been taken in preparation of the Register of Wards: ...

(b) An investigation was made into the use of finger prints as a means of identification apart from the development and use of a naming system. No finger print expert is stationed in the Northern Territory whose evidence in relationship to finger prints would be accepted in a court of law. All identification work in the Police Branch is done by the Central Bureau of finger prints in Sydney and for identification purposes the Bureau requires the prints can be a valuable auxiliary means of identification, and this has been provided for.

(NAA A 452/54 Item 57/1580)

The plan to fingerprint was eventually abandoned for the “practical difficulties in making the prints and in having the prints read in the Northern Territory” (memorandum from Administrator Wise, 15 February, 1995 NAA A 452/54 Item 54/617). It is worth presenting in **Figure 8** as an instance of the international transfer of technology and ideas concerning vulnerable populations. The letter (18 January 1955) from a company representative of Polarizers to Paul Hasluck, Commonwealth Minister for the Territories, describes their experience in working with officials in South Africa in using photography to document individuals for the purposes of the government’s ‘identification programme.’

Micro/meso-level Information: Population Registers and Registration Systems

In the Northern Territory, the published reports of William Stretton, Chief Protector of the Aborigines for the years 1908-1911, indicate his efforts in developing a population register of Aboriginal persons in the Territory and also conducting a census. The Northern Territory Administrator’s report for 1908 includes within the section on Aborigines a memorandum from Stretton in which he comments on population issues:

With regard to population of the aborigines in the Northern Territory, there have been several estimates formed of the numerical strength of the natives, and those I have seen are, in my opinion, over estimated.

When stationed at Borroloola from 1888 to 1904, I took great interest in the native folklore, and with regard to the number of individuals comprising each tribe, I could find no tribe with more than 80 souls, and those were the tribe least know to civilizations, and this I find obtains in other localities. There is a small tribe on the South Alligator River whose habitat is near to Caparlgo, the late mission station, the full strength of this tribe is 22, and the whole tribe are now in Part Darwin and vicinity.

At this time of the year many of the river tribes meet in Port Darwin. I shall endeavor to obtain a list of the names of each tribe, with its numerical strength, and in the meantime I estimate the native population to be as follows:

| | Area Square Miles | Native Numbers |
|--|----------------------|-------------------|
| Coast natives from Victories River on the west to Robinson Rivers on the east | 20,000 | 5,600 |
| Up-river tribes and intervening country | 30,000 | 4,000 |
| Inland tribes from Newcastle Waters to southern boundary | 473,000 | 3,000 |
| Melville Island | <u>2,400</u> | <u>400</u> |
| Total | 525,400 | 13,000 |

(Report of the Northern Territory Administrator 1908, 48)

In the report for 1910, Stretton writes, “(t)he registration of half castes started by me on my appointment two years ago is still kept up...” (Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1911, 42). The nature of the information included in the register is not yet known, nor the use of the data.⁴ These statistical activities are also coincident with the Aboriginals Ordinance of 1911, but any link between the policy and population data systems has yet been revealed.

As shown in **Figure 9** showing reports for May 1909, ‘Census-taking’ under the auspices of Chief Protector Stretton was also connected to distribution of rations among Aboriginal communities. Note that later in the year of 1909 Stretton responded to an increasing half-caste population in both memoranda (see **Figure 10**) and through the

⁴ Inwards correspondence from the Government Resident’s Office of the Northern Territory has been reviewed for these years (1908-1910) and has not revealed any documentation of the register maintained by Chief Protector Stretton. Correspondence of the Aborigines Department of South Australia which administered Aboriginal policy in the Territory until 1911 is currently restricted for public access for these for these years.years, also

published report of the Northern Territory Administrator (see **Figure 11**). In his communication with the Government Resident, Stretton urged the administration to set aside “a block of land ... within easy distance of Palmerston, on which to erect buildings and form a Home for these unfortunate young people.” Also note in the left-hand margin of the document, the response of the Government Resident: “The necessary legislation must precede the adoption of any practical scheme for the segregation of the half castes referred to by the Protector.”

Legislation concerning Aborigines in the Northern Territory was passed by the Parliament of South Australia in the following year and accepted by the Commonwealth in 1911 (see above). The ‘block of land’ was the Kahlin Compound:

...located 2.5 kilometers from the township of Darwin, was established initially for ‘full-blood’ people in an effort to control their movements, keep them out of Chinatown, and do away with camps which offended authorities’ senses of aesthetics and hygiene. The areas running down to Cullen Bay had a number of attributes. It was far enough from town to isolate Aborigines when necessary, yet close enough for those employed to walk to work (Austin, 1997, 45).

As described above, a school for ‘half-caste’ children was established within the compound in 1913; the Bungalow in Alice Springs (Stuart) was established the following year (see **Figure 12** and **Figure 13**).

The placement of ‘half-caste’ children in government and mission schools rested on the program of child removal from Aboriginal mothers and communities. This program gained momentum under the authority of Chief Protector Cook during the 1930s continued under the implementation of the Aborigines Ordinance through the 1950s, and effectively under the Welfare Ordinance of 1953 (see Haebich, 2000). Efforts to register and monitor the Aboriginal population throughout the Northern Territory were carried out largely through the auspices of the Police Inspector and the network of Sub-

Inspectors. Patrol Officers made routine and regular visits to pastoral stations and were directed to record names and personal characteristics of Aboriginal persons and families living both on and in the vicinity of the stations. The reports of the Patrol Officers often include lengthy narratives concerning the welfare of half-caste children within their jurisdiction and observations about the prospects for individual children to assimilate into 'white' society (see also Austin 1997; Long 1992).

Shown in **Figure 14** are examples of the documentation prepared by the Officers. The reports routinely include both summary counts of native people and families, and personal information recorded about individual 'half-caste' children for purposes of identifying those children for whom removal was determined to be in the child's best interest (see Macleod, 1997). **Figure 15** presents the report from Patrol Officer E.C. Evans in December of 1949 that is well known in the literature. Evans describes an act of child removal that provoked his recommendations for revising the system.

Meso-data: Census-taking and Returns

Population data were part and parcel of the institutionalization of Aboriginal children and control over the lives of adults. 'Census-taking,' 'returns,' and 'statistics' continued to be integral, seemingly increasing in importance, to programs of rationing and education and training on government settlements throughout the implementation of the Aboriginals Ordinance as well as era of welfare legislation after 1953. Note, for example, this trail of documents concerning administrative statistics for the Bungalow in 1952: **Figure 16** presents the daily journal of Superintendent Holden of the Bungalow for March 1952 and illustrates the place of preparing 'returns' during the work week. In

reviewing the daily journal for August, the Director of Native Affairs asked for statistics to be shown separately by sex (see **Figure 17**), which prompted a response from the Acting District Superintendent to explain the difficulties in data collection and raise a question about the need for the data (see **Figure 18**); the Director responded stating the need for the data (**Figure 19**). Superintendent Holden complied with providing the data (see **Figure 20**).

The data were central to the process of resource allocation at the level of Territory administration. For example, in February 1954, an administrator in the Department of Native Affairs noted in response to the data on rationing of meat at the Bungalow, shown in hand writing at bottom of **Figure 21** and reproduced here:

The numbers of females and children seem out of all proportion of the number of males. As we not Daily Strength Returns or Rations Returns from other area[s], & as Supt Webb gives not statistics in monthly Journal, we have nothing to check against. You will note that only 13 workers (male and female) are included in total of 197.

Acting McCaffery added: “Mr. Webb is to complete statistics in monthly journal, forward a direction, please.” Upon receiving the directive (11 February 1954) Acting District Superintendent Evans responded in a memorandum (See **Figure 22**) in which he notes (in the last typed paragraph) the problems in both collecting population statistics and comparing data across government settlements. Again, the response from the level of the Territory Administration is telling about the role of meso-level information in the administration of Aboriginal affairs and the distribution of rations. Continued and consistent submission of data is underscored; note also the question about the return of ‘widows’ to ‘their country’. The hand-written comments in the memo are reproduced here:

D.N.A. Average numbers rationed should not be hard to give, & that is the real information we want. I note that statistics were given up to end of February 1953, when Mr. Holden handed over to Mr. Webb, but none given since then. According to figures now given, average numbers have risen from about 120/130 to 197.

CC. There are two matters requiring attention –

- (1) Statistics are to be made available and regularly – Mr. Webb has a superintendent to assist him.
- (2) Surely some of the widows could be return to their country.
- (3) I require continuing submission regarding rationing at the Bungalow.

Administration of government schools and as well as government oversight and funding of schools for aboriginal children run by missions during the entire period of this study required monitoring children as well as resources. Not unexpectedly, school attendance rolls were part of the daily the government schools were collect were routinely submitted. See, for example, **Figure 23**, which illustrates a summary report for attendance at the Bungalow school for October 1956. The connection between policy and school statistics is also evident in a communication between the Education Department and the government school in which personal details (micro-data) for individual children were also requested:

5th. June, 1957.

Head Teacher,
Bungalow School
ALICE SPRINGS.

PART-COLOURED CHILDREN ATTENDING BUNGALOW SCHOOL:

Would you please supply the following details in relation to part coloured children attending the Bungalow School.

- (a) Full Name – European and Aboriginal (if any);
- (b) Age (approximate age if actual not know);
- (c) Name of parents or foster parents;
- (d) Tribal Affiliation.

2. I would be pleased also if you discuss with Mrs. Jackson the reason why it is preferable to have these children remain at the Bungalow rather than have then

transferred to the Alice Springs public School and let me know the results of your discussion.

(J. Gallacher)
DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICER

(NAA E748/0 Item ED 2/1)

Upon receipt of the information, the Education Officer responded:

11th. July, 1957.

Head Teacher,
Bungalow School
ALICE SPRINGS.

ATTENDANCE – PART COLOURED CHILDREN
BUNGALOW SCHOOL:

Thank you for the information set out in your letter of 5th. July, 1957.

2. The policy regarding the admission of part-coloured children is as follows: “where a part-coloured child has been brought up entirely in a native environment and has a very limited knowledge of the use of the English language shall be admitted to the Bungalow School for at least a year for training with particular attention to the teaching of English as a foreign language. At the end of the year’s training his case shall be reviewed and a decision made as to whether he should continue at the Bungalow school or should be admitted to an institution and attend the public school”. I hope this will help clear any worries which you may have in this regard.

3. I would prefer you to use the term “part-coloured” instead of “mixed blood” when referring to these children.

(J. Gallacher)
DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICER

(NAA E748/0 Item ED 2/1)

Mission schools also submitted reports which included counts of children (see **Figure 24**, and often more detailed information which, as above, flowed from policy implementation (see **Figure 25** as an illustration).

Meso/Micro-data: Census as foundation for Registration

As discussed above, the Welfare Ordinance of 1953 sought to apply Commonwealth welfare policy on the basis of need rather than race. Persons in need of “special care and assistance” were to be ‘Wards of State’ or simply, ‘Wards.’ of the government. A “Register of Wards” was to be developed in order to implement the Ordinance. As a 1954 memorandum from the Administrator of the Northern Territory, F. R. S. Wise of 1954 reveals, the construction of the Register required several components, each having implications for the human rights of persons named Wards under the Ordinance. As evident in **Figure 26** the focus of the administrator was on Aborigines. Steps in the process included renaming persons, collection of personal and family information to be included in the Register for each person and for preparing for a census, verification of the information, maintenance of an individual card record for each Aborigine, and decentralization of the card record system.

Colin Macleod described his experiences as a patrol officer in collecting information and its purpose in administering the law. His perspective is worth quoting at length:

The Welfare Ordinance decreed that all persons gazetted as wards were to be registered under the custodianship of the Director of Welfare and have their names printed in the ever-growing and continually corrected Register of Wards. An extraordinary amount of time and energy was spent collecting and collating names. I could never travel without the register. Whenever I spoke to any group of Aborigines, I would, if I did not know them, have to check to see if they were in this one-and-a-half inch thick, brown, manilla folder-sized gazette and, if so, ensure such registration was correct. This damn thing was my ever-pressing bible. It not only ruled the lives of about 18,800 Aborigines, but also half the Territory’s public servants. It was referred to by some as the ‘stud book.’

A person was registered by having record his or her European name, tribal name, language or tribe, skin or sub-section (his or her intra-tribal grouping for marriage purposes in accordance with tribal law), place of birth, approximate age and sex. The scope for error was immense, particularly as nomadic and fringe-

dwelling people often changed their names, spoke more than one language, appeared to be of different ages (depending on who was recording the information at the time), and even could, in certain circumstances, be prohibited by tribal law from using his own and other's tribal names.

It was a public document, officially printed, and twice this register went before the Legislative Council to be amended. ...

I'd often be found bending over the bonnet of a Land Rover, with sweat dripping off the end of my fingers, writing down the above information in a conversation that would go something like this:

'Hello, where all you mob from?'

'Might be some place boss.'

'My name Mr Macloed. What your fella name?'

'Might be 'im Sammy, boss.'

'Sammy, this women your missus?'

'Altogether properly boss me marry, 'im that one. Might be I marry 'im other one too.'

'All right, you have two missus, Sammy. What their names?'

'No more 'im say that one name boss, but that other missus 'im bin callim Lizzy.'

At this point there would be much laughter from the females, as Sammy had found himself in some dilemma of tribal law taboo, that prohibited him from speaking one of their names at all, or in some cases only allowing me to hear the name – from the woman herself – in a whisper. ...

The drill was to see if you could identify a person by the description given in the register. Quite frequently this was possible, but often it was not. One often found a set of particulars on a person that almost matched – but not quite. The answer then was to carry on with even more questioning during which time it would usually surface that someone had changed their 'whitefella' name, or perhaps their spouse's name (or their spouse), or previously recorded age, place of birth, or parent had been recorded wrongly.

... As you can well imagine, the local lawyers had a fruitful time thumbing through the register searching for omissions or errors to get their clients acquitted (Macleod, 1997, 49-52).

The components of constructing the Register of Wards are shown in **Figures 27-**

32. Figure 27 illustrates the working form for the collection of individual information about Aboriginal persons. **Figure 28** provides illustrations of the collection of census information for Aboriginal populations in patrol districts and missions throughout the Territory. Note that the census information for Hermannsburg is the Nominal Roll for the mission, and includes a different set of information. **Figure 29** and

Figure 30 illustrate the process of transition between the Aboriginals Ordinance and the Welfare Ordinance. Persons identified as Aborigines were to be declared Wards, but also had to file the paperwork.

The process took several years to complete; as Officer Macleod described the Register was checked and rechecked (see **Figure 31**); to be sure, the Ordinance did not become the rule of law on the ground until 1957. Ultimately the Register of Wards was gazetted (see **Figure 32**). In 1960, the Register included 15,277 names of Aboriginal persons (Haebich, 2000, 462) but grew to include several thousand more people.

Meso/macro Information: Special Censuses

As illustrated in the many examples above, ‘census-taking’ was a regular and recurring component of Aboriginal administration in the Northern Territory during the period under study. We shift now, however, to ‘special censuses’ which sought to enumerate the Aboriginal population of the Territory at one (roughly) coincident point in time. Special censuses had been undertaken as part of Aboriginal administration elsewhere in Australia during the colonial period. For example, in 1877, the Board for the Protection of Aborigines undertook a census of Aborigines which preceded the implementation of the ‘merging half-caste’ policy (see Kraly and McQuilton, 2005).

Special censuses also played a role in the management of Aboriginal persons and populations in the Northern Territory, both for purposes of control and regulation but also in preparation for efforts to separate out persons, specifically children, of part-Indigenous descent for removal to schools and other training facilities. Within the Territory, the operative context for special censuses, as with most statistical activities regarding the

Indigenous population, was effort by government officials, notably Protectors, to develop policy concerning the increasing half-caste population in the Northern Territory. Shown in its entirety in **Figure 33** is a memorandum from within the department of the Chief Protector advocated for a census of Aboriginal half-castes (see page (2) of the memo). This recommendation is made as part of an argument for progress to be made concerning Aborigines in the Territory through both education and control (see page (3)). The memo was written in 1925 and the recommendation for a census was quickly considered and approved (see **Figure 34**). One year later the census was conducted and the data tabulated. **Figures 35-37** show the micro level data that then became tabulated in aggregate form. Once again, the relationship between the collection of population data and operational policy development emerges as the hand-written note (shown in **Figure 38**) illustrates:

Submitted for the information of the Minister.
When a Government Resident for North Australia is appointed and takes up duty at Darwin, the question of transferring the half-castes now in the Darwin home to Oenpelli or some other Mission Station might be re-opened.
(Initialed)
27.10.26

Ultimately, the data were published in administrative reports for the Territory (see **Figure 39**).

In 1953, a similar initiative for a special census focused on ‘half-caste’ children present in schools in the Territory on 30th June was requested of the Department of Education by the Native Affairs Branch (see **Figure 40**). It appears that in the next year, the reverse request was made to the Director of Native Affairs for the numbers of white, part-white, and Aboriginal populations of the Northern Territory for the purpose of review of education in the Territory (see **Figure 41**).

The focus thus far in the study has been on population data systems in Aboriginal policies and program in the Northern Territory and to some extent in the Commonwealth Department of Home Affairs (Territories). We turn briefly to consider the collection for demographic data on Indigenous people within the context of census and statistical programs of the Commonwealth. (A more complete discussion of this topic is considered in Smith, 1980, and Kraly, 2005).

While Section 127 of the Commonwealth Constitution of 1901 excluded Aborigines from being included in the national census, Commonwealth statisticians move to initiate special annual censuses of the Aboriginal population within two decades (see Kraly, 2005). In the Northern Territory, these census data were collected largely through the auspices of the Commissioner of Police. Within the Northern Territory Administration there are examples at demographic analysis of these data. See, for example, **Figure 42**.

During the 1950s, there was increasing interest in coordinating population data collection in general between the Commonwealth and the Territory. While under the Census and Statistics Act 1905-1949, the Commonwealth Statistician held regulative authority over the collection and publication of statistics for the Northern Territory, in practice the activities were delegated to administrators in Darwin. In 1952, a report on the 'published statistics' for the Northern Territory was prepared for the Department of External Territories (Commonwealth) which gave priority to two weaknesses in statistical reports for the Territory: 'Primary Production' and 'Population and Vital (Aboriginal)' (NAA A452/54 Item 55/754). Concerning counts of the Aboriginal population, the report notes:

The aboriginal population of the Northern Territory is included in census counts but for the intervening years between censuses there is not a sufficient record of vital statistics to enable reliable population figures to be quotes. The census count divides the population according to adults or children and full-blood or half-caste. The term “half-caste” includes persons of mixed blood living with aboriginals. The term “full-blood” includes persons whose predominant strain is aboriginal.

The Commissioner of Police in the Northern Territory acted as Deputy Supervisor of Censuses for the Aboriginal Censuses which were conducted before the war. The census information was collected by Police patrols and there was a considerable degree of estimation. Mr. Wilcox of the Census Office in Canberra, with whom the matter was discussed, expressed the opinion that the Police and Patrol Officers working in co-operation could carry out the collection of statistics of aboriginal population. The main qualification required was not so much a statistical training as a knowledge of the Territory and the habits and movements of aboriginal groups (NAA A 452/54 Item 55/754).

Analysis of the report included consideration of bringing statistical activities in the Territory more directly within the sphere of the Commonwealth Statistician. **Figure 43** provides those sections of the memorandum considering changes in statistical operations within the Territory. Paragraph 14 notes the suggestion of appointing a Commonwealth statistical officer to work in Darwin; paragraph 15 outlines the disadvantages of such an appointment, including (a) the secrecy provisions of the Census and Statistics Act. Paragraphs 16 and 18 address issues of confidentiality pertaining to both micro and meso-data and are particularly relevant for the general issues of population control considered in this case study and the larger project of human rights and population data.

Discussion

This analysis has worked within similar boundaries as that Rowse (1998) in his exceptional study of rationing in the Northern Territory. Rowse notes that his “book should not be mistaken for ‘Aboriginal history’; it is a critical history of the culture of the colonizers, using non-Indigenous sources, mostly written but some oral, to comment not

only what the colonist did but also on what they thought they were doing” (1998, 4). Accordingly, we have sought to document the practices of the colonizers, that is, administrators and to a certain extent, policy-makers, in using population data and data systems in the development and implementation of policies and programs seeking to ‘protect’ Aboriginal people and communities in the Northern Territory, effectively through the process of population control. The concept of ‘administrative armature’ forwarded by Rowse (1998) resonates well with the themes of our analysis.

Our research has revealed the persistence use of population data in all forms – micro-, meso- and macro- – in Aboriginal affairs in the Northern Territory and throughout the period under review. Early efforts at population registration and personal identification of individuals flowed from concerns among officials about increases in the part-Aboriginal population, the welfare of children and the inadequacies of Aboriginal women as care takers, control over the movement of Aboriginal workers near white settlements, etc. Census-taking for local communities, regions and institutions was an integral component of the administration of rations and resources. Following the whereabouts and welfare of individuals, and very much in particular, part-Aboriginal children through personal records and reports served as a foundation for strategies of child removal and then control in government institutions and mission schools. Special censuses of the Aboriginal and part-Aboriginal population provided information for planning and policy formation for the region.

It is useful to consider these findings in relationship to factors that might increase the ‘vulnerability’ of population data systems being used in ways harmful to populations

or subgroups within populations. Seltzer (2003) has outlined the factors that increase the potential for population data to be misused in social policy. ‘Critical factors’ include:

1. Population studied is weak or otherwise vulnerable.
2. Data gathering or research involved variables that are on “sensitive” topics, typically topics that are or can be used to identify or stigmatize one or more vulnerable groups, or use classifications that permit the identification or stigmatization of such groups.

Ample evidence exists concerning the vulnerability of indigenous people to death, disease and dispossession as a result of European colonization and settlement; evidence about the attempted use of personal and corporeal identification is consistent with the second factor.

Seltzer then identifies the following aggravating factors:

1. All or substantially all of population is covered, i.e., sampling is not used.
2. Longitudinal data gathering is involved, or the activity can be linked to a longitudinal system.
3. Participation is mandatory or is effectively coerced.
4. Little or no input from the subject population in planning the data gathering or research activities. (The risk potential is further enhanced if there are substantial inputs in terms of expertise, staff, or funds from foreign persons or institutions.)
5. The data gathering or research is carried out in a war, a period of civil disruption, or during or shortly after a similar emergency.
6. Little or not attention to organizational, operational, methodological, and technological safeguards against the misuse of information obtained for non-statistical purposes.
7. Confidentiality assurances provided to respondents have limited or not legal basis.
8. Ethical reviews are not carried out, are perfunctory, or are heavily influenced by utilitarian considerations (Seltzer, 2003, 196).

(1) Concerning the first issue, we found outstanding evidence comprehensive counts of Aboriginal and part-Aboriginal populations particularly for those groups of people geographically concentrated in settlements, reserves and institutions such as schools or missions; sampling among Aboriginal populations as a means to collect demographic information was not evident in Aboriginal administration in the Territory. (2) The

prominence of population registration systems and the accounts of patrol officers regarding individual children and adults are consistent with longitudinal data systems; similarly, the Register of Wards reflected an ongoing relationship of individuals with the state. (3) Participation in statistical documentation was involuntary; we found no evidence of consent. (4) Nor did we find evidence of the participation of indigenous persons in the planning of data gathering initiatives or statistical programs; we were impressed, however, with ways in which population data systems were customized to the policy or administrative issue or question at hand, and the authority of Territorial administration and the office of the Chief Protector. This weight of authority seemed to shift after the departure of Dr. Cecil Cook in 1938. (5) Data gathering activities appear to have abated somewhat after the first world war, but increased during the early years of the Depression. Statistical priorities shifted during the second world war.

(6) There was little evidence of institutional dialogue or organizational structure concerning Aboriginal affairs in the Territory dedicated to preventing potential misuses of population information. (7) At the level of Territorial administration during the period before World War II, we found little evidence of issues of confidentiality. Discussions during the 1950s concerning the extension of the authority and expertise of the Commonwealth statistical office to the production of statistics for the Northern Territory did raise issues of the use of data for small groups and areas, and hence, confidentiality. The interest, however, was more in the direction of facilitating Territorial *access* to information that might be otherwise constrained by commonwealth standards for confidentiality. (8) We have not found evidence of the performance of ethical review or perusal regarding statistical practices within Territorial administration of Aboriginal

affairs although accuracy and consistency of data and statistics regarding Indigenous populations was a goal held by administrators.

Thus, as a first pass through this analysis, we conclude that each of these factors is present in the case of population data systems as they pertain to Indigenous peoples in the Northern Territory. The degree to which the archival record and records are complete and representative is an important issue to be considered in both the validity and reliability of our interpretations to date. Marsh and Kinnane (2003) raise critical issues regarding the selective destruction of archival material concerning Indigenous persons and communities as well as Aboriginal policy and administration in the history of Western Australia. They, and others, underscore the biases raised for historians and scholarly research from incomplete records and more importantly archives that have been selectively purged (see also Auer, 1996). In the case of Australian Aboriginal administration, the point concerning the content of archived government record is made forcefully and is also relevant for our thinking about the role of population data in Aboriginal policy and administration:

The control of Aboriginal peoples through the creation and use of specific archives mirrors many of the characteristics of archives of repressive regimes. Therefore, to passively accept the files of the DIA [Department of Indigenous Affairs] Archives as a by-product of departmental business is to misunderstand their nature. The system of record keeping was deliberately coordinated to suit the needs and style of an autocratic administration, resulting in a particular, and somewhat idiosyncratic, assemblage of documentation. Thinking of the DIA Archives as 'archives of a repressive regime' puts it in a different perspective and helps to clarify assertions of subjectivity of the material in this collection (Marsh and Kinnane, 2003, 114).

Accordingly, loss of government records, just as initial collection of the information, reflects political philosophy and public policy. In the case of Aboriginal affairs in Australia, loss of archival information, as Marsh and Kinnane demonstrate, has profound

implications for historical research, and as or more critically, for evidentiary foundations for native title claims. Returning us to the legacy of the child removal and the Stolen Generation, Anna Haebich documents the heart breaking consequences of incomplete and inaccurate records for Aboriginal persons for family reconstruction and reconnection (see in particular Haebich, 2000, chapter 9; also Commonwealth Government, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997)

The focus of this analysis has been the *process and role* of population record-keeping within the *process* of Aboriginal policy making and administration -- the point before administrative and statistical records become ‘history’⁵. During the 1930s, Chief Protector Cecil Cook’s training in epidemiology was evident in his penchant for relatively rigorous social and medical analysis. Accordingly Cook acted to use population data for the calculation of rates and ratios to characterize the Aboriginal and part-Aboriginal population in the Territory as part of advancing his goal to assimilate half-caste persons into European society. Generally, the results presented above for the case of the Northern Territory reveal the responsiveness of protectors and patrol officers, superintendents and missionaries, to such requests by administrators for the collection and tabulation of population data at both the micro- and meso-levels.

Such administrative responsiveness provokes us to consider the professional perspective and occupational duties and responsibilities of the persons from whom data and data collection were requested. Specifically, we might consider the nature of work of persons obliged to provide population data to higher officers in order to understand the feasibility of instilling ethical standards and guidelines regarding the collection and use of population data and information systems. Unlike Commonwealth statisticians,

protectors, police and patrol officers, even educators in the Northern Territory in the first few decades of Federation were not in the vocation of social statistics and statistical analysis, but rather were more broadly engaged in the control and protection of Aborigines, a phrase embedded in the administrative narrative for the Northern Territory. In the case of Aboriginal affairs, the collection of data – ‘censuses’ and ‘returns’ regarding Aboriginal persons as well as other residents of the Territory was only one piece of the diverse set of duties extending over long days and weeks of occupation as police and patrol officers. Consider a selection of the daily entries of the Station Journal, shown in **Figure 44**, for the Timber Creek Police Station for 1932-1933 and what is revealed about the place of ‘population data systems’ in the working rhythms of the officers.

Population data collection was one of myriad dimensions of Aboriginal administration in the Northern Territory during this period under review. But the data did indeed flow up from the ground – from Timber Creek, Daly River, Hermannsburg, and the Bungalow and the far and remote reaches of the Territory, to distant sites of policy formation regarding Aboriginal persons and communities in the Commonwealth -- the office of the Government Resident in the north, and ultimately, the Minister in the south. This statement from the annual report for the Northern Territory for 1921 serves as a succinct closing:

The report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines will be found of interest, and his statistics in relation to half-castes have a certain significance which should command attention (Northern Territory Report 1921).

⁵ Discussion with Katherine Goodwin, National Archives of Australia, Darwin Office.

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