

Social constructionism and its effects



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Social constructionism is a general term sometimes applied to theories that emphasize the socially created nature of social life. Social Constructionism is something that a group in society has constructed, for example brotherhood is a social constructionism. It is something that is created socially but happens because society supports it and encourages it to occur. It is something that has been created at some point, but may be considered a social norm now. It has a label and continues if people continue to talk about and put time into it.

Social constructionism is regularly traced back to the works William Isaac Thomas and the other Chicago sociologists, as well as the phenomenological sociologists and philosophers such as Alfred Schutz. Such approaches emphasize the notion that society is actively and imaginatively produced by human beings. They describe the world as made or invented rather than simply given or taken for granted.

In social theory, constructivists stress the social construction of reality.

This is the philosophically idealist component of constructivism which contrasts with the materialist philosophy of much social science positivism. According to constructivist philosophy, the social world is not a given: it is not something 'out there' that exists independent of the thoughts and ideas of the people involved in it. It is not an external reality whose laws can be exposed by scientific research and explained by scientific theory.

(Marshall, 1998)

The political and social world is not part of nature. There are no natural laws of society or economics or politics. History is not a developing external progression that is autonomous of human thought. (Hacking, 1999)

One of these socially accepted norms is racism, although much of society believes that racism does not exist in a modern society. However, there are many circumstances that differ from this and prove that in today's society there are still many forms of racism and it has become one of these social norms.

Racism is the term used to explain the hostile or negative feelings of one ethnic group towards another and the consequential actions from such attitudes, but sometimes the hostility of one group toward another is expressed and acted upon with a single-mindedness and cruelty that goes far beyond the group-centred prejudice that seem to constitute an almost universal human failing. Racism is not just xenophobia, a phrase invented by the ancient Greeks to describe impulsive feelings of hostility to another, xenophobia may be the preliminary point upon which racism can be constructed but it is not the actual thing itself.

Racism has two components: power and difference; it originates from a state of mind that regards them as dissimilar from us in ways that are stable and unbridgeable. (Fredrickson, 2002)

In Australia, racism is still evident although much of society believes that racism does not exist in a modern society. However, there are many circumstances that differ from this and prove that in today's society there are still many forms of racism and it has become one of these social norms. The

<https://assignbuster.com/social-constructionism-and-its-effects/>

nature and frequency of Australian racism varies over time and across space: it is not a static phenomenon (Vasta and Castles, 1996)pp. 5, 20

There are many different terms that are currently used to describe racism which include intolerance, ethnocentrism, prejudice, racialism, bigotry and discrimination all to describe racism. (Vasta and Castles, 1996)

The increased exposure of individuals to cultural variation gradually improves individual's tolerance of a cultural dissimilar to their own. Therefore, the residents of areas that have a strong established cultural diversity may be expected to develop greater admiration of cultural difference, and have a lesser dependence upon cultural similarity if they are exposed to other cultures, the preliminary stages of contact between different cultural groups are likely to involve racisms.

There are a variety of theories that attempt to explain the geographical discrepancy of racisms. These range from the traditional urbanists through neo-Marxist explanations, Social Construction approaches. Social constructionism about race more politically correct than essentialism.

“ Existentialism, can form a picture of a self with absolutely no centre, a self that constructs itself by free acts of will. The constructed self must, however accept agonizing responsibility of what which it has constructed, later thought of the self as being constructed in a social matrix . this suggest a genuine distinction in which some constructions of the self are social , and some are not , This is called “ Social existentialism” and is “ worth reviving. One ‘ which sees the self as a social of people , an attitude which is strongly reinforced by cultural background , This “ psychological essentialism ” is

<https://assignbuster.com/social-constructionism-and-its-effects/>

proposed , in part , to explain the prevalence of concepts of race and the ease with which they can be conscripted for racism” (Hacking, 1999)

“ Social constructionism is often contrasted with essentialism because it moves away from the ideas of the naturally given or taken for granted and questions the social and historical roots of phenomena Most anti racialist writing denounces essentialist attitudes to race. They may not use the label social construction, much but they are regularly grouped among social constructionist about race.” (Hacking, 1999)

This theory suggests that race is a socially constructed category rather than a natural order. (Jackson and Penrose , 1993) (Vasta and Castles, 1996).

These races are constructed in different ways, these way are reliant upon the specific location and the identity of the specific place. Jackson and Penrose stated that ‘ place contextualises the construction of race, generating geographically specific ideologies of racism. (Jackson and Penrose , 1993)

Place is significant in the construction of ‘ race’ and therefore it is imperative in the construction of racism. The precise forces that determine ‘ race’ in any location will also strengthen racism. Constructivism has become the dominant approach for geographical study of racisms. (Bonnett, 1996)

A social construction approach should be predominantly positive for unscrambling the geographies of racism. It would definitely be crucial for formulating place-sensitive anti-racism interventions. A constructivist theory of the geographies of racism has both explanatory and policy contributions. Constructivism clearly allows for a more spatially sensitive understanding of the construction of ‘ race’ and the development of racisms.

Theorising the causes of spatial variations in racism is not straightforward.

Nevertheless,

some of the established theories of racism can be of assistance in understanding the

geographies of racism. There is some evidence of a rural and urban variation in

ethnocentrism. The uneven tolerance of cultural diversity could be explained in part by

the differing experiences and expectations that arise from an urban way of life. As in

Chicago School thinking, the assumption is that the long-term exposure to ‘otherness’

or difference eventually spawns an accommodation, or tolerance, of at least the cultures

that are encountered. This model is confounded, however, by the persistence of racism

against some minority groups. The most remarkable such persistence in the Australian

case is the racism long endured by Indigenous peoples. (Dunn and McDonald, 2001)

Australia is known as a multicultural country with many foreign individuals making Australia their permanent residence. As Australia is a multicultural society the idea of racism is minimal, however this is not the case. The highest form of racism in Australia is that of the indigenous people not only the majority of white society also by the government policies that the leaders that approve these policies.

Since the colonization of Australia the Indigenous population have been disadvantage in all aspects of life. This can be due to many different forms of racism from the white population and the Australian Government that have left Aboriginal people in this disadvantaged state.

Aboriginal people up to the twentieth century were not constitutes as Australian citizens . They had no rights compared the white population , they were not allowed to owned land or were not about to vote in national elections . It was this that continued to reinforce that the white society was superior to the Indigenous population These racist beliefs restricted the Aboriginal peoples from achieving the same basic rights as white Australians and it was not until the 1960's that all Aboriginal people around Australia were able to vote in State and federal elections. (Lyons, 2005)

The main form of racism by the Australia Government was the creation of the white Australian policy. The White Australia policy arose from a Commonwealth government objective of creating and maintaining a mono racial Australia, termed “ racial integrity”. Although there were other racist policies in the earlier years, by the 1950s, this usually meant only restrictions on immigration.

It was the most significant and lasting policy adopted in 1901, described as providing “ an impetus to our national life”. “ White Australia” was not some strange abnormality for Australia’s rulers. This policy of institutionalised racism had deep roots in the interests of Australia’s ruling class. (Lyons, 2005)

Racism against Aboriginal people helped open the door to other forms of racism especially for the Chinese immigrants during the gold rushes of the 1850s, they were treated as appalling as the indigenous population they were segregated onto protectorate camps these camps were modelled on previous colonial experience including the protectorate camps that had recently been imposed on the survivors of the “ wars of extermination” against Aboriginal people.

([http://www. sa. org. au/component/content/article/126-edition-48/1069-100-years-or-racism-federation-and-the-white-australia-policy](http://www.sa.org.au/component/content/article/126-edition-48/1069-100-years-or-racism-federation-and-the-white-australia-policy))

This Racism towards Aboriginals in Australia is widespread and the effects of racism affect the lives of Indigenous people in their day to day lives. This is due to the continuing effect of White invasion and the dispossession that followed. These effects have resulted in low socio economic status and therefore leading to poor health, higher rates of imprisonment and less job opportunities than the rest of white society within Australia.

(Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1991, p. 72)

The level of intolerance differs between cultural groups in Australia. White society from various backgrounds suffer majority less ethnocentrism or racism

<https://assignbuster.com/social-constructionism-and-its-effects/>

compared to other ethnic groups. The groups, who suffer from racism and the relative follow on effects of racism, could therefore be expected to differ in each locality. It can therefore be assumed that racism will differ across space according to the presence of different cultural groups. There are substantive strands of racism running throughout Australian society. (Dunn and McDonald, 2001)

Research into racism in NSW found that results shows there is consistent racism still in Australian society . The results suggest that for the Australians shows that a large majority of respondents in NSW felt that Indigenous Australians were treated over generously by the government names such as dole bludgers have stemmed from this in regards to the Centrelink payments , almost a quarter of those respondents were supportive of calls for the scrapping of multiculturalism, the majority of respondents felt that migrants should learn to live and behave like the mainstream Australians do, therefore returning to racial Government policies of the past , such as assimilation and the white Australia policy . Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2000)

Although the Past Government policies have excluded the beliefs and the wellbeing for Aboriginal peoples , current Government policies are beginning to bridge the gap between the Indigenous and non indigenous population . These policies included improved policies on health and education , this improved policies are important in lessening the effects of colonisation and the racism felt by the Indigenous population. This policies however has not improved the health socio economic status of the Indigenous population, it is only recently that these policies are inclusive of the cultural beliefs of the indigenous society.

(Dunn and McDonald, 2001)

The effects of racism by Europeans through assimilation, the stolen generation, white Australian policies and other non cultural appropriate policies have been Aboriginal Australian health, education and law have been horrific and destructive to the Indigenous population. The Aborigines peoples face problems in their struggle for equality of opportunity and toleration. Generations of Europeans have attempted to exterminate the Aboriginal Australians or to exclude them the rest of Australian society. The Aboriginal people have showed considerable resistance and cohesion and laws introduced by Europeans has helped to create and preserve the present condition of Aborigines, and changes to that condition depend largely on changes to the law and its administration.

Social construction exists in Australia in the form of racism however there are acts to try and correct some of the socially constructed issues. Apologies to the stolen generation, the possibility of a referendum to recognise the aboriginals as rightful owners of the land are both steps to address the issues that aboriginal people face, however it is still not enough. Racism is feed by those who have fear of others and accept stereotypes as being fact. Unfortunately in order to change a social construction there needs to be a complete change of society and that takes time.