

How health science research played a significant role in racial formation

[Sociology](#), [Identity](#)



This essay will be discussing how health science research played a significant role in racial formation with reference to both local and global terms.

During the Nazi regime scientists were focused on eugenics and finding ways to create a superior 'Aryan' race to alleviate and prevent modern ills - crime, mental illness, disability etc. Medical professionals such as Eugen Fischer and Fritz Lenz researched and supported racial purity. Dr. Fischer conducted a 'race mixing' study in Namibia to prove his theory that racial characteristics were hereditary by observing the physical characteristics of the "Rehoboth Bastards" who were the children of Dutch men and Khoikhoi women. Dr. Lenz however was a supporter of mass sterilization due to his belief that 'race mixing' was a danger to the 'racial purity' the Nazi regime was aiming to accomplish. Racial formation is defined as "the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed." These studies show how racial formation was used to categorize and destroy specific racial categories especially regarding those from African descent. Mass sterilization targeted women for reproductive control to prevent undesirable traits to be passed on to the next generation and thus the racialized state could continue to generate 'racially pure' children by encouraging couples with the required genetics to reproduce and those with so called impurities were forced into sterilization. Nowadays sterilization centers such as Planned Parenthood in the United States of America are mostly located in black communities suggesting that racial prejudice still exists in terms of reproduction.

Furthermore, South Africa's past experience with racial discrimination during the Apartheid period, which " was a system of racial segregation in South Africa imposed upon the oppressed masses." This was enforced through laws such as the Pass Laws Act of 1952 – it was compulsory for all black South Africans over 16 to carry a passbook – in order to facilitate and maintain a White dominated system which was already installed through colonialism and racial classification. This system also shows similarities with Nazi Germany in the sense that mixed race marriages were illegal for the conservation of racial purity regarding the White population. Medical professionals in the apartheid period were complicit with the torturous conditions in prisons specifically as the causes of death were made out to be from hunger strikes or by accidents such as falling out of a window yet many of the detainee deaths were due to brutal assault by the prison officials. Torture was used to " break" inmates so that they would provide information on their comrades and on any illegal political groups.

The Black Consciousness phenomenon provides the black race with a sense of liberation after the restrictive and cruel conditions of Apartheid. This concept is defined as " the realization by the black man of the need to rally together with his brothers around the cause of their operation." This has incredible importance to unify and bring pride back into black culture so that people of color have a stronger sense of self and pride in who they are knowing that racism is no longer a norm or accepted behaviour in society, rather a concept of discrimination.