

# Free research paper on racial and ethnic differences

[Sociology](#), [Racism](#)



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## **A CASE OF AUSTRALIA**

ERIN

SOC 308 RACIAL & ETHNIC GROUPS

LAYANNA NAVERRE-JACKSON

Introduction

Societies of humans are classified of being consisting of different races and ethnicities; though both the terms are related to each other, they still have a distinct meaning. The people are classified as being from a similar races based on their biology whereas ethnicity refers to their association with the culture. From the traditional perspectives, race refers to the physical appearance of any person which includes the color of the skin, hair, color of eyes and even the structure of the bones or jaws; whereas, the ethnicity refers to the nationality, ancestry, values, beliefs and the language of the individual which also includes the culture. So, it can be said that race districts the population genetically (Greene and Owen, 2004). Ethnicity refers

to the shared traits of people and the shared history of the group; race refers to the sharing of genetic traits. Each race is related to a distinct living standard which is associated with the culture; as culture evolves over time, so this evolution impacts the race. In contrast, ethnicity is that element which influences how an individual is raised and makes a person unique (Healey and O'brien, 2004). Australia is a country with diverse ethnic groups and it is also classified as being impacted by racism; the population comprises of people that belong to different ethnic and racial backgrounds. This paper sheds light on the society of Australia from the perspectives of race and ethnicity; further, it discusses the ethnic problems and compares the society of Australia with the American Society.

## **Society of Australia**

Australia constitutes of people with diverse backgrounds; the society comprises of various cultures and has a diversity of lifestyles. An estimate states that out of every four people, one is born outside of the country (Girndt, 2010). The country is mainly dominated by white people who are around 92% which is followed by the people from Asian ethnicity (7%) while the remaining 1% belongs to some other ethnic groups (Cia. gov, 2013).

According to the 2006 census (Cia. gov, 2013), the languages spoken in the society include:

- English 78. 5%
- Chinese 2. 5%
- Italian 1. 6%
- Greek 1. 3%

- Arabic 1. 2%

- Other 9. 2%

According to the data collected in 2011, the major urban areas include: Canberra (399, 000); Sydney (4. 429 million); Melbourne (3. 853 million); and Brisbane (1. 97 million). From amongst the total population, 89% resides in urban areas; an estimate states that the annual rate of urbanization is 1. 2%. The country ranks on 21st position in comparison to the world. Literacy as defined in the country is the ability to read and write by an individual above the age of 15 years; the estimate states that 99% of the total population is termed as literate in Australia. The growth rate of the population is 1. 11% and in comparison to the world, it ranks on 107th position.

Every society has evidence of the presence of social stratification; different sociologists including Karl Marx, Davis and even Moore have given explanations of the existence of inequality in the society. The Australian society is subject to social stratification due to the fact that people are actually individuals; individuals refer to those people who belong to differing classes in the society and have distinct chances of life. “ Social difference becomes social stratification when people are ranked hierarchically along same dimension, whether this is income, wealth, power, prestige, age, ethnicity, gender or some other characteristic” (Mayer, 1964). All the people who belong to the same social rank are given similar chances in life. There is high social mobility in Australia which is a positive aspect of the society; social mobility refers to the chances of the individuals to move from one social class to another through their own efforts either upwards or downwards.

The class structure of the Australian society is divided into four classes: at the bottom is the underclass which has level of income below the line of poverty; it consists of the unemployed, homeless, and recipients of long term welfare. These people have very limited chances in life. Next is the working class which includes the laborers, trades people and the factory workers; these people have a higher income in contrast to the underclass and they are slightly more secure in terms of finances.

The third class is the middle class which is further divided into three categories: first being the lower middle class where the individuals have income of working class but they perceive themselves as belonging to the middle class; these classes of people are those who constantly move in and out of the middle class. Second is the central middle class, which is the class where most of the Australians belong to. These people have higher level of income as compared to the working class and belong to professional occupations. As we move up, another transitional class exists which is the upper middle class where the individuals have slightly higher income but they still believe as belonging to the central middle class.

The last and the superior class is the upper class where people inherit the wealth or they earn from professions that give high salaries like the CEO's of multinationals etc. In this society, the classes have higher significance and determine the income of individuals. The distribution of income and wealth becomes more obvious with the classes. Further, there is a clear link of the classes with the education. The people of the upper class are those who are the most highly educated and so they gain the best professional jobs. With the attainment of education, the social mobility is also ensured. People with

the high incomes receive better education which helps them to move further up in higher class while gaining occupations that support their mobility (Mayer, 1964).

Most of the residents of Australia are those white people who have come to settle here from Europe; while the original or the natives to the country are the Aboriginals who are the dark brown people; they have been outnumbered by the white settlers. The culture of the country is mostly dominated by laying emphasis on the activities of leisure; and people take great pleasure in BBQs and sports (Koerner, 2011). The dressing style followed is mainly western; the preference in food and drink is influenced by ethnic diversity or it can be said that global fashions dominate the society.

### **Ethnic Issues in the Society**

There are various ethnic issues that dominate the Australian Society; the fact is that it is the ethnic composition of the society which has the most powerful impact on the behavior of the consumers, the trends of culture and even how the cities are composed. The ambassador of Australia referred to this country as “ one of the world’s most tolerant countries” with “ open, multicultural and welcoming nation”. A survey conducted in 2009 found that out of ten people, every one person did not believe in the equality of races; they even declined the concept of inter-racial marriages. Further, 37% believed that the reasons for the weakening of the country were the ethnic diversity (Healey and O'brien, 2004).

The society of Australia is a victim of racial violence as well as hate crimes (Fix and Turner, 1998). It has been reported that the crimes committed out

of hatred are specifically signaling racial and ethnic discrimination; in addition, the justice system is also biased and the policies are also supporting the whites of the country.

With the arrival of the white people, the culture of the Aborigines was ignored widely; in fact massive killings took place and it they tried to remove their culture through assimilation (Mellor, 2003). Further, many legislative acts only reflected the views of the whites; survey conducted in 2011 confirmed that 70% of the higher education staff reported being discriminated against at the workplace. John Miller said, “ The survey confirms that racial discrimination continues to exist in the higher education sector” (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). The concept of multiculturalism is highly threatened in Australia due to the presence of extremists; there are chances that due to non-integration of the different cultures, the society would explode into ethnic conflicts soon.

Another issue is with the media; in comparison to the press, the electronic media is under the direct supervision of the government. The Australian media is a strong supporter of monochrome and does not support multiculturalism. Major role is being played by the media in limiting the inter-racial communication and the population is not being informed correctly about the ethnic diversity (Mellor, 2003). During the times of massive immigration, the Asian appearing people were heavily discriminated against and harassed; the Muslims were harassed during the Gulf War and also after the incident of 9/11. This proves that stereotyping and prejudice is a common trend in the Australian society and the discriminations exist based on ethnic background as well as racial links.

## **Australia vs. USA**

United States of America is similar to Australia from the perspectives of practicing racism. The truth is that racism is plaguing America regardless of the concept of equality which is also written clearly in the Constitutions. The very common stereotypes that exist in America are: more crimes are committed by the African-Americans as they are comparatively violent than the white Americans; the African-Americans simply do not work and live on the welfare of the government; they deal with drugs; and all the African-Americans are uneducated people with no literacy at all (Fix and Turner, 1998). The truth on the other hand is completely contradictory to these stereotypes where more whites live on welfare; system of criminal justice is racially biased; whites also deal with drugs; and today, almost each and every child of this race is attending school.

Likewise, racism exists in Australia too; it is also combined with gender discrimination, cultural and linguistic backgrounds too. There are more complaints by women in Australia regarding racism and discrimination. Another form of racism has been experienced by the Muslim women; their style of speech is mimicked but the most terrible thing is that they are declined of jobs only because they wear the hijab regardless of an excellent resume (Mersham, 2000). It has also been reported that indigenous women from minority races are violated sexually. Further, people who are born abroad experience double chances of being discriminated racially at their workplace.

The high dominance of the whites in Australia is the reason why the Australians are not united; multiculturalism is being promoted in the country



as it enforces the dominance of the whites in the country (Boese and Phillips, 2011). It is believed that only whites are the true Australians and must access good jobs; all the other people except the European Australians are referred to as the “ ethnic Australians” who are being weakened and divided in communities that are completely segregated (Smolics and Secombe, 2009).

The reason which has hurt America the most is the failure of see that segregating the school system wasted a lot of money and also led to hurting the workforce in the long run for the country (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). In addition, the prejudice which they had against the Japanese blinded them and they failed to see how the emerging country was threatening the economy of the United States. But now, various programs have been established that promote ethnic harmony and so the country is becoming ethnically aware and tolerant.

## **Conclusion**

Every society comprises of people belonging to different races and ethnic backgrounds; both differ in terms of sociological and biological perspectives. Australia is a multicultural country like America but it mostly comprises of the whites who are the European settlers. The laws and policies all support the whites and this leads to emerging conflicts between other ethnic groups. The fact is that racial discrimination, stereotyping, prejudice and other forms of discrimination is also being practiced in the country. Although United States of America is one of the most culturally diverse countries, it has been found that discrimination and racism exists there too. Racial and ethnic

harmony is very critical for the stability of a society which is missing from these well-known multicultural societies.

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