

Argumentative essay on a definition of racism

[Sociology](#), [Population](#)



For many, the concept of racism is defined as being the ignorant hatred of another person based solely on the colour of their skin, their ethnic status, or their country of origin. In its most obvious form, it is aggressive, violent and blatant. However, it is clear that it is more integrally situated in society than some may first realise. In Naila Kabeer's paper entitled *The Structure of Revealed Preference: race, community and female labour support in the London clothing industry*, racism is discussed in terms of its underlying effect on a society: she discusses the impact of racism on the lives of Bangladeshi women and the effect of racism on their ability to live their life fully. In Maykel Verkuyten, Wiebe de Jong and Kees Masson's paper entitled *Similarities in Anti-Racist and Racist discourse: Dutch local residents talking about ethnic minorities*, we are presented with a view that suggests that liberal principles such as freedom, human rights, equality and rationality are used in both racist and anti-racist discourse and are moulded to fit with the relevant argument. The purpose of this essay is to explore the definition of racism with regard to these two papers.

When de Jong et al. addressed the issue of racist discourse in the Dutch city of Rotterdam, they encountered, quite surprisingly, the view that racism was both acknowledged but also reversed: many of the local residents felt that ethnic minorities were actually favoured by the local council. Equally, on the other side of the coin, in Kabeer's paper, she discusses how the Bangladeshi community of East London actively seem to make decisions which will ensure the safety of their community and its individuals, in what is considered to be an intrinsically racist society: " Most of them choose to live in council housing in ' safe' neighbourhoods rather than owner-occupied

housing elsewhere, because of fear of racial harassment in white owner-occupied areas.” (Kabeer 324). The implication of both of these studies’ findings is that racism can be most closely defined as being something which deeply affects the lives of everyone involved: whether they are the oppressor or the oppressed.

Kabeer discusses, at length, the impact of racism as being a major factor in why Bangladeshi women are restricted in terms of what jobs they can take (along with the traditional implications of their patriarchal religion) and the view that ‘ the [Bangladeshi] community’ chooses to keep itself to itself for fear of reprisal from white outsiders. When compared with de Jong et al.’s study, they conclude that the ethnic minorities are favoured by the councils and that it is white nationals who suffer the most. It is clear then, that racism is presented as being both of a negative factor in the lives of ethnic minorities, but it is also driven forward by the view that ethnic minorities do not adhere to their new cultural settings.

Based on the discussion in these two papers, racism is best defined as being a vicious cycle: white nationals were initially, in the majority, very anti ethnic minorities coming into the country which caused the ethnic minority groups to become very exclusive and introvert – giving the impression that they do not want to participate in society, except for their own community. However, it is clear that racism is both defined by the ignorance of non-ethnic groups and reinforced by the ethnic groups wish to protect themselves; for as long as communities such as the Bangladeshis in East London feel threatened, they will continue to isolate themselves, whilst equally, for as long as they

isolate themselves, the resentment which fosters racism in non-ethnic groups, will continue to grow.

References

Kabeer, Naila. “ The Structure of ‘ Revealed’ Preference: Race, Community and Female Labour Support in the London Clothing Industry.” *Development and Change* 25. 2 (2008): 307-331. Print.

De Jong, Wiebe et al. “ Similarities in anti-racist and racist discourse: Dutch local residents talking about ethnic minorities.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 20. 2 (1994): 253-267. Print.