

**Institute of Australian Geographers Conference, University of  
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*SESSION: POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY*

A geography of racism in NSW

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## Geographies

The NSW assessment of racism I'm presenting today was perhaps the first academic assessment of the geographies of racism in Australia. The spatial variation of racisms in Australia are as yet poorly understood. This is a problem found around the world. For example, Robinson (1987:169) pointed out that in the UK the study of variations in social attitudes between different parts of the country is an under-researched field of inquiry. The literature that does examine regional differences in racism are outdated and mostly focus on the United States. Studies in Australia that focus on the extent of racism (The National Inquiry into Racist Violence, 1991; Cope *et al.*, 1991), have made little attempt to establish any spatial patterns. This project attempts to fill that gap. A core conclusion from what was very much an exploratory analysis in NSW is that the reasons for the spatial variation in racism indicators are complex and require a comprehensive analysis.

Robinson (1987) found that there were significant regional variations in prejudice in the UK. Similarly, Schaefer (1975) had found that racial prejudice did not vary randomly throughout the UK, but that it was greater in certain areas than others. In the United States, Pettigrew (1959) examined the differences in attitudes towards African Americans in the North and South of the country. It was found that differences existed between the areas. The same was anticipated with regard to Australia.

Recent academic reports and opinion polling all indicate that racism is widespread in Australia (see Appendix 1). While racism is everywhere, it is also likely that it is 'everywhere different'. This variation is likely to be related to the different cultural make-up of each and every region of Australia, to the different needs and resources of the cultural groups in each place, and to the different problems and tensions in each locality. These variations have been largely ignored by the 'anti-racism project' in Australia.

### **Racism: definitions**

Racism has been defined in a multitude of ways. A host of different terms are used to describe what are sometimes called racism, these have included: intolerance, ethnocentrism, prejudice, racialism, and bigotry. A common division of terms, among social scientists, is between ethnocentrism, racialism and racism.

Ethnocentrism: the unquestioned assumption that one's own ethnic group is superior

**Ethnocentrism** manifests itself as a belief in stereotypes about other groups, and in actions and behaviour which are influenced by an unquestioning acceptance of such stereotypes (Young, 1990). Ethnocentrism is the unquestioned assumption that one's own ethnic group is superior. Ethnocentric stereotypes are reinforced in media such as film or newspapers. Ethnocentrism is not necessarily overt, nor does it necessarily originate from an intended act of oppression. Essentially, it occurs when an individual will take his or her own culture's values and norms and judge other cultures accordingly (LeVine and Campbell, 1972:1 as quoted in McAllister and Moore, 1991:129). However, when ethnocentrism is orchestrated in order to hurt or disparage another ethnic group it becomes **racism**. Ethnocentric behaviour is an essential

ingredient for racism. One cannot be racist if one does not believe their ethnic group is superior.

Racialism: a belief that the human species can be categorised into essentially different / natural groups

Miles (1989) argued that racialism or racialisation is a belief that the human species can be categorised into essentially different groups. It is “any argument which suggests that the human species is composed of discrete groups” (Miles, 1989). It is linked, as Anderson (1999) is demonstrating, to notions of nature and of what is natural. The sociobiological belief that humankind can be sorted by a biological category called ‘race’ was roundly condemned by UNESCO in the 1950s and 1960s (UNESCO, 1983). Notwithstanding the academic demise of sociobiology, the approach continues to enjoy significant currency as a popular or common-sense explanation for cultural difference and ethnic conflict (Dunn, 1998). During 1996 and 1997 this was apparent in the so-called ‘race debate’ in Australia. Another important distinction is between **racialism** and racism.

Racism: oppressive intent or purposeful harm

**Racism** where such categorisation is carried out “in order to legitimate inequality between those groups of people” (Miles, 1989:49). It is this oppressive intent which distinguishes racism from racialism. The ability to categorise people into discrete groups based on ‘race’, and the assumption of ethno-superiority are what enable racism.

For the purposes of this project, the term racism was used in two ways. Firstly, to refer generally to the problematic area of racialism, ethnocentrism and intolerance. Secondly, it was used specifically to refer to instances of intended harm and disparagement, including reports of racial discrimination, statements of hatred and intolerance, or support for policies or pronouncements which differentiate rights and entitlements according to ethnicity or ‘race’. Ethnocentrism specifically referred to the use of ethnic stereotypes and presumptions of cultural superiority. Racialism referred to the sociobiological belief that human beings are divided by a biological category called ‘race’. The latter of which we were unable to examine.

### **Spatial variation: source of assumptions**

The following five observations all indicate that there will be regional differences in racism.

#### a) Rural / urban differences in the tolerance of difference

It has long been recognised that people from non-metropolitan areas are generally less tolerant of cultural difference than people from metropolitan areas. Such findings have drawn upon a long-established binary within urban studies of the rural-urban dichotomy or the rural-urban continuum (Simmel, 1903; Tönnies, 1887; Wirth, 1938). According to the early urban theorists, cities produced experiences of otherness, heterogeneity and dynamism. Whereas rural life gave rise to a preference for experiences of sameness, homogeneity and continuity. There are of course many limitations to this urban-rural dichotomy. These include the problem of defining

where rural ends and urban begins (Stewart, 1958), but also what we might call urbanising influences which imprint upon rural life, through advances in communications etc, not to mention the varying forms of urbanism (World city, industrial city, provincial centre, suburban edge, etc).

Despite the abovementioned reservations opinion surveys of Australians have consistently found a rural-urban distinction on attitudes to cultural diversity and immigration. Political parties which have racist policies have generally been more successful in rural areas than in urban ones. Thus Davis and Stimson (1998) identified disillusionment and disenchantment, in part associated with racist attitudes in urban fringe areas ('regional Australia'), in their study of the One Nation Party vote at the 1998 Queensland State Election. This urban - rural variation is well recognised by Political parties like One Nation:

As migrants congregate in or cities, the effect of Asianisation will be more concentrated there. This will lead to the bizarre situation of largely Asian cities on our coasts that will be culturally and racially different from the traditional Australian nature of the rest of the country (Hanson, 1988).

Indeed, in the above quotation, the One Nation Party both draw upon (for political gain) and then reinforce the notion of an urban - rural dichotomy.

b) The level of intolerance suffered differs between cultural groups

McAllister and Moore (1989) found that there was a marked difference between the intolerance suffered by ethnic groups in Australia. The religious group which experienced the most intolerance were Muslims (McAllister & Moore, 1989:8-9). The ethnic groups which were considered to be the most 'socially distant' from those who were surveyed were the Vietnamese, Lebanese and Turkish. Controversially, McAllister and Moore also analysed social distance by 'racial categories' and found that 'Asians' faced the highest level of prejudice (1989:6-8). The extent of racism towards Aboriginals in Australia is endemic across all states and territories. The report of the National Inquiry into Racist Violence stated that: "racism and racist violence permeates the day-to-day lives of Aboriginal and Islander people"(1991:72).

Whites, from whatever background, suffer demonstratively less intolerance or racism. There is little doubt that the extent of racism differs according to cultural group. It can therefore be assumed that racism will differ across space according to the presence of different cultural groups.

c) Different settlement patterns & different cultural make-ups of localities

The majority of Australians now "live in multicultural areas" (Jupp *et al.*, 1990:56-7). However, the cultural composition of each locality varies in both the degree of diversity and the types of cultures which are present (Burnley in Thompson *et al.*, 1998). This in part reflects specific historical patterns of migrant settlement, which have been maintained through processes of community formation and chain migration. The groups who suffer racism, and the intensity of it, could therefore be expected to differ in each SLA.

d) Differing local commitments to harmonious community relations

There is a significant variability in the commitment of local governments to maintaining harmonious local community relations (Thompson *et al.*, 1998). This commitment varies by state (eg Council protection of indigenous sites of significance), and by urban or rural location (eg Council concern with local inter-communal relations) (Thompson *et al.*, 1998:62-3,69-70). Some local councils are vociferously opposed to local community relations initiatives. Others blame local ethnic tensions on the activities of minority cultural groups. For example, many non-metropolitan councils argued that racism had increased as a result of Native Title claims by local indigenous groups. There can be little doubt that the varying commitment of local governments to improving community relations will contribute to very different levels tolerance and racism.

#### e) Different racisms by socio-economic status

It has long been accepted that racism is negatively associated with affluence and educational attainment. Similarly, electoral support for political parties with racially discriminatory policies or pronouncements is greater in urban areas of socio-economic disadvantage than in affluent localities. The residential differentiation of the Australian people by occupation, affluence and education is therefore likely to produce regional variations in racism.

#### Space matters to racism

The variations of racism throughout Australia are likely to be related to the different cultural make-up of each and every region, to the different needs and resources of the cultural groups in each SLA, and to the different tensions and institutional interventions in each locality. In this way, space matters to the issue of racism. The unique histories and relations and of each 'place' could be expected to produce unique sets of inter-communal relations.

#### Counter arguments:

Racism is a product of individual personality traits rather than any demographic, social or regional variables?

Deakin (1970) argued that prejudice in Britain was a manifestation of individual personality traits rather than any demographic, social or regional factor. Following that, Studlar (1977, as quoted in Robinson, 1987:172) found that attitudes to immigration were very widely dispersed throughout various contextual circumstances and that "it seems to matter very little in which regions respondents reside".

#### Macro-level variables only?

There are important macro-level influences which can inspire a widespread improvement or worsening of inter-communal relations. These macro-level influences would include central government initiatives (such as anti-racism campaigns), as well as policy shifts (on immigration or multiculturalism for example) and legislative changes (Native Title legislation) as well as shifts in the economy (onset of recession, structural adjustments resulting from economic globalisation).

However, I think almost all of these macro-level influences upon racism would be spatially uneven in their impacts upon racism.

### **Theories historically applied to explain racism**

Sociobiology: difference results in racism

Chicago School: race relations cycles, racism a short term result difference which dissipates along with assimilation

neo-Marxist: Capitalist system ensures economic competition (unemployment, etc) between migrants and the rest of the working class. Poorer educational achievement among the working classes

Constructivist: socially constructed, and spatially specific, racisms and racialisms

### **Data sources**

#### Opinion poll data

Four separate opinion polls, from the years 1994 to 1996 were used in this study.

OHP Table 1

Responses from outside of NSW were culled from the analyses, except for the Irving Saulwick poll data from 1994, in which the national poll has been retained, but only for the urban rural comparisons.

These were used as indicators of ethnocentrism and racism

Indicators of ethnocentrism & racism

#### Official racist incidents

Data were available from the Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW on race discrimination and racial vilification complaints. These included all complaints lodged with the Board for the whole of 1996 and up to the end of October 1997. Lodging a formal complaint to the Board involves the sending of a brief letter describing what type of discrimination or harassment has occurred.

Race discrimination & racial vilification complaints, 1996 & most of 1997

727 complaints, 679 useable for analysis

The data set contained 727 complaints made over the time period outlined above. Of these, only 679 were suitable for analysis. The remaining 48 complaints were not suitable either because the postcode had been recorded as '9999', which meant the Board had not been provided with an address, or the postcode given was not in NSW.

Indicators of racism

### Geo-coding for regional variation

The data were sorted into Statistical Districts in the first instance, using the 12 Statistical Divisions in NSW. Sydney was divided into seven categories, comprising seven pairs of contiguous Statistical Subdivisions. This created 18 geocodes, comprised of 11 SDs and seven SSDs.

The poll results were available by postcode. We had AC Nielson reprocess the data by Statistical Division, and also by seven categories within Sydney.

The data set received from the Anti-Discrimination Board comprised a list of postcodes that corresponded to the complainant's home postal address. While this meant that the actual racist incident may not have occurred in the postcode area that was provided, the Complaints Department at the Board assured us that most incidents occur near to the complainants home.

### Limitations

The limited sample size in the data sets meant that it was not appropriate or feasible to have as many geographical groupings as originally intended. NSW was divided into only 18 regions. While this reduced statistical error, it also reduced the ability to focus on small areas in NSW. It had originally been hoped that pockets of racism could be identified and that there would be quite specific reasons causing this. Larger geographical areas such as SDs, as opposed to SSDs or SLAs, generalise the findings and do not allow for quite specific causes of racism and intolerance to be identified.

This was very much an exploratory analysis. The results below offer an initial examination into the spatial variation of racism in NSW.

### **Urban - rural variations**

#### Ethnocentrism

The first two rows of results in Table 2 refer to immigration, specifically to the quantity and diversity of immigration.

Take in Table 2 about here

Generally, well over a half of all respondents thought that immigration levels were too high in 1996. And over a quarter believed that Australia was a worse place to live as a result of culturally diverse immigration program. When asked about the current immigration level, urban respondents appeared less intolerant. Only 64 percent agreed that the immigration level was too high, whereas three quarters of rural residents agreed. Over a third of country residents felt that Australia was a worse place to live following diverse migration; while just less than a quarter of city residents believed that Australia was a worse place to live.

The next six rows of data come from questions aimed at deriving a sense of intolerance of specific ethnic groups. They reveal firstly, that there is a high degree

of intolerance of ‘Asian-Australians’ and also indigenous peoples. Results regarding the quantity of Asians migrants is very high, for both urban and rural. More alarmingly, fifty per cent of respondents overtly agreed that the number of Asian migrants should be reduced. Half of the respondents agreed with the arguments of Pauline Hanson that “Aborigines are treated over generously by government”. One in four respondents thought it appropriate to scrap the ATSIC.

City respondents appear slightly more concerned about some (undefined) types of migrant flow. This might reflect intolerance of particular cultural groups which have settled in their own urban area.

Anti-Asian sentiment was not only widespread, but there appears to have been little urban and rural variation. Anti-indigenous feeling was higher among respondents from rural Australia. Rural respondents were especially concerned about the continuation of the indigenous bureaucratic and representative body ATSIC.

The results in Table 3 are intended to be indicative of tolerance of cultural diversity. If you like, it compares support for cultural diversity (multiculturalism) versus support for monoculturalism (Anglo-Celtic identity, ways of life and institutions). Broadly, the results in Table 3 confirm other findings that support for multiculturalism, for actual policies, is lesser than the support for the diversity now exhibited – performed – within Australia. That is, demographic multiculturalism is supported (see top rows of Table 2) by more than three-quarters of Australia, while the policies of multiculturalism (however defined – usually never in such survey questions) receive less support.

Take in Table 3 about here

It is difficult to make too much of the variance between rural and urban responses to the questions reported on in Table 3. Generally, rural supporters are more critical of cultural preservation by migrants (this could reflect a higher migrant presence among the urban samples). The rural respondents also have a surer idea, or more confident understanding, of who ‘the majority’ are in Australia (this again might reflect the differing cultural make-ups of the urban and rural samples). That is rural respondents see their culture as the majority way of life, the mainstream, are critical of those who maintain a cultural difference from that presumed norm.

### Racism

In 1996, ACNielsen asked respondents whether they agreed with the twenty year old policy of non-discriminatory immigration as opposed to current selection based on work skills or reunion with family. The question was clearly framed in such a way that respondents would have been aware that they were being asked whether or not they supported a racially-biased policy. Selecting migrants on the basis of colour, religion or country of birth is racist, and is a practice associated with White Australia Policy, which was officially abolished in 1973 (Zelinka, 1996).

Take in Table 4 about here

Firstly, the results show that one-fifth of respondents were prepared to support a racist policy or racist legislation. This is not quite as high as was suggested in Table



2, wherein it was revealed that one-half of respondents agreed with Hanson that the proportion of migrants from Asia should be reduced. Nonetheless, it is significant that perhaps as many as one in five Australians believe that migrants should be selected on the basis of 'race'.

Take in Table 5 about here

There were a significantly higher number of incidents reported in the urban areas of NSW (Sydney, Newcastle, and Wollongong) (Table 5). The urban areas of NSW recorded 495 complaints, compared to 184 complaints in rural NSW. However, the rate of racism complaints was slightly higher for rural areas.

These preliminary findings do suggest there is a rural-urban variation in intolerance of difference and diversity: of ethnocentrism. This lends support to the notion of a rural-urban dichotomy in the tolerance of cultural difference. Rural respondents were more ethnocentric than urban respondents for most indicators that were examined. They were generally less supportive of multiculturalism. Attitudes towards Aboriginal communities were consistently less generous among rural respondents.

Beyond the urban-rural divide, it also apparent that there are substantive strands of racism (broad definition) running throughout Australian society. Over a one-quarter see no national benefit emanating from diverse immigration, perhaps as many as a quarter are supportive of calls for the scrapping of multiculturalism, and one-fifth would be prepared support a racially-biased migration program. During 1996 and 1997, over seven hundred citizens of NSW suffered a bias or vilification which they thought to be racist. This less than two year period does not include those who only inquired, not those who laid their complaints to the national Human Rights Commission or other agencies.

### **Regional variation**

The first finding to come from the regional breakdown of responses to the surveys is that while there is a general urban rural divisions, there are also regional variations which confound that simple division. That is, there are parts of Sydney in which respondents were consistently more ethnocentric than some rural areas.

OHP of Figures 1 & 2

Firstly though, let me run through some of the regional break-downs for some of the indicators we looked at above. Opinion polling on the general size and composition of Australia's immigration program, when reprocessed by the 18 regions I mentioned above (some of which do not appear in each graph due to little or no respondents for that survey source), shows that respondents from some rural regions exhibit lesser degrees of concern about immigration program size and composition. For example, Murrumbidgee and the Richmond-Tweed responses.

There also appear to be higher than average levels of concern within some of the amalgamated subdivisions of Sydney, such as outer-western Sydney / Blacktown, and also those from central western Sydney. This was the case with regard to the size of immigration flow. Concern about the composition of recent migration flows was particularly strong among the two outer Sydney SLAs (Figure 2). This partly

confirms my earlier suggestion that concern about specific migrant groups might be linked to the varying focuses of migrant settlement throughout Sydney (Figure 2). Outer Sydney generally is the region of this city, which has most recently, in the 1990s, become a migrant reception area (particularly of migrants of a NESB). Inner western Sydney has a much longer history of such migrant reception, and is no longer experiencing rapid immigration fed growth.

At the same time non-metropolitan divisions such as the Mid North Coast demonstrate heightened levels of concern, and yet SLAs in that Division have very low numbers of NESB. For example, Hastings has only 2.8 per cent population born overseas in a NES country.

OHP of Figure 3

Figure 3 outlines the regional variation of anti-'Asian' sentiment among respondents to the opinion polls. The regions from where respondents were most likely to express anti-Asian sentiment were rural areas (North Western, Mid-North Coast & Central West Divisions), the Hunter and outer western Sydney. The areas from which respondents were least likely to support a reduction in Asian migrants were the inner and northern Sydney SLAs (affluent Sydney) and the Illawarra.

OHP Figures 4 & 5

Figure 4 is a regional break-down of the belief that indigenous people in Australia are "treated over generously by government". If you like, this question operationalised the construction of Aboriginals as welfare bludgers. This mythology is well entrenched, as already mentioned (most Australians seem to believe it). This belief, along with support for abolishing ATSIC, seems most likely in non-metropolitan regions such as Richmond-Tweed, North Western and perhaps Murrumbidgee (Figure 4 & 5). Some of these areas had showed a lesser than average concern regarding immigration issues, demonstrating that racism is very much regionally-specific in its focus. Divisions like North Western also have high ATSI population proportions (10 %). Other regions of high anti-Aboriginal sentiment included the Hunter and the Illawarra.

OHP of Figure 6

Opposition to multiculturalism was higher among those respondents from the central west and mid-north Coast rural divisions, in the Illawarra, and to a lesser extent the outer western areas of Sydney. Richmond-Tweed and Murrumbidgee were, as with immigration generally, areas of lesser concern regarding multiculturalism. Again this is in contrast to the anti-Aboriginal sentiment expressed by respondents from those areas. Affluent Sydney (inner, eastern and northern Sydney) were again those regions from where less respondents were likely to express dissatisfaction with multiculturalism (specifically regarding cultural maintenance in the case of Figure 6).

OHP of Figure 7

Finally, I have sorted by region those respondents who expressed support for racially-biased immigration policy. The respondents from affluent Sydney area, Northern Sydney, along with the Murrumbidgee and Richmond-Tweed, showed the lesser

support for such policies. Higher levels of support came from respondents in outer Sydney, as well as middle Sydney and the Mid North Coast.

A more reliable way to discern, or construct, patterns from these charts is to collapse the data. I might hasten to add, however, that this sort of amalgamation loses patterns too. One such dissonance were those regions which demonstrated higher anti-Aboriginal sentiment, but whose respondents were more relaxed about immigration and multiculturalism issues. This is somewhat perceptible in the standard deviation score for those regions.

take in Table 6 about here

Firstly, the urban-rural variation is only confirmed in so far as affluent Sydney, and to a lesser extent inner-western, are concerned. Outer western Sydney and the two regions dominated by industrial centres (Illawarra and the Hunter) do not average out as areas of tolerance of ethnic difference. Nonetheless, it is still the case that inner, eastern and lower northern Sydney were areas from where respondents exhibited lower levels of racism.

Earlier I noted that there appeared to be a clear difference in attitudes towards immigration and different cultural groups between the rural and urban areas of NSW. However, examination of the regional variations in racism has shown that the issue is far more complex than that. There are regions in Sydney where people harbour more racist sentiment than rural areas of NSW.

The areas from where respondents were the most 'racist' (using these indicators) were Outer western Sydney, the two regions with major industrial city (Illawarra and Hunter), and the mid north coast.

Clearly, respondents from inner, eastern and lower northern Sydney (affluent Sydney) were consistently and relatively less likely to put 'racist' views than those from all other regions of NSW. Generally, respondents from the inner areas of Sydney appear more tolerant than the outer areas. This is perhaps a result of a combination of factors, including spatial variations in income, educational attainment and the settlement patterns of migrants across Sydney.

take in table 7 about here

Actual official reports racist incidents by region are shown in Table 7. By far most reports came from complainants from the inner and eastern Sydney, as well as the inner west. These were areas considered to have the least racist sentiment. However, some non-metropolitan regions have high rates, although you can see that numbers we are operating on are fairly small and unreliable. Such as the North western Statistical Division. Also the outer western Sydney rate is quite high.

### **Associations & theory**

A crude correlation analysis (Spearman rank coefficient) was undertaken using the ranked results from the regions, alongside some socio-economic and cultural compositions variables.

## Affluence

The associations between demographic variables and racism, which are suggested by theory were supported by the direction of the associations. Although as you can see there are problems of statistical significance (related to small sample size). Nonetheless, socio-economic variables of education (number tertiary educated), income (median weekly hld income) were both negatively associated with racism. Likewise in those regions where unemployment (the number was higher so it was likely that racist sentiment was.

One of only two associations which were significant at the 95 per cent level was that between tertiary education and anti-Asian sentiment. Also, the support for the scrapping of ATSIC was least supported in regions of greater affluence.

There is some scope here to deploy a traditional neo-Marxist account of racism. There is a positive relationship between the level of racism and the unemployment rate in an area. Secondly, there appear to be negative relationships between racism and income, and between racism and education. These findings support the assumptions that as the level of competition for resources increases, including employment, the level of intolerance increases. However, of all the socio-economic variables, it was education which had the strongest associations with racism.

## Cultural composition

The associations based upon Asia-born numbers and LOTE (over five and speaking a language other than English) were stronger and mostly negative. Generally speaking there appears to be a negative relationship between the level of cultural diversity and the level of racism. This is indicated by the numbers who speak a language other than English at home. This suggests that contact between people of different ethnicities results in higher levels of tolerance. This is supported by the direction of the association between the number of Asia-born in an area and the level of racism. The second of two associations which were significant at the 95 per cent level was between linguistic diversity (LOTE) and anti-Asian sentiment.

This lends some support to Chicago School theory, specifically the notion of a 'race-relations cycle'. That is, that the experience of difference, the exposure to cultural diversity, builds tolerance.

This clearly does not hold however with regard to indigenous Australians. Firstly, the associations between the number of Aboriginals in a region and racism were pretty weak. However, the associations were generally positive. That is, the greater the presence of ATSIs, the more likely that respondents gave racist replies to the survey questions. More importantly it suggests that contact between cultural groups does not necessarily move into the latter and more tolerant stages of a 'race-relations cycle'. Despite contact over more than 200 years Aboriginal presence is positively related with racism.

This latter result, weak as it is, could lend credence to a sociobiology take on communal relations. That is, that the coexistence of cultural difference in the same space necessarily and inevitably will lead to conflict. However, such a perspective is clearly undermined by the findings with regard to diversity and racism.

The causes of the spatial variation in racism are clearly complex. To my mind, none of the abovementioned theories, alone, adequately explain the geographies of racism. While exploitation theory explains some variation, it appears that there is not one factor that can completely explain higher levels of racism in one area and lower levels in another; but rather it is more likely that these factors combine in unique ways in each region and create historically and geographically specific ideologies of racism.

A challenge I have set myself is to apply a social construction approach to this area. I think that such an approach will be useful for a number of reasons. 'Race' is a socially constructed category. 'Race' is constructed in different ways; ways that are dependent upon place and the unique layers of identity of that place. Social construction theory stresses the importance of place in the construction of identity. To quote Peter Jackson and Jan Penrose:

place contextualises the construction of 'race', generating geographically specific ideologies of racism (Jackson and Penrose, 1993:203).

Place is important in the construction of 'race' and thus is important in the construction of racism. The specific forces that determine 'race' in any location will also underpin racism. If this is the case, then a social construction approach should be useful in disentangling the geographies of racism. It would certainly be essential for formulating place specific anti-racism interventions.

## **Discussion**

### Rural - urban division?

It is dangerous to dichotomise in this way, indeed the regional variations demonstrate that. However as Brett (1997:7) has suggested we may be looking at a real divide, or a divide which has real effects:

the evident widespread support for her [Hanson] views challenged the complacency of the elites of the south east who had come to believe that the rest of Australia supported their vision of a tolerant, multicultural, ethnically diverse Australia (Brett, 1997:7).

I know that Jim will talk more about these sorts of notions in his paper.

### Regional specific causes?

Some implications of these findings are that there may be regionally specific causes of racism which are dependent upon the region in question. The identification of regionally specific causes is critical to the formulation of remedies. Thus, anti-racism strategies need to focus on these specific causes to obtain any degree of success.

Between 1996 and 1998, the Federal Government commissioned an inquiry into racism in Australia (see DIMA, 1998:1). The results of that inquiry are not publicly available, and purposefully so. I presume that the research found racism to be widespread, and that it also found there to be geography to it. I make this

presumption on the basis of the Federal Government's statement in so-called 'anti-racism' campaign that:

campaign messages and strategies have to be tailored for different audiences and for different parts of the country (*Living in Harmony*, Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, 1998:1).

No evidence has yet been presented to support the above assertion, even though it seems to have directed public policy. There has been then, a recent official determination that anti-racism interventions will be more effective when developed and mounted locally (Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, 1998:1). The cynic in me, laments that this conclusion, was at least partially a cynical means of dodging central state responsibility for anti-racism.

### Local anti-racism interventions?

Previous research on local government and their interventions into local intercommunal relations suggests that local authorities are ill prepared to take on responsibility for anti-racism. Council officers were found to have a very poor understanding of what community relations policy entailed. Council administrations exhibited a lack of interest in local intercommunal relations, even when there had been evidence of recent and serious ethnic discord. This as either because Councils did not yet see themselves as responsible for the local community relations (not yet perceived as an holistic local governance), or because they saw such policy as catering to people not fully considered to be local citizens.

### Further work

A core conclusion from this exploratory analysis in NSW was that the reasons for the regional variation in racism indicators are complex and require a much more comprehensive analysis.

JF using electoral surveys, up against voting patterns

IB associations between racism and cultural make-up and socio-economic data

KD racialism

### **Tables**

**Table 1** Opinion polling surveys used in establishing the geography of racism in NSW

	<b>Survey company</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Sample size</b>
<b>Opinions about Multiculturalism Survey</b>	Irving Saulwick and Associates	May – June 1994	Nationwide: 1000

<b>Survey of community attitudes towards Aboriginal reconciliation</b>	Brian Sweeney and Associates	May 1996	NSW: 225
<b>Attitudes to Immigration and Multiculturalism Study</b>	ACNielsen	June 1996	NSW: 559
<b>Pauline Hanson Study</b>	ACNielsen	November 1996	NSW: 555

**Table 2** Intolerance of cultural difference, city and country, NSW, 1994 & 1996

	City % Yes	Country % Yes
Current immigration level is too high <sup>3</sup>	64	73
Australia is a worse place to live now that people from so many countries live here <sup>1</sup>	24	36
There are too many migrants from certain areas <sup>4</sup>	63	53
There are too many migrants from Asia <sup>4</sup>	89	85
The proportion of Asians in our migration intake should be reduced <sup>4</sup>	51	56
Aborigines are treated over generously by the government <sup>4</sup>	51	57
Aborigines are extremely well looked after <sup>2</sup>	21	31
The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission should be abolished <sup>4</sup>	27	42

Sources: <sup>3</sup>ACNielsen (1996a); <sup>4</sup>ACNielsen (1996b); <sup>2</sup>Brian Sweeney and Associates (1994); <sup>1</sup>Irving Saulwick and Associates (1994)



**Table 3** Intolerance of cultural diversity / multiculturalism, city and country, NSW, 1994 & 1996

	City % Yes	Country % Yes
Migrants should not be encouraged to preserve their own culture <sup>3</sup>	40	45
The policy of multiculturalism should be abolished <sup>4</sup>	19	27
Migrants should be criticised for wanting to mix mainly with people of same cultural background <sup>1</sup>	34	36
Migrants should learn to live and behave like the majority of Australians do <sup>1</sup>	56	69

Sources: <sup>3</sup>ACNielsen (1996a); <sup>4</sup>ACNielsen (1996b); <sup>2</sup>Brian Sweeney and Associates (1994); <sup>1</sup>Irving Saulwick and Associates (1994)

**Table 4** Support for racially selective immigration policy, city and country, NSW, 1996

	City % Yes	Country % Yes
Migrants should be selected for reasons including colour, religion or country of birth <sup>3</sup>	22	19

Source: <sup>3</sup>ACNielsen (1996a)

**Table 5** Racial discrimination complaints, city and country, NSW, 1996-7

	City	Country
Number of reported incidents	495	184
Population	4,437,857	1,476,744
Number of incidents per 100,000 people	11.2	12.5

Source: Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW (1996; 1997); ABS Census 1996.

**Table 6** Regions of NSW rankings by indicators of racism, averages and standard deviations

Region	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	Total	Mean	Std devi <sup>^</sup>
Inner Sydney / eastern suburbs	2	4	1	2	2	1	7	19	2.7	2.138
Lower northern Sydney	4	9	3	4	7	11	2	40	5.7	3.352
Murrumbidgee	1	1	5	9	17	7	4	44	6.3	4.250
Inner W Sydney / central W Sydney	12	10	6	7	6	5	6	52	7.4	2.573
Hornsby / N beaches / Gosford	6	11	7	13	8	2	9	56	8.0	3.559
Fairfield / outer SW Sydney	9	15	11	9	3	4	12	63	9.0	4.282
Richmond-Tweed	3	2	9	16	16	17	1	64	9.1	7.198
South Eastern	8	8	8	13	9	8	10	64	9.1	1.864
Northern	10	5	12	12	10	9	8	66	9.4	2.440
Central west	15	7	15	1	4	13	11	66	9.4	5.533
St George / Canterbury	7	6	8	6	11	15	15	68	9.7	3.988
Outer W Sydney / Blacktown	13	16	14	8	5	3	14	73	10.4	5.062
Illawarra	11	13	2	15	15	12	13	81	11.6	4.467
Hunter	14	3	16	16	12	16	5	82	11.7	5.499
Mid north coast	16	12	14	3	13	14	16	88	12.6	7.467
NW / far west / Murray	5	14	-	-	-	-	3	22	7.4	
North Western	-	-	17	17	14	10	-	58	14.5	
Murray	-	-	4	5	1	6	-	16	4	

Where 1 was scored by the region with least percentage of ‘racist’ response for the following questions:

**A:** Proportion of respondents who felt that the current level of immigration was too high

**B:** Proportion of respondents who felt that Australia receives too many migrants from certain regions

**C:** Proportion of respondents who agreed that the proportion of ‘Asians’ in Australia’s migration intake should be reduced

- D:** Proportion of respondents who agreed that Aboriginals are treated over generously by the Federal Government
- E:** Proportion of respondents who agreed that the ATSIC should be abolished
- F:** Proportion of respondents who disagreed with the policy of multiculturalism (defined as encouraging migrants to preserve their culture)
- G:** Proportion of respondents who believed that migrants should be selected on the basis of colour, religion or country

**Table 7** Regional distribution of racial discrimination complaints, NSW, 1996-1997

<b>Region</b>	<b>Number of Incidents</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Rate per 100,000 population</b>
Inner Sydney / eastern suburbs	104	507 614	20.5
North western	23	116 403	19.8
South eastern	36	188 302	19.1
Murrumbidgee	26	145 799	17.8
Inner W / central W Sydney	72	419 194	17.2
Central west	24	168 571	14.2
Lower northern Sydney	33	267 744	12.3
Far west	3	25 085	12.0
St George / Canterbury	81	682 057	11.9
Fairfield / outer SW Sydney	56	511 277	11.0
Richmond-Tweed	22	202 635	10.9
Illawarra	35	360 298	9.7
Outer W Sydney / Blacktown	58	644 773	9.0
Northern	15	175 221	8.6
Mid north coast	10	262 985	7.6
Hornsby / beaches / Gosford	46	708 631	6.5
Hunter	23	540 491	4.3
Murray	2	108 979	1.0

Sources: The Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW (1996; 1997)

**Table 8** Statistical associations between racism and demographic variables: rank correlation coefficients

Indicators	Educat.	Unemp.	Income	Aborig	Asia-Born	LOTE
<b>A, n=16</b>	-0.2551	0.291	-0.256	0.202	-0.185	-0.224
<b>B, n=16</b>	-0.1706	0.008	0.203	0.184	0.153	0.185
<b>C, n=17</b>	-0.5245 ****	0.281	-0.404 **	0.458 ***	-0.453 ***	-0.496 ****
<b>D, n=17</b>	-0.1618	0.353 **	-0.256	0.195	-0.336 **	-0.246
<b>E, n=17</b>	-0.2567	0.322 *	-0.430 ***	0.325 *	-0.364 **	-0.404 **
<b>F, n=16</b>	-0.2625	0.323 *	-0.159	0.101	-0.026	-0.029
<b>G, n=16</b>	-0.1088	0.071	0.067	-0.085	0.065	0.105

Where \* = significance at  $\alpha = 0.25$   
 \*\* = significance at  $\alpha = 0.2$   
 \*\*\* = significance at  $\alpha = 0.1$   
 \*\*\*\* = significance at  $\alpha = 0.05$

and where:

**A:** Proportion of respondents who felt that the current level of immigration was too high

**B:** Proportion of respondents who felt that Australia receives too many migrants from certain regions

**C:** Proportion of respondents who agreed that the proportion of 'Asians' in Australia's migration intake should be reduced

**D:** Proportion of respondents who agreed that Aboriginals are treated over generously by the Federal Government

**E:** Proportion of respondents who agreed that the ATSIC should be abolished

**F:** Proportion of respondents who disagreed with the policy of multiculturalism (defined as encouraging migrants to preserve their culture)

**G:** Proportion of respondents who believed that migrants should be selected on the basis of colour, religion or country

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