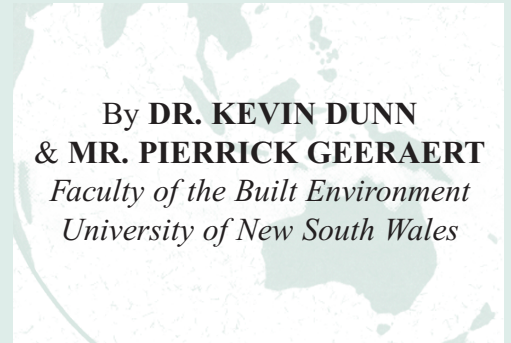


This article
HYPERLINKED
on
GeoWeb

The geography of 'race' and racisms

By DR. KEVIN DUNN
& MR. PIERRICK GEERAERT
*Faculty of the Built Environment
University of New South Wales*



Surveying racist attitudes

The 'race debates' in Australia of 1996 and 1997 were initiated in large part by the statements of Pauline Hanson, co-founder of the One Nation Party. There was a good deal of media assertion that support for this anti-immigration and anti-multiculturalism political group was principally rural based. An underlying assumption was that rural-based Australians were more sympathetic than urbanites to the anti-immigration and anti-multiculturalism policies of the One Nation Party. We were not entirely convinced that such an urban-rural dichotomy existed with regard to racist attitudes. Such a straightforward urban-rural division in the extent of racism had not been convincingly demonstrated in any recent research (Dunn & McDonald, 2001, pp. 34-36). For example, research on the geography of voting for the One Nation Party found that some parts of capital cities generated higher rates of support than did many rural areas (Davis & Stimson 1998). A number of authors have quite correctly noted that the nature and frequency of racism varies over time and across space: it is not a static phenomenon. The racism within each locality or region is likely to be demonstratively different to that which exists in others (Amin 2002, pp. 975-976). The geography of racism looks to be regional, rather than a rural-urban dichotomy.

The geographies of racism still remain poorly understood. The University of New South Wales Racism Project sought to examine the spatial variation of racism and to that end we commissioned a telephone survey of a random sample of 5056 residents from the states of New South Wales and Queensland. The questionnaire included thirty questions regarding the respondent's attitudes, their experiences of racism and cultural mixing, and seven questions on the respondent's gender, age, cultural and educational background. Samples proportional to the populations of every second postcode were gathered, and data for each Local Government Area in the two states was ensured. This paper outlines current thinking within

geography on racism, and reports on spatial variations in the answers to the attitudinal questions that were asked (see *Table 1*).

Geography and 'race'

There have been three significant approaches to the geography of 'race': from sociobiology, through superorganicism, and into social constructivism (*Table 2*). Over the last century, the geographical emphasis has moved from an analysis of how landscapes give rise to 'races'—environmental determinism, through the mapping and measuring of fixed 'racial' groups—the superorganicism of old cultural geography, to examining the way that the idea of 'race' as a category of humankind has been constructed in the interests of powerful groups—new cultural geography (see Bonnett 1996; Dunn 2003; Kobayashi & Peake 1994). The UNSW Racism Project was located within the latter of these paradigms. For this reason, whenever we use the term 'race', we contain the word within quotation marks, drawing attention to our view that it is a constructed category rather than a natural grouping of humankind.

The everyday belief that there are natural 'racial' categories of humankind remains widespread in everyday society. The belief in such categories has been defined as racialism. The attitudinal questions in the project survey (*Table 1*) gathered data on belief in race, defined as racialism. About 78 per cent of respondents believed that humankind could be sorted by natural categories called 'races' (*Table 3*). The belief remains prevalent in Australia.

Racism/s old and new

The new cultural geography, or social constructivist perspectives, identify different forms of racist belief and statements. There is a distinction made between traditional or old racism and new racism. Old racisms are based on supposed racial hierarchies and prohibitions on racial mixing. The new racism is focused not through 'race' but upon cultural differences (Jayasuriya 2002). These forms of racist

Geodate is published and distributed by:

Warringal Publications, PO Box 336, Fitzroy, Vic. 3065 • Telephone: (03) 9416 0200 • Facsimile: (03) 9416 0402
GPO Box 4611, Sydney, NSW 1043 • Telephone toll free: 1800 334 641 • Facsimile toll free: 1800 629 559 • Website: www.edassist.com.au
Subscription Information: Initial subscription \$65.50/1 set; Class set (10 copies) \$98.00. ISSN 1320-9698 100% RECYCLED PAPER

Table 1: Asking questions about racism, indicators from the University of New South Wales Racism Project

Question number	Questions wording	Response options	Indicator
1	It is a good thing for a society to be made up of people from different cultures	Strongly disagree; Disagree; Neither disagree nor agree; Agree; Strongly agree	Strongly disagree + disagree an indicator of opposition to cultural diversity
2	You feel secure when you are with people of different ethnic backgrounds	As above	Strongly disagree + disagree an indicator of concern about cultural difference
3	Australia is weakened by people of different ethnic origins sticking to their old ways	As above	Strongly agree + agree an indicator of concern opposition to cultural difference
4	There is racial prejudice in Australia	As above	Strongly disagree + disagree an indicator of denial of racism
5	Australians from a British background enjoy a privileged position in our society	As above	Strongly disagree + disagree an indicator of cultural privilege that Anglo-Australians enjoy
6	It is NOT a good idea for people of different races to marry one another	As above	Strongly agree + agree an indicator of belief in the need to keep 'races' separate
7	All races of people ARE equal	As above	Strongly disagree + disagree an indicator of belief racial hierarchy
8	Humankind is made up of separate races	As above	Strongly agree + agree an indicator of belief natural racial groups
9	You are prejudiced against other cultures	As above	Strongly agree + agree an indicator of self identified racism
10	Do you believe that there are any cultural or ethnic groups that do NOT fit into Australian society?	Yes; No (then asked which groups)	Yes was an indicator of the right to make judgements about cultural fit, naming groups indicates out-groups
11	In your opinion how concerned would you feel if one of your close relatives were to marry a person of ... Asian background	Not at all concerned; Slightly concerned; Somewhat concerned; Very concerned; Extremely concerned	Slightly concerned through to extremely concerned was an indicator of whether Asian-Australians were an 'out-group' in Australian society
12	Aboriginal background		As above
13	Muslim faith		As above
14	Jewish faith		As above
15	Italian background		As above & control
16	British background		As above, plus a 'troubling effect', i.e. reminds Anglo respondents of their own 'ethnic' status and that they too may be the focus of intolerance.
17	Christian faith		

Table 2: Paradigms of 'race studies' in geography, examples of work with Indigenous Australians

Phase of cultural geography (paradigm)	Theory of culture and the cultural landscape	Ethnic and racial studies in Geography	Examples of work with Indigenous Australians
<i>Environmental determinism (sociobiology)</i>	Landscape (environment generally) as the generator of culture	Identifying the environmental bases of 'races' and of culture more generally	Measuring skin colour and skull shapes, and linking those to environmental patterns and change
<i>Old cultural geography (superorganicism)</i>	Cultures as deposited on the landscape. Culture as a container into which humans are born/raised,	static/unchanging Measuring and mapping 'race' & ethnicity. Use of diffusion models and segregation measures	Mapping the distribution of Indigenous peoples/tribes. Assessments of segregation, welfare and resources
<i>New cultural geography (social constructivism)</i>	Cultures and landscapes seen as constructs of human action past and present. Research focus on this construction	Deconstructing racial ideology, analysing the politics of race, the links between nationalism (or localism) and racism	Analysis of the racialisation of Indigenous people and their places, analytical work on whiteness

attitude include exclusionary assumptions about what constitutes the nation or a citizen, e.g. the dominant perception that Australian national identity is Anglo-Celtic. New racisms also include opposition to cultural difference, generalisations and stereotypes about minority groups, and failure to recognise the cultural disadvantages and privileges of racism. These two forms—old and new—have been referred to as the twin logics of racism, they are distinct but related. There is no absolute, single definition of racism. Racist expressions are various, sometimes concealed. For this reason the project gathered attitudinal data on a range of racism forms (Table 1).

Urban-rural variation in racist attitudes?

The research of urban sociologists in the late 1800s and early 1900s suggested that there are significant differences between the urban way of life and the rural way of life and that these gave rise to very different attitudes. Specifically they commented on the cultural diversity and experience of cultural difference that cities generate. As a consequence, it was expected that city dwellers were more comfortable with varied cultural experiences, and moreover, had come to appreciate and enjoy cultural diversity. These same theorists referred to an inverse preference for cultural sameness that rural life gave rise to. On this theoretical basis a higher intolerance of cultural difference, and of diversity, has usually been anticipated within rural areas. For example, some Australian researchers had generated findings that anti-Indigenous sentiment was stronger in rural Australia than in cities (Dunn & McDonald 2001, pp. 34–35).

The survey data provided little substantive evidence of a straightforward urban-rural differentiation of racist attitudes, and many of the results confound the suggestion that rural ways of life give rise to a preference for sameness and an intolerance of difference. For example, rural respondents were generally less likely to think that cultural diversity was a bad thing, and they were also less likely to deny that there was racism within Australian society (Table 3). Anti-Indigenous sentiment was clearly stronger among rural respondents, and anti-Muslim sentiment was stronger in the cities.

These data do not accord with popular impressions of the ‘red-necked ruralite’ and the ‘cosmopolitan urbanite’. There was no consistent, nor striking, urban-rural division of attitudes. In an era when mass media is so far reaching, people from both rural and urban Australia share many similar daily experiences, such as watching the same soap operas and news reports. It is well recognised that the media have a central role in the reproduction of racist attitudes. This includes stereotypes about certain groups, narrow representations of what constitutes the nation (ideas about what an Australian is), and portrayals of cultural difference as a cause of problems. It is true there are some regions of rural Australia have very serious issues of racism, linked to long histories of poor inter-communal relations. Nonetheless, the geography of racism is not urban-rural but is regional in its variation.

Table 3: Racist attitudes by city or rural location, New South Wales and Queensland, 2001

Racist attitude	Capital city* per cent	Regional city** per cent	Rural per cent	All per cent
1. Cultural diversity is not good	8.11	8.24	5.98	7.34
2. Insecure in presence of cultural difference	10.7	11.9	10.5	10.7
3. Ethnic diversity weakens nation	44.39	45.30	45.30	44.84
4. Denial of racism in Australia	9.4	8.7	7.2	8.5
5. Denial of Anglo-Australian cultural privilege	42.4	43.5	42.4	42.6
6. Belief in racial sexual separation	12.5	15.3	13.7	13.3
7. Do not believe in racial equality	11.2	12.8	11.9	11.7
8. Belief in ‘races’	77.2	76.6	78.6	77.6
9. Self-identification as a racist	13.2	9.9	10.8	12.0
10. Can identify groups that don’t fit in Aust.	44.3	48.1	44.8	44.9
11. Anti-Asian sentiment	26.2	28.8	28.8	27.5
12. Anti-Aboriginal sentiment	28.4	25.9	30.4	28.9
13. Anti-Muslim sentiment	54.4	54.9	50.1	52.8
14. Anti-Jewish sentiment	23.7	22.9	25.0	24.1
Number	2577	607	1872	5056

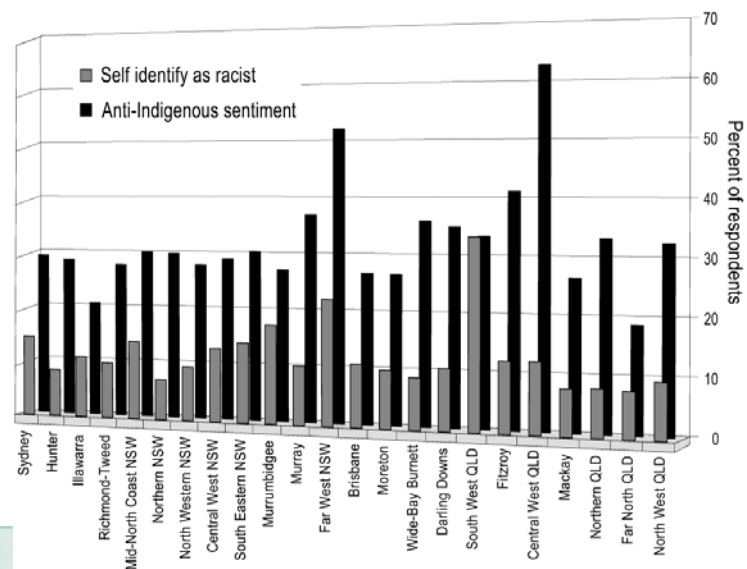
*state capitals of Sydney and Brisbane

**regional cities—NSW industrial cities of Newcastle and Wollongong and Gold Coast leisure region.

The regions of racism

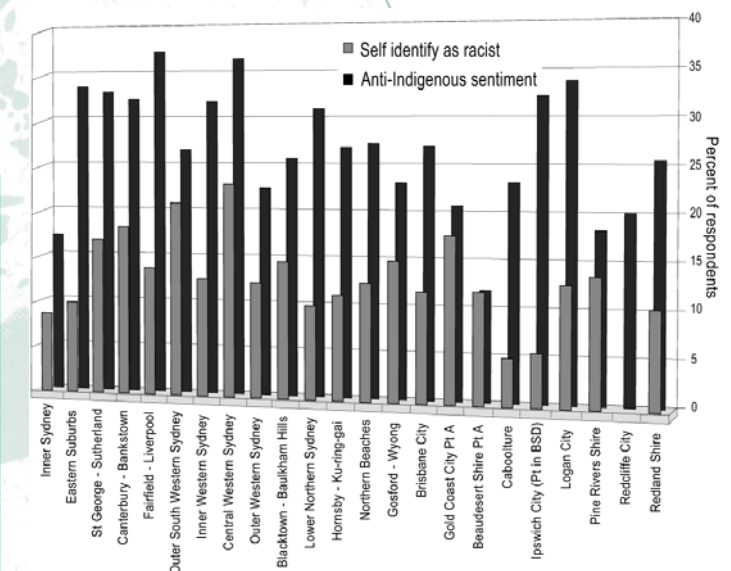
Racist attitudes were expressed in each region in highly specific ways. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the regional variations for two indicators: self-identification as racist and anti-Indigenous sentiment. An immediate and obvious finding is that variation in one form of racist attitude does not correspond with regional variations for another. For example, the Far Western NSW Statistical Division (SD) had the highest rate of anti-Indigenous sentiment in NSW and also the highest rate for self-identification as prejudiced (Figure 1). The same was not true for Queensland, where the SD with the worst anti-Indigenous sentiment had self-identification rates not much above those for Brisbane SD (Figure 1). Within Sydney, those statistical sub-divisions (SSDs) with high rates of anti-Indigenous sentiment, such as Fairfield-Liverpool and Central Western Sydney (which includes local areas like Auburn and Parramatta) had dramatically different rates of self-identification (Figure 2). Another interesting contradiction can be observed for the SSD surrounding what was Pauline Hanson’s Federal Seat in Ipswich.

Figure 1: Self identification as racist and anti-Indigenous sentiment, by statistical divisions of New South Wales and Queensland, 2001



Source: The University of New South Wales Racism Survey, telephone survey, October–December 2001

Figure 2: Self identification as racist and anti-Indigenous sentiment by statistical sub-divisions of Sydney and Brisbane, 2001



Source: The University of New South Wales Racism Survey, telephone survey, October–December 2001

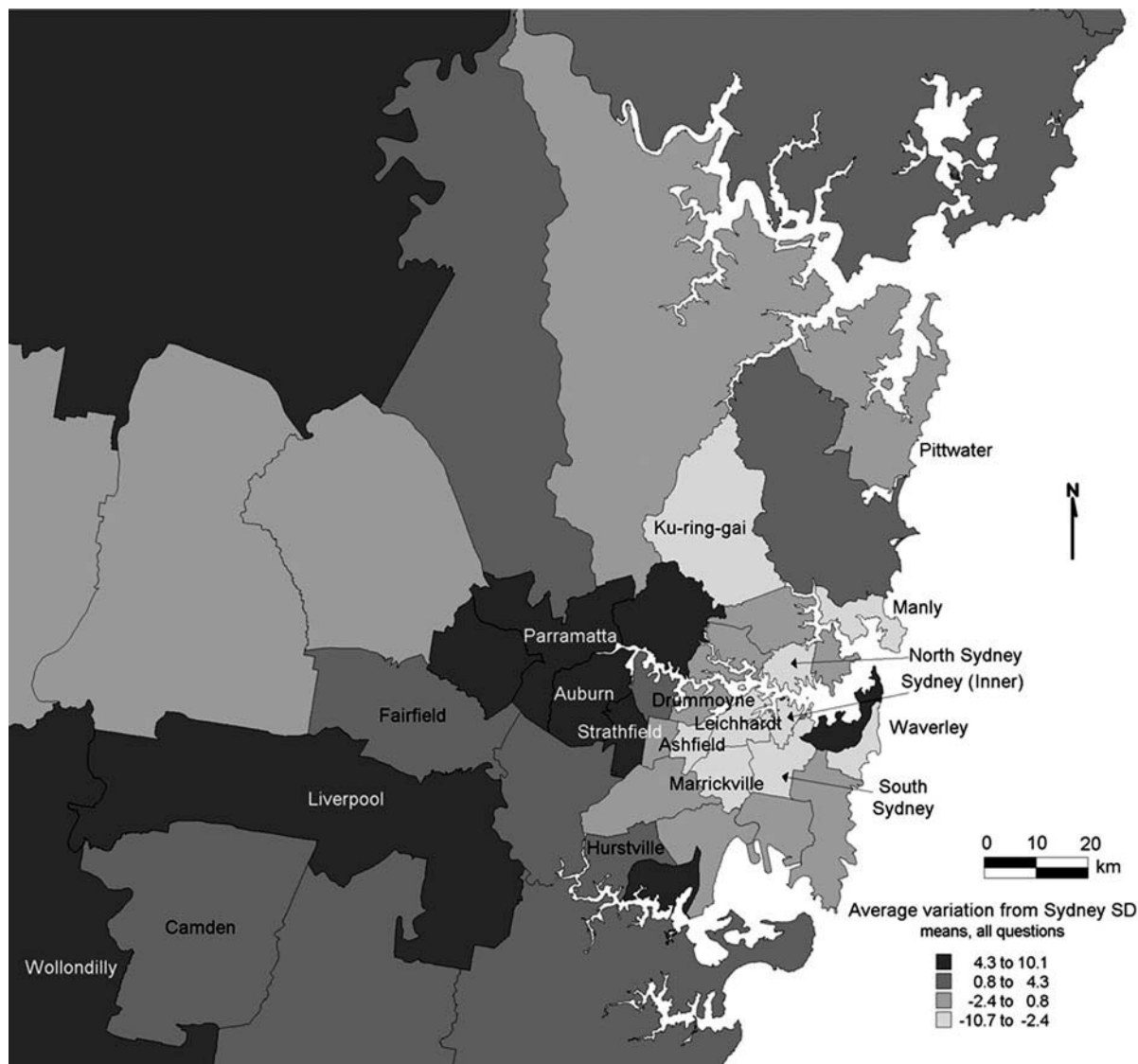
These regional level data fail to show a perceptible urban–rural dichotomy in attitudes. Anti-Indigenous sentiment was particularly strong in two rural statistical divisions: Far Western NSW and Central Western Queensland. However, rates of intolerance of Indigenous Australians in Sydney and Brisbane (29.1 per cent and 26.6 per cent respectively) were similar to the rates for the remaining and largely rural SDs of NSW and Queensland (Figure 1). There were seven urban statistical sub-divisions (SSDs) within Sydney, and two in Brisbane, that had higher rates of anti-Indigenous sentiment than the average (27.5 per cent, see Table 3). In Sydney these areas included outer and central western suburbs, generally areas of lower average socio-economic status and higher proportions of recent migrants, but it also included affluent areas such as Lower Northern Sydney, and areas of longstanding cultural diversity such as the inner west.

To generate an overall sense of the geography of racist attitudes a calculation was made of the extent to which each Local Government Area (LGA) across Sydney varied from the average response (for all of Sydney) for the first fourteen indicators listed in Table 1. These variations from the mean were then summed and divided by 14. The result provides a sense of the extent (in percentage points) to which an SLA was generally above or below the average for all of Sydney. For example, Auburn LGA at 10.05 was generally ten per cent ‘more

racist’ across the 14 indicators, while Ashfield at the other extreme was generally 10.62 less racist for the questions asked (Figure 3).

Half of the Sydney LGAs had average responses that were generally between 2.5 points below or above the Sydney mean. Figure 3 reveals that the generally least-racist opinion was located within LGAs in the affluent north shore (North Sydney, Drummoyne, Ku-ring-gai, Manly), the very inner city (Sydney and Waverley) and especially those SLAs with considerable cultural diversity (LGAs like South Sydney, Ashfield, Marrickville, Leichhardt and Waverley). The generally most-racist opinion was located within areas of lower socio-economic status and high recent migrant settlement. These included the central western LGAs of Auburn and Parramatta, as well as Liverpool, Strathfield and Fairfield. Other areas of generally higher intolerance were the rural fringe LGAs of Wollondilly and Hawkesbury. The geography just described accords with research expectations that racist attitudes are linked to levels of education and to economic vulnerability (Davis & Stimson 1998; Dunn & McDonald 2001). There is also a sense that those areas of much longer standing cultural diversity (Marrickville, Ashfield, South Sydney and Leichhardt) are places where people have become more accustomed to, and perhaps appreciative of, cultural diversity.

Figure 3: Racist attitudes across Sydney Local Government Areas, 2001



Source: The University of New South Wales Racism Survey, telephone survey, October–December 2001

Note: The data were generated using a summation of variation from means for each of fourteen questions on racist attitudes (see Table 1). The sum was divided by the number of variables (14), this generated an indication of the extent to which opinion within each LGA was generally more, or less, racist than that for the entire Sydney Statistical Division.

But the geographies of racism are more complex than even the above suggests. The map generated for opinion on ‘old racisms’ (questions 6 and 7) looked quite different to other maps, such as concern about cultural difference (questions 1, 2 and 3) and the denial of racism/privilege (questions 4 and 5). For example, the highly-affluent north shore LGA of Pittwater had a much higher-than-average support for old racist attitudes of racial supremacy and racial separatism, and yet for the other indicators its responses were generally less racist (or about average). Respondents from the rural fringe LGA of Camden were third least supportive of old racisms, yet they were among the top group of LGAs where concern about cultural difference was expressed.

Figures 4 and 5 provide a neat demonstration of the varied geographies of the different racisms. The two indicators used are anti-Muslim (question 13) and anti-Asian sentiment (question 11). For some LGAs the intolerance of Asian-Australians, Indigenous Australians, Jews and Muslims was consistently either higher or lower than the Sydney average. For example, the Auburn responses were on average consistently intolerant, and in Ashfield they were consistently tolerant. But in other areas tolerance was very uneven across these ‘out-groups’. Respondents in the inner-western LGA of Leichhardt were generally among the most tolerant in regards to Asian-Australians and also Indigenous Australians, but was one of the sites of most extreme anti-Islamic feeling (see Figures 4 and 5). The outer-western LGA of Campbelltown, an area of lower than average socio-economic status, had a below average rate of Islamophobia (anti-Muslim sentiment), but above-average levels of anti-Asian sentiment. Indeed, the maps of Islamophobia and Anti-Asian sentiment are quite different.

Conclusions: anti-racism and geography

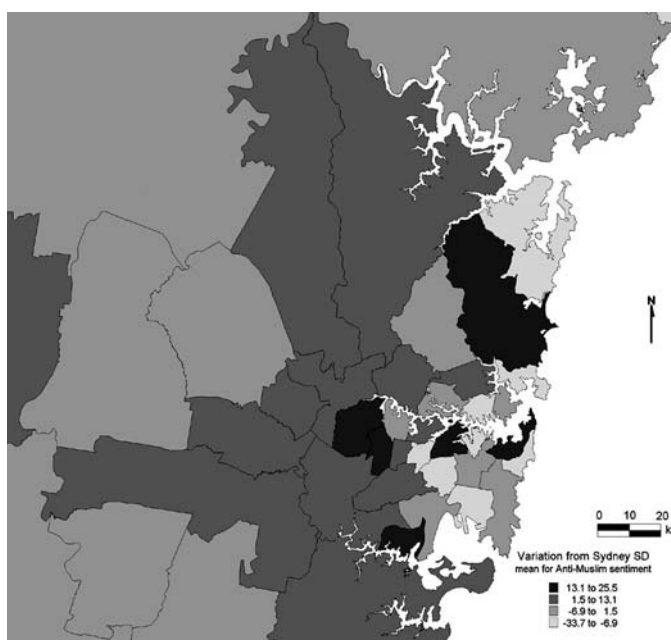
The University of New South Wales Racism Project has generated a very detailed and quite complicated picture of racism in NSW and Queensland. Racism is multi-faceted, old and new, it is culturally-uneven in its victimisation, and it is regionally unique. Each region has its own mix of cultural groups, recent migration histories, long-standing histories of inter-communal relations, and different forms of cultural experiences. The populace of each region has very disparate average levels of education and different vulnerabilities in the labour and housing markets. All of these suggest the geographically specific nature of racism.

The fight against racism—anti-racism campaigns, more inclusive statements of national and local citizenry, tolerance building exercises and so on—should pay heed to this geographical variation. Local anti-racism initiatives, that are regionally specific and targeted, will be much more effective than generic or national campaigns. Indeed, a generic campaign to improve Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations may be almost irrelevant for some communities. However, the same issue and campaign may be the most crucial issue in a handful of regions and be of moderate importance in most. One of the intended outcomes of the UNSW Racism Project is to make available for local communities our detailed findings on the racisms within each local government area. Local governments and other local non-government groups will be able to use these data, informed by their own understandings of local inter-communal relations, to generate locally-targeted and locally-owned anti-racism initiatives.

References

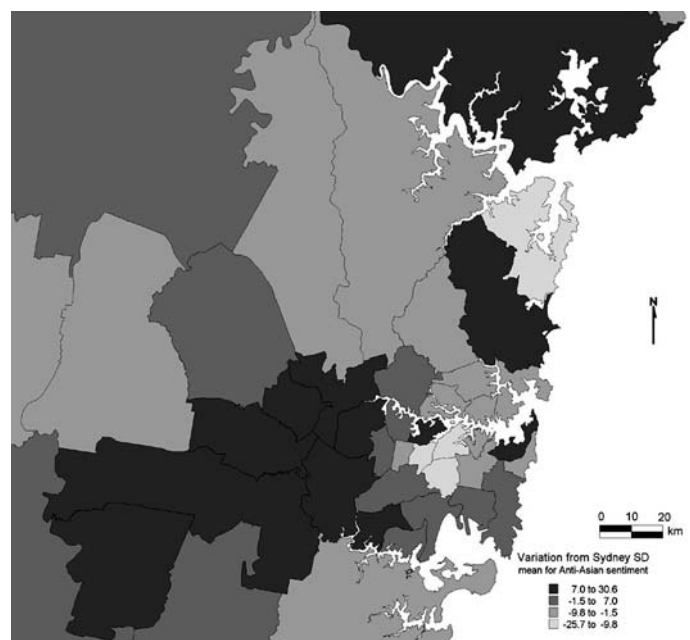
- Amin, A. 2002, ‘Ethnicity and the city: living with diversity’, *Environment and Planning A*, vol. 34, no. 6, pp. 959–980.
- Bonnett, A. 1996, ‘Constructions of ‘race’, place and discipline: geographies of ‘racial’ identity and racism’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* vol. 19, no. 4, October, pp. 864–883.
- Davis, R. & Stimson, R. 1998, ‘Disillusionment and disenchantment at the fringe: explaining the geography of the One Nation Party vote at the Queensland Election’, *People and Place*, Vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 69–82.
- Dunn, K. M. & McDonald, A. 2001, ‘The geography of racisms in NSW: A theoretical exploration and some preliminary findings’, *Australian Geographer*, vol. 32, no.1, pp. 29–44.
- Dunn, K. M. 2003, ‘New cultural geographies in Australia: identity, citizenship and space’, in Garner B. (ed.) *Geography’s New Frontiers Conference Proceedings*, pp. 189–200, Conference Papers No. 17, The Geographical Society of New South Wales, Gladesville.
- Jayasuriya, L. 2002, ‘Understanding Australian racism’, *Australian Universities Review*, vol. 45, no. 1, pp. 40–44.
- Kobayashi, A. & Peake, L. 1994, ‘Unnatural Discourse: ‘Race’ and Gender in Geography’, *Gender, Place and Culture*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 225–243.

Figure 4: Anti-Muslim sentiment, Sydney Local Government Areas, 2001



Source: The University of New South Wales Racism Survey, telephone survey, October–December 2001

Figure 5: Anti-Asian sentiment, Sydney Local Government Areas, 2001



Source: The University of New South Wales Racism Survey, telephone survey, October–December 2001

Understanding the text

1. What were the 'race debates' of 1996 and 1997 concerned with?
2. What was the evidence that racism in Australia varied across space?
3. Explain the methodologies employed in the University of NSW Racism Project.
4. Identify the appropriate paradigm of cultural geography that is best reflected in the following phrases:
 - a. A study of how people leave their imprint on the landscape resulting in distinctive house types, languages and religious affiliations.
 - b. A study of culture that maintains that culture is a result of human thought and action involving contested notions of power and control and who benefits and who loses out from the operation of these forces.
 - c. A study of Indigenous Australians that makes links between environment and apparent skin colour and skull shape.
5. A superorganic perspective of culture sees people as being born into a culture and they live their lives according to the dictates of that culture. How could such a notion reinforce racist thinking?
6. Why do the instigators of the University of NSW Racism Project insert quotation marks around the word, race?
7. What has been the recent work in genetics that refutes any meaningful biological category called 'race'? Investigate work on the human genome sequence that suggests any particular genetic combination can be found in almost any 'race'.
8. How is this recent work reflected in the responses of the people surveyed in NSW and Queensland in 2001?
9. To what extent do racial hierarchies in Australia reflect the colonial experience and the hegemony of Anglo-Celtic cultures?
10. Identify the 'twin logics of racism'.
11. According to early urban sociology theory, why was racism and/or anti-Indigenous sentiment thought to be more prevalent in the city rather than the bush?
12. What light did the 2001 survey shed on this idea?
13. In general terms where was anti-Indigenous sentiment and anti-Muslim sentiment most apparent?
14. Identify the particular role of the media in affecting rural and urban attitudes towards 'race'.
15. Explain the assertion that 'the geography of racism is not urban-rural but is regional in its variation'.
16. Postulate why respondents from the Western NSW Statistical Division might self identify as racists and respondents from Central Western Sydney and Fairfield-Liverpool exhibit high rates of anti-Indigenous sentiment?
17. Explain the calculations that indicated that respondents from Auburn appeared to be more racist and those from Ashfield less racist, on average.
18. To what extent did the results of the survey support the theoretical proposition that racist attitudes are linked to levels of education and to economic vulnerability?
19. What were the tentative conclusions about background factors suggested by the respondents from South Sydney and Sydney's Inner West?
20. What was anomalous about the responses from the wealthy LGA of Pittwater?
21. Justify the assertion that 'the maps of Islamophobia and Anti-Asian sentiment are quite different.'
22. Explain the importance of a geographical study such as this in combating racism.

Skills

1. Refer to *Table 1*.
 - a. List the assumptions that are being probed by the questions in the table.
 - b. What is meant by a 'control' question?
2. Refer to *Table 2*.
 - a. T.S. Kuhn referred to paradigms in 'The Structure of

Scientific Revolutions' (1962). According to Kuhn scientists work in communities, groups of researchers and teachers who share a common approach to their work. They are socialised into a research field through which they can problem solve from a mutually accepted framework. This is the paradigm through which they work. To what extent are the authors Dunn and Geeraert justified in using the word 'paradigm' to refer to the three phases of cultural geography?

- b. How do these three paradigms underpin shifts in thinking about ethnic and cultural studies in geography?
3. Refer to *Table 3*.
 - a. Which capital cities were referred to in the table? Which regional cities?
 - b. How many respondents were there in total?
 - c. What percentage of respondents lived in the two capital cities?
 - d. What was the major finding evident from the table?
 4. Refer to *Figure 1*.
 - a. In which statistical divisions did respondents express the most anti-Indigenous sentiments in their respective states?
 - b. In which statistical divisions did respondents self identify as racists in their respective states?
 - c. Which statistical divisions appeared to be the least racist according to the survey?
 - d. Remark on the similarities or differences between the attitudes apparent in Sydney and Brisbane.
 - e. Which Queensland statistical division most resembled attitudes apparent in the Illawarra?
 5. Refer to *Figure 2*.
 - a. If you were an Indigenous Australian where would you experience the least racism, on the basis of the results of the survey?
 - b. Which Statistical Sub-Division contained the greatest percentage of respondents that self identified as racists?
 - c. Identify the similarities and the differences between the respondents from Canterbury-Bankstown and Lower Northern Sydney.
 6. Refer to *Figure 3*. On the basis of the survey comment on the expected racist attitudes experienced by an Indigenous person living in South Sydney, a Turkish-born person living in Auburn, a Vietnamese-born person living in Marrickville, a Shanghai-born person living in Ashfield and a German-born person living in Pittwater.
 7. Refer to *Figure 4*. On the basis of the survey, how comfortable would a practising Muslim feel living and worshipping in: Warringah, Woollahra, Leichhardt, Council, and Kogarah LGAs?
 8. Refer to *Figure 5*. On the basis of the survey, which LGAs appeared to express the least Anti-Asian sentiment?

Extension activities

1. What evidence, if any, is there of racism in your local area/community? What are the most critical forms of racism within your local area? Speculate on other racisms that might be important (though not apparent) within your local area.
2. What are the likely geographic explanations for the specific racisms in your local area? Are they related to the economic well being of people in the area, average levels of education, or the cultural mix and history of the area?
3. Consider using the questions in *Table 1* to construct your own questionnaire on racist attitudes. What additional questions can you add?
4. How is racism in your locality, or in others, influenced by national level issues, such as contemporary political debates, over immigration, multiculturalism, Indigenous affairs?
5. How is racism influenced by dominant ideas about what constitutes national identity, e.g. the popular image of who is an Aussie, Briton, Kiwi, etc? How are such ideas circulated?
6. Can you formulate anti-racism initiatives that are relevant and sensitive to your local area?