The Geography of Racisms in NSW: a theoretical exploration and some preliminary findings from the mid-1990s

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ABSTRACT *The spatial variation of racisms is an under-researched field of inquiry, certainly in Australia. This paper explores the geographies of racism in New South Wales. Responses to three opinion polls conducted between 1994 and 1996 were used to construct patterns of racisms across NSW. Preliminary findings suggest a substantive degree of racism in NSW. There was little evidence of an urban–rural variation in terms of ethnocentrism. Examination of regional variations confounds this simple division. Social Constructionist theory is put forward as a spatially sensitive theory for understanding and responding to the geographies of racism. The identification of regional variations in racism is crucial to the development of regionally specific anti-racism campaigns. This paper highlights the need for more comprehensive analyses of the varying causes and remedies for racisms.*

KEY WORDS   *Racism; ethnocentrism; intolerance; spatial variation; anti-racism; New South Wales.*

Introduction

The nature and frequency of Australian racism varies over time and across space: it is not a static phenomenon (Vasta & Castles 1996, pp. 5, 20; Cope *et al.* 1991, p. 27). A host of different terms have been used to describe racism, including: intolerance, ethnocentrism, prejudice, racialism, bigotry and, of course, racism. In this study the following forms of racism were analysed: ethnocentric attitudes and racist incidents. Recent academic reports and opinion polling all indicate that racism is widespread in Australia (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1991; Vasta & Castles 1996, p. 14). However, the geography of racism in Australia is poorly understood. This is a limitation experienced across the world. For example, Robinson (1987, p. 169) pointed out that in the UK the study of variations in such social attitudes was an under-researched field of inquiry. Extant assessments of regional differences in racism are now dated (Pettigrew 1959; Robinson 1987; Schaefer 1975). The vast majority of studies on the extent of racism have generally made little if any attempt to appreciate spatial variations in the intensity, nature and definition of racism (Kobayashi & Peake 2000, p. 400).[1] Geographers in the UK and elsewhere have begun to focus on racism, replacing a prior emphasis upon 'racial' distributions or 'race' relations (Bonnett 1996). Recent geographical work of this type in Australia has focused on the spatialised nature

of racialisation (see Anderson 1990; Dunn 1998a). The NSW study of racism presented here is the first academic assessment of the spatial variation of racism in Australia.

While racism is everywhere, it is also possible that it is 'everywhere different' (Kobayashi & Peake 2000). This variation is likely to be related to the different cultural make-up of each region of Australia and to the different problems and tensions in every locality (Burnley 1998; Dunn 1998b; McAllister & Moore 1989). These variations have been largely ignored in the development of anti-racism policy in Australia.[2] It is in this particular sense that space does matter to the issue of racism (Bonnett 1996).

Methods and definitions

To approach the question of racism being everywhere different, three separate public opinion polls from 1994 through to 1996 were used in this study. The telephone surveys were conducted Australia-wide. The 1994 survey 'Opinions about multiculturalism' was conducted by Irving Saulwick and Associates between May and June 1994, and comprised a nation-wide sample of 1000. In June of 1996, ACNielsen conducted its 'Attitudes to immigration and multiculturalism' survey, which had a NSW sample of 559. In November of that year, ACNielsen conducted another survey, which we have used—the 'Pauline Hanson' survey—which had a NSW sample of 555. There were two substantive limitations to these data sets. Firstly, the surveys were not intended to generate attitudinal data by region. The pollsters contacted respondents randomly, and did not attempt to fill regional quotas. As a result, the sample sizes from the various regions of NSW vary considerably. Secondly, no data on the cultural background of respondents were obtained in the surveys, and we caution readers to avoid the assumption of 'white' or Anglo-Australian-only respondents.

The responses were isolated by postcode. The NSW data were then sorted into the 12 Statistical Divisions (SDs used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)) for NSW. Sydney SD was further divided into seven sub-categories, comprising seven groups of contiguous Statistical Subdivisions (SSDs). The remainder of NSW was organised into nine regions. Four of the SDs for which there were lower levels of survey responses were combined into two amalgamated regions. This created 16 geocodes (comprised of nine non-metropolitan regions within NSW and seven groupings of SSDs in Sydney).

Data were also obtained from the Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW on race discrimination and racial vilification complaints. These included all complaints lodged with the Board in 1996 and 1997. Lodging a formal notification to the Board involved the complainant sending a brief letter describing the type of discrimination or harassment that had occurred. The data set received from the Board comprised a list of postcodes that corresponded to the complainant's home address. Whilst this meant that the incident may not have occurred in the postcode provided, the complaints department at the Board gave an informed assurance that most incidents occur near to the complainants' homes (Fulmer, Complaints Administration, letter dated 26 November 1997). The data set comprised 679 incidents of racial discrimination and vilification.

Ethnocentric attitudes and racist incidents were the indicators of racism used here. We were aware that these key concepts suffer a spatial insensitivity. The measures that we used to operationalise these concepts may or may not be accepted in all spaces, and

among all social groups, as valid indicators of racism.[3] Nonetheless, we view our data sets as provisional yet strategic mechanisms for identifying spatial variations in racisms.[4]

Ethnocentrism is the unquestioned assumption that one's own ethnic group is superior to others. Ethnocentrism manifests itself as a belief in stereotypes about other groups, and in actions and behaviour that are influenced by an unquestioning acceptance of such stereotypes. 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 (Kobayashi & Peake 2000, p. 393; Young 1990, p. 41). Essentially, it occurs when individuals take their own cultural norms as a benchmark from which another culture is judged inferior (Le Vine & Campbell 1972, p. 1). This is often manifest as an unquestioned assumption that a dominant cultural group is the 'self' or normal, while members of ethnic minorities are 'other', 'ethnics', 'foreigners' or 'aliens'. In settler societies like Australia, this places Anglo-Australians as 'non-ethnic' or above difference and colour—they are constructed as the natural epitomisation of Australianness (Bell 1993, pp. 68–9, 81; Goodall *et al.* 1994, p. 54; Kobayashi & Peake 2000, pp. 392–4). Ethnocentrism encompasses various intolerances, including intolerance towards specific ethnic groups and intolerance of cultural difference (from an assumed Anglo-Celtic-Australian norm). McAllister and Moore (1989) found that the intolerance suffered by minority cultural groups in Australia varied significantly. The religious group that experienced the most intolerance was Muslims (McAllister & Moore 1989, pp. 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 (1989, pp. 6–8) also analysed social distance by 'racial categories' and found that 'Asians' faced the highest level of prejudice.

Racist incidents refer to instances of intended harm and disparagement. For example, the National Inquiry into Racist Violence (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1991, p. 14) adopted a working definition of racist violence as 'a specific act of violence, intimidation or harassment carried out against an individual, groups or organisation on the basis of "race", colour, descent or national or ethnic origin'. The definitional constructs of this research on racisms comprise ethnocentric attitudes (including various forms of intolerance) and racist incidents.

Constructing the geography of racisms

There are a handful of theories that attempt to explain the geographical variation of racisms. These range from the traditional urbanists (Simmel; Wirth) through neo-Marxist explanations, the Chicago School and, more recently, Social Construction approaches. Here we briefly review the explanatory contribution of these theories. It has long been recognised that people from non-metropolitan areas are generally less tolerant of cultural difference than those from cites. Such findings have drawn upon a long-established distinction within urban studies regarding a rural way of life and an urban way of life (Simmel 1903; Tönnies 1887; Wirth 1938). According to the early urban theorists, cities produced experiences of otherness, heterogeneity and dynamism. Meanwhile, rural life gave raise 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 those urbanising influences that impact upon rural life, such as education programs or advances in communications. In

addition, there are the varying forms of urbanism (world city, industrial city, provincial centre, suburban edge, etc.). Despite these reservations, opinion surveys of Australians have consistently found a rural–urban distinction on attitudes to cultural diversity and immigration. Political parties that have racist policies have generally been more successful in rural areas than in urban ones. However, recent research by Australian political geographers has found very little evidence for a simple urban–rural division regarding support for the One Nation Party (ONP) (Davis & Stimson 1998; Forrest *et al.* 2001). Davis and Stimson's (1998, p. 81) analysis, of ONP votes in the 1996 Queensland State Election, identified regions of rural Queensland that generated fewer votes for the ONP than did parts of inner city Brisbane.

It has long been accepted that racism is negatively associated with affluence and educational attainment (see Nunn *et al.* 1978; Smith 1981).[5] Similarly, electoral support for political parties with racially discriminatory policies or pronouncements has been found greater in urban areas of socio-economic disadvantage than in more affluent localities (Davis & Stimson 1998; Goot 1998). For example, ONP votes in the 1998 Queensland State Election were concentrated within the fringes of metropolitan centres (Davis & Stimson 1998, pp. 74–6, 79). In terms of socio-economic status, or class variation, the spread of the ONP vote was positively associated with the presence of blue-collar workers and the unskilled (pp. 79–80).

> Generally, the ONP primary vote is at its strongest at the edge of metropolises and the regional urban centres and in their hinterlands. Where these areas contain unskilled workers in blue collar industries, few indigenous Australians or people born overseas, … then the ONP is likely to do well. (Davis & Stimson 1998, p. 81)

Davis and Stimson (1998) argued that support for political parties with racially discriminatory policies was strongly linked to disenchantment born of social polarisation. There is also an established neo-Marxist perspective that racism is a tool of capitalism (see reviews in Cope *et al.* 1991, pp. 26–8; Dunn 1998a, pp. 508–9; Solomos 1986; Vasta & Castles 1996, pp. 22–7). Specifically, neo-Marxists have argued that racism is a political means of dividing the working class, and that spatial segregation of ethnic groups assists in the reproduction of racism (Cox 1959; Harvey 1973, p. 81). Segregation, and racism generally, are therefore seen as manifestations of inter-working-class competition encouraged by the elite. At the very least, structural economic downturns, resulting in job displacement and marginalisation, have been associated with heightened racism and intercommunal tension (Vasta & Castles 1996, pp. 38–40). Accordingly, greater levels of racism among the working class are expected. The residential differentiation of the Australian people by occupation, affluence and education is therefore likely to produce regional variations in racism.

Racism towards Aboriginals in Australia is endemic. The *Report of the National Inquiry into Racist Violence* found that 'racism and racist violence permeates the day-to-day lives of Aboriginal and Islander people' (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1991, p. 72; see also the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody 1991, pp. 153–6). These racisms are a continuing legacy of invasion, dispossession and structural disadvantage enacted by a white society on Indigenous Australians. As mentioned earlier, the level of intolerance differs between cultural groups in Australia. Whites, from whatever background, suffer demonstratively less ethnocentrism or racism. The groups who suffer from racism, and the relative intensities of racism, could therefore be expected to differ in each locality. It can therefore be

assumed that racism will differ across space according to the presence of different cultural groups.

The majority of Australians now 'live in multicultural areas' (Jupp *et al.* 1990, pp. 56–7). However, the cultural composition of localities varies in both the degree of diversity and the ways of life which are present (Burnley 1998). This in part reflects regionally specific and historical patterns of migrant settlement, which have been maintained through processes of community formation and chain migration. Extending upon the work of early urbanists (see reference to Simmel, Wirth, etc. above) the Chicago School theorists argued that intolerance in the city was a necessary but ephemeral process. Park and Burgess, for example, argued that new cultural entrants to a city disrupt an established social and cultural order. A period of disorganisation pertained, in which both the host population and the entrants progress through a 'race' relations cycle (Burgess 1925, p. 54; Park 1950, pp. 82–4). This involved a process of accommodation, and eventual assimilation, as the degree of communication and understanding between communities improved. For these reasons, this form of interpretation of intercommunal relations is often described as a 'contact' or 'interactionist' approach. Put simply, the increased exposure of individuals to cultural difference gradually enhances their tolerance and their embrace of it. Therefore, residents of areas of established cultural diversity could be expected to develop greater appreciation of difference, and have a lesser dependence upon cultural sameness. However, according to Chicago School interactionist theory, the initial stages of contact are likely to involve racisms.

The unique histories and relations of each 'place' could be expected to produce unique sets of intercommunal relations. This complexity and local specificity point to the utility of a Social Constructivist theory of racism. According to this theory, 'race' is a socially constructed category rather than a natural order (see Jackson & Penrose 1993, p. 3; Kobayashi & Peake 1994; Vasta & Castles 1996, p. 22). 'Races' are constructed in different ways; ways that are dependent upon place and the unique layers of identity of that place. Jackson and Penrose stated that 'place contextualises the construction of "race", generating geographically specific ideologies of racism' (Jackson & Penrose 1993, p. 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. Constructivism has become the dominant approach for geographical study of racisms (Bonnett 1996, pp. 872–7). A social construction approach should be particularly useful for disentangling the geographies of racism. It would certainly be essential for formulating place-sensitive anti-racism interventions. For instance, Kobayashi and Peake have argued that:

> Not only is the antiracist struggle situated, but it occurs most effectively through an engagement of the places where it is most strongly manifested. This engagement involves an understanding of how a variety of social processes comes together in places. … The political task is therefore to situate antiracist struggles in those sites where they will have most effect. (Kobayashi & Peake 2000, p. 398)

A constructivist theory of the geographies of racism has both explanatory and policy contributions. Constructivism clearly allows for a more spatially sensitive understanding of the construction of 'race' and the development of racisms.

Racisms in NSW

There are substantive strands of racism running throughout Australian society. Nearly 90 per cent of respondents in the 1994 and 1996 polls felt that there were too many migrants from Asia (see Table 1: indicator B). Respondents were asked if they agreed with Australia's current immigration policy of selecting migrants on the basis of work skills and family reunion or whether migrants should be selected on the basis of colour, religion or country. Selecting migrants on the basis of colour, religion or country of birth is racist, and is a practice associated with the White Australia Policy, which was officially abolished in 1973 (Zelinka 1996). However, over one-fifth of respondents were prepared to support a racist policy or racist legislation regarding the selection of migrants (indicator J). It should be of concern to policy makers that perhaps as many as one in five Australians believe that migrants should be selected on a cultural or 'racial' basis.

Over half of NSW respondents felt that Indigenous Australians were treated over generously by the government, almost a quarter were supportive of calls for the scrapping of multiculturalism, and over 60 per cent felt that migrants should learn to live and behave like the 'majority of Australians' do (Table 1: indicators D, H and I). In addition, during 1996 and 1997, at least 700 citizens of NSW suffered a bias or vilification which they thought to be racist and which they reported to the Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW. These results confirm the findings of earlier reports that racism in Australia is a substantive social problem (Australian Council of Trade Unions 1994, 1995; Jones 1997; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1991; Vasta & Castles 1996, p. 14). This serves as a reminder of what Vasta and Castles (1996, p. 5) referred to as the unity of racism. Members of some cultural minorities in Australia consistently endure more racism than do members of other cultural groups. This is linked to the dominant representations of these groups that circulate in the media and other forums (Goodall *et al.* 1994). The general incidence of racism is also linked to official and popular articulations of national identity (Hage 1998). For example, official articulations of nationhood, and media stereotypes, have consistently awarded a lesser claim to citizenship for Indigenous and Asian-Australians, among others (see Hamilton 1990; Meadows & Oldham 1991). In many senses, anti-Asian and anti-Indigenous racisms have the same historical and cultural roots: they are legacies of the White Australia construction of nationhood (see Vasta & Castles 1996, p. 14).

Urban and rural racisms

Table 1 outlines survey responses by urban or rural location of respondent. The indicators of intolerance of specific groups reveal that there was a high degree of intolerance of 'Asian-Australians' and also Indigenous Australians in both rural and urban areas. Anti-Asian sentiment was not only widespread, but there appears to have been little urban and rural variation. City respondents appear only slightly more concerned about some (undefined) types of migrant flow (indicator A). This might reflect intolerance of particular cultural groups that have settled in the respondents' locales. Anti-Indigenous feeling was marginally higher among respondents from rural Australia. Half of the respondents agreed with an argument of Pauline Hanson that 'Aborigines are treated over generously by the government' (indicator D). Rural respondents were especially concerned about the continuation of the Indigenous

TABLE 1. Ethnocentrism by urban and rural, NSW, 1994 and 1996

Indicator	Indicator code	Survey question	Urban % Agree	Rural % Agree	Total % Agree
Intolerance of specific groups	A	There are too many migrants from certain areas[b]	63	53	59
	B	There are too many migrants from Asia[b]	89	85	88
	C	The proportion of Asians in our migrant[c] intake should be reduced	51	56	53
	D	Aborigines are treated over generously by the government[c]	51	57	53
	E	The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission should be abolished[c]	27	42	33
Intolerance of cultural diversity	F	Current immigration level is too high[b]	64	73	68
	G	Migrants should not be encouraged to preserve their own culture[b]	40	45	42
	H	The policy of multiculturalism should be[c] abolished	19	27	22
	I	Migrants should learn to live and behave like the majority of Australians do[a]	56	69	61
	J	Migrants should be selected for reasons including colour, religion or country of birth[b]	22	19	21

Sources:
[a] Irving Saulwick and Associates, 1994, nation-wide data set only. Sample of 1000 (623 urban, 377 rural).
[b] ACNielsen, 1996, NSW sample of 559 (357 urban, 202 rural).
[c] ACNielsen, 1996, NSW sample of 555 (354 urban, 201 rural).

bureaucratic and representative body, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) (indicator E). These findings provide little evidence for a marked urban–rural division of attitudes to specific cultural minorities.

There was some evidence of a higher rural intolerance of cultural diversity. This was demonstrated in respondent support for immigration and multiculturalism. The area of most concern with rural respondents was 'multiculturalism'. The opinion poll surveys operationalised the policy of multiculturalism as the principle of cultural preservation or distinctiveness for migrants (indicators G and I). Cultural preservation is, of course, only one of the central arms of Australian multicultural policy (see Commonwealth of Australia, 1999, p. 19; Office of Multicultural Affairs 1989, p. vii). Rural respondents were more concerned about multiculturalism than their urban counterparts (indicators G, H and I). Support for a racist immigration policy was similar among rural and urban NSW respondents. Nonetheless, these results lend some support to the notion of a rural–urban dichotomy in this general area of intolerance. Most Australians are exposed to the negative representations of multiculturalism and diversity which appear in mainstream media (see Bell 1993; Goodall *et al.* 1994, p. 187). However, those residing in areas of profound cultural diversity experience the direct benefit and dynamism of multiculturalism. Survey respondents from Sydney have a greater likelihood of having developed a more complex and balanced view of multiculturalism than those from rural NSW. This rural intolerance or dislike of cultural diversity accords with the assumptions of the early urbanists.

Data obtained from the Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW reveal that there were 495 reported racist incidents in urban areas (Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong) and

184 reported incidents in rural areas. However, the number of incidents per 100 000 people was only marginally higher for rural areas (12.5 compared with 11.2 reported incidents per 100 000 people). The survey responses had not suggested there was a greater level of intolerance of specific groups in rural areas. Similarly, the rates of reported incidents of discrimination do not support a marked urban–rural variation in racism.

These preliminary findings provide only limited evidence of an urban–rural variation in ethnocentrism. Attitudes towards Indigenous Australians were slightly less generous among rural respondents. And, rural respondents were generally less supportive of multiculturalism (indicators G, H and I). However, intolerance of specific migrant groups was sometimes higher among urban respondents (see indicators A, B and J).

Regional variations in racism

The first finding to come from the regional breakdown of responses to the surveys is that there were regional variations that further confound the idea of an urban–rural division. For example, there are parts of Sydney in which respondents scored consistently higher, on the indicators of racisms, than for some rural areas.

Table 2 shows the 16 regions in NSW used for this study, as well as their rankings from selected indicators. Opinion polling on the general size and composition of Australia's immigration program (indicators A, C and F) shows that respondents from some rural regions exhibited lesser degrees of concern about immigration program size and composition than did those from urban areas. For example, Murray/Murrumbidgee and the Richmond-Tweed responses were consistently more tolerant to immigration than those from outer western Sydney/Blacktown and Fairfield/outer south-western Sydney (Table 2). There appear to be higher than average levels of concern within amalgamated subdivisions in Sydney, such as outer western Sydney/Blacktown, and also those from central western Sydney. This was the case with regard to the size of the immigration flow (indicator F). Concern about the composition of recent migration flows (indicators A and C) was strong among the two outer Sydney regional groupings (Fairfield/outer south-western Sydney and outer western Sydney/Blacktown). This partly confirms the earlier suggestion that concern about specific migrant groups might be linked to the varying focuses of migrant settlement throughout Sydney. Outer Sydney generally is a region that has most recently become a migrant reception area, especially of migrants of a non-English-speaking background (NESB). Meanwhile, inner western Sydney has a much longer history of such migrant reception (Burnley 1996). This is suggestive of a racism associated with the earlier stages of the 'race relations cycle', as expressed in Chicago School theory, and an inner city tolerance born of accommodation.

The regions where respondents were most likely to express anti-Asian sentiment were rural areas (North Western/Far West NSW, Mid North Coast and Central West Divisions), the Hunter and outer western Sydney. By contrast, the areas from which respondents were least likely to support a reduction in Asian migrants were inner and northern Sydney (affluent Sydney) and the Illawarra. These results contradict the findings from Table 1. Very little urban–rural variation in anti-Asian had been detected; indeed, rural respondents were slightly less likely to support the ONP call for a reduction in Asian migrants (indicator C). The regional breakdown of attitudes suggests that anti-Asian sentiment is strongest in some rural centres, but also in the outer edges of Sydney where Asian migrants have begun settling in more recent times. Inner

TABLE 2. Regions of NSW, ranked by indicators of ethnocentrism, NSW, 1994 and 1996

Region	Ranks							Total
	A	C	D	E	F	G	J	
Inner Sydney/eastern suburbs	5	1	2	1	2	3	7	21
Murray/Murrumbidgee	2	4	6	12	1	1	3	29
Lower northern Sydney	10	3	4	6	5	2	2	32
Richmond-Tweed	1	7	14	16	4	4	1	47
Hornsby/Northern beaches/Gosford	12	6	11	7	6	5	9	56
Inner W Sydney/Central W Sydney	11	5	8	5	12	11	5	57
South-eastern NSW	8	7	11	7	8	7	10	58
St George/Canterbury	7	9	5	10	6	9	15	61
Northern NSW	6	9	10	9	10	10	7	61
North Western/Far West NSW	3	16	16	14	3	5	4	61
Central West NSW	8	14	1	3	15	16	10	67
Fairfield/outer SW Sydney	16	9	9	1	9	13	12	69
Hunter	3	15	15	11	14	8	5	71
Outer W Sydney/Blacktown	13	12	6	3	13	12	14	73
Illawarra	15	2	13	15	11	14	12	82
Mid North Coast	13	13	3	13	16	15	16	89

Note: '1' indicates the rank corresponding to the region exhibiting the most tolerant responses for a selection of the indicators shown in Table 1.

and middle Sydney, sites of long-standing Asian-Australian presence, were the places of greatest tolerance. These trends again lend support to the notion of a Chicago School 'race' relations cycle. However, the rural variation in anti-Asia sentiment is not so easily explained using this model.

Some non-metropolitan divisions such as the Mid North Coast demonstrated heightened levels of concern about migrants and immigration, and yet SLAs in that Division have very low numbers of people of a non-English-speaking background (NESB). For example, Hastings had an overseas NESB proportion of only 2.6 per cent in the 1996 Census (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2000). The respondents from affluent Sydney areas (e.g. northern Sydney), along with Murray/Murrumbidgee and Richmond-Tweed, showed the least support for racially biased immigration policies (indicator J). Higher levels of support came from respondents in outer Sydney, as well as the Mid North Coast. These findings again lend some support to the Chicago School contact theory of racism. They also suggest a socio-economic association with racism.

The regional breakdown of the belief that Indigenous Australians are 'treated over generously by government' (indicator D) can be seen as an operationalisation of the construction of Indigenous Australians as 'welfare bludgers' (Hamilton 1990, p. 20; Meadows & Oldham 1991, pp. 31–4). This mythology is well entrenched; as already mentioned, a majority of respondents seemed to believe it. This belief, along with support for abolishing ATSIC (indicator E), was most likely in non-metropolitan regions such as Richmond-Tweed, North Western/Far West NSW, the Hunter and the Illawarra (Table 2). Some of these regions showed a lesser than average concern regarding immigration issues, demonstrating that racisms are very much regionally specific. The statistical division of North Western has a high ATSI population (10 per cent of the total population) relative to other regions (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2000). There is a persistence of anti-Indigenous sentiment in areas of long-standing presence of Indigenous Australians. This confounds the contact model of Chicago

School theory. These data point to enduring racisms in specific spaces, which are social constructions resulting from the particular histories of intercommunal relations.

Figure 1 illustrates the proportion of respondents in each region in response to two selected questions, indicators D and G, respectively. Opposition to multiculturalism (indicator G) was higher among 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 Murray/Murrumbidgee were, as with sentiment regarding immigration, areas of lesser concern regarding multiculturalism. Again, this is in contrast to the anti-Indigenous sentiment expressed by respondents from Richmond-Tweed. Affluent Sydney (inner, eastern and northern Sydney) were those regions from where respondents were less likely to express dissatisfaction with multiculturalism (specifically regarding cultural maintenance).

Figure 1 suggests the regionally specific nature of ethnocentrism. Regions where respondents appeared consistently less intolerant of Indigenous Australians were the Central West, inner Sydney/Eastern Suburbs and lower northern Sydney and to a lesser extent outer western Sydney/Blacktown (Table 2). In contrast, the majority of respondents from the Central West and outer western Sydney/Blacktown disagreed with the policy of multiculturalism. However, inner Sydney and the eastern suburbs of Sydney continued to demonstrate high levels of tolerance to both Indigenous Australians and multiculturalism. In contrast, respondents from the Illawarra region appeared to be relatively intolerant of both multiculturalism and Indigenous Australians.

The final column in Table 2 provides the sum of each region's ranks. While this sum is used to place the regions in order within the table, it is important to note that some regions do not demonstrate a consistent level of racism. The urban–rural variation is only confirmed in so far as affluent Sydney, and to a lesser extent inner western/central western Sydney, are concerned. Outer western Sydney and the two regions dominated by industrial centres (the Illawarra and the Hunter) do not average out as areas of tolerance of cultural difference. Nonetheless, it is still the case that inner, eastern and lower northern Sydney were areas from where respondents exhibited lower levels of racism. This sort of data amalgamation suppresses some regional disparities. For example, some regions demonstrated higher anti-Indigenous sentiment yet had respondents who appeared more relaxed about immigration and multiculturalism issues (see Richmond-Tweed and Murray/Murrumbidgee).

Earlier, we noted an apparent rural–urban variation of attitudes to cultural difference in NSW. However, examination of the regional variations in racism indicators 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 cities (Illawarra and Hunter), and the Mid North Coast. Respondents from affluent Sydney were more 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 educational attainment and the settlement patterns of migrants across Sydney.

Anti-racism

There are dangers in drawing an urban–rural dichotomy regarding ethnocentrism. Indeed, the regional variations demonstrate the generalisation inherent in such a
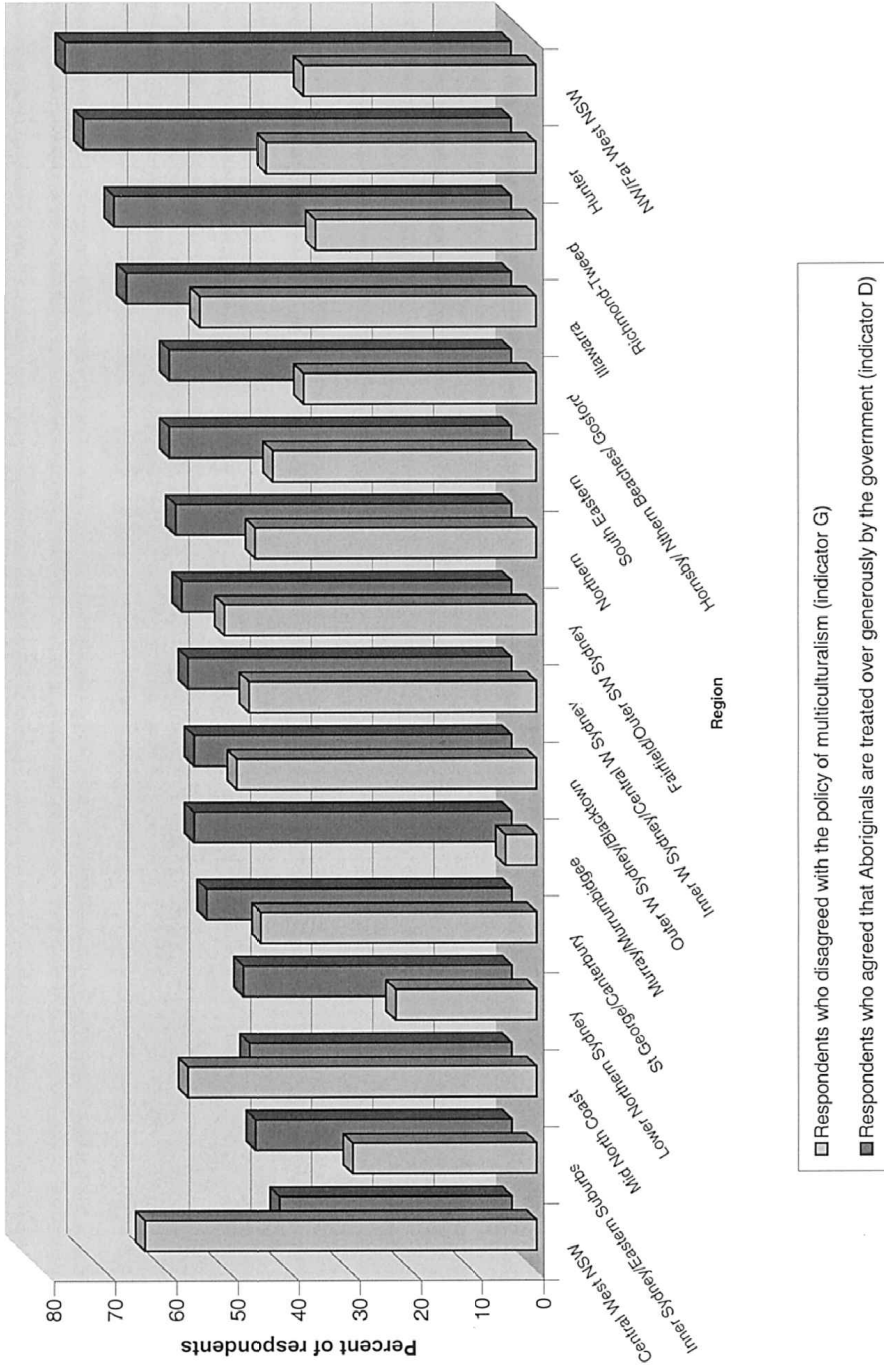
FIGURE 1. Regional variations in anti-multiculturalism and anti-indigenous sentiments.

dichotomy. However, as Brett (1997, p. 7) has suggested, we may be looking at a real divide, or at least 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, p. 7)

Clearly, the nature and frequency of racisms vary dramatically. Some implications of these findings are that there may be regionally specific causes of racisms. Furthermore, the local recognition or definition of racism is also likely to vary (Bonnett 1996, p. 878). These fundamental variations should be considered in the formulation of anti-racisms.

Between 1996 and 1998, the federal government commissioned an inquiry into racism in Australia (see Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) 1998, p. 1). The results of that inquiry are not publicly available. It is likely that the research found racism to be widespread, and that it also found a geographical variation. The latter presumption is made on the basis of the federal government's statement in their 'anti-racism policy' that 'campaign messages and strategies have to be tailored for different audiences and for different parts of the country' (DIMA 1998, p. 1). No evidence has yet been publicly presented by the federal government to support the above assertion, although clearly some evidence of a geography of racism must have been gathered.

International research has indicated the importance of locally developed and locally owned anti-racism initiatives (Vasta & Castles 1996, pp. 15–16). However, local governments, non-government agencies and other grass roots organisations in Australia may be ill prepared to take on responsibility for anti-racism. There is, for example, a substantial variability in the commitment of local governments to anti-racism initiatives (Dunn 1998b). This commitment varies by state and by urban or rural location (e.g. council concern with local intercommunal relations). Previous research on local government and its interventions into local intercommunal relations revealed that council officers had a very poor understanding of what community relations policy entails (Dunn 1998b, pp. 62–3, 69–70). Some local councils were vociferously opposed to local community relations initiatives. Council administrations exhibited a lack of interest in local intercommunal relations, even when there had been evidence of recent and serious community discord. Others blamed local intercommunal tensions on the activities of minority cultural groups. For example, some non-metropolitan councils argued that racism had increased as a result of Native Title claims by local Indigenous people (Dunn 1998b, p. 64). Clearly, there is a responsibility for anti-racism at the grass roots or local level. But these initiatives require substantive central government support and guidance, as well as rigorous critical evaluation.

Researching Australian racisms and anti-racisms

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. A core ideological basis of racisms is the belief in racial categories of humankind. This belief is referred to as 'racialism' (Miles 1989). It is linked to notions of nature and what is natural (Anderson 1998, pp. 125–7). UNESCO in the 1950s and 1960s (UNESCO 1983) roundly condemned the sociobiological premise that humankind can be sorted by a biological category called 'race'. 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 1998a). The sociobiologists provide a simplistic theory of racism. They have argued that spaces of cultural diversity generate race hatred and violence (Ardrey 1967, p. 253). No prior opinion poll had specifically examined racialism and the conducting of a new survey was beyond the present budget of the project reported on here. Racialism should, however, be a core component of any future analytical geographies of racism (Bonnett 1996; Kobayashi & Peake 2000, p. 393).

Theorising the causes of spatial variations in racism is not straightforward. Nevertheless, some of the established theories of racism can be of assistance in understanding the geographies of racism. There is some evidence of a rural and urban variation in ethnocentrism. The uneven tolerance of cultural diversity could be explained in part by the differing experiences and expectations that arise from an urban way of life. As in Chicago School thinking, the assumption is that the long-term exposure to 'otherness' or difference eventually spawns an accommodation, or tolerance, of at least the cultures that are encountered. This model is confounded, however, by the persistence of racism against some minority groups. The most remarkable such persistence in the Australian case is the racism long endured by Indigenous peoples. Areas of relative affluence in NSW appear to be places where there is lesser racism. Political economy theories of racism anticipate such a geography. Racism and intercommunal tensions are seen as the expected results of inter-ethnic (and inter-class) competition over scarce urban resources like employment, education and housing. Our expectation, however, is that it is education levels, rather than inter-class competition, which are the most substantial contributors to this class-related geography of racism. It is important to note, however, that educational achievement may have its most dramatic effect on an individual's preparedness to express racist sentiment. That is, involvement in higher education may develop an individual's sense of what is considered a racist statement (and therefore inappropriate) without necessarily changing either their views or their day-to-day (perhaps racist) actions (see Yinger 1986, pp. 36–7). Furthermore, a single variable, such as education levels or local cultural diversity, is unlikely to account for the higher levels of racism in some areas and lower levels in others. Rather, the nature and frequency of racisms is more likely related to the manner in which these factors combine in unique ways in each region and create historically and geographically specific ideologies of racism. This finding lends support for the application of a Social Constructivist approach to the geography of racism. Moreover, a constructivist approach would be a geographically sensitive conceptual model from which to base the formulation of anti-racism initiatives.

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NOTES

[1] In terms of Australian inquiries and reports on racism, see, for example, the National Inquiry into Racist Violence (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1991) or Cope *et al.* (1991).

[2] Anti-racism policies in Australia have taken a number of forms. These have ranged from cultural festivals (exhibiting arrays of art, food and dancing), to programs and events that provide information about the diversity of community groups, and also include cross-cultural training for government and community workers. There have also been initiatives to counter systemic racism,

and remedial interventions to address ethnic discord. Cultural theorists and commentators often refer to this general policy sphere as 'community relations policy'. Many make a distinction between tolerance-building exercises (the festivals and information programs) and anti-racism policy (confronting and reprimanding racisms) (see Dunn *et al*. 1998b).

[3] In an ongoing and larger analysis of the geography of racism, it is our intention to ask respondents for their opinions on the extent, nature and seriousness of racisms (Dunn, Forrest & Burnley, *Geographies of Racism in Australia*, ARC Large Grant Project, 2000–2003). This project should provide insights into what Kobayashi and Peake (2000, pp. 394–6) have called the 'normalcy of racism'. The privilege of Whiteness is associated with a way of life and perspective from which racism is unseen or is considered an exceptional aberration (Kobayashi & Peake 2000, pp. 393–7).

[4] This project is a preliminary sketch of the geography of racisms. We recognise that it is also a very specific take on what constitutes racism. Racism in Australia is largely, though by no means exclusively, an 'Anglo-Celtic' problem. We are both Anglo-Celtic-Australian researchers—a mid-career academic (Kevin) and a recent graduate (Amy)—with an intellectual investment in anti-racism in Australia. Our ultimate research mission is to assist with the development of more efficacious anti-racism interventions. Policy analysis and development has long been a focus of many of our research projects.

[5] The negative association between racist attitudes and class (as measured through educational achievement and affluence variables) is not a straightforward indicator of a link between racism and inter-class conflict. For example, educational achievement among the middle class may have a much greater impact upon the expression of racist sentiment than it does upon oppressive actions by those individuals (see Yinger 1986, pp. 36–7).

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