Arts

Understanding and minimising cultural racism

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Overview

1   A Chinese alumina refinery in 'Utopia'

2   International students in Australia

3   Sociological research designed to:

    -understand and minimise cultural racism

    -reveal counter practices

    -enhance social cohesion

A Chinese alumina refinery in 'Utopia'

- A third of the Australian population has expressed concern about cultural differences threatening societal harmony (Dunn 2009)

- Proposed Chinese TNC AU$2.2 billion alumina refinery ['shelved' 2010]

- The *Established* and the Entrepreneurs together faced the prospect of a new group of 'outsiders' (the *Chinese*) (Elias and Scotson 1994)

- The practice of 'othering' was not commonly related to colour, race or class but was strongly related to cultural influences, these being the hallmark of new or cultural racism

- Old racism in a different outfit

Utopia

Understanding and minimising cultural racism ~ Helen Forbes-Mewett

Environmental concerns

Hopeful employees

- "In [Utopia], you're so used to seeing different cultures. Plus, you don't even know what half your friends are. They could be Aboriginal, well I'm Aboriginal cross South Sea Island cross Pommy, so try and call me a racist 'gainst white people, it's like "Man my granddaddy was white"… I don't think [Utopia] would have a problem with more Chinese people coming over"

- "I'm a single mum … I'm a bit worried as well whether it's a family friendly environment working for [ChǎngShāng] … whether they're going to be in an environment where it accepts like, "No, I cannot come to work today, my kid's sick" kind of thing. Because you said it's Chinese company, well they all work with their babies on the rice patties don't they?"

Join the club…

- "Join the club, … join the bowls club, join the tennis club, the social aspect has got to be the quickest way to become part of a community, it's not so much the work, it's the social aspect of the community I think is the most important part. See then they get the idea, "oh that's you know, Mao Zedong, he's a member of our darts club". "Oh really!" And that can be an ice breaker…."

- "If they want to come here, learn to adapt. They need to respect. Most fights they'd ever break up is new people coming to town and disrespecting locals. Locals don't put up with that …we will all band together no matter black, white, brindle, Chinese, Japanese, whatever"

- Insider/outsider relations - from Chinese workers in Utopia to international students in delinquent-prone communities

International student safety and crime

- 426,748 international students in Australia (AEI 2011 data)

- Thousands live in delinquent-prone communities (DPC)

- Higher incidence of violence and crime

- Large numbers of international students fractured already weakened social structures in resource scarce areas ~ IS 'explosion'

- Some sections of DPCs are marked by depravation (locals, immigrants, refugees)

- Evidence of racism primarily relating to cultural factors

Delinquent-prone communities

- "We've got entire suburbs that are [government] housing commission…. People from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. There are more likely to be mental health problems, drug issues, you name it. On and on it goes. Unemployment at home means dad drinks too much and gets angry, slaps mum in front of the boys. The kids grow up thinking that's a normal way to do things…. We do have more of it out here…. It's just a cycle"

- "Now we're seeing these frenzied stabbing attacks, multiple stabbing attacks because, again, if you take it back to Xbox…you do a violent action and you can just keep doing that violent action…. That's what they're doing with their knives"

Cultural racism

- "My first stereotypical view would be young white Australian men who are racist and don't want IS taking their jobs. The other would be IS themselves…"

- The offenders often did not fit the above stereotypical view

- "Africans are doing it. Asians are doing it. White people are doing it. Kids are doing it. But it's easier to say the majority of our offenders are under 18 years of age…it's a youth problem connected to people from low socioeconomic backgrounds"

- "It is frightening to look into their backgrounds"

- Most believed it was circumstances rather than nationality that mattered to the perpetrators.

The protests

- "…the protests that occurred in Melbourne were replicated here [Sydney]"

The irony of Harris Park

- "The irony of Harris Park was that it was really more two racial groups that wanted to punch the bejesus out of each other. You've got a large Indian population…[and] a large Lebanese population in this area, and they absolutely hate each other's guts. They've never assimilated, and they absolutely resent the encroachment…. Both groups…."

- "The protests in Sydney arose out of a couple of Indian students getting bashed and then a group of Indian students taking up baseball bats, cricket bats and those sorts of things, and finding the nearest Lebanese kids that are wandering around through their streets, and beating them up. And then it just snowballed from there"

- Regional areas were also affected: "I feel that whoever is studying, they're against him, it doesn't really make much difference if you're Australian or if you're international, particularly in that area"

It was just like an explosion

- "You can't bring an extra 100,000 people into the State, into the suburbs of Melbourne, which is basically what happened, and not forward plan … police resources and emergency response resources and that's exactly what they did. It's just absolutely idiotic"

- "It was just like an explosion happened one day and people in certain parts of Melbourne looked up and there's all these strangers here now.… It seemed to not happen in a dribble effect where people got used to it. It just seemed that one day, we didn't have many and the next day, everywhere you looked, your train was full of overseas students. Your bus was full of overseas students. Your streets were teeming with them. So I think that we've probably just seen the explosion of crime and distrust and all those things that happen when two completely different communities all of a sudden butt heads and now we're probably all getting a little bit more used to it now, even the disaffected kids…."

Advancing social cohesion

- Research

  - Understanding cultural racism
  - Disseminating the understanding

- Postgraduate supervision

  - Increasing the level of relevant research
  - Further understandings and dissemination

- Teaching

  - Using research-based teaching to share the findings with students

Thank you!