



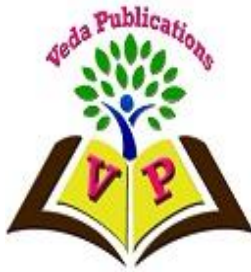
## THE ROLE OF RACE AND ETHNICITY IN ABORIGINAL SOCIETY STRUCTURE

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### ABSTRACT



The word ethnicity is derived from the Greek work 'ethnos' which means people who have same distinctive culture. An ethnic group can stay anywhere in a small art of the city. Ethnicity is sometimes used interchangeably with race, but they are very different concepts. **Ethnicity** is based on shared culture—the practices, norms, values, and beliefs of a group that might include shared language, religion, and traditions, among other commonalities. For example, ethnic groups such as Irish, Italian American, Russian, Jewish, and Serbian might all be grouping whose members are predominantly included in the “White” racial category. In some cases, ethnicity is incorrectly used as a synonym for national origin, but those constructions are technically different. National origin (itself sometimes confused with nationality) has to do with the geographic and political associations with a person's birthplace or residence. But people from a nation can be of a wide range of ethnicities, often unknown to people outside of the region, which leads to misconceptions. Ethnicity is the very important to understand a social group and other contribution to the society. When a small ethnic group from one country to other country, they bear their culture and knowledge. By study of these ethnic groups, we can enrich our knowledge. The process of globalisation affects the ethnic groups to sustain their cultural identity. In this era of globalisation one type of cultural homogenization is going on which is basically dominated by global north over global south. In this situation ethnic groups are facing a serious challenge for their identity.

**Keywords:** *Ethnicity, Social, Cultural Identity, Language, Religion, National Experience, Cultural Homogenization Etc.*



Terrible inequalities remain in Australian society between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal (White) people. This paper tries to examine the role of race, racism and ethnicity in historical perspective and in the contemporary Australian government, using a structuralist, constructivist framework. It was found that historical approaches to governing Aboriginal people were paternalistic and assimilationist. Institutions like the Central Board for the Protection of Aborigines, which terrorised Aboriginal people for over a century, were creating a racist structure felled by racist ideologies. Despite continuous activism by Aboriginal people, it took until 1967 for them to get citizens' rights. During that period, Aboriginal affairs were shifted from state jurisdiction to national jurisdiction. Aboriginal people continue to be underrepresented in positions of power and still lack self-determination. The national government of Australia has reproduced historical inequalities since 1967, and racist structures and ideologies remain. Brutality and racism against the Aboriginal people of Australia has characterised colonisers' behaviour since the colonisation of Australia (Allison, 2013; Reynolds, 1987). It has been documented that many non-Aboriginal inhabitants of Australia have regarded Aboriginal people as a lesser people, to be controlled or dealt with (Rowland, 2004).

Racism in Australia is widespread and widely experienced, with 70% of Aboriginal people experiencing it on a daily basis (Paradies & Cunningham, 2009). It has negative consequences on health and access to health care, and impedes economic opportunities. Renewed attention was generated for the issue of racism in Australia by the report of a national survey in 2011, where it was found that 85.6% of Australians think something should be done to reduce or minimise racism in Australia. Interestingly, only 12.4% of the over 12.5 thousand respondents perceive themselves as prejudiced against other cultures. Race is historically rooted in colonialism. Like many other countries, Australia has a colonial past where its indigenous people were structurally discriminated against. In the early years of colonisation, these ideas were mostly based on their ethnicity, with colonisers finding Aboriginal cultures to be inferior to the British culture. However, around the 1850s, coloniser's thinking became decidedly racial, with policies being based on Aboriginal skin-colour specifically. Additionally, the Australian settlers became convinced that Aboriginal people were doomed to go extinct, as a result of their 'inferior race'. The policies which were based on this idea nearly led to the destruction of Aboriginal people. Therefore, it is valuable to study Australian history through a racial rather than an ethnic lens. The remainder of this history are



still present in Australian society today. When studying Aboriginal people in Australian society, it seems more logical to study race rather than ethnicity, because the Australian government has historically regarded Aboriginal people as a different 'race' and based its policies on that notion. A strong belief that a differing biology caused social differences between Aboriginal people and European settlers permeates the history of Australia. Therefore, this study considers Australian through a racial rather than an ethnic lens.

The arrival of European settlers to Melbourne and its area in 1835 had a huge impact on the local Aboriginal tribes. By 1840, the European population of Melbourne had reached 4,000, which resulted in an enlarged germ pool (Broome, 2005). Dr P. Cussens was Melbourne's medical officer at the time. In May 1939, he recorded cases of dysentery, typhus fever, respiratory infections and syphilis among Aboriginal people. In his words, these diseases could "render them extinct in a very few years", if they remained unchecked (Broome, 2005, p. 26). In 1844, George Augustus Robinson, Chief Protector of the Aborigines, wrote in his yearly report: "As a People the Aborigines are rapidly on the decay. They are greatly reduced. They are but Remnant Tribes. Sections are extinct. Their diminution is attributable to several Causes. In their petty feuds and intestine strifs several have been sacrificed, but hundreds have fallen victims

to the dire effects of European disease"(Gunson, 2002). In just nine years, from first settlement in 1835 to 1844, Aboriginal went from around 10,000 strong to being 'remnant tribes' where 'sections are extinct'.

Apart from the effects of disease, an estimated 1,000 Aboriginal people were killed violently between 1835 and 1850, opposed to a suggested 80 white deaths in the same period of time (Broome, 2005). First, it is important to get an understanding of what Victoria looked like before European settlers arrived. After that, a light will be shed on what happened in the early years of colonisation. The Aboriginal people of Australia have been portrayed as being constantly on the move before colonisation, as nomadic hunter-gatherer people. Recently the case has been made that the people the British encountered when they first set foot on Australia did have permanent settlements and also practiced agriculture. Victoria was the most populated region in Australia, sustaining 36 different closely related clans, consisting of around 20,000 people. These clans were organised in tribes, each with their own language.

By the time the British settlers arrived, Aboriginal people had been living in Australia for an estimated 65,000 years (Clarkson et al., 2017). The Kulin migrated throughout the year, following the seasons. Each tribe inhabited their own territory, and they had strict laws of



ownership. When strangers invaded their lands without clear purposes or invitation, they were executed according to tradition (Broome, 2005). Messenger wore decorated messenger sticks, which were a means of communication between neighbouring tribes. Through these, as well as through songs, information could travel all through Australia (Frankel & Major, 2014). For example, Kulin people living in the south of Australia would sing songs describing crocodiles, only existing in the rain forests all the way north. Although the Kulin had a migratory way of life, they strongly manipulated their surroundings to provide for themselves better, in ways which can be seen as practicing agriculture (Pascoe, 2014). They did this, however, from a philosophy best understood in Western terms as stewardship of the land. Aboriginal worldviews were based on stories of the Dreamtime, when land and men were created. Each tribe in Australia had its own mythology and language, but stories of the Dreamtime seem to be a common thread in Victoria. In some myths of the Kulin nation, the eagle Bunjil and the crow Waa together are two halves of one whole, the Creator (Frankel & Major, 2014).

In 1975, the Racial Discrimination Act was passed in the Australian Parliament, finally officially prohibiting discrimination based on race, but discrimination did not instantly disappear. Since the beginning of the colonisation of Australia by the British in 1788,

Aboriginal people have been discriminated against based on their race. This discrimination has been justified by the colonisers by a paternalistic narrative, portraying Aboriginal people as incapable of taking care of themselves 'properly'. Social characteristics were related to biological differences by categorizing people this way. Colonial distinctions based on race have prevailed to this day, and racism remains a widespread societal problem. Aboriginal people have worse socio-economic positions, more health problems and higher criminality and substance abuse rates than average.

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