

Book Review

Martha Augoustinos and Katherine J Reynolds, *Understanding prejudice, racism and social conflict*

London: SAGE, 2001

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Augoustinos and Reynolds' publication studying the nature of prejudice and the psychological discipline reveals the problematic ideals concerning prejudice within society. Whilst the work mainly focuses on this theme through an Australian context, the issues raised relate to a broader current climate. The book's purpose is to come to some conclusion surrounding prejudice but also present how it's of concern internationally. The case studies used to demonstrate how prejudices evolved are mostly prior to the 21st century, however this is no weakness as the topic itself is clearly one that isn't disappearing. All these factors together form a text which aims to have an impact on reducing prejudice.

The structure of the text has each chapter engaging with prejudice and racism in relation to a different concept. Chapter I considers the nature and personal experience of prejudice by conveying Australian Aborigines' everyday life experience. Ian Walker's section links closely to peripheral voices as it displays the unheard voices of the Australian Aborigines who experience prejudice in Australia. Walker uses tables conveying nationwide gallop polls and percentages of prejudice scales to present the average beliefs Australians hold. The studies are from 1981 and 1994; whilst these are dated it's useful in presenting past statistics in order to help understand prejudice in the past but also in the present. Walker concludes from the tables that 'old-fashioned' and 'modern' racism coexist rather than there being one specific form of racism. Due to this Walker says that prejudice has always been under systemic change therefore, it's not a simple task to reduce it as it doesn't have just one form. The text describes it as a changing philosophy which will need to be combated in different ways due to different forms of it. Spreading understanding of what is being dealt with target one of the greatest problems with the subject, understanding it.

The following two chapters help to convey the psychological approach to prejudice but also how studying prejudice has changed. Locke and Johnston (Chap: III) convey how people hold negative feelings towards a group. They explain that prejudiced people use stereotypes to help maintain prejudiced views. The significance of this is that it describes the thought processes which people have. In his chapter, Drew Nesdale studies children and how prejudice can develop as they become racially aware by the age of four. This could offer information to combat prejudice if we understand how children's minds can be positively changed given the right environment.

Following on from this, chapter IV discusses the group process which stems from how groups view intergroup relations. Therefore, the chapter isn't proposing that prejudiced psychology is the fault of the individual but of the group. Oakes and

Haslam believe prejudice is a group process which comes from the psychology of that group. This offers insight into how to combat prejudice, specifically the thought processes of the group rather than the individual. This doesn't mean the individual shouldn't be identified, however it suggests targeting an individual who expresses prejudiced views won't be as effective in reducing prejudice as targeting the group.

The text considers immigration, nationality, social distance, stereotyping, and personality in the context of prejudice. Reading through the theme of peripheral voices highlights why particular groups are marginalised, due to a white majority's prejudice.

Some of the strengths include the book's coverage of many societal issues, through the example of Australian aborigines. This is an unheard voice within society and is an example of how academic books can educate whilst also raising awareness. This is not specific to Australia but is equally important for other countries which disregard alternative histories.

This text's focus is to offer knowledge for interested readers and academics but also to help reduce prejudice by understanding it from a psychological perspective. This text would be recommended as it discusses a topic not frequently spoken about whilst making generalised points which are applicable to other current troubling topics.