



Xenophobia

Anastasia Karakitsou

MA Professional Language and Intercultural Studies graduate, University of Leeds, UK

What is it?

The term 'xenophobia' comes from the Greek words for foreigner or stranger (*xenos*) and fear (*phobia*). It is closely related to racism and ethnocentrism (ancient Greeks thought of all foreigners as "barbarians" only fit for slavery). Xenophobia is based on the ideology that humanity is "naturally" ordered into certain categories; it emphasizes how the Other differs, and is inferior to the Self. Xenophobia feeds upon a range of prejudices against the Other, as a threat to national identity ("racial purity"), or law and order in society. Xenophobia is frequently a social construct created by the dominant classes (elites) who seek to preserve their power by oppressing the Other (migrants, refugees, and ethnic minorities). People may engage in acts of hatred and violence; this is when xenophobic ideology becomes practice. From the Others' perspective, xenophobia may hinder their integration into the host community, affect them psychologically, limit their employment prospects, and turn them into social outcasts.

Who uses the concept?

Xenophobia is studied by historians, sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, political scientists and independent political theorists, as well as by those in communication, ethnic studies, and conflict resolution. Journalists often document particular, contemporary examples of xenophobia.

Fit with intercultural dialogue?

Intercultural dialogue is imperative to combat the current rise in xenophobia. In order to move past xenophobia, individuals need to be open to dialogue with people from other cultures, and willing to shed their false assumptions, understanding that the culturally different Other is not the problem.

What work remains?

It is necessary to examine and challenge the present anti-immigration government policies and emerging public hatred resulting from xenophobic rhetoric. This can happen on a personal, national, or academic level. Otherwise, politically manipulated "fear of the stranger" will lead to increased conflict and deaths, as history has shown.

Resources

Friberg-Fernros, H., Demker, M., & Martinsson, J. (2017). Media and the power of naming: An experimental study of racist, xenophobic and nationalist party labels. *Ethnicities*, 17(5), 727-745.

Hjerm, M. (2001). Education, xenophobia and nationalism: A comparative analysis. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 27(1), 37-60.

Reisigl, M. and Wodak, R. (2001). *Discourse and discrimination*. London: Routledge.