Who are they? National identities of young people living in Australia.

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Respondents’ National Identities

What Are Australians?

Racism

Social Values

Political Values

Multiculturalism

Tolerance

Australian Appearance

Stereotypical Australians and Social Constructions of Australians

Indigenous and Non-Anglo Background Australians – What is Their Place in the Narrative of Australian Identity?
Abstract

The national identities of thirty-six young adults who reside in Melbourne, Australia were examined. Aided by qualitative data, this study shows that young people in Australia have developed a complex understanding of their national identities. Through the influence of family, place, education, language and appearance the respondents reflexively (Giddens, 1991: 53) constructed their national identities. Many of their national identities were hybrid (Nederveen Pieterse, 1994, 2001) recognizing their residence in multicultural Australia as well as their diverse heritages. These hybrid national identities were varied as the respondents’ attachment to their heritage national identity existed along a continuum (Nederveen Pieterse, 1994: 172). The respondents’ national identities were also fluid (Noble, Poynting and Tabar, 1999: 42) as the respondents adjusted and modified them to adapt to the circumstances in which they found themselves. Yet these hybrid and fluid national identities are not indicative of fractured and unstable national identities. Rather the respondents’ national identities appear to be solidly constructed and they have a strong sense of who they are. The fluidity and hybridity of the national identities allowed them the flexibility to combine the disparate aspects of their national identities and utilize them to serve them effectively in various situations.

The respondents’ fluid, hybrid identities are indicative of contemporary Australia where the population is made up of people with heritages from all areas of the globe who live together in a multicultural society. However Australia’s past including its White Australia and assimilation policies retain some resonance. Social constructions of Australian national identity as being white and Anglo and the expectation that migrants ‘fit into Australian society’ remain. Whilst people from any background were perceived by the respondents to have access to an Australian national identity, a hierarchy (Hage, 1998) was evident where those with more social capital had preferential access to this
identity. The respondents noted social activities and political values as making up this social capital. However the most valuable form of cultural capital for recognition of an Australian national identity was a white-Anglo appearance.
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Chapter One

Introduction

When I grew up in Melbourne in the 1960s as the child of a newly arrived migrant, any behaviours or characteristics that were not regarded as ‘Australian’ were very quickly commented upon by fellow students in the school ground. My Swiss-Anglo heritage meant that I was blonde with a fair complexion and could readily meld into the very Anglo majority so long as I took care to only voice and portray what were regarded as ‘Australian’ behaviours. What constituted ‘Australian’ behaviours was never overtly explained but as a young child I rapidly became aware of what was and was not acceptable. Others at my school with a Southern European heritage were more visibly different and thus the targets of many racist comments and jokes. I learnt that it was totally unacceptable to eat rye bread at school and to mention salami or garlic would result in immediate ostracism. These aspects of my life became firmly hidden and I worked assiduously to fit in with the ‘Australian’ norm.

At that time there seemed to be little debate about Australian identity. Australians remained very British; members of my extended family referred to England as ‘home’ despite having never visited the country. Australian life very much mirrored the British lifestyle. I recall the consternation expressed when a pizza shop first opened in our neighbourhood. The existence of Aboriginals was generally ignored. It was widely believed that they would die out or be subsumed through interbreeding with ‘white Australians’. Few Aboriginals were seen in suburban Melbourne and one had to travel to remote areas to come into contact with them. Thus they were largely regarded as a relic of the past and disregarded. There was some recognition that people of other backgrounds, such as the Chinese,
lived in Australia; however they were deemed to be a small minority and regarded as curiously different from the norm. As a child I heard stories of Chinese market gardeners and visited China Town in Melbourne.

Whilst Australia was very British there were also others living in the local community who were not of British heritage. In Grade One I was infatuated by a boy in my grade who was of Chinese heritage. Next door to us lived an Italian family and as children we regularly ‘chatted’ over the fence to the elderly grandmother who wore black and spoke no English. These people with a non-British heritage existed as a part of the community but were barely visible. Their heritages were not celebrated and not publicly displayed. Rather they were expected to fit into the very British customs of Australia as noted by Tan (2006). Despite the fact that there was some diversity within the population, the vast majority were of British heritage and Australia was very much a part of the British Empire. At primary school we sang the British national anthem (then also the Australian national anthem, a fact which in itself illustrates the very strong association between Australian identity and British-ness) and swore allegiance to the Queen. Any sense of Australianness was entwined with the notion of British-ness. Britain was ‘home’ to many, as if the land that they lived in, the land that many were born in, was a place of temporary residence until they could return to where they felt they really belonged.

This attachment to Britain may have arisen due to the shortness of Australia’s history after colonisation. There was little or no recognition of any Australian history prior to colonisation; it was as if the land only really existed after Cook’s arrival in 1770. The notion of ‘terra nullius’¹ illustrates this thinking. The existence of Indigenous

¹ Terra Nullius is the ‘assumption that prior to white settlement Australia belonged to no-one (in spite of more than 40,000 years of Aboriginal occupation)’ (Moore, 1993: 1096).
Australians was excluded by this notion and thus Australia was generally regarded as only having existed from the time of Cook’s ‘discovery’ of the land. Australia was seen as a new country, very much a distant outpost of England. Prior to 1948 Australians were British subjects (Tilbury, 2007: 3). It was not until 1948 that the Australian Citizenship Act was adopted (Galligan and Roberts, 2004: 1; Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2007a) and people could be citizens of Australia.

Post World War II migration saw the arrival of many people with a non-British heritage, initially from central Europe and then from Southern Europe and later all areas of the globe. Australia also began to increase its links with the USA and loosen the attachment to Britain. This began to reduce the notion of Australian identity being so intensely aligned to Britain. In the 1970s the arrival of large numbers of Asian migrants greatly altered the face of Australia. Today the majority of the Australian population retains some British heritage but Australia cannot deny the profound influence of the non-British background Australians. Australia has been forced to reconsider its identity, to recognise the plurality of its population and the vast changes that have occurred in the country since the arrival of the first British settlers.

Whilst growing up in the 1960s I was profoundly aware of being an Australian. Yet feeling Australian made up only a part of my national identity; my European roots were also a significant influence upon my understanding of my national identity. The influence of my European background permeated much of the way in which I lived and thought. From the beginning I understood myself as having a hybrid national identity formulated from the various influences on my life. My experiences are not unique; they are shared by the many people who have arrived in the country as migrants or are the children of these

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2 In Australia about 74% of the population have some Anglo-Celtic background (Department of Immigration and Citizenship: 2007b).
migrants. New arrivals to Australia and their children do not necessarily neatly ‘fit’ the pre World War II notion of British dominated Australian identity. They are also very likely to identify with one or more other countries as well as having strong affiliations to Australia.

This context sets the background for my research: a desire to explore how young adults, many of whom have ancestries that are unique and complex combinations of many national cultures and who interact with other Australians with equally multifaceted backgrounds, understand their national identities in Australia today. Their residence in a country striving to formulate an identity that reflects the contribution and existence of its diverse population and also retains a connection with its past adds to the complexity of their national identity formation.

Many countries of the world have long histories whereby the ancestors of the current populations have shared a common history, occupied a territory and developed traditions, all of which have worked to unite the population and provide a sense of national identity. Thus how people understand their own national identity can be based upon their association with their land and its heritage. People who live in a more homogenous nation with a long established identity may share a common sense of national identity with their fellow nationals. In contrast people in Australia do not necessarily share a common understanding of their national identity due to their varied backgrounds. Rather the population of Australia has diverse backgrounds with little common heritage or history to bind them together due to extensive migration from all areas of the world. Hence the national identities of people living in Australia are very intricate. Individuals have to meld together aspects of their various backgrounds and experiences, as well as their residence in Australia, to develop an understanding and construction of their own unique national identity.
or identities. These national identities are individually developed through everyday life experiences as people consider their unique heritages, interact with others and interpret these interactions.

How people living in Australia understand their national identities is of interest due to the ongoing transformations in the make-up of the population. Since the first arrival of British settlers the composition of the population has continued to alter and therefore so has the image of Australian identity. Australian identity is not static but contingent upon time and location. No definition can be regarded as being definitive. Any definitions must be re-examined continuously in the light of new circumstances. Changes in understandings of Australian identity have impacted upon people’s understanding of their own national identities. In this thesis a national identity is defined as the sense of belonging that an individual feels to a nation or nations. The nation may or may not correspond to a state (the relationship between nations and states is discussed in detail in the section – ‘Australia as a State and a Nation’). People’s understandings of how their own and others’ national identities align with dominant perceptions of Australian identity can impact upon the cohesiveness and harmony of all those residing in Australia. If the idea of Australian identity is expansive and inclusive it can contribute to a harmonious and accepting society; however if the idea is narrow and judgemental it can lead to conflict, exclusion and isolation. Whether people feel a commitment to a primary Australian national identity may impact upon their allegiance to Australia as a country and to the lifestyle and values associated with Australian identity. Thus insights into how young adults understand their own national identities are significant in multicultural Australia.
Research Question

This thesis sought to examine the question: How do young residents of Australia perceive their own national identities? An individual’s identity can be understood as his or her biography (Giddens, 1991: 53). The sense of self has a feeling of continuity while also modifying in relation to circumstances. While citizenship is a legal term, national identity refers to the sense of belonging that a person feels toward a nation of people. This may or may not match with an attachment to a state. It also may or may not relate to an attachment to an ethnicity. It may be a national identity that the person has chosen to construct or it may be a national identity that the person has had to construct in response to pressure from others. The thesis investigated how young adults who permanently reside in Australia felt about their national identities. It explored whether they felt Australian, whether they had other national identities and how their interactions with others had worked to shape their thinking about their own national identities and those of others.

The next chapter will examine the literature that discusses the development of national identity, the crucial roles of appearance and culture in development of national identity and hybrid and cosmopolitan perspectives of national identity. It also examines literature that discusses ideas of nation and state in relation to Australia, Australia’s history, multiculturalism in Australia, social constructions of Australian national identity and understandings of young adults. Chapter Three examines the research methodology. It outlines the methodology utilised in this thesis, methods of data collection, the sample used, details of the respondents, crucial ethical issues that were considered, strategies used to analyse data, the importance of the time for data collection and limitations to the research. Chapter Four examines the respondents’ perceptions of Australian national identity. It outlines the respondents’ focus on the importance of social activities and values, political values,
multiculturalism and tolerance in Australian national identity. It also notes their awareness of racism, their recognition of the significance of appearance in understandings of Australian national identity, social constructions of Australian national identity and the limited recognition of Indigenous Australians and Non-Anglo background Australians in Australian national identity. Chapter Five examines the respondents’ understandings of their own national identities. It notes their adoption of Australian national identities as well as their hybrid, fluid and cosmopolitan understandings of their national identities. Chapter Six examines the development of their national identities. It explores the importance the respondents place upon their families, place, education, language, appearance, accent and religion in the development of their national identities. It also notes the importance of the contemporary context in shaping their national identities. Chapter Seven synthesises the key findings of the research and provides a summary of the conclusions in relation to the research question.
Chapter Two

Literature Review

In order to explore the national identities of young adults in Australia an understanding of many perspectives is required. These include identity development; the role of appearance and culture in identity development; understandings of hybridity; Australia as a state and a nation; history; contemporary multicultural Australia and social constructions of Australian identity. Without a sound recognition of previous research, an appreciation of theoretical perspectives and an understanding of Australia in both an historical and contemporary context the research would lack the necessary foundation upon which to proceed. This section will examine these perspectives and explore previous research to provide the empirical and theoretical context for this thesis.

Identity Development

National identity is a component of overall identity. It is crucial to have an appreciation of identity and how identities are produced in order to investigate the part of identity that is central to this research. Identity can be understood as a sense of self that is constructed by people about themselves (Giddens, 1991: 54). It is the ‘ongoing sense the self has of who it is’ (Matthews, 2000: 16, 17). A person’s identity is complex. Ethnicity, gender, religion and socio-economic status are just some of the many aspects that are incorporated to create the multifaceted mosaic that is an individual identity. Not only is identity multifaceted it is always being revised and modified to adjust to altering circumstances.
According to Giddens (1991: 33) modernity has broken down the protections of small traditional communities where identities were once fixed and inflexible. In these small traditional communities factors such as birth place and gender played a key role in determining a person’s identity. A person was born into a prescribed position within a community and there was little room to move. Jenkins questions the rigidity of smaller, more traditional communities of the past and argues that even in the past there existed a degree of individual choice over identity formation (2008: 11). He states that societies have never been totally rigid and that people have always been able to modify some aspects of their own identity despite the restrictions of birth (Jenkins, 2008: 11). Yet the power of restrictions of birth in the past cannot be overlooked as people’s opportunities to mould their own unique identities were far more limited (Giddens, 1991: 33) than in contemporary Australia. While the restrictions of the past may have offered little choice they did offer an element of security. People’s places within their community were clear and expectations and constraints were known to them.

The elements of security of the past are no longer so powerful. Past traditions that held the community together and ensured that all adhered to the key features of their prescribed identity, thus retaining a degree of harmony and security for all, have been undermined by modernity. (Giddens, 1991: 33)

Modernity is a post-traditional order, in which the question, ‘How shall I live?’ has to be answered in day-to-day decisions about how to behave, what to wear, what to eat – and many other things – as well as interpreted within the temporal unfolding of self-identity (Giddens, 1991: 14).

People are thus released from the strictures of rigid, prescribed identities and more able to construct their own identity that reflects
their individuality. According to Beck and Beck-Gernshiem (2002: 23) ‘the choosing, deciding, shaping human being who aspires to be the author of his or her own life, the creator of an individual identity, is the central character of our time.’ This construction requires the active involvement of individuals. Rose (1989: 231) argues that ‘every choice we make is an emblem of our identity, a mark of our individuality, each is a message to ourselves and others as to the sort of person we are.’ As individuals build their identities the decisions that they make impact upon their environment and the world around them:

The self is not a passive entity, determined by external influences; in forging their self-identities, no matter how local their specific contexts of action, individuals contribute to and directly promote social influences that are global in their consequences and implications. (Giddens, 1991: 2)

The construction of identity is shaped by the influences and structures around a person and the identity that is created in return moulds and reshapes these influences and structures. For example a person who constructs an Italian side to their national identity in response to their family’s Italian identification and their participation in Italian cultural activities will then continue an Italian influence on others through their display of Italian-ness and maintenance of Italian traditions.

People in contemporary Australia are required to mould their own identity with less clear guidelines than in the past. Today people have a plethora of choices about their own identity. The choices available are far more open due to the array of alternatives available (Giddens, 1990: 38; Giddens, 1991: 32; Jones, 2003: 181). This places considerable strain upon individuals as they become responsible for the construction of their own selves (Giddens, 1991: 75). Not only are identities more open to negotiation, many other aspects of
contemporary life are far less certain than in the past where religion and tradition worked to preserve ontological security. These factors are no longer so influential, leaving people to determine their own way in a world full of contradiction and uncertainty (Beck, 1992).

The contemporary world is a world that is faced with continual threats and insecurities. These include the threat of natural disasters as well as threats created by humans such as pollution, environmental degradation and toxic by-products of industry. Certainly there existed threats in the past; however the contemporary world faces new, highly contentious threats that have been created by human activity (Beck, 1992). There are no simple, agreed solutions to these new threats and the ideas of experts are divided, thus creating a more uncertain environment (Giddens, 1991: 195). Change is a constant in this risk society, forcing people to endlessly review the world and their place in it. The increasingly rapid rate of change throughout the world and the subsequent new risks which are emerging place all people in a state of risk. The future is unpredictable. Australians, along with all others in the world, inhabit this world of risk (Beck, 1992). In contemporary Australia the impact of dramatic changes in demographic composition, due to migration, cannot be foreseen, so Australians are also faced with this unknown risk. It is within this context that they must construct their identities.

The notion of individuals constructing their own identities may initially appear to suggest that the construction of individual identity has broken free from the pressures of the structures of society and that

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3 Giddens (1991: 243) defines ontological security as ‘a sense of continuity and order in events’. It is having a sense of comfort and safety that a person can determine how events will play out in the future as clear patterns have existed in the past. It is derived from the belief that the world is ‘morally and socially ordered’ (Jones, 2003: 201)

4 Risk Society can be understood as a society that faces risks that are not only natural but are also created by humanity such as climate change and the pollution. The answers to these risks are not clear due to the diversity of expert opinion. People’s lives are now structured around the idea of risk.
individuals have attained unfettered freedom to construct their own unique identity. Yet no person is able to construct a self-identity in isolation. Individuals require the validation of others to build and support their notion of their identity. Ceisal notes that identity development is ‘the result of both structure and agency’ (2009: 668). People perceive themselves ‘by putting themselves in the position of others and viewing themselves from that standpoint’ (Ritzer, 1996: 342). Mead (1962: 134) referred to this as ‘reflexiveness’. He stated that ‘selves can only exist in definite relationship to other selves’ (Mead, 1956: 227). In order to construct an identity ‘the human actor is not merely self conscious but is also engaged in the monitoring of the ongoing flow of activities and structural conditions’ (Ritzer, 1996: 529). Coleman and Higgins (2000: 63) also note that ‘identity depends less on individual self-understandings than on others’ recognition or acknowledgement of who and what we are’ (italics in original). Noble (2007: 332) explains that ‘identities are the result of a dialogue process with others who have the ability to validate one’s identity claims.’ However these others also have the ability to contest or reject an identity claim.

‘Others’ play a crucial role in validating or refuting an identity. Thus the constructor of identity must constantly observe others’ reactions to the identity presented. Through this monitoring of reactions, aspects of identity may be jettisoned, amended or bolstered. Mead first proposed this notion when he explained:

It is by means of reflexiveness – the turning-back of the experience of the individual upon himself – that the whole social process is thus brought into the experience of the individuals involved in it; it is by such means, which enable the individual to take the attitude of the other toward himself, that the individual is able consciously to adjust himself to that process, and to modify the resultant of that process in any given social act in terms of his
adjustment to it. Reflexiveness, then, is the essential condition, within the social process, for the development of mind (1962: 134).

Fromm goes so far as to state that a person ‘has no identity, there is no self excepting the one that which is the reflex of what others expect of me’ (1960: 219). The self can thus be understood as a ‘looking-glass self’ where we imagine our appearance as viewed by another and judge that appearance (Cooley, 1983: 184). Thus how ‘we imagine ourselves to be seen by others’ (Hall, 1994: 122) greatly influences how people come to understand their own identity to the extent that without this feedback people are unable to formulate any sense of self.

Taylor (1994: 32, 33) supports the ideas of Mead (1962) and Cooley (1983) when he notes the ‘dialogical’ nature of identity development, stressing the importance of ‘significant others’ in assisting in the creation of identity. Individuals monitor others’ reactions to them, especially the reactions of those they regard as significant, and shape their identity accordingly. A person cannot develop a sense of individual identity without this vital feedback from others. Through the ongoing monitoring of others’ perceptions individuals construct a repertoire of approved characteristics as part of their identity. Each individual then becomes ‘his own overseer’ (Foucault, 1998: 155) ensuring that the identity conforms to perceived limitations and expectations of others.

All identities are constructed within the constraints and opportunities available. Whilst there is a degree of flexibility and choice in identity development this is not unlimited. Identities are constructed within constraints such as time, place, culture and appearance. These restrict options making some choices unattainable. So it can be argued that:

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5 For example see discussion of appearance on identity development on page 13.
Selfhood is personally created, interpretively elaborated, and interpersonally constructed. The self, however, is not only fashioned, as it were, from the inside out. In forging a sense of self, individuals routinely draw from social influences and maintain their sense of self through cultural resources. (Elliot, 2005: 5 – 6)

Self development is a social process. It requires substantial input from others as they provide the reactions by which the developing self can be monitored and adjusted.

Identity development is not a process which can ever be completed; it remains ongoing and people must constantly reassess their identities in light of new situations. According to Giddens the development of an identity is not only a reflexive project, but an ongoing reflexive project:

Self-identity is not a distinctive trait, or even a collection of traits possessed by the individual. It is the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography. Identity here still presumes continuity across time and space: but self-identity is such continuity as interpreted reflexively by the agent. (italics in original) (1991: 53)

As such, an identity can never remain fixed. It must remain a project ‘in progress’, always adapting as circumstances alter. The self becomes chameleon-like, able to transform itself according to the situation. Such an image can suggest that the self is fragmented and disjointed, that it has no overall notion of ‘being’ and is able to be thrust into different shapes by the whim of circumstance. Such a notion of self would have no stability and no focal sense of being. Giddens (1991: 189) argues that these tensions must be ‘resolved in order to preserve a coherent narrative of self-identity.’ A person must
acknowledge these various aspects of the self but also meld them into ‘an integrated narrative’ (Giddens, 1991: 189) which is able to both retain a sense of ongoing stability and integrity as well as being able to morph and adjust to change.

The ongoing reflexive nature of identity development is particularly significant when considering ideas of national identity in Australia due to the extent of changes that have occurred in the country since colonisation. As the demographic makeup of the population has undergone such vast changes in the past 60 years, the question of what it means to be Australian has had to be reassessed. The very British pre World War II image of Australia bears little resemblance to the culturally diverse Australia of the early 21st century. Those who have lived in the country for a long time, those born in Australia and those who long ago migrated to Australia have had to forge a new understanding of their Australian national identity due to these altered circumstances. Those who are more recent migrants have had to adjust to a new national identity which incorporates their presence in Australia.

The influences upon identity are innumerable; however some influences have been recognised as being particularly significant in shaping the construction of identity. The formation of families may vary considerably yet families remain universal institutions (Gilding, 1997: 6). Families play a crucial role in the socialisation of children. As such they work to mould the identity of children, reinforcing approved traits and discouraging negative characteristics. Unterhalter, Epstein, Morrell and Moletsane (2006: 592) note the importance that young people place upon parents and family in their lives. They set boundaries within which identity options can be explored. The popularity of family history and genealogy as shown in the success of
television programs such as *Who Do You Think You Are?* also highlight the importance people place upon their family histories and how these work to shape their understandings of themselves.

Similarly, place can play a critical role in people’s sense of who they are. An ‘intertwined’ (Gruenewald, 2003: 626) relationship exists between people and places where ‘people make places and places make people’ (621). In his book *The Ties That Bind* Jameson (2002) documented the experiences of migrants who return to the homelands of their families. A common theme amongst these visitors was the sense of belonging and attachment that they experienced when they visited the countries of their ancestors (Jameson, 2002). Eden Gaha, a subject in Jameson’s book, developed a ‘point of reference’ which helped clarify his understanding of his national identity which incorporated both Lebanese and Australian attachments (Jameson, 2002: 71).

Young people also spend many years in schools and ‘education consists of a methodological socialisation of the young generation’ (Durkheim, 2006: 80). Education works not just to develop ‘the individual organism in the direction indicated by its nature, to elicit the hidden potentialities that need only be manifested. It creates in man [sic] a new being’ (Durkheim, 2006: 80). In schools young people gain information that influences their understanding of the world and their place in it which assists them to construct a sense of their national identity.

The languages that are spoken by people play a pivotal role in the development of their identities. People are united by sharing a common language. The ability to communicate can draw people together while an inability to communicate can create barriers between people. It can identify a person as an ‘insider’ or an ‘outsider’ thus

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*Who Do You Think You Are?* is a popular television program which traces famous people’s family trees.
impacting upon a person’s ability to construct an identity that incorporates belonging to that group. Siraj-Blatchford argues that children develop a sense of ‘identity, community and belonging’ through the language that they speak (2007a: 414). Fluency in the language of a nation can identify a person as belonging or not belonging thus playing a crucial role in the construction of national identity.

A person’s religious affiliation is also an integral aspect of their identity. It informs their value system and behaviour and situates them as a member of a specific group. Thus they share the identity of that group. Through religious affiliation a person can self-identify and be identified by others as a representative of the majority in a country. Their religion could also impose upon them marginal status within a country thus lessening their ability to readily claim or be seen to have attachment to that country as part of their identity.

The media plays a powerful role in contemporary Australia; it provides much of the information upon which decisions are made and attitudes formed (Siraj-Blatchford, 2007a: 62). How particular groups are portrayed on the media can shape how an individual comes to appreciate their identity and whether they develop a positive or negative sense of self. Kymlicka (1995: 89) argues that ‘if a culture is generally not well respected, then the dignity and self-respect of its members will also be threatened.’ Goodall, Jakubowicz, Martin, Mitchell, Randall and Seneviratne (1994: 75 – 77) state that ‘the representation of non-Anglo Australians in ads has usually been limited to “comic stereotypes” … in these ads European and Asian immigrants are stereotyped as not particularly intelligent people.’ Siraj-Blatchford (2007a: 67) similarly notes that elsewhere in the world, such as Britain and the United States, the media represents ‘black people’ as problems and aggressors or as passive, hopeless victims. Such disparaging representations can function to diminish a
person’s ability to develop a self-confident identity. Identity is developed through people viewing themselves from the position of others (Ritzer, 1996: 342). The media can be understood as a voluble ‘other’. It presents flattering or unflattering depictions of groups within society and those who are a part of those groups. In their research Jakubowicz and Senevirate’s (1996: 10) respondents suggested that as the media tended to present Australians as fair-skinned, blue-eyed, blonde, white and Anglo-Saxon, those who did not have these characteristics were presented as ‘different to or excluded from Australian society.’ The respondents noted that the way the media represented Australians did not make them feel Australian (Jakubowicz and Senevirate, 1996: 11). This inhibited them from developing of an Australian national identity and reinforced the non-Australian side of their national identities. For those who desire the acknowledgement of a non-Australian national identity this is not problematic. However it creates anxieties for those for whom a non-Australian national identity has little or no relevance to their lives and who feel that Australian is the core of their national identity.

Friendship groups and peers are important to young people and ‘are key locations where children develop their social identity’ (Ridge, 2006: 435). Young people’s national identities can be profoundly influenced by the opinions of their peers. Phinney, Romero, Nava and Huang in their research with immigrant families in America found that ‘social interaction with peers from one’s own ethnic group was significantly related to ethnic identity’ (2001: 149).

An understanding of identity development that identifies the multiple factors that have contributed to the construction of national identity rejects a primordial (Anderson, 2001: 210; Shils, 1957: 130) notion of national identity. Such a perspective asserts that ethnicity is ‘fixed, basic to human life, “given” by the facts of birth’ (Anderson, 2001: 211). A primordial perspective leaves no space for people to mould or
adjust their national identity. Their national identity is pre-determined at birth and unable to be altered. Thus this research is based upon the notion that national identity is not primordial but constructed through the interplay of many factors.

In contemporary Australia where identities are less fixed by tradition and where change and risk (Beck, 1992) are ever present people must construct their own sense of self. Contemporary Australians have more freedom to build identity than have people in past eras yet they must be ever cognisant of the factors which limit and shape their choices. These factors will be explored in more detail in subsequent sections.

**The Role of Appearance in Identity Formation**

Giddens (1991: 56) notes that ‘the self, of course, is embodied’ and as such ‘the self is also more or less constantly “on display” to others in terms of its embodiment’ (58). An individual inhabits a physical form and this works to limit options in the creation of self so ‘appearance, to put the matter bluntly … becomes a central element in the reflexive project of the self’ (Giddens, 1991: 100). Therefore appearance works to shape identity development. One aspect of appearance is skin pigmentation, and historically skin colour has been associated with ideas of race. According to Cornell and Hartmann (1998: 21) ‘a race can be thought of as a genetically distinct sub-population of a given species’, in this case the human species. However there ‘is no biological basis for distinguishing human groups along lines of “race”’ (Winant, 2004: 155) as people cannot be ‘unambiguously defined in terms of their genetic constitution’ (Abercombe, Hill and Turner, 2000: 123). In fact the ‘genetic variation found within human population groups is actually greater than the variation between them’ (italics in original, Siraj-Blatchford, 2007b: 403). Race then can be seen as a social construction, a means to label ““others”, of making clear that “they” are not “us”” (Cornell and Hartman, 1998: 27).
The notion of race has been utilised in history to rationalise behaviours such as colonisation and slavery. The idea of a ‘superior’ race was used to justify the domination of ‘inferior’ races (Cornell and Hartman, 1998: 28). ‘Scientific’ notions were devised to support such thinking (Reynolds, 1989: 107). One such notion was phrenology which ‘was based on two linked beliefs – that skills and traits of character were located in specific areas of the brain and that the configuration of the skull reflected the shape of the brain underneath’ (Reynolds, 1989: 107, 108). Examinations of the skulls of various peoples inevitably indicated the superiority of the white skinned as they were conducted by white scientists who had vested interests in supporting this idea. Anderson (2002: 249) argues that while ‘race science’ may no longer inform scientific work, it ‘remains the partly hidden bedrock underlying much public debate.

There still exist variations of appearance among humans and these can be used to include or exclude and to mark boundaries between people. The creation of such boundaries impacts upon the development of identity. Individuals are unable to ignore these divisions. The research of Ganguly (1997), Tan (2003) and Zevallos (2003, 2005) highlights the recognition of the ways that appearance can be used to differentiate between peoples. These researchers found that their non-Anglo appearance respondents faced ongoing questioning of their claim to an Australian national identity. This awareness of differentiation according to appearance works to exclude certain aspects of identity and impose others upon people. It also works to provide some with favoured status upon which to develop identity while others, because of an appearance that carries less esteem, must incorporate this less prestigious image into their identity.
Australia has a history of positive prejudice toward white people. *The Sydney Bulletin* was ‘a fierce advocate of the White Australia policy’ and in 1888 the colonies had already passed legislation restricting Chinese migration (Hirst, 2007: 12). Hirst (2007: 13) quotes *The Sydney Bulletin* as having written ‘no nigger, no Chinaman, no lascar, no kanaka, no purveyor of cheap coloured labour, is an Australian.’ As far back as 1909 debate occurred in *The Sydney Morning Herald* regarding the treatment of shipwreck survivors and whether Chinese survivors should be allowed to land in Australia (National Archives of Australia, 2010).

Whiteness and non-whiteness may appear to be simple observable facts; however this is not the case. Whiteness is a social construct and notions of whiteness have altered over time (Hage, 1998: 58, Stratton, 2000: 164). Andreoni (2003: 85, 86) notes that early Italian migrants to Australia suffered considerable discrimination as ‘in the late 1930s, Italians were still not seen as white’ and were referred to as the ‘Olive Peril’. Lebanese people also had to struggle to be recognised as white in order to gain entry into Australia under the White Australia policy (Hage, 1998: 58). Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2007: 60) also note that in the 1910s Greek and Maltese migrants were regarded as ‘cheap black labour’ and note that ‘such a perception is unlikely nowadays.’ Stratton (2000: 173) argues that in the past in Britain, the Irish and the Jews were also regarded as non-white. However, in Australia, Italians and other nationalities have become included in the umbrella of whiteness over time. Thus Hage suggests that “whiteness” is an everchanging, composite cultural historical construct’ (1998: 58).

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7 *The Sydney Bulletin* was the first national paper in Australia and was first published in 1880.
8 *The Commonwealth Immigration Act*, commonly referred to as the White Australia Policy was the first piece of legislation passed by the new nation of Australia in 1901. It restricted immigration into Australia. The Act was a retreat from the previous situation where for decades people from all areas of the world had migrated to Australia. The purpose of the Act was to build a white nation.
9 The Lascars were South Asian seamen.
10 The Kanakas were South Pacific Islanders. They were often forcibly removed from their island homes to work in the Queensland sugar fields.
11 *The Sydney Morning Herald* is a daily newspaper in Sydney. It dates back to 1831.
reinforcing the notion that the concept of whiteness has not remained static.

That ‘whiteness’ remains a significant factor in the construction of a positive identity of many Australians can be seen in the work of Vernon Ah-Kee, an Australian artist with an Indigenous background. His writing, _Whitefell-anormal_ emphasises the assumed normalcy of whiteness in Australia:

_Whitefell-anormal_

_If you as a white man wish to insert yourself into the black man's world, with his history, in his colour, and on the level at which you currently perceive him, then know that you will never be anything more than mediocre. You will not be able to involve yourself in the decision-making processes of this land, and you will not have any constructive access to the social and political mechanisms of this land. At times this land will shake your understanding of the world, and confusion will eat away at your sense of humanity, but at least you will feel normal_ (Ah Kee, 2004).

Larbalestier (2004: 153) similarly argues ‘that whiteness itself becomes an unexamined component of the normative order.’ Thus a person with a non-white appearance is compelled to note their exclusion from the normal, dominant group of Australians. The statements by Ah-Kee (2004) and Larbalestier (2004: 153) can be understood to contribute to a differentiation between those who are white and those who are not. Those who are white are advantaged and their place in Australia, as privileged Australians, is accepted as normal. Those who are not white remain on the periphery and must work to claim their place in Australia and their recognition as ‘normal’ Australians.
Hage (1998: 60) argues that people can acquire degrees of whiteness through the acquisition of capital. People who may not appear as white can gain increased acceptance as nominally white through education or a prestigious job. However, Hage (1998: 62) strongly notes that no matter how much capital is gathered these people can never attain the most valued capital, that of being naturally born white. For Hage (1998) a hierarchy exists and those not born white can climb higher up the hierarchy but never topple those born white who hold the top position. For white skinned Australians, their incorporation of whiteness in their identity is unchallenged. However, for those with a non-white appearance, their access to a nominal white identity is tenuous. The loss of a high status job could erode access to a white identity.

For some in contemporary Australia there still exist strong associations between Australian identity and whiteness. While multiculturalism, which acknowledges the array of ethnicities residing in Australia, has been a recognised policy since the 1970s, there still appears to be an inherent belief that ‘true’ Australian identity is linked to whiteness and Anglo appearance (Tan, 2003, 2006; Zevallos, 2005; McLeod and Yates 2003; Dockett and Cusack, 2003). Such a belief is a barrier to those who are not white and of Anglo appearance from fully embracing an Australian national identity. In her study of the experiences of Chinese Australians, Tan (2003) wrote that having a Chinese appearance set her and her respondents with Asian appearance apart. Being of Chinese appearance isolated her respondents when they were children as they were bullied or exoticised and certainly regarded as ‘other’ (Tan, 2003). Despite their efforts to assimilate, the respondents’ Oriental appearance set them aside as being different and ‘perpetually foreign’ (Tan, 2003:112). Tan quotes one respondent who stated, ‘I can live in this country for 500 years … but I will always be Chinese’ (2006: 72). The Latin American and Turkish women in Zevallos’ study also felt that their physical
appearance set them apart from mainstream Australians (2005). The fact that they were regularly asked, ‘Where are you from?’ signified that they were different and not accepted as being ‘really’ Australian, thus reinforcing the idea that Australian identity is a ‘physical ascription’ (Zevallos, 2005: 6). Those with a non-Anglo appearance found that they are constantly required to ‘prove the legitimacy of their claims’ to Australian identity (Tan, 2006: 72) which reinforced the ‘discourse in which “whiteness” and “Australianness” are seen as synonymous’ (77).

McLeod and Yates’ research with twenty-six secondary school students also supports the link between whiteness and Australian identity (2003). They note that:

Even when students opposed racism, “Australians” were positioned against “Others”, sometimes collapsing distinctions between Asians and Aboriginal people, grouping them together because of their contrast to ordinary, white Australians. (2003: 37)

While all identified with the notion of Australians as being white, the definition of who was the ‘other’ or not Australian varied (McLeod and Yates, 2003: 37 – 43). Some commented that Aboriginals were also Australian, ‘recognising prior national belonging to “our” country’ (McLeod and Yates, 2003: 37) and so ‘white Australians and Aboriginal Australians thus share a common ground against “Asians”’ (McLeod and Yates, 2003: 38). Other students felt that skin colour was of more significance than having an historical connection to an area of land. As such they regarded fair skinned migrants as more Australian than Aboriginals (McLeod and Yates, 2003: 42). For these students, skin colour appeared to remain a significant indicator of Australian national identity.
Many of the young children interviewed by Dockett and Cusack also stated that an Australian could be identified by appearance, especially skin colour (2003: 367). Seven of their forty-two respondents ‘were adamant that people could be Australian only if they had light skin’ (2003: 370). Not all the children made the link between whiteness and Australian national identity however, with one respondent stating ‘it doesn’t matter about their skin’ (Dockett and Cusack, 2003: 368). However women of non-white appearance from developing countries interviewed by Ganguly (1997) felt that there was a strong link between whiteness and Australian national identity. Most of these women described the typical Australian as Anglo and as such felt that their own appearance set them apart (Ganguly, 1997:20).

When Phillips and Smith asked six focus groups, all with very different backgrounds, who they felt were typical Australians (2000) they found that ‘non-Anglo Australians were cited infrequently for their “Australianness”’, and most of those identified were white (2000: 210). Of note was the remarkable consistency in the responses between the different groups, even from one focus group comprised of non-English speaking background women (Phillips and Smith, 2000: 211). The tie between whiteness or Anglo appearance and acceptance as Australian was also identified by Colic-Peisker in her research with Bosnian refugees (2005). She found that ‘being white means being “invisible”’ (Colic-Peisker, 2005: 619). Hence the respondents she studied initially found it easier to blend into Australian society than refugees of other skin tones. These respondents found that by being ‘invisible’ they were less likely to experience ‘prejudicial gazes’ (Colic-Peisker, 2005: 619).

The work of these researchers illustrates the powerful role that appearance and in particular skin colour can have on the construction of national identity. How others perceive a resident of Australia, whether they readily include them as fully Australian or marginalise
them as not fitting the norm of Australian appearance will influence their ability to include Australian identity as a central aspect of their national identity.

**Culture**

Kymlicka (1995: 89) suggests that a key factor in shaping options for the development of individual identity is culture. Within many national and state identities there exist groups who hold clear and definite cultural identities which differentiate them from the larger national/state identity. Culture relates to the ‘values, ceremonies and ways of life characteristic of a given group’ (Giddens, 2006: 1012). Culture is seen to provide the parameters for the identity options that are ‘imaginable’ (Kymlicka, 1995: 89) and provides the context from which people can explore options (Poole, 1996: 411). Culture can thus have a profound impact upon a person’s identity. If a person is a member of a dominant cultural group, a group whose culture is respected and valued, then the person can use this to develop a positive self-identity. However a member of a minority culture that is looked down upon by the majority has his/her opportunities for developing a positive self-identity curtailed. Taylor notes that ‘a person or a group can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves’ (1994: 225). This factor is of major significance in Australia, a country whose population is composed of people with many cultural backgrounds. White, British culture is conceived as the norm. Other cultures are perceived as being in the minority as they differ from this dominant culture. Members of the dominant cultural group, those of white British background, can be regarded as privileged when constructing their Australian national identity due to the ready association between British cultural heritage and Australian culture that remains in contemporary Australia.
The Australian government supports multiculturalism, a belief that upholds respect for diverse cultures. Such a policy could be understood to acknowledge the concerns expressed by Kymlicka (1995), Poole (1996) and Taylor (1994) as it asserts the value of different cultures within Australia. However there remains a dominant majority culture which is rooted in Australia’s British colonial history. Many Australian traditions, structures and even public holidays are derived from this culture. Thus members of this cultural group find themselves in a privileged position. Their culture is the norm and can be said to carry far more capital than other minority cultures.

Christianity is the most widely acknowledged faith in Australia with almost 64% citing Christianity as their religion in the 2006 census (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2008: 46). Christmas and Easter, the major celebrations of the Christian faith, are Australian public holidays. The religious celebrations of other faiths are not conferred the same recognition. In acknowledgement of such inequalities Poole (1996: 417) asserts that ‘the idea that the modern state is neutral between different cultures is a liberal fantasy.’ No matter how solidly any rhetoric supports multiculturalism in Australia the British culture maintains a position of prominence. Therefore those sharing the dominant cultural heritage are able to forge their self-identity from a more advantageous position as the structures of Australia reflect and support that culture.

While physical characteristics such as skin colour, facial features, hair type and height are relatively fixed, culture is less fixed. People are more able to make choices about which aspects of their culture they wish to retain, which they wish to discard and whether they wish to adopt new cultural practices with which they have no familial ties. For example people may adopt a religious belief that has no connection with the religious practices of their forebears. However it must be recognised that in some situations the choice to abandon one’s culture is extremely limited and potentially costly. Gutman argues that ‘for
many women and other vulnerable individuals who stand to lose their families, friends, property, and means of livelihood if they exit the group, the price of exiting is exorbitant’ (2003: 198). For some there exists very little choice about cultural identity. This must be taken into consideration when considering the extent of choice that individuals have over their cultural identity. However in multicultural Australia for many people a degree of choice does exist. Many people are able to embrace aspects of their inherited culture and abandon others. Thus the adoption of an ethnic identity can be ‘less ascriptive’ and more ‘voluntary’ (Gans, 1979: 7). People are thus ‘free to look for ways of expressing that identity which suit[s] them best’ (Gans, 1979: 7). They may not be compelled to adopt all aspects of a certain ethnic identity and only that particular identity.

Given the multiethnic backgrounds of many Australians, many meld together various cultural identities into a hybrid identity or focus on one aspect of their cultural heritage while relinquishing others. Cultural identities can thus be regarded as negotiable where physical appearance is not. Danforth (2000: 88) notes that in countries such as Australia ‘the choice of identity may become so fluid and free from stigma that one can speak of ethnicity as a life choice.’ Given the impact of globalisation it was predicted that separate cultures and ethnicities would disappear in the ‘global melting pot’ and that a degree of cultural homogeneity would arise (Cornell and Hartman, 1998: 4 – 7). This has not been the case and cultural and ethnic identities remain as ‘powerful forces’ (Cornell and Hartman, 1998: 9). Hall (1994: 310 – 313) argues that there has been a revival of ethnic and cultural identities in the face of the globalisation and hybridisation. People are turning to the local and the familiar for security and a sense of identity in the face of the confusion and

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12 Globalisation can be defined as the shrinking of the world in terms of time and space, increased interconnections, interdependencies and sharing of culture between the peoples of the world and the increased impact of transnational organisations (Cohen and Kennedy, 2000: 24; Meyer, 2000: 233).
uncertainty of post-modern globalisation (Cohen and Kennedy, 200: 343). This can pose challenges for existing states as groups seek to establish their own cultural, ethnic nation states (Cohen and Kennedy, 200: 343, Hall, 1994: 310 – 313). Hall cites the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia into new, smaller nations as an example of this (1994: 312). Recently the population in the south of Sudan voted in a referendum to form a separate country from the north, and at present groups in Irian Jaya are seeking independence from Indonesia. People's cultural affiliations can play a significant role in supporting or diminishing their national and state identities and so are significant to this research.

Any debate about culture also raises questions about what incorporates a culture. A culture must have some degree of stability to be identified as a culture (Kompridis, 2005: 324), however, it must also be recognised that cultures modify over time. The contemporary dominant Australian culture, despite its ongoing indebtedness to its British heritage, is very different to the culture of the 1950s. Over time Australian culture has adapted to recognise the existence and influence of non-British background Australians. A pizza restaurant in contemporary Australia is certainly no longer cause for comment and pizza has become part of the cuisine of most Australians. What may be of significance is the current speed that cultures are adapting and changing (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001: 222, 231). With the impact of globalisation and the increasing interaction between peoples around the world, aspects of different cultures are being absorbed by all cultures. Some have argued that Western culture has subsumed all other cultures (Cohen and Kennedy, 2000: 239) and that it has eroded the value and variety of alternative cultures through a form of cultural imperialism. Others argue that instead new cultures are being created and that aspects of Western cultures are being blended with other cultures to create new hybrid or Creole cultures (Cohen and Kennedy, 2000: 245). Thus aspects of cultures can be merged to create an
alternative culture. For example an Italian pizza can be served with a tandoori topping where two culinary traditions are utilised. Nederveen Pieterse (1994: 169) argues that hybridisation is not merely Westernisation, but that the West has also absorbed aspects of non-Western cultures.

**Hybrid Understandings of Identity**

The notion of hybridity has much applicability to Australia. Many different cultures have been brought to Australia by its diverse migrant intake and aspects of these cultures have become inculcated into Australian life. Australian culture is no longer regarded as purely British but a blend of many influences. The Australian population also has numerous backgrounds. Intermarriage between peoples with different national backgrounds and a lack of strong residential segregation (Hirst 1994: 4, 5) can create children whose heritage is complex and who may feel allegiances to more than one state or culture. Thus many may come to regard themselves as having a hybrid rather than a singular national identity. A hybrid, as defined by Beltran (2004: 595), is ‘a subject who embodies the blending of two diverse cultures or traditions’. Such a definition could be limiting in the Australian context as the heritages of many Australians incorporate more than just two cultures or traditions. For the Australian context it may be more beneficial to broaden the notion of a hybrid identity to incorporate two or more cultures.

Whilst a hybrid national identity could be understood as a blending of cultures (Beltran, 2004: 595) Homi Bhabha (1990: 207) argues that it is more than merely a simple blending. Rather he views it as a “‘third space” which enables other positions to emerge’ (Homi Bhabha, 1990: 207). Instead of a hybrid identity mixing up parts of essentialist cultures it is a process that ‘displaces’ past binaries to formulate new perspectives.
The idea of hybridity has faced criticism as it can be viewed as the ‘loss of purity, wholeness and authenticity’ (Nederveen Pieterse, 1994, 171). Homi Bhabha suggests that it is ‘an absurd notion of an uncontaminated culture’ (1996: 54). Any notion of loss is predicated in the belief that an original culture was pure and discrete from others. This concept of ‘loss’ (Nederveen Pieterse, 1994, 171) can carry negative connotations. ‘Hybrids [were] sometimes categorised as half-breeds, half-castes, mutts and mongrels, [and] were seen as threats to the biological purity and cultural and racial superiority of European whites’ (italics in original) (Marotta, 2008: 295). Thus hybrids were once considered as lacking a clear and solid identity, as marginalised and ‘homeless’ (Marotta, 2008: 305). However Marotta (2008: 306) suggests that this negative association is not necessarily always the case and that ‘the hybrid experience may result in positive characteristics such as cross-cultural adaptation, intercultural effectiveness, a less ethnocentric attitude and an enlightened and radical world-view.’ Poynting (2009) also regards hybrid identities as offering liberating opportunities as they enable people to select aspects of their various backgrounds to formulate an identity that suits their individuality.

Nederveen Pieterse (2001: 225) notes that hybridisation as a concept is ‘meaningless without the prior assumption of difference, purity, fixed boundaries’ (italics in original). Hutnyk (2005: 82) similarly asserts that the idea of hybridity ‘relies on the proposition of non-hybridity’ or a ‘prior non-mixed position.’ Cultures have inevitably been ‘contaminated’ by each other and the notion of an untainted culture is a fantasy (Nederveen Pieterse, 1994: 178). Cultural boundaries are blurry and not rigidly defined. Traditions and traits mingle where cultures meet. They are not readily contained by territorial borders. While a degree of haziness has existed on the boundaries of cultural groups in the past, there is increased intermingling of cultures in the contemporary world due to the rise in international travel and the
escalation of communications between people as a result of
globalisation. Hybrid or melded cultures not only exist on cultural
borders but are more widespread. Nederveen Pieterse also notes that
cultures have not remained static over time (1994: 178). Cultures are
vibrant and alive. A short examination of history illustrates the
dynamic nature of culture and its ability to transform while retaining
its authenticity and connection to the past. For example some
contemporary Aboriginal artists’ paintings represent images from the
‘Dreamtime’ yet they utilise modern paints and canvases. For these
painters the integrity of the Aboriginal artistic culture is maintained
while it has adapted to current times.

Hybridity serves as a valuable tool as it provides a theoretical lens
through which to consider the complexity of Australian national
identity. The notion of hybridity is a shift from essentialist discourses that focused on ‘purity, wholeness, authenticity’ in the
nineteenth century (Nederveen Pieterse, 1994: 170 - 171) where
people were perceived to be only able to have one central national
identity. It recognises people’s abilities to incorporate aspects of
various cultural traditions into their sense of self-identity. Thus a
hybrid identity can be regarded as dynamic and creative as it rejects
notions of essentialised and fixed identities (Marotta, 2008: 307). The
notion of hybridity has gained some official recognition in the United
States of America as the 2000 census provided the opportunity for
respondents to identify multiple ethnic identities (Kraidy, 2005: 158,

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13 The Dreamtime
'According to Aboriginal belief, all life as it is today - Human, Animal, Bird and Fish is part of one vast unchanging network of relationships which can be traced to the great spirit ancestors of the Dreamtime. The Dreamtime continues as the "Dreaming" in the spiritual lives of aboriginal people today. The events of the ancient era of creation are enacted in ceremonies and danced in mime form. Song chant incessantly to the accompaniment of the didgeridoo or clap sticks relates the story of events of those early times and brings to the power of the dreaming to bear of life today.’ (Aboriginal Art, Culture and Tourism Australia, 2010)

14 Essentialist discourses state that the basic qualities of a person or group of people can be determined by race or ethnicity (Gunaratnam, 2003:29). These identities are regarded as being immutable.
Nederveen Pieterse, 2001: 220). In the 2006 Australian census respondents were instructed to note up to two places of ancestral origin (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006b), also recognising the blended ancestries of many Australian residents.

Researchers have found that some school children Australians have constructed hybrid national identities. Singh Ghuman (2001), in his research of South Asian students in schools in New South Wales, noted that many were trying to ‘find some middle way – a compromise – between their traditions and the Australian way of life’ (56). Most of Ghuman’s respondents referred to themselves as having a ‘hyphenated’ identity (2001: 57). They had forged a hybrid sense of themselves which incorporated both Australian features and those of their heritage. Many of the young children in Dockett and Cusack’s study were very comfortable with the idea of a national identity that was not limited to just one nation (2003). Dockett and Cusack note ‘there was strong support for diversity among families and peers, with many children accepting and supporting their own dual national identity as well as that of others’ (2003: 370). Similarly Kabir’s research of Muslim school students in Sydney found that almost half referred to themselves ‘with dual or hyphenated identities’ and that all ‘demonstrated strong bonds with both cultures’ (2008: 234). Poynting’s (2009) research of Muslim girls notes their blended identities and celebrates their active roles in the construction of their identities (373, 381).

McCrone notes that identities are formulated and adjusted to meet strategic needs; that ‘individuals assume different identities at different times which may not even be centred around a coherent self’ (1998: 32). Thus identities can be seen as tactical constructions that are devised to best maximise advantage. Not only can identities be hybrid and reflexively constructed over periods of time they can also be variable where different facets of an identity emerge as dominant in
different circumstances. Noble, Poynting and Tabar (1999: 42) studied the ethnic identities of Arabic speaking school boys in Sydney and found that ethnic identities were fluid and varied according to ‘context, topic and relations’. The respondents’ affiliations with identities became ‘strategic’ (Noble et. al., 1999: 39) and were adjusted to suit their needs in different situations. The respondents saw themselves as hybrid, ‘half Lebanese and half Australian’, however the intensity of their affiliation to each nation varied according to the situation15 (Noble et. al., 1999: 35, 41). For example in public situations ‘Australianness’ was highlighted but within their group their ‘Lebanese-ness’ was of more significance (Noble et. al. (1999: 35, 40).

The hybrid national identities constructed by Noble, Poynting and Tabar’s respondents were adaptable; they reflexively modified their identity to suit circumstances. Thus they actively engaged in an ongoing construction of self whereby they negotiate a sense of self that is both malleable enough to adapt when necessary but also sufficiently grounded that the image of self does not disintegrate. Zevallos (2003: 90 – 93), in her study of women with a Latin American background in Australia also notes that her respondents adjusted their national affiliation according to the situation in which they found themselves. When discussing gender roles and women’s rights they emphasised the Australian aspect of their national identity yet when meeting a friend and kissing as a form of greeting their Latin American side came to the fore (Zevallos, 2003: 91, 93). Sometimes they highlighted their national identity that related to their heritage country in Latin America, at other times they favoured the Australian aspect of their national identity (Zevallos, 2003: 90 - 93).

Yet hybrid national identities can be regarded by some as threatening as they break clear boundaries and blur the lines between groups

15 When these young respondents were revisited in 2003 they had retained their hybrid understanding of their national identities (Noble, 2007: 341).
In the Australian context they could be perceived of as threatening the notion of a shared Australian national identity that is uniquely Australian and discreet from all other state and national identities. Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2003: 592) note that ‘people were envisioned as each having only one nation-state’. A hybrid identity which recognises an affiliation to more than one nation state challenges this paradigm. Yet for Beck (2001:190) the development of hybrid national identities is unsurprising as he argues that ‘today people trade internationally, they work internationally, they love internationally … so why should we expect political loyalties and identities to remain bound to a single nation state?’ The Australian government recognises the diversity of the Australian population and that while migrants may adopt aspects of Australian culture and identity they also retain strong attachments to their heritages (Roth, 2007). Australians are able to hold dual citizenship so long as this is permitted by the other country (Betts, 2002: 60, Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2007). This recognises that many Australians wish to portray their hybrid national identities through formal citizenship of both Australia and another country. This was seen as extremely important by the women in Ganguly’s study (1997) as many were reticent to become Australian citizens if it required them to forgo the citizenship of their birth country.¹⁶ Those who were able to retain their original citizenship felt far more comfortable adopting Australian citizenship (Ganguly, 1997). Therefore ‘dual citizenship may facilitate the naturalization and political assimilation of immigrants’ (Brown, 2002: 71) as it enables them to retain a connection to their country of origin. The importance of dual citizenship was recently demonstrated when many Australians of Sudanese heritage were able to vote in the referendum in Sudan in Australia. They had the opportunity to voice their Sudanese political options without threatening their Australian identity.

¹⁶ Not all countries provide for dual citizenship. In some instances if a person were to adopt Australian citizenship they would need to relinquish their original citizenship.
The notion of multiple national citizenships is however, a contested issue. Brown feels that the provision of multiple citizenships ‘lowers the cost to obtain an Australian identity [citizenship]’ and so it may be taken up without forsaking allegiance to another country (2002: 72). Brown suggests it may hinder the adoption of a united Australian national identity (2002: 76) and could result in political disturbances in Australia as those with multiple citizenships attempt to influence Australian government policies to support another country (2000: 69; 2002: 74). This view is also shared by Soutphommasane (2009: 86) who argues that dual citizenship is a form of ‘political bigamy’ and weakens a person’s loyalty to both states.

It is important to note that there exists a significant difference between the objective notion of state citizenship and the idea of national identity. Australian state identity through citizenship is not the same as Australian national identity. An individual may hold Australian citizenship yet may feel that they are not accepted as a genuine Australian, or having an Australian national identity, by all members of the community. This may occur if the characteristics of the individual do not match the observer’s notions of Australian national identity. Similarly a person may not feel Australian despite the confirmation of legal Australian status through citizenship. State citizenship can be understood in its legal sense - the citizenship that is obtained through the right of birth in a certain location or the official conferring of citizenship after a person has met a variety of legal requirements. It is an objective legal status. In comparison perceptions of Australian national identity, or other national identity, are subjective. However citizenship can serve to enhance a person’s subjective affiliation with a national identity.

The increasing focus on hybridity as a form of national identity reflects changes in thinking about migration. No longer are migrants
expected to arrive in a new country and quickly forsake their culture and country of origin. This change of thinking is reflected in Australia’s policy changes from assimilation in the 1950s to multiculturalism from the 1970s and the recognition of dual citizenship (Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2007). With massive advances in transport technologies migrants are able to easily travel back and forth between Australia and their country of origin. Advances in communication technologies make the maintenance of close ties to the country of origin fast and inexpensive. These factors assist migrants to retain links to their countries of origin hence they remain significant in their sense of national identities.

Hybrid thinking about national identity is supported by some migrant source countries such as Greece which has a new term, ‘spodemoi’ (italics in original) to describe Greeks living abroad (Schiller et. al., 1995: 53). For people of Swiss heritage living overseas, often referred to as the ‘Fifth Switzerland,’ the Organisation of Swiss Abroad represents their interests in Switzerland. This works to maintain their strong association with their Swiss national identity. Italians living outside Italy are also able to elect parliamentarians in Italian elections.

The breaking down of essentialist images of national identity and the emergence of discourses of hybridity are significant in understandings of Australian identity. Opportunities to identify with more than one national identity now exist in Australia and allow Australian residents to construct a multifaceted national identity which has specific meaning for them and reflects their identification with Australia and other nations.
Cosmopolitan Outlooks

Migrants may regard themselves as part of a diaspora and this plays an integral part of their national identity. The notion of a diaspora, which was initially associated with the nation of displaced Jews from AD 70 (Esman, 1996: 316), has come to refer to ‘a minority ethnic group of migrant origin which maintains sentimental or material links to its land of origin’. Many migrants retain strong attachments to their ‘homelands’ and such can be understood to display ‘long distance nationalism’ (Skrbis, 2001: 3). They may regard themselves as cosmopolitans. In this case migrants ‘forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement’ (Schiller, Basch and Blanc, 1995: 48).

A simple understanding of cosmopolitanism is difficult to arrive at (Skrbis et. al., 2004: 117, Woodward et. al., 2008: 2, Skrbis and Woodward, 2005: 3, Calcutt Woodward and Skrbis, 2009: 169). However Skrbis and Woodward (2007: 731) note that ‘at its heart the cosmopolitan agenda proposes a radical decoupling of social action and imagination from national or local anchors … toward a cosmopolitan culture which is seen as globally open and inviting cultural cross-pollination, hybridity and fluidity.’ Scholte (2000: 160) describes cosmopolitanism as an attachment to a ‘universal human community’ and Cohen and Kennedy (2000: 354) refer to cosmopolitans as ‘world citizens’ with less affiliation to an individual state.

Whilst the notion of cosmopolitanism has often been linked to ideas of global mobility, some who do not travel may adopt a cosmopolitan outlook as they exhibit openness to other cultures’ values and beliefs (Woodward et. al., 2008:4 – 5). Also not all who travel and spend time living in countries other than that of their birth construct cosmopolitan
outlooks as some remain ‘rooted’ in their home identity (Skrbis et. al., 2004: 121).

National identities in contemporary times are constructed in a globalised environment where ‘boundaries between home and away, local and global, traditional and de-traditionalised, and here and there, have become increasingly blurred’ (Skrbis et. al., 2004: 116). A result of globalisation can be ‘the development of individual outlooks, behaviours and feelings that transcend local and national boundaries’ (Woodward et. al., 2008: 1).

While in the past migration was conceived of as a one way process Skrbis (2008: 239) now argues that migration needs to be reconceptualised as it ‘extends and continues beyond settlement’ (Skrbis, 2008: 239) as many contemporary migrants return or move on to new locations. Thus new ways to understand national identity that recognise the affiliations that people hold to nations beyond the boundary of the country within which they reside have to be considered. Many cities have cosmopolitan populations where people are able to live comfortably in different locations and cultures around the world and hold complex global affiliations, hybrid national identities and multiple citizenships.

The potential for people to move across borders and live parts of their lives in different states can mean that for some old notions of national identity, based upon past nationalist perspectives where people were expected to have only an affiliation to one nation, are losing relevance. As people live in various states they may come to develop strong affiliations to numerous states and nationalities. Colic-Peisker suggests that ‘transnational mobility has a new conceptual quality of rising beyond rather than stretching across national borders’ (italics in original) (2010: 482). Thus people may develop a cosmopolitan outlook whereby they have fostered attachments that are not contained
within borders. As people become more aware of different cultures and lifestyles through new media they become open to alternative ways of being. Global concerns that ignore state borders such as pollution, environmental degradation and terrorism serve to unite people such that they become aware of the interconnectedness of their lives and the inconsequence of national borders. Such factors have fostered the development of cosmopolitan outlooks. It must be noted that Cohen and Kennedy (2000: 354) argue that a cosmopolitan outlook may only be available to the ‘privileged classes or the elites’ and that these elite cosmopolitans may have closer bonds with each other than with their fellow state citizens. Those unable to travel or with little access to information about the wider world may retain stronger allegiances to nations or even local areas.

A cosmopolitan outlook is relevant to this research as young adults in Australia are increasingly moving around the globe and aware of other cultures. Some young adults in Australia have already lived in several countries and others plan to do so in the future. These young people no longer feel that their future lives will be confined within Australian boundaries. With the globalised economy opportunities to work beyond Australia’s borders are increasingly available and being taken up. Young people are also increasingly aware that their futures are not only affected by factors within Australian borders but that they share common concerns and opportunities with others across the globe. This thesis aims to explore the relevance of cosmopolitan identities to the lived experience of contemporary young adults.

**Australia as a State and a Nation**

In the contemporary world state identity is a significant factor in understanding national identity and its development. The belief in citizenship of a state being so central to individual identity is a
relatively new phenomenon as states have become major political entities only in the last one hundred and fifty years. Before 1880 there were only fourteen internationally recognised states (Cohen and Kennedy, 2000: 84) yet by the late 1980s there were around two hundred (Castles, 1998: 330). Prior to the establishment of states a key factor in identity may have involved inclusion in a clan or a tribe. National identity is also a considerable factor in contemporary individual identity. It is necessary to create a clear distinction between a state and a nation.

A nation can be defined as a state with a defined territory, a government ruling over that territory with laws that impinge upon all those living within the territory (Cohen and Kennedy, 2000: 378). However Tate (2009: 97, 98) clearly differentiates between a nation and a state, whereby a nation is a community of people who share a sense of cohesion and a state is a geographic territory over which resides a government. McCrone (1998: 3, 5) suggests that a nation is often referred to in terms of geography but suggests that a nation is actually far more than this. He regards a nation as being a ‘spiritual family’ rather than merely the physical characteristics of the earth, and sees it as a ‘soul’ or ‘solidarity’ (McCrone, 1998: 3, 5). Due to the size of nations, members of any nation cannot know all other members of the nation. As such a nation must be an ‘imagined’ community (Anderson, 2002: 6). The people of a nation are able to imagine a sense of solidarity with all others who belong to their nation. It has been said that a nation is a community that is bound together by a sense of comradeship (Anderson, 2002: 7; Guibernau and Goldblatt, 2000: 126 – 127). The idea of a nation of people is constructed; it is the idea of a unity between people who will never be able to meet all other members of the nation.

A connection between nation and state is often assumed. When Australia was proclaimed in 1901 it existed as a state, but at that time
Tate questions the existence of a sense of nationhood (2009: 98). He suggests that ‘it took some time for a sense of “nation” to develop in the wake of the Australian state’ (Tate, 2009: 98). A sense of nationhood is generated by the development of a conviction that all are bound together due to living within the set borders of a territory. Taylor (1999: 225 – 269) suggests that the need for a strong imagined community is vital for a democratic state. In a democracy it is necessary for all the population to feel a part of the state and to feel that their interests are considered (Taylor 1999: 225 – 269). If a group feels that they are a marginalised minority whose concerns are ignored in democratic votes, the potential exists for fissures to develop in the national cohesion (Taylor 1999: 225 – 269). Australia is a state with a very diverse population and hence must face the challenge of creating a strong understanding of imagined community and nationhood among all Australians, an understanding that is robust and able to avoid fragmentation due to difference.

The idea of statehood has often been linked with the concept of an ethno-nation whereby all those living in a state feel a connection to the territory and a bond between citizens, often associated with an ancestral history of having occupied that land for generations (Scholte, 2000: 161, 162). Along with this tie to the land is the notion of blood ties between all those within the land with all members of the state sharing a common heritage and history (Scholte, 2000: 161, 162). This common heritage may, in fact, be more imagined than real; Hall notes that in all states in Europe people have mixed heritages and notions of race have no biological foundation (1992: 298). In fact Kukathas (1993b: 22) also argues that while beliefs have existed about homogeneity, cultural diversity has actually been ‘the most notable feature of society in the history of human settlement.’ However the people of a state feel linked due to the idea of a long shared ancestry. States have also been conceived as sharing a common culture, however Hall disputes whether any states have ever been mono-
Some writers (Birrell, 1995; Castles, 1998; Cohen and Kennedy, 2000; Scholte, 2000; Phillips and Smith, 2000; Phillips and Holton, 2004) suggest that the concept of state based on a shared ancestry or culture may not be the most appropriate way to conceive of states. Globalisation with its resultant movement of populations around the world can be understood to be diluting the myth of ‘pure blood’, where all are believed to share a common ancestry, feature of states. Older states such as those in Europe were born from a long history of people being united through common leadership and ancestral histories of occupation of land. Australia has a very different history. It is a land of Indigenous people, colonisation and convict settlement followed by migration from all areas of the globe. Hence it lacks the characteristics of a racially and culturally united state.

The fact that Australia cannot be conceived as simply a racial or culturally-based state appears to be very prevalent in the debate about Australian identity. Increasingly larger proportions of the population no longer share ancestral and cultural links with Britain (Birrell, 1995: 280). The concept of a state as a civic entity (Birrell, 1995: 11; Phillips and Holton, 2004: 736) where the population is bound together by ‘civic ideals like citizen equality or freedom’ (Birrell, 1995: 11) may be emerging. Such a belief proposes that the past plays no significant role in the development of a sense of national unity (Gellner, 1996: 1). Smith (1996a: 4) disagrees with this position and emphasises the importance of ‘memories, values, myths and symbols’ in order to inculcate the sense of a united nation. He states that nations are built on shared memories, of both defeats and victories and that these unify people (Smith, 1996b: 382). Smith also notes that memories can be ‘manipulated’ in order to achieve certain aims (1996b: 382). Australia, as a relatively ‘new’ country lacks memories that emerge from the distant past and as a country of many new migrants its population also lacks shared memories. Yet history has been utilised to create a myth
of shared heritage; stories of ANZAC\textsuperscript{17} heroes are upheld as examples of the Australian spirit, a spirit shared by all Australians no matter how recent their arrival was. Young adults interviewed in 2006 (Lohm, 2007) noted that history played a significant role in their understanding of Australian national identity. John Howard, during his term as Prime Minister from 1996 to 2007, strove to highlight Australian notions of mateship and the importance of the ANZAC tradition (Dyrenfurth, 2005a: 1) possibly aiming to build a sense of shared national memory amongst Australians.

Research has already been undertaken to gain an appreciation of contemporary Australians’ perceptions of Australian national identity. Pakulski and Tranter analysed the 1995 Social Science Survey\textsuperscript{18} to determine how Australians understood what makes a person an Australian. They suggest that there are three ways that people understand Australian identity - civic, ethno and denizen:\textsuperscript{19}

Civic identity is the most frequently embraced of the three macro-social identity types distinguished here. More than one third of Australians who adopt it feel strong emotional attachment to Australia conceived of as a large voluntary association. The membership in this association is a matter of personal commitment and respect for Australian laws and institutions. Ethno-national identity, by contrast, is embraced by less than one third of Australians who see themselves as culturally distinct people. For them full and true membership in the Australian nation is conditional on sharing customs and traditions acquired either through birth or long residence (presumably combined with

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{17} ANZAC Day commemorates the landing of Australian and New Zealand troops at Gallipoli on 25\textsuperscript{th} April 1915. The day recognises the contributions made by all soldiers.
  \item \textsuperscript{18} The International Social Survey Program began in the early 1980s and now includes over 30 countries. It is a continuing program of cross-national collaboration which undertakes research about attitudes.
  \item \textsuperscript{19} Denizen identity can be defined as having a weak attachment to ‘macro societal collectivity’ (Paluski and Tranter, 2000: 36). It exists where a person has very little attachment to a national identity.
\end{itemize}
assimilation). Finally, denizen identity, which is only in about six percent of our sample, characterizes persons with a weak attachment to Australia. (2000: 36)

Pakulski and Tranter found that those with an ethno perception tended to be the older respondents who were less educated and more religiously minded while those with a civic perception tended to be baby boomers, better educated and were more secular minded (2000: 35). Thus ‘the proportion of ethno-nationalists is likely to shrink in the process of generational replacement, educational revolution and progressive secularization’ (Pakulski and Tranter, 2000: 35).

Jones (1999: 23), when examining national identity, distinguished two ways to understand national identity: as a nativist or as a civic pluralist. It must be noted that national identity can be differentiated from nationalism. Nationalism is a political movement by a people to gain self-determination in the form of their own state (Cornell and Hartman, 1998: 36). In comparison national identity is the connection felt between people who may constitute a state but may also exist within or beyond state borders. The nativists believed that to be truly Australian a person needed to be born in Australia or have lived most of their life in Australia, whilst the civic pluralist felt that Australianness was connected to beliefs and feelings and a commitment to Australian laws and institutions (Jones, 1996: 23). Like Pakulski and Tranter, Jones noted that the ‘nativists tend to be older, to have left school earlier, to live in regional Australia … are more often native born than migrant, are more likely church goers’ (1996: 24). Thus this perception may diminish as older nativist generations die out and so Australian identity may come to be more commonly understood from a civic perspective in the future.

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20 ‘Baby boomers’ is a term used to refer people born in the post World War II period when there was a distinct increase in birth rates.
The findings of an Australian National University survey also suggest increased support for the perception of a civic national identity (cited in Holton, 1998: 208). While speaking English was regarded as important in this survey, skin colour, a criterion linked to an ethno-national identity, was not mentioned. However, Jones and Smith, in their analysis of The 1995 Social Survey Program, noted that while:

Governments have sought increasingly to define national identity around civic themes … our findings suggest that such policies have had only mixed success. While most respondents saw civic attachment as important, they had by no means relinquished more traditional understandings. (2001: 58)

While there has been a shift from an ethno to a more civic perception of Australian national identity, some ethno focus still exists as is evident by the association between appearance and Australian identity (see discussion in ‘The Role of Appearance in Identity Formation’ above).

How national identity is understood has a profound impact upon people’s construction of their own national identities. If an individual and the broader Australian population endorse an ethno perception of identity it precludes migrants from adopting any aspects of Australianness into their national identity. An ethno perception creates clear lines between those who belong and those who do not. Without the necessary blood ties a person can never acquire an Australian national identity; they are forever relegated to an identity rooted in their past. In Australia the ancestry required for inclusion in ethno-perceived Australia is British or of similar appearance (Colic-Peisker, 2005: 619; Dockett and Cusack, 2003: 367; Ganguly, 1997: 20; McLeod and Yates, 2003: 37 – 43; Phillips and Smith, 2000: 219; Tan, 2003: 112; Zevallos, 2005: 6). This claim to ethno ownership of Australian national identity can be understood as an anomaly given the
short history of this group in Australia. However it retains resonance. In comparison a civic perception of national identity encourages the adoption of Australian national identity provided civic values are upheld. It enables migrants to quickly be included in the group who identify as being Australian. If this perception of national identity is held by an individual and the Australian population it invites and encourages the adoption of Australian national identity in those who migrate to Australia. Whether either civic or ethnic understandings of national identity are relevant in the contemporary world has been queried by Karner who argues that these understandings ‘distort and oversimplify more multifaceted and contradictory realities’ (2011: 39). The lack of uncontested endorsement of any perception creates an unclear and unstable environment in which national identity is constructed.

Now that I have looked at ideas of nationhood and statehood I will turn to a brief investigation of the history of Australia’s population that provides insights into the factors that shaped how people perceive national identity and the current environment in which national identities are constructed.

**Brief Historical Overview**

Australia is now recognised as being a multicultural country, however this was not always the case. Australia is an ancient land, yet as a state it is very new. It was only in 1901 that the disparate colonies joined together as a federation. Before 1901 the various colonies were independent entities under the direction of Britain. Prior to colonisation the Indigenous population inhabited the land, living in groups, but these groups did not together imagine themselves as being part of the larger community (Anderson, 2002) of a nation.
The original inhabitants of Australia, the Torres Strait Islanders and the Aboriginals, were not a single culture or a homogenous group at the time of colonisation (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), 2007). There were many different groups each with their own language, beliefs and customs (DFAT, 2007). The Indigenous population was not isolated from the world beyond Australia. From the late 17th or early 18th century Indigenous Australians who lived in the northern parts of the country traded with Indonesian Macassar fishermen who annually visited northern Australia to gather sea slugs (Foroutan, 2008: 220). Today Indigenous Australians remain pluralist groups, despite that fact they are often lumped together as a single group in debates about Australian national identity. Furthermore, Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders have long been ignored in discussions about Australian national identity. Hollinsworth argues that ‘in settler societies, such as Australia, national identity is formed through the defining and expelling of the Indigenous from the colonial body politic’ (1998:191). With the Proclamation of Terra Nullius made by Governor Bourke in 1835 the British disregarded the Indigenous population’s claim to the land (NSW Migration Heritage Centre, 2010).

Taylor (2000: 30) notes that early Australian national identity was dominated by the belief in a 'gentrified antipodean society' of British settlers who promoted the idea of terra nullius and ignored the existence of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population and the convict settlers. In fact it was believed that the Aboriginals would disappear or die out (Healy, 2008: 219). The first European arrivals were also not a homogenous group. There were vast social and class distinctions between the convicts and the free settlers. Hirst states that

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21 Terra Nullius is a Latin term which translates as 'Empty Land' or 'Nobody's Land'. This proclamation ignored the fact that Indigenous people occupied the land (The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Journal, 2010)

22 According to the Australian Pocket Oxford Dictionary the term antipode refers to 'places that are diametrically opposite to one another on Earth … Australasia in relation to Europe’ and hence the term antipodean refers to ‘Australian’. This belief is open to question given that Australia was originally a penal colony.
‘the founding population was composed of three ethnic groups – English, Scots and Irish – who came from the one state, the United Kingdom, but who still bore much antagonism to each other’ (1994: 5) due to past conflicts between the groups.

The 1850s gold rushes saw a dramatic increase in Australia’s population. It grew rapidly from 430,000 in 1851 to 1,150,000 by 1861 (Mackie, 2004). The arrivals were a mixture of people including British, Irish, Americans, Germans, Italians, Greeks, Spanish, Swiss, Swedes, Danes, Chinese, Afghans, Japanese, Indians, Malays and Pacific Islanders. Particularly large numbers of Chinese arrived. These early Chinese migrants have also been much ignored in early notions of Australian national identity (Ramsay, 2001: 263; Ryan, 1997: 71). Therefore Australia has long existed as a pluralist society (Larbalestier, 2004: 146) despite early attempts to ignore this, as Hollinsworth states:

Rather than Australia existing as a “genuine” entity springing forth from a common territory and shared ancestry, values and struggles, Australian identity was something to appeal to or manufacture as evidenced by the intense struggles over the writing and presentation of Australian history. (1998: 192)

Due to this failure to recognise Chinese settlers, the original Indigenous population and the variety of other nationalities who lived in Australia, Australia was often regarded as mono-ethnic, recognising only the British background settlers (Jayasuriya, 1997: 87). Australia strongly identified itself as being a white-Anglo country with very British traditions (Jupp, 1996: 2). Markus et. al. note that post-Federation immigration policies, often referred to as the White Australia Policy, reduced the diversity that existed in early Australia and so created an ‘essentially white British society’ (2009: 89). The diversity which had existed in early Australia was diminished and the
existence of this early diversity has been largely ignored. Ang (2003: 55) states that the British transplanted their cultural homogeneity to Australia.

The White Australia policy was introduced in 1901 to enable Australia to 'quarantine itself from its immediate surroundings in the interest of a much desired internal homogeneity and white racial purity' (Ang, 2003: 58). The aim was to create an ideal white democracy in Australia. The policy was adopted with the intention that the vast majority of migrants would come from Britain and so Australia would retain its image of being 'new Brittania' (Jupp, 1996: 2). The White Australia policy, along with policies such as the Pacific Island Labourers Act 1901 (Documenting Democracy, 2011, Illwarr Multicultural Services, 2007: 6) that required the deportation of Pacific Islanders, moulded an Australian population that became predominantly white. Jupp noted this when he suggested that there may have been less debate about Australian identity if it 'were indeed uniform, as in some respects it was fifty years ago' (1998: 229).

At this time Australia’s national identity was inextricably tied to Britain. Australians saw themselves as essentially British, but living in a distant location. They were ‘British people distinguished only by their Australian residence and distance from the centre of the Empire’ (Dutton, 1999: 7). In 1944 John Curtin, then Prime Minister, referred to Australia as ‘an outpost of the British race’ (Mackie, 2004: 151). Hassam (2000: 14) cites the diary of Mary Kater, who in 1875 travelled to England, and ‘felt at home’. Britain was regarded as home by many of these early Australians. In fact it was not until the 1940s that the term ‘Australian nationality’ started to be used (Dutton, 1999: 7) signifying the extent of British influence on perceptions of early Australian identity. In 1948 the ‘Australian Citizenship Act’ was adopted (Galligan and Roberts, 2004: 1; Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2007a), which noted that ‘Australian citizenship
entails pledging loyalty to Australia and its people, sharing their democratic beliefs, respecting their rights and liberties, and upholding and obeying the laws of Australia’ (Galligan and Roberts, 2004: 1). The Indigenous community continued to be ignored in these images of Australia as were the other non-British groups who also lived in Australia.

After World War II the government identified the need to increase Australia’s population and developed the slogan of ‘populate or perish’ (Mackie, 2004: 153). In 1945, the then Federal Immigration Minister, Arthur Calwell, initiated Australia’s huge immigration program. The government anticipated that for every non-British migrant there would be ten British migrants, so there was a belief that these new arrivals would readily assimilate into the Australian lifestyle (Collins, 1988: 10). When it became impossible to meet immigration targets with British-born migrants the government sought migrants from Central Europe, seeking migrants that it felt would quickly assimilate to the new culture. In fact policies ‘discouraged and even rejected settlers from countries which were perceived as too dissimilar to the dominant Anglo-Celtic culture of Australia at the time’ (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1994). Over the ensuing years the ‘immigration net was reluctantly cast wider and wider’ (Collins, 1988: 12), resulting in Australia developing a very diverse population. Ang (1999: 195) argues that the expansion of Australia’s immigration net to include Europe was driven by a fear of Asia and a desire to keep Australia white, even though the definition of whiteness had to be modified. Despite the variety of backgrounds of migrants Australia retained a policy of assimilation, whereby all new migrants were

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23 In June 2006 24% of Australia’s population was born overseas. The proportion of people in Australia’s population born in the United Kingdom and Italy declined between 1996 and 2006, while the proportion born in China and New Zealand increased. The Vietnamese-born proportion remained 4%. Between 1996 and 2006 the numbers born in these countries increased largely: Sudan 27% increase, Afghanistan 13% increase, Iraq , 10% increase (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007a)
expected to relinquish the culture of their birth land and adopt Australian lifestyles.

From the mid-1960s until 1972 a policy of integration was implemented. This policy recognised the difficulties migrants faced with the expectation of immediate assimilation (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT, 2007). Migrants were still expected to adopt mainstream Australian lifestyles, but were also able to retain their own distinctive cultural characteristics (Jupp, 1996 vi). As such minority cultures were able to preserve their individuality. However this was to be more strongly recognised in the policy of multiculturalism. In 1973 the White Australia policy was officially abolished due to ‘international revulsion against racism and the need to improve relations with emerging Asian nations’ (Castles, 1999: 33).

The introduction of a policy of multiculturalism was announced in 1973 (Jupp, 1996: vi). Al Grassby, the then Minister for Immigration, stated that for a family to achieve its ‘common good’ conformity was not necessary; what was required was a commitment to the good of all’ (Arber, 1999: 309). Similarly the Australian nation did not require migrants to abandon their individual cultures for all to ‘be part of the same Australian family’ (Arber, 1999: 309). Kukathas (1993a: 157) concurred suggesting that in a free society all do not need to have a common goal unless the goal is to ‘preserve the rules of a free society so all can pursue their own needs.’ However, multiculturalism was shifted from a central focus under the Howard government (Manne, 2006: 22; Forrest and Dunne, 2006: 208). In 2008 Kerkvasharian (2008: 26) went so far as to say that ‘multiculturalism is under attack.’

A resurgence in recognition of Australia’s British heritage occurred and this was promoted as being the basis of the Australian way of life by Kevin Andrews, then Minister for Immigration and Citizenship in 2007:
This way of life is influenced by a history that includes the Judeo-Christian beliefs and traditions brought by the British settlers. Also present were the values and institutions that form the basis of a free and open democratic society, particularly our British political heritage and the spirit of the European Enlightenment. (Andrews, 2007)

Migrants were again expected to ‘integrate into our society’ (Andrews, 2007) and less focus was given to the maintenance of settlers’ heritages. Howard led a conservative Liberal party government which emphasised the fact that ‘Australia's ties with Britain were built on history, sentiment, and shared values and would never die’ (AAP, 2003). In 2006 Howard stated that Australia’s cultural identity was heavily Anglo-Saxon and noted the significance of Western civilization and the English language to Australian culture (Tilbury, 2007: 5 – 6). He espoused the value of the ‘Australian way of life,’ a way of life that Ang (2003) argues is inherently white and British. The Border Protection Bill of 2001 (Ang, 2003: 63) and the citizenship test introduced in 2007 can be regarded as strategies designed to maintain this way of life which retains strong associations with British heritage. Tate (2009: 97) contends that Howard articulated ‘a particular concept of the Australian nation’ and that he moved from a multicultural perspective and returned to a focus on assimilation or integration (Das, 2006). Forrest and Dunn (2006: 208) argue that the Howard government ‘brought with it a marked decline in the importance of multiculturalism … and a resurgence of Anglo privileges, values and identity’. Howard won the 1996 election with the slogan ‘for all of us,’ appealing to the Australians who felt that the previous Labor government’s policies had marginalised them (Maddox, 2005: 69, 77). Elder (2007: 58, 59) and Forrest and Dunne (2006: 208) argue that Howard’s policies were developed in response to the fears of many Australians that their way of life was undermined by previous Labor party policies that supported multiculturalism. Similarly Poynting
(2008: 8) argues that the Howard policies were aimed to appease ‘unskilled workers,’ ‘working class battler[s]’ and ‘the petite-bourgeois aspirationals’.

Howard, in his time as Prime Minister, promoted Australia’s historical ties with Britain. He also worked to re-frame Australians’ understanding of their history and refuted the ‘black armband’ version of Australia’s history:

The expression 'black armband view of history' has been used to describe a brand of Australian history which its critics argue 'represents a swing of the pendulum from a position that had been too favourable, too self congratulatory', to an opposite extreme that is even more unreal and decidedly jaundiced. (McKenna, 1997)

Howard preferred to focus on Australia’s achievements and downplayed the injustices of the past. In a speech in 1996 he said:

I take a very different view [to that of those who sought to highlight the negative aspects of Australian history such as the unjust treatment of Indigenous Australians]. I believe that the balance sheet of our history is one of heroic achievement [through British settlers’ success in taming the land and establishing colonies] and that we have achieved much more as a nation of which we can be proud than of which we should be ashamed. (McKenna, 1997)

Thus Howard worked to reinstate Australia’s connections to Britain and Australia’s debt to the British colonisers who established the state of Australia. He aimed to revitalise a version of history that took pride in the achievements of the British colonisers and downplayed any past injustices.
Pauline Hanson and her One Nation Party were also prominent in Australian politics in the late 1990s. Hanson gathered support through her appeal to what she referred to as ‘mainstream Australians’. She argued that they had been neglected in favour of ‘minority group interests, especially Indigenous people and Asians’ (Elder, 2007: 59). Melleuish (1998: 8 - 9) argues that, like John Howard, Pauline Hanson did ‘not view the Australian past as something to be ashamed of’, a view in stark contrast to the previous Keating Labor government which had sought stronger ties with Asia, supported multiculturalism and Indigenous Australian rights and sought to sever ties with the British past by making Australia a republic.

Recent global events may have also contributed to a decline in the support for multiculturalism and the re-emergence of assimilationist views. Jabubwicz (2006: 258) argues that after the 9/11 attacks, the London bombings and the Bali bombings multiculturalism was questioned. Fear of Muslims has grown and the Howard government’s endorsement of Christian values can be regarded as a response to this fear and a return to the values of the dominant majority (Jabubwicz, 2006: 253).

In December 2007 Kevin Rudd became the Labor Prime Minister of Australia. In February 2008 he demonstrated a key difference in his political outlook by apologising to the ‘Stolen Generation.’ In his apology Kevin Rudd said:

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24 Pauline Hanson was elected to Federal parliament in 1996. She advocated stopping the specialist programs aimed at supporting Aboriginals and migrants and instead addressing the needs of ordinary white Australians whose needs she felt were being ignored by governments. In her first speech to the House of Representatives in 1996 she stated that she wanted multiculturalism abolished (Hanson, 1996). Her ideas sparked considerable heated debate about the government’s policies regarding migration, Aboriginals and multiculturalism. The One Nation Party was established in Australia in 1997 by Pauline Hanson.

25 The Stolen Generation is a term used to describe the forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families which was ‘official government policy from 1909 to 1969.’ (Reconciliation Network, 2007)
To the Stolen Generations, I say the following: as Prime Minister of Australia, I am sorry. On behalf of the Government of Australia, I am sorry. On behalf of the Parliament of Australia, I am sorry. I offer you this apology without qualification. (Reconciliation Network, 2007)

This action recognised the suffering caused when Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families to be raised in a culture which ignored their ancestry. This was a considerable change from the Howard years where the ‘black armband’ view of Australia’s history had been strongly condemned and Howard had repeatedly refused to apologise despite popular support for this. Rudd’s apology recognised the significance of a view of Australian history that was not British centred and instead foocussed on the experiences of others who played a role in Australia’s history.

This brief outline of Australia’s population history demonstrates the changeability of Australia’s national identity. Prior to white settlement the Indigenous population saw themselves as belonging to language groups rather than one united nation. Prior to Federation Australia was a collection of independent colonies. After 1901 a sense of Australian national identity was forged that relied heavily upon British ties. Since 1901 this British image has lost validity in the light of demographic changes and been replaced with a sense of multiculturalism.

Contemporary Multicultural Australia

The above brief history demonstrates that Australia has never existed as a country with a homogenous population. Australia has always had a population with varied backgrounds which has been accentuated by the large intake of migrants since 1945. It is now recognised that ‘cultural diversity has become a touchstone of its national identity’ (DFAT, 2007: 1). The multicultural nature of its population is officially recognised as a key feature of Australia. This multicultural
understanding of Australia sets the context for current Australian residents when constructing their national identities. It is an ever-present feature of contemporary Australia as all residents must interact daily with a diverse mix of peoples who live in Australia and regard themselves as Australian. This diversity cannot be ignored as it was in the past due to the degree of diversity in contemporary Australia. Australia’s Indigenous population has not disappeared; in fact the number of people identifying as Indigenous is growing. In June 2006 there were estimated to be 517,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders living in Australia, representing 2.5% of Australia’s population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007b). In fact ‘between 2001 and 2006, the Australian Indigenous estimated resident population increased by 58,700 or 13%’ (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007b). Australia’s population is also composed of peoples from all areas of the globe.

Multiculturalism is embraced by many in Australia. In a study undertaken by Zevallos (2005: 9) her Turkish and Latin American respondents readily embraced the notion that Australia was a multicultural nation and believed that all Australians should recognise this fact (2005: 9). One of Zevallos’ respondent’s comments when faced with a racist remark highlighted this. She retaliated to the remark saying, ‘Australia is known as the multicultural society, a multicultural country. How dare you! You’re not Australian yourself, only the Aboriginals are Australian in that sense’ (Zevallos, 2005: 10). Zevallos’ respondents explained acts of racism they experienced as the behaviours of a few deviants who denied multiculturalism (2005: 10).

However attitudes toward multiculturalism vary in Australia. When Scech and Haggis interviewed people who identified themselves as ‘white’ they voiced ‘willingness, even desire, to conceive of Australia as a “multicultural” society in which “everybody could be themselves”’ (2001: 143). Dunn, Forrest, Burnley and McDonald in
their survey of 5056 residents of Queensland and New South Wales also found that 85% of respondents felt it was ‘a good thing for a society to be culturally diverse’ (2004: 416). Markus and Arunachalam (2007) in their investigation of attitudes in two Melbourne suburbs found high support for non-discriminatory policies, yet support for multiculturalism was less enthusiastic with a preference for a policy that encouraged migrants to speedily fit into the Australian community. Dandy and Pe-Pau (2010) also examined attitudes toward multiculturalism in Australia. Their data ‘demonstrated favourable attitudes toward cultural diversity and support for multiculturalism’ (Dandy and Pe-Pau, 2010: 34), yet these positive attitudes were not expressed by all.

Multiculturalism is not a simple idea with a singular meaning that is readily accepted by all. It can be understood in various ways. Jones (1999: 21) suggests that at ‘a relatively uncontroversial level, it may signal little more than an endorsement of mutual tolerance and a “fair go.”’ Hirst explains that multiculturalism can be regarded as soft or hard (1994: 2). Tolerance and acceptance of migrants embracing their own cultural traditions whilst living in Australia is soft multiculturalism, while a belief that migrants must be supported by the government to promote their individual cultures is hard multiculturalism (Hirst, 1994: 2).

In times of economic affluence policies of hard multiculturalism may be more readily accepted. The Hawke-Keating Labor government in the 1980s introduced policies of economic rationalism as they embraced globalisation (Bulbeck, 2004: 342). These policies, along with a shift in Australia’s international focus to position itself as more a part of Asia, resulted in a sharp decline in support for hard multiculturalism. Many who suffered the economic consequences of

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26 Economic rationalist theory argues that the private marketplace is the best means to support a community and it endorses minimal government intervention. Thus services provided by governments are diminished and privatised.
these policies, such as job losses, felt that they had been betrayed by the government that was providing support for some groups, but not for them. Jones supports the idea that economic hardship contributed to a reduction in support for hard multiculturalism, stating that ‘popular support for values like tolerance and equality of opportunity is easier to garner when economic times are good than when they are bad’ (1996: 25). He suggests that those who felt they were victims of harsh economic policies which resulted in high ‘unemployment, job uncertainty and poverty’ sought to find scapegoats in ‘minority groups like Aboriginal Australians and Asian immigrants [who] are easy targets’ (Jones, 1996: 25). Schech and Haggis suggest that the move to place Australia as part of Asia and sever links with Britain set those supporting multiculturalism against those defending Australia’s British heritage (2001: 149).

Hage notes that policies of hard multiculturalism in the 1980s led to ‘a marked increase[d] in the capacity of Third World looking Australians to advance their interests’ (1999: 21). This, in conjunction with economic changes due to globalisation, left some Anglo-Australians feeling marginalised. Those working in manufacturing and rural areas, especially unskilled manual workers who suffered the most from economic rationalist policies, resented the special policies, such as funding for cultural programs, supporting migrants (Bulbeck, 2004:342, Galligan and Roberts, 2004:85). In Bulbeck’s research, respondents were very happy to accept other cultures, however, they were not so accepting of migrants or Aboriginals receiving ‘special’ treatment (2004). Bulbeck observed that socio-economic class was not the key factor in determining if a person was a ‘white worrier’27 (2004: 349) and that worriers were represented across the socio-economic scale. This bitterness contributed to the “White decline” backlash of those white Australians who felt that their interests were being ignored.

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27 Bulbeck states that ‘white worriers’ are white, more likely to be male and ‘represented across the socio-economic scale’ who feel marginalised by government policies (2004: 341, 357-358).
by the government and thus sought to voice their anger and whose feelings were loudly articulated by Pauline Hanson (Hage, 1999: 22).

Various explanations have been presented to explain the different attitudes toward multiculturalism that exist across the Australian population. Hirst discusses the divide between soft and hard multiculturalism, stating that the many who understand the term in its soft form regard ‘an attack on multiculturalism as an attack on tolerance and acceptance’ (1994: 3). Perhaps this can explain the ‘white worriers’ (Bulbeck, 2004: 349) combined belief in multiculturalism and resentment at what they viewed as unfair treatment. It has also been suggested that resentment toward hard multiculturalism was fostered by the lack of consultation with the general public regarding its adoption. Phillips and Holton state that:

While politicians and cultural elites were broadly committed to a new model of national identity based on multiculturalism and citizenship, new national social survey findings were showing that the general public was less unified.

Australian national identity based upon multiculturalism and citizenship was popular among the highly educated, the young and the secular-minded, a more traditional and restrictive understanding continued to be widely embraced by the less educated, the older and the religiously-minded. (2004: 736 - 737)

Intellectuals and politicians from the mid-1990s supported hard multicultural ideas, however much of the public felt that their needs were being ignored.

Markus’ studies in Melbourne in 1993 – 94 and 1998 explored attitudes to immigration and identity issues. His findings suggest that there had not been a marked change of attitude toward these issues
over the time frame (1999: 39). This was contrary to the thesis that ‘xenophobic attitudes’ were increasing (Markus, 1999: 39), given the vocal support for Pauline Hanson and One Nation and their policies in the late 1990s which opposed multiculturalism. However he found that while there was ‘widespread endorsement of non-discriminatory policies and willingness to accept migrants of all backgrounds … there is almost no support for government funding of cultural maintenance in the first five years after an immigrant’s arrival in Australia’ (Markus, 1999: 51). This again suggests support for soft multiculturalism but not for hard in the contemporary Australian context.

However multiculturalism has had its critics. Opponents of multiculturalism fear ‘social conflict, fragmentation and disharmony’ (Jayasuriya, 1997: 89), believing that only a single culture country can flourish. This fear was loudly voiced by Pauline Hanson in 1996 in her maiden parliamentary speech when she stated that ‘a truly multicultural nation can never be strong or united’ (Jones, 1996: 17). The Australian historian, Geoffrey Blainey, also voiced this view stating that multicultural nations often fall apart (1994). Dunn et. al. (2004: 416) note that forty-five percent of their respondents felt strongly that ‘cultural diversity was a threat to nationhood in Australia.’ These voices reflect a strong belief in an ethnic state; that a state cannot be united without longstanding ties of history, blood and culture. The presence of such perceptions of national identity in contemporary Australia are relevant to this thesis as they relegate those who do not possess the requisite ethnic heritage to an ongoing non-Australian national identity.

Jamrozik, Boland and Urquart (1995: 111) argue that fears about multiculturalism reflect a fear that the ‘hegemony of the Anglo-inheritance’ will be lost. Hage concurs arguing that opposition to multiculturalism is driven by a degree of fear that ‘ethnics’ are now ‘in control’ (1998: 222). Those who no longer feel comfortable and
empowered in their state develop a ‘fantasy’ notion of a state, an ideal that they imagine existed in the past and has been stolen from them (Hage, 1998: 74). Thus the rise of Pauline Hanson and her policies could be explained by the fact that Australian society had undergone considerable change in the 1990s. The Hawke-Keating government had enacted policies of economic rationalism which caused economic hardship for many (Soutphommasane, 2009: 107, 108) and made efforts to align Australia more closely with Asia (Manne, 2006: 22) while the composition of the population continued to alter dramatically. Those who no longer felt the reality of Australia met their comfortable ‘fantasy’ (Hage, 1998: 74) believed that their ideal Australia had been destroyed by the government’s policies of multiculturalism as Australia no longer felt ‘homely’ to them (Hage, 1998: 66).

Another fear has been expressed that ‘multiculturalism would divide the nation into warring tribes’ (Hirst, 1994: 3). This has been accentuated by the Internet, cheap communications and fast, inexpensive travel which have enabled migrants to maintain closer ties with their homelands. In his analysis of the Croatian community in Australia, Brown notes that the community was considerably involved in the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the ensuing wars, through fund raising, returning to Croatia and voting in Croatian elections (2000). Ties such as these may have been seen as diminishing loyalty to Australia. Brown notes that since the September 11 attacks in the USA there has been increased concern that foreign ties may make demands upon the loyalties of migrants living in Australia (2002: 72, 76). There also exists a fear that ethnic groups may increase the strength of their voice to demand actions that provide only for their needs while ignoring the concerns of others; a fear that they may ‘compete with mainstream institutions and so have the potential to threaten social cohesion and social stability’ (Jayasuriya, 1997: 90). Perhaps this was the source of Pauline Hanson’s fear of ‘being swamped by Asians’
Such fears are not unique to Australia. Ben-Eliezer (2008: 950) identifies similar fears in Israel toward Ethiopian Jews. Furthermore, in South Africa immigrants are also regarded as a threat (CDE Focus, 2006: 1).

In contrast Hirst (1994: 4) argues that migrants do not remain in groups separate from the rest of the Australian population. He suggests that ethnic groups soon lose their distinctiveness as they merge into broader Australian society (Hirst, 1994: 4). According to Hirst, there is no long lasting residential segregation of ethnic groups in Australia, marriage outside ethnic groups is high, children of non-English speaking migrants quickly adopt the English language, there is a decline in religious devotion over the generations and migrants themselves believe that when new migrants arrive they should alter their behaviours to become more Australian (1994: 5). Adhikan (1999: 192) also argues that there is no evidence of ethnic enclaves in Australia. Adhikan and Hirst’s findings suggest that migrants’ ties to their countries of origin diminish over time. It also suggests that migrants merge into the Australian population and do not retain strong characteristics of their country of origin for generations. Hirst’s findings thus counter the fears of some that migration could create schisms in Australian society.

People living in Australia must develop their own sense of national identity in this environment. This is an environment where multiculturalism is advocated although understandings of it vary. This variation of understandings results in differing degrees of acceptance of difference and different levels of support for assistance in the maintenance of migrants’ heritages. Past and present constructions of Australian national identity have also served to influence people’s understandings of Australianness.
Social Constructions of Australian Identity

All countries have their own stories and histories which work to unite people as a nation (Smith, 1996a, 1996b). These also play a crucial role in the reflexive construction of self. Hall (2001) explained how stories contribute to identity development:

Storytelling is at the heart of human understanding. Who are we? How did we come to be here?

Isn’t this history? Not quite. From the community’s point of view there is a problem with history. There’s too much of it, because it includes everything we do. No nation on earth lives with its actual history. People take from it a selection of stories. Stories they are comfortable with.

Perceptions abound about what a ‘true’ Australian is and what is ‘really’ Australian. In a personal conversation a young Australian once told me that Melbourne was not really Australia, that the outback28 was the real Australia. While the majority of the Australian population lives in cities on the coast (Walter, 2000: 42) the bush or the desert centre is often perceived and presented as ‘real’ Australia.

There are also plentiful stories about the Australian character. Characters29 such as the Jolly Swagman, Crocodile Dundee, the Man from Snowy River (Ganguly, 1997: 19), Don Bradman (Egan, 2003: 177), the ANZACS, the diggers, the gold miners, the bush rangers and the early bush men are part of Australian folklore (Australian Government Culture and Recreation Portal: 2007). These images are of heroic men battling against huge odds to work in a rugged

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28 The term outback refers to the remote desert and bush areas of Australia.
29 The characters and terms referred to here are explained in the glossary.
environment, to care for their ‘mates’\(^{30}\) and to uphold egalitarian principles:

The central character of the Australian legend, the noble frontiersman, can be reduced down to type: an able-bodied white male with very few personal attachments who ekes out a modest existence with honest work. He is harmless and mostly good natured, able to poke fun at himself as well as others … the legendary Australian carries out his life according to the dual creeds of mateship and egalitarianism. (Nile, 2000: 2 – 3)

Women have little place in these stories. In Ganguly’s (1997: 19) research her female respondents noted that the Australian character tended to be masculinised, leaving little recognition of the female portion of the population. Lawson’s story of *The Drover’s Wife*\(^ {31}\) gives insight into the role of women who also lived harsh lives supporting their husbands as they battled the harsh environment of Australia. Yet these women are not portrayed as active participants; the drover’s wife waits as her husband is away actively participating in the production of the Australian story. Mackay (1993: 13) argues that such male dominated imagery is ‘outrageous if not offensive’ given the redefinitions of gender roles in Australia. In literature and art (Australian Government Culture and Recreation Portal: 2007) there is recognition of early pioneer women but they do not have the same status in folklore as the men. These images of Australian identity also ‘have Anglo-Australians at their centre’ (Albert and Hadid, 2009: 165) while the stories of other ethnicities, such as the Chinese are ignored (Ryan, 1997: 72). As stated by a respondent in my previous research:

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\(^{30}\) The notion of mateship is an integral aspect of Australian folklore. Mateship generally occurs between males and is brought into focus in times of adversity when men bond together and support each other to overcome great odds. Mates care for each other and are always there to assist in times of need. Of recent times the term has been expanded to also include women, though it remains a predominantly male concept.

\(^{31}\) Henry Lawson wrote the story of *The Drover’s Wife* which was published in 1892. The story describes the hardships faced by a woman left behind to care for the farm and family while her husband was away droving.
I think there is too much emphasis placed on things like Captain Cook\textsuperscript{32} and the Eureka Stockade\textsuperscript{33} and all that sort of thing. They are very white stories, very Anglo stories and it is fine for them to be told if they are told in conjunction with other stories as well. (Lohm, 2007: 30)

The contributions of other ethnicities, such as the role of Afghan cameleers who from the 1840s helped open the central deserts of Australia, the Pacific Islanders who worked in Queensland sugar plantations between 1860 and 1900 and the Japanese and Malay divers who worked in the late 1800s and early 1900s to establish the pearl industry in Western Australia (Mackie, 2004: 63) are rarely heard. The crucial roles played by these men in Australian history and are generally overlooked. However the role played by any women who may have accompanied them is even less documented.

These images of Australian national identity retain resonance even in Australia today. Brett (2003) and Dyrenfurth (2005a) both outline the way in which the former Prime Minister John Howard utilised these concepts to maximize his political advantage. He included in his speeches appeals to a ‘fair go … [and] mateship’ (Brett, 2003: 19) to summon support recognising the ongoing appeal of these images. The power of the notion of mateship is evident in the manner that Australians ‘band together in times of crisis’ (Sharp, 1997: 19). For example in early 2011 Australians rallied to support flood victims in many areas. Yet other images such as those of the Man from Snowy River or Crocodile Dundee bear little resemblance to contemporary Australia. The majority of Australians do not lead such colourful lives

\textsuperscript{32} An Englishman, Captain Cook claimed the Australian land for Britain in 1770. In Australian history he is often referred to as having discovered Australia. This is a very Euro-centred perspective as it does not recognise the Indigenous Australians who lived in the country and had known of its existence for thousands of years.

\textsuperscript{33} In 1854 gold miners opposed the government’s miners’ licence. Near Ballarat in Victoria they built a flimsy stockade and fought government troops.
and these individuals may be recognised as exaggerated caricatures, exotic representations of a make-believe Australia, certainly ‘more stereo-typical than typical’ (Lohm, 2007: 52).

Despite these social constructions of Australian identity being different to the realities of Australia in the 21st century their significance cannot be overlooked. They are crucial aspects of the folklore of the country and the values they espouse are still prevalent in Australian thinking. Perhaps they can be regarded as the backdrop upon which a more realistic and current image of Australians can be negotiated and embraced, which may come to include new and more inclusive images. Or perhaps they serve as the shared memories that Smith (1996a, 1996b) believes are essential for the development of solidarity between members of a nation. Such memories may be highlighted and assembled by the population to engender unity.

Yet they also ignore many facets of the contemporary Australian population. The implications of these non-inclusive constructions of Australian national identity must be considered when discussing the construction of identity. Kymlicka (1995: 89) notes the vital role played by culture in the development of identity as it provides ‘imagined options’. The lack of strong non-masculine and non-white images of Australian national identity in these constructions can work to distance many Australian residents from these powerful images of Australian national identity. Thus they may come to understand themselves as estranged from the predominant images of Australia and construct a national identity which sits at the periphery of Australian identity. This could create a hierarchy of Australian national identity as espoused by Hage (1998) with some having a greater claim to an Australian identity than others. This could have the potential to cause fractures in any notion of a united sense of being Australian.
Young Adults

Much has been written about the development of Australian national identity. Considerable research has been undertaken to gain insight into how people residing in Australia define Australian identity (Dockett and Cusak, 2003; Ganguly, 1997; Jones, 1996a; Langer and Farrar, 2003; Hollinsworth, 1998; Jayasuriya, 1997; McLeod and Yates, 2003; Phillips and Holton, 2004; Ramsay, 2001; Schwarz, 2004; Stratton, 2000; Tan, 2003). While this research has focussed on both long and short-term Australian residents and school children there has been little focus on the ideas of young adults (those who are post primary and secondary education), whose perceptions will shape future definitions of Australian national identity. This formed the basis of my Honours thesis: ‘Perceptions of Australianness among young adults raised in an outer eastern suburb (of Melbourne)’. My findings shed some light upon the thinking of those interviewed, however the sample was small and only reflected a very small sector of young adults in Australia.

Dwyer and Wyn (2001: 33) suggest that the lives of young adults today are different from those of the past. They propose that there now exists a lengthy transition period from school and youth into work and adulthood (Dwyer and Wyn, 2001: 33). Factors such as remaining ‘in full time education until a later age’, the increased difficulty entering the labour market and the extension of time that young people remain dependent or semi-dependent upon their families (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997: 8, 9) prevent young adults from embracing all the social responsibilities and features associated with adulthood. The transition to adulthood is now ‘longer and more demanding’ (American Sociological Association (ASA), 2005). A traditional understanding of adulthood has involved the completion of schooling, employment, marriage and children (ASA, 2005); however if this definition is applied only 31 percent of American men and 46 percent of American women would have achieved ‘adulthood’ by age 30 in
Respondents in Dwyer and Wyn’s study did ‘not view study and work in the sequential way implied in the customary models of transition’ (2001: 19). In fact at about 22 years of age 63 per cent still lived at home (Dwyer and Wyn, 2001: 19). These trends are also identified in Sweden, Canada, Belgium and Britain (Dwyer and Wyn, 2001: 20).

Marriage is a traditional signifier of the achievement of maturity and adulthood however ‘the trends towards older age at marriage continued in 2005’ (ABS, 2006a) and in 2009 the median age for marriage was 31.5 an increase in 3.5 years from 2004 (ABS 2009a) suggesting that arrival at full adulthood is being delayed. There is also an increasing trend for people not to marry at all. In 2006 15% of couples were living together and unmarried (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2011). ‘Youth is seen as a separate “stage” of life because the time of youth is about the preparation for future (real) life – adulthood’ (Wyn and White 1997: 13). Now it would appear that young adulthood may be emerging as another stage in the lives of Western young people. It is a time when youth has been left behind, yet the full responsibilities of adulthood are not yet fully undertaken. This thesis investigated the impressions of such contemporary young people in Australia.

Chapter Review

This chapter has considered the current literature that explores notions of identity development, the role of appearance and culture in identity development, understandings of hybridity, Australia as a state and a nation, Australia’s history, contemporary multicultural Australia, social constructions of Australianness and young adults.

It argues that identities are socially constructed in an environment that is less constrained than in the past where much of identity was
determined by factors such as birth. Factors such as appearance and culture are noted as being influential in the construction of national identity. Identities are not perceived to be static and unchanging, rather they are perceived to be flexible and able to mutate according to situations. These ideas are supported by Giddens’ concept of ongoing reflexivity (1991).

National identities are not simple entities, rather they are often multi-factored and complex. Often people's national identity incorporates connections to more than one nation. The concept of hybridity is utilised to understand the manner in which individuals are able to incorporate various aspects of their heritages to construct a unique national identity that recognises these heritages. In the contemporary globalised world where the lives of people around the world are inextricably connected, international travel is more readily available and people are informed about alternative cultures a cosmopolitan identity has been developed by some who regard themselves as global citizens who are sensitive to the diversity of humanity.

Australia was proclaimed a state at the time of Federation in 1901. Since then it has worked to become a nation whereby all Australians feel a part of the imagined community (Anderson, 2006) of Australians. Since then its population has undergone massive changes which were influenced greatly by government policies such as White Australia and the promotion of immigration and multiculturalism. Today's Australian population is diverse composed of people with heritages from all around the globe. Understandings of Australian national identity have been shaped by the stories of Australia’s past. These include the ANZAC legend and notions of mateship. As identified by respondents in past research these tend to be very white, masculinised images which are not reflective of the contemporary Australian population. These issues are pertinent to Australia,
especially given the plurality of its population and the ongoing debate about Australia’s national identity.

Finally the chapter explored the importance of interrogating the opinions of young adults. These people are a significant proportion of the Australian population and will be influential in shaping the attitudes in the future. Research has been undertaken to explore the ideas of adults and school aged children regarding national and Australian identity however the specific thinking of young adults is an area that lacks detailed inspection.

Perceptions of self are not static but always in flux, adjusting to suit changing circumstances, and so understandings of national identity are also not fixed. A country such as Australia is not only experiencing the mammoth changes experienced by the world in this era of technological change, but also added transformations due to changing demographics. Ideas of national identity must be constantly re-examined as past perceptions may be quickly outdated.

It is evident from this literature review that notions of what it is to be an Australian have been previously investigated. However while this thesis built upon this literature, it examined new areas. It explored how young people, rather than school aged children or older adults, understood their national identities. It considered how a range of features such as stereotypical images of Australianness, appearance, family, education, religion and young people’s temporal situatedness in contemporary Australia worked together to impact upon the development of their national identities. It thus provides new insights into the multiple factors that work to influence young people to develop their national identities. It also examined the significance of hybridity in the national identities young people from varied heritages providing insights into the significance if this notion in contemporary Australia.
The next chapter, Chapter Three, outlines the methodology utilised in this research, providing an outline of the theoretical perspective guiding the research. It also discusses the way that data was collected, details about the sample and the respondents, the ethical issues arising in the project, data analysis strategies and the limitations to the research.
Chapter Three

Research Methodology

The purpose of this study was to investigate how young residents of Australia perceived their national identities. A person’s national identity is just one aspect of a complex set of factors that make up a person’s sense of self. How an individual understands Australian national identity will influence his/her comprehension of his/her own national identity. A perception of Australian national identity may include or exclude certain people, according to how well their appearance, values and behaviours match the held perception. So a perception of Australianness can serve to include some and exclude others. As such it can work to unite those living in Australia or cause divisions to occur, whereby some are never able to meet the commonly accepted vision of being Australian and so will be marginalised from Australian society, either by the rejection of others or their own recognition of their inability to conform to a prescribed image. It is thus important to gain an insight into how young adults understand Australian national identity and how this impacts upon their understandings of their own national identity.

Due to the extent of migration, many who live in Australia carry close affiliations to other states, as well as to myriad cultural heritages. These affiliations impact upon how people construct their own complex sense of national identity. As such these factors must be explored. The notion of self is constructed through interactions with others and is always under review and re-evaluation. How young adults communicate with others and with whom they communicate will thus be crucial in the development of national identity.

This thesis examines the question: How do young residents of Australia perceive their national identities? In order to gain a broader
appreciation of their perspectives the following sub-questions were also explored: How do young adults understand Australian identity; how do they understand their ethnic/cultural identity; with whom do these young adults interact and how do they understand their interactions with others?

**Theoretical perspective**

This study examines young people’s perspectives of their national identities. A national identity reflects an affiliation with a nation; that is, a group of people who share a sense ‘belonging’ (Tate, 2009: 97, 98) and cohesion. This differs from a state identity or identification with a country which relates to the legal connection, through citizenship, of a person to a geographical area ruled by a state. As state or country identities are objective, legal definitions they were not appropriate terms to utilise in this research.

National identity also differs from ethnic identity. The notion of ethnicity is premised upon a belief in common blood ties and common descent resulting in shared physical features, language, religion and cultures (Cornell and Hartman, 1998: 16, 17). An ethnic group can be understood as a ‘subpopulation within a larger society’ (Cornell and Hartman, 1998: 19). Through informal discussions with young people prior to the collection of data it became apparent their lay understanding of ethnicity incorporated this notion of subgroup. Thus, in their eyes it seemed that in Australia those not belonging to the dominant group were perceived to have an ethnic identity while those belonging to the dominant group were regarded as lacking ethnicity. For this reason it was not deemed appropriate to use the term ethnic identity in this research.
The decision to investigate national identity rather than state, country or ethnic identity was tactical as it avoided confusions that young lay people may have about the specificities of these terms in sociological discussions. National identity was also selected for this study as it is subjective. It relates to how a person feels rather than purely subjective criteria. I was eager to examine not their objective citizenship, which is easily established, but their personal ‘imagined community’ or communities of a nation or nations (Anderson, 2002: 7). As the respondents came from many ethnic groups I was eager for them to explore how they related their ethnicity and their residence in Australia to develop a national identity.

This study is grounded in the belief that people are not born with national identities but construct their understandings of their national identities within the environment they inhabit. As such it rejects a primordial (Anderson, 2001: 210; Shils, 1957: 130) notion of national identity. Rather this research sees national identity as being an aspect of overall identity that is adaptable, as being constructed and reconstructed according to circumstance (Cornell and Hartman, 1998: 72).

The notion of national identity being constructed is based upon Giddens’ (1991) idea of the role of ongoing reflexivity in identity development. Giddens’ ideas have grown from the thinking of earlier theorists. Mead (1956: 204) refers to the self as a ‘social structure [that] arises in social experience’. Thus people’s sense of themselves is developed through their interactions with others and their responses to their understanding of other’s reactions to them (Mead 1956: 234). Self-image ‘is a product of the ways others think of us’ (Jones, 2003: 103). People are intelligent beings able to make decisions and ‘plan their conduct in the light of the expectation as to how things will happen’ (Cuff and Payne, 1984: 118). Giddens notes that the self is never a finished project and that throughout life adjustments must be
made to accommodate new circumstances. He regards the self as an ongoing reflexive project (Giddens, 1991: 76). These adjustments do not occur within a vacuum, but within the community that the individual inhabits.

The environment and the structures of a community constrain the potential options available for identity construction. There are limits to peoples’ choices when constructing their national identities. Kymlicka identifies one of these limits when he refers to the impact of culture and how it can work to both provide opportunities for development of self-image, but also prohibit or restrict other possibilities (1995: 83 - 89). As each individual adjusts and acts within their environment they also act to reinforce and maintain it. People’s understandings of themselves therefore are limited by the structures of their society, but these understandings also serve to reinforce and reproduce these structures (Giddens and Pierson, 1998: 75 – 93). Such a notion may suggest a society that provides no option for change, however Giddens regards people as intelligent beings, able to make rational decisions, so recognises a degree of creativity in their development of self (1991: 41). Certainly the structures of society restrict decisions but they do not prohibit adjustments and so people, as thinking beings, are able to bring about change:

… this is just what social life is like. It is continually contingently reproduced by knowledgeable human agents – that’s what gives it fixity and that’s what also produces change. (Giddens and Pierson, 1998: 90)

Thus national identities can be regarded as constructed by individuals but reliant upon the environment in which they are constructed to set opportunities and limitations upon these constructions. They are also reliant upon endorsement or rejection by others for their development. National identities are fluid and able to adapt to new circumstances.
In Australia much of the population has a migrant background. Thus national identities of Australian residents may be hybrid (Nederveen Pieterse, 1994) reflecting both a person’s connection to another state as well as their residence in Australia. Such a concept challenges the notion of a state being a single people (Schiller et al., 1995: 51). It requires recognition that there may exist no single Australian national identity and that each Australian may have constructed his/her own unique sense of national identity which incorporates aspects of Australianness but may also incorporate other features.

These understandings of the development and complexity of national identity have informed this research. They indicate that the methods utilised to gather data must allow respondents the opportunity to explain, in depth, their feelings and ideas or only shallow and superficial insights will be gained into people’s understandings of their national identities.

Methodology

The nature of the research question led to the use of a qualitative research strategy as it intended to gain a detailed insight into the respondents’ thinking about their national identities (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005: 133). The research explored the perceptions of young adults and these could not be presented as a set of numbers. While statistics provide quantitative data about large groups and offer valuable information, this research sought to gain comprehensive detailed insights into the respondents’ personal understandings and feelings in relation to their own national identity and their appreciation of what it meant to be Australian. As such it was necessary to provide the respondents with the space to explore their thoughts. It was through the language the respondents used, the words they selected,
the way they phrased their thoughts that a fuller insight into their thinking was gained.

Providing respondents with an open framework within which to outline their thinking may result in a huge variety of responses and ideas. Certainly this can create difficulties when analysing the data as it does not necessarily ‘fit’ into neat categories. The respondents sometimes voiced similar ideas, however the ways that these ideas were articulated varied greatly. At times the respondents appeared to ‘change their minds’ and even contradict themselves as they worked to answer questions and tease out how they felt about their individual national identities within the context of living in Australia. This provided rich data for analysis that highlighted the complexity of their understandings of their national identities.

Data Collection

Whilst the research had a qualitative focus a brief written questionnaire was used to gather simple factual data prior to the commencement of the interview. These questionnaires collected data related to the respondents’ age, education level and family members’ places of birth. The use of these questionnaires as a separate information-gathering tool from the interviews served to make a distinction between the fact gathering aspect of the research and the actual interviews where more complex and thoughtful responses were sought. Questionnaires provide an efficient means to gather simple data such as family members’ places of birth. However questionnaires are not well suited to obtaining complex, detailed responses. In written questionnaires respondents are reluctant to provide long answers as it can be time consuming and assumes a degree of literacy that all respondents may not possess. As such questionnaires are best suited to obtain straightforward data where respondents can simply tick a box or provide a simple, short response. Verbal questionnaires are also better
suited to short direct questions where the researcher can easily record responses. If verbal questionnaires require longer responses they may be more accurately defined as structured interviews than questionnaires.

In the questionnaires used, all questions were clear and simple and only required respondents to provide factual data. These questionnaires served several purposes. Firstly they gathered information which was essential for the research. Family history, education, religion and places of residence all impact upon the development of national identity. Secondly they gathered this information quickly and effectively. Thirdly the questionnaire provided a non-threatening introduction to the interview. I was very conscious that to begin the interview with a series of quick verbal questions may not assist the respondents to feel comfortable. I was anxious to create a sense of rapport with the respondents such that they would feel at ease and able to speak openly and freely. A list of verbal questions in quick succession, all of which required only short responses, may have set an undesirable tone for the interview. The respondents may have felt that the interview was rather like an ‘interrogation’ and that only quick, short responses would be required throughout the interview, something I was eager to avoid. Fourthly the questionnaires led respondents into thinking about the topic of the interview. It gave them a few minutes to reflect upon the topic without having to voice their thoughts. Respondents were able to relax into the interview rather than being ‘hit’ with questions as soon as they sat down. Fifthly these questionnaires enabled me to collect this data before the commencement of the interview so that valuable interview time was not wasted gathering such straightforward data. Finally the questionnaires provided me with data to which I could refer during the interview.
The questionnaires were completed before the interview began. When respondents arrived for the interview we ordered snacks and drinks (when interviews were held in a café which was almost always the case) and chatted generally to enable respondents to settle and feel relaxed in the interview space. The respondents then completed the questionnaire whilst snacks and drinks arrived. This was planned so that the actual interview was less likely to be interrupted by café staff.

The data collected in the questionnaires was vital in assisting in the format of the interview, providing information that informed the wording of certain questions or highlighted areas which required more in depth exploration. I could phrase questions to more effectively suit each respondent. For example I could ask, ‘what Italian traditions do you follow?’ rather than just, ‘what traditions do you follow?’ This provided clearer directions for the respondents. The aim of the interview was to enable the respondents to feel comfortable, to be able to explore their ideas in an unhurried manner and to outline their complex thoughts; hence the quick, factual questions were incorporated in the questionnaire and so did not form part of the interview. See Appendix 1 for a copy of the questionnaire.

The main data gathering tool utilised in this project was an in-depth interview. The voices of young adults are not always listened to (Hickey and Fitzclarence, 2000: 126) so interviews were used and designed to provide a voice for young adults and for me to gain ‘access to people’s ideas, thoughts and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher’ (Reinharz, 1992: 19).

Interviews provide an opportunity to gather far more detailed and rich responses than questionnaires and avoid the possible influence of ‘group think’ or conformity (Harrison, 2000: 22) that could emerge if focus groups were utilised. Focus groups do have the advantage of allowing respondents to develop and expand their ideas as they listen
to the ideas of others. Given that this area of research explores themes that do not necessarily impact upon the day-to-day lives of respondents the opportunity to generate thinking and build upon or respond to the ideas of others could be advantageous. However this advantage was seen as being outweighed by the potential for a dominant person to take over the discussion and silence any who had dissenting opinions but were less confident to express them. For some respondents the subject matter could also be quite sensitive, especially for any who felt that their national identities were not respected. For such respondents to speak openly in a group setting could prove quite daunting.

In order to gain the maximum insight into the thinking of respondents it was vital that the respondents felt able to speak honestly with no fear of recrimination. Ensuring the comfort of respondents was of crucial significance in this research particularly as I am considerably older than the respondents. I also have a white European appearance and so respondents of non-white backgrounds may have felt some reticence in voicing feelings about non-acceptance by white Australians. It was necessary to quickly develop rapport and ensure respondents understood that their ideas would be respected and listened to in an uncritical and empathic manner. My aim was to create a ‘caring research environment that [was] non-hierarchical’ (Liamputtong, 2004: 450). Considerable attention was given to planning these interviews so that respondents would feel relaxed (Bouma and Ling, 2004: 177; Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell and Alexander, 1995: 79; Ruane, 2006: 147) and ‘safe enough to talk freely’ (Kvale, 1996: 125). My intention was to minimise the ‘asymmetry of power’ which Kvale (1996: 20) suggests is inherent in interview situations, an asymmetry that is heightened when respondents are young people and the interviewer is older (Leyshon, 2002: 2).
Various strategies were implemented to create a comfortable and trusting environment for the interviews. Participants were involved in the decision about where and when the interview took place. These were conducted in cafes or public libraries chosen by the respondents. This was done to create a non-threatening environment where I hoped the respondents would not feel that they were being taken into the terrain of the interviewer and so may possibly have felt uncomfortable. Prior to beginning each interview, time was spent putting participants at ease, building trust (Reinharz, 1992: 24, 25, 29) and completing the questionnaire. This was planned to give the respondents time to relax and develop a connection with me before launching into the interview. Given the location of the interviews, care was taken to ensure that others were not able to overhear the conversation as this may have inhibited the respondents and breached their confidentiality.

A small, inconspicuous digital audio recorder was used to record the interviews. Prior to the commencement of the interview respondents were reminded that their participation was voluntary, that they could terminate the interview at any time and that they did not need to answer questions that may make them feel uncomfortable. Their permission to record the interview was obtained and they were reminded that they could obtain a summary or full copy of the project upon its completion. Respondents were invited to ask any questions that they had about the research. Some were very eager to learn more about the project while others were simply happy to provide their ideas.

In the pilot stage of the research respondents were recruited to be interviewed one-on-one. Despite my detailed planning some early respondents did not appear as comfortable in the interviews as I had hoped. After one interview a respondent remarked that the interview was ‘hard’ and she had felt uncomfortable at times as she was unable to quickly formulate answers to all the questions. I was concerned that
any respondent should feel ill at ease, especially in this case as she was particularly articulate, well informed and outgoing. If she had felt uncomfortable then I guessed that others may feel similarly. A solution to this problem came in the form of paired interviews. The first such interview was not planned. Two respondents who were to be interviewed one after the other arrived at the same time for their interviews. They were friends and had come together. We discussed the option of interviewing them together rather than one at a time and they quickly embraced the idea. This interview was a success. After the interview both respondents stated that they had welcomed the opportunity to be interviewed together. They noted that they had felt relaxed and appreciated the opportunity to listen to each other’s comments and then add any further comments of their own. This dialogue between the respondents had provided in-depth, reflective responses.

Holstein and Gubrium (1995: 66 – 70) note the possibility of ‘multivocal’ interviews emphasising that the ‘narrative force of multivocality may be more poignant and visible’ when more than one person is interviewed. Liamputtong (2007) also explains that a ‘conjoint’ interview is ‘more accepted by the participants as it provides a more comfortable situation for them’. After this positive experience I decided to provide future respondents with the opportunity to be interviewed alone or with another respondent with whom they felt comfortable. As respondents were obtained through snowballing it was simple for two respondents who were known to each other to arrange to be interviewed at the same time. This arrangement was seen to allow for the exchange and development of ideas - a key attribute of focus groups to be gained while minimising the significant pitfalls of focus groups such as potential domination by

34 Multivocal is the term used by Holstein and Gubrium to refer to interviews with more than one respondent.
35 Liamputtong uses the term conjoint to refer to paired interviews.
36 Snowballing is a system whereby a few respondents are sourced and then they are asked to pass on flyers and details of the research to others (Baker, 1999:141).
an individual and discomfort to respondents. Fourteen respondents chose to be interviewed in pairs. The remainder chose to be interviewed individually.

A key feature of the paired interviews was their relaxed nature (Liamputtong, 2007). Respondents appeared at ease as they had a friend with them. This may have altered the power dynamics of the interview (Kvale, 1996: 20) thus making them feel more comfortable. Rather than me being the one to ask questions and wait for replies discussion often took place between the two respondents. For example when asked about occasions celebrated by their families a discussion took place between two respondents as they explored the different emphasis their families placed on certain celebrations. For one Easter meant ‘chocolate and camping’ whereas for the other it was a ‘massive occasion’ because she was Catholic. These discussions between respondents reduced my part in the interviews and instead of asking all the questions I was more an observer guiding the conversation.

In the paired interviews when one person spoke he/she often sparked ideas in his/her friend. They became ‘self-reflexive’ as they had the opportunity to ‘air, review and reason their views aloud’ (Cerulo cited in Ruane, 2005: 159). One respondent noted, ‘now that you’ve brought that up, I’ve never actually thought about it.’ Discussion between the friends prompted more comprehensive responses. The friends ‘activated, stimulated and cultivated’ each other’s ‘interpretive capabilities’ (Holstein and Gubrium, 2003: 17). They were not merely ‘passive vessels of answers’ (italics in original) (Holstein and Gubrium, 2003: 30) but ‘productive sources of knowledge’ (italics in original) (Holstein and Gubrium, 2003: 74) as they worked together to give meaning to their experiences.

My respondents in the paired interviews spoke confidently as each respected the ideas of their friend and allowed them space to speak. This may not always be the case as friendships are not necessarily
equal relationships and there is always the possibility that one respondent could overshadow the other, as can occur in focus groups, and thus skew the responses given. Fortunately my paired respondents appeared to speak freely and there was no observable suggestion that respondents’ ideas were modified by the presence of a friend.

All interviews were semi-structured. A set of questions (see Appendix 2) was developed to ensure a degree of structure to the interviews and to ensure that all respondents were asked to provide responses to the same questions. However the questions were open ended to enable respondents the opportunity to elaborate on ideas that were of particular interest to them, thus providing a degree of power to respondents. They had the opportunity to drive the direction of the interview to some extent, however I guided the conversations to ensure that the interviews remained on target. As the questions were open I was able to adapt the questions to suit the respondents. For example I asked some respondents who had grown up in a very white community how this had impacted upon the development of their national identity. The semi-structured format also provided me with the opportunity to ask probing questions and obtain more detail. The use of semi-structured interviews was appropriate for this research as they allowed the respondents to speak at length about their own experiences and interpretations. No two respondents approached the questions in the same manner. All had individual stories to tell. It was essential to build flexibility into the interviews so that each respondent could tell his/her story in a manner which was comfortable for them.

Despite the interviews being semi-structured they had a clear direction and questions were asked in a sequential manner. Questions around the same theme were grouped together rather than being asked in a haphazard manner. This was planned to assist the respondents as it was hoped that each question would logically lead on to the next. However not all interviews flowed in the anticipated manner. I monitored responses to ensure that if a respondent included answers to
several questions in one detailed response that these questions were not re-asked. The order that questions were asked was also modified at times if comments made by respondents led more logically to an alternative question. The key aim was to engage the respondents and obtain information in a relaxed manner rather than ensuring that questions were presented in a pre-planned sequence.

I also closely monitored the respondents’ non-verbal communications throughout the interviews. If a respondent had appeared uncomfortable at any time I planned to offer them the opportunity to terminate the interview or skip the question. Luckily this did not occur and all respondents were happy to fully participate in the interviews. However through observation of non-verbal communications questions were adapted. If a respondent appeared unsure about a question I rephrased the question to clarify it for the respondent.

In interviews respondents are generally invited to present their ideas, however it must be noted that in such situations respondents are often conscious of the impression that they want to make on the interviewer. They are unlikely to portray themselves in what they perceive may be a negative light. Whilst respondents in my study were assured that there were no right or wrong answers and that I was seeking their opinions, the desire to present a favourable image had the potential to influence answers to my interview questions.

**Sample**

A sample of young people aged between 18 and 25 who are permanent residents of Australia was sought to participate in the research. The respondents lived in and around Melbourne. Respondents were sought who had either a self identified predominantly Anglo-Irish background, a predominantly Southern European background or a predominantly South-East Asian background. These groups were selected as they represent key migrant groups in Australia. The
Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates that of the 23.6 percent of Australia’s population born overseas 33.3 percent were born in North-West Europe (mainly the United Kingdom and Ireland), 17.7 percent in Southern and Eastern Europe and 12.6 percent in South-East Asia’ (2007a). The final sample size for this research was 36: 26 women and 10 men. Drawing respondents from three different backgrounds resulted in smaller numbers of respondents from each background thus reducing the amount of data gathered for each group and adding to the complexity of the data. The choice to take this approach was made as I was keen to discover the impact that background had upon national identity development in the Australian context. The previous literature suggested that those of Anglo-Irish background and appearance were more able to construct an unchallenged, solely Australian, national identity whilst those of non-Anglo-Irish background and appearance were impelled to identify non-Australian aspects in their national identities. I was eager to explore how background, often determined by others through appearance, shaped the national identity construction of participants. Within each sample group there were respondents who were born in Australia and overseas, thus within each group there was heterogeneity. This added to the complexity of the data gathered and these factors may have impacted upon the respondents’ appreciation of their national identities.

Given the many years that migration has taken place in Australia and the subsequent intermarriage between those of different national backgrounds some respondents had mixed backgrounds. Respondents were asked to self-nominate their predominant background. It is of note that some predominant backgrounds identified by the respondents were very different to those that an objective observer might expect. From a mixture of family backgrounds some chose to align with just one and minimise others. For example one respondent identified as having a Southern European background, yet his actual family history suggested a much stronger British heritage. Respondents’
understandings of geography also varied considerably. Some claimed a particular background yet the countries of their heritage did not necessarily fit neatly into the category.

I accepted respondents’ own understandings of their heritage. This decision was premised on the underlying principles of the research which were to gain an appreciation of the respondents’ individual and thus subjective appreciations of their national identities in a supportive and non-judgemental environment. To have imposed an outsider’s objective judgement of their heritage would have immediately broken the understanding that was reached with the respondents that their ideas would be respected. Furthermore the aim of the research was to investigate their understandings of their national identity.

The respondents were a convenience sample from Melbourne and were recruited through snowballing. Flyers (see Appendix 3) were distributed through my friendship and acquaintance groups and displayed on appropriate notice boards in educational, sporting, recreational and community organisations around Monash University and the outer suburbs of Melbourne. Respondents were encouraged to pass flyers on to their friends and acquaintances who met the selection criteria.

The educational background of respondents was characteristic of the Australian population. Almost all had completed Year 12. A few were completing a trade qualification. Most had completed, or were completing, a graduate degree and some were undertaking post graduate studies. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011) in 2010 78% of 20 to 24 year olds had completed Year 12. Also according to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics 77% of tertiary aged people in Australia were in tertiary education in 2008 (2011). Eight of the 36 respondents were born overseas. This is reflective of the Australian population at June 2009, 22.2 per cent of the population
were born overseas (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2008: 1). The intention was to obtain a relatively even gender mix and this was achieved with the Anglo-Irish and Southern European groups but not the South-East Asian group. Similarly the intention was for all the groups to be of a similar size; however the Anglo-Irish group numbered 15, the Southern European numbered 13 and the South-East Asian numbered 8. Attempts were made to obtain more equitable groups however the requirement that all respondents be volunteers resulted in the varied numbers in each group. Thus this research cohort cannot be regarded as ‘typical’ as they are neither a random nor a representative sample.

**Respondent Details**

The respondents in this research lived in Melbourne, Victoria. Most were born in Australia, however eight were born overseas. Only one of the eight born overseas was not an Australian citizen. The other seven either had Australian citizenship through their parentage or had taken out Australian citizenship. The one who was not currently an Australian citizen had permanent residency in Australia and was about to embark on the process of gaining Australian citizenship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Place of birth</th>
<th>Heritage (as identified by the respondent)</th>
<th>Age (at time of interview)</th>
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Ethical issues must be considered in relation to any research and many issues were reflected upon prior to undertaking the project.

All participation in the research was voluntary. This was clearly explained on the Explanatory Statement, the Consent Form, the questionnaire and at the beginning of the interview. Respondents were also informed that they could exit the research at any time, could terminate the interview at any time and they did not need to answer questions if they did not wish to. Respondents were also assured that their anonymity would be maintained through the use of pseudonyms in all papers written based upon data collected from them.

The potential respondents contacted me by telephone or email having obtained this information from flyers, friends or other respondents. I did not contact potential respondents unless specifically invited to do so by the potential respondent. For example sometimes people handed me the contact details of a potential respondent. This occurred after the potential respondent had expressed their willingness to participate and had asked for their details to be passed on to me so I could contact them to arrange a time for the interview. It was imperative that all
respondents were volunteers and felt no pressure to participate in the research. The voluntary nature of the respondents’ participation was repeatedly reinforced.

Interviews were conducted in public spaces such as libraries or cafes where both the respondents and the researcher felt safe and comfortable. However as the privacy of the respondents was of paramount importance and interviews were conducted in public spaces attention was be paid to ensuring that the conversation was not overheard thus more private tables or spaces were selected.

To protect the confidentiality of respondents no names or identifying details were noted on the questionnaires, interview recordings or transcripts. All were labelled with the pseudonym allocated to each respondent (Bouma and Ling, 2004: 199). These were stored separately from the consent forms. All data collected was stored in a safe location and only shared with supervisors. In this thesis and other papers based upon this research only pseudonyms have been used and some details have been altered to protect the identity of the respondents.

**Data Analysis**

The recordings of the interviews were transcribed to provide a written record for analysis. The transcribed interviews were attached to the appropriate questionnaires. These were then read repeatedly to determine commonalities and variations. A feature of the responses was their variety. No two respondents spoke similarly. All had provided unique perspectives and explained their ideas in their own distinctive style. It was impossible to search for common words used by the respondents. Thus my challenge was to ‘figure out what themes, which central ideas, help[ed] tie all the material together’ (Baker, 1999: 335). The transcripts of the respondents’ interviews
were read in depth several times (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005: 150) to search for recurring themes and openly coded (Baker, 1999: 335). This proved fruitful, as while the respondents had expressed their ideas in diverse ways certain common themes emerged.

The data was divided into three sections: ideas about Australian identity, the respondents’ understandings of their own national identities, and the factors that had shaped the development of their national identities. The interviews had been planned to progress through these three sections, however as all the interviews had their own character not all developed in this sequence. Thus all interviews had to be examined and openly coded (Baker, 1999: 335) in their entirety so information could be collated into these sections. Next, I undertook focused coding (Baker, 1999: 336) where specific questions or ideas were scrutinised to develop an appreciation of any common themes and the range of the varied responses. All responses gathered were considered in relation to previous research to discover how closely my respondents’ ideas corresponded with or varied from past research. Respondents’ ideas were also considered in relation to various theoretical perspectives in order to ascertain whether these theories could be utilised to understand and explain the ideas.

The respondents fell into three discrete groups: those of self-identified Anglo-Irish, Southern European and South-East Asian backgrounds. The responses of these three groups were examined to discover if there were particular commonalities in thinking between members of any group or groups and if there were any specific differences in thinking between the groups. Similarly commonalities and differences were looked for between the different genders, education levels and ages. Whilst some differences appeared between the ethnic background groups there was considerable homogeneity in the spirit of the responses in both genders and all ages and educational levels.
When respondents are referred to in this thesis pseudonyms are used. Details relating to each respondent are also provided. These include: country of birth, age at the time of the interview and the background that the respondent has identified such as Anglo-Irish (AI), Southern European (SE) or South-East Asian (SEA). The format of this is, for example, Wendy, Australia, 22, SEA indicating the pseudonym given to the respondent, her country of birth, her age at the time of the interview and her self-identified background.

**The Pivotal Importance of Time**

The interviews cited in this thesis were undertaken to ascertain how young Australian residents, at the beginning of the 21st century, understood their national identities. They were conducted between late 2007 and early 2009. John Howard had been the Liberal Prime Minister for almost twelve years when Kevin Rudd’s Labor party won the November 2007 Federal election.

An acknowledgement of the timing of these interviews is fundamental to understanding the data collected. Both recent and past political events have shaped the environment in which these young adults have grown up. Most respondents would have known John Howard, the past Prime Minister, and the Liberal party as Australia’s government for most of their lives. Given the social constructionist stance taken in this thesis the impact of this must be recognised.

**Limitations to this Research**

This research provides a snapshot of 36 young people’s understandings of their national identities as outlined by them in interviews conducted between late 2007 and early 2009. They resulted in the collection of invaluable insights into their complex understandings of their national identities. However it must be
recognised that the opinions of only 36, who were not a representative sample, were gathered so the information cannot be generalised. The sample included young people of self-identified Anglo-Irish, Southern European and South East Asian background. The Australian population comes from wider backgrounds thus future research could include young people of self-identified heritages not included in this research. In particular the impressions of young Indigenous people would provide complementary perspectives.

As the development of national identity is understood to never be complete and a life-long on-going process, the ideas of the respondents may alter, thus this research simply interrogates their feelings at the time of their interview. Future research could examine how the respondents’ constructions of their national identities alter over time.

Whilst much thought was given to the preparation of the questions asked in the interviews as the research progressed themes that I had not foreseen emerged. An opportunity to revisit the early interviews would have provided an opportunity to examine these emerging themes. In future it may be wise to incorporate in planning an opportunity to reinterview respondents to further delve into their ideas. While this may provide greater insights it also has considerable drawbacks. It may be more difficult to recruit volunteers to participate in the research if they feel that they may be requested to commit more of their time. It could also add to the difficulty of finding convenient times for respondents to be interviewed given their busy lives.

Chapter Review

This qualitative research was undertaken in Melbourne between late 2007 and early 2009. It was grounded in the notion that identities are constructed by individuals who live in a social environment which
impacts upon this construction. It recognises the complexity of national identities and the significance of hybridity in people’s understandings of their national identities. The next three chapters will discuss the findings from this research. Chapter Four will explore how the respondents understood what it meant to be an Australian.
Chapter Four

What Are Australians?

The dramatic changes in the ethnic composition of Australia’s population have necessitated much rethinking about Australia’s national identity. No longer are Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders the only people living in Australia and no longer are Australians predominantly descended from British migrants. Immigration has forced Australians to be reflexive about their national identity. Castles (1998: 105) argues that countries where considerable immigration has occurred must ask ‘who are we?’ and ‘who belongs to us?’ These questions must be constantly re-visited as old perceptions lose resonance when the composition of the population dramatically alters.

Many respondents initially found it problematic to put into words an explanation of an ‘Australian’. It was difficult for them to verbalise the subtle features that made a person an Australian and differentiated them from non-Australians. Their ideas seemed amorphous yet it appeared that each had a clear impression in their own mind of what an Australian was. However from the many varied impressions provided by the respondents certain common images did emerge.

This chapter will explore the respondents’ understandings of the concept of Australian identity. It will outline the respondents’ beliefs that Australian identity is associated with certain social activities such as having a passion for sport as well as an enjoyment of the beach, barbeques and the consumption of alcohol. The respondents’ recognition of the importance of social values and a commitment to political values will then be examined. Their recognition of the multicultural make-up of Australia as well as their support, though at times tempered, of multiculturalism is discussed. The chapter will explore the notion of tolerance and the power that this grants to some
and removes from others. The impact of the varied appearances of Australians and the ongoing association between a white, Anglo appearance and Australian identity is examined. Next the chapter will discuss the respondents’ understandings of stereotypical images of Australians and the impact of commonly accepted social constructions of Australian national identity. Finally the chapter will contend that no one of these characteristics is the quintessential essence of Australian national identity, is totally unique to Australia or is essential to being Australian. Rather Australian national identity is constructed through the acquisition of many characteristics and some carry more significance than others.

Social Activities

Social activities such as engagement in sport, going to beaches, enjoying barbeques, being outdoors and consuming alcohol were noted as being key aspects of Australian national identity. Sport, in particular, was cited as an Australian activity. For Elder this is not surprising as she notes that ‘Australians are sports mad’ (2007: 288). Mackie (2004: 188) also states that in Australia sport is ‘sometimes claimed to be a “national religion.”’ These strongly support the respondents’ identification of love for sport as being a key Australian characteristic. Jonathon (Australia, 24, SE) explained the significance of sport:

*Kids that are good at sport are always favoured in Australian culture over the kids that are good at literature or the arts.*

For Jonathon sport was central to Australian national identity and prowess at sport was so strongly admired that it was valued beyond other skills. Charlotte (Australia, 20, SE) described ‘going to the
footy,^{37} cricket, playing sport and going to the beach’ as typical Australian activities. Wayne (England, 24, AI) pointed out that Melbourne is the sporting capital of Australia while James (Australia, 21, SE) noted the importance of sporting events stating that ‘Grand Final Day^{38} is huge and there is a public holiday in Melbourne for the Melbourne Cup,^{39} a horse race.’ Nick (Australia, 20, SE) enthusiastically spoke of the atmosphere at the MCG^{40} as being indicative of Australians’ passion for sport. There is a huge carnival atmosphere at the MCG during the football finals; people dress in their team colours, there are many social events and there is a great deal of celebration before and after the games. The Boxing Day cricket match, also held at the MCG, is a key event in Melbourne’s calendar as thousands throng to watch the game. As the interviews were conducted in Melbourne the respondents have focused on Melbourne based sporting events. These comments highlight the enthusiasm with which Australians embrace sporting events. However it must be noted that Australians are not alone in their passion for sport. In 2006 over 214 countries and territories watched the Soccer World Cup Final (FIFA 2009) and 84% of Italians watched the finals that year (EU Football.BIZ, 2006). In 2010 24.3 million people worldwide watched the Soccer World Cup Final ‘at any one time during the telecast’ and ‘a total of 111.6 million viewers watched at least part of the match’ (Pierce, 2010).

Football, cricket and horseracing were regularly cited as examples of the connection between outdoor sporting activities and Australian national identity; however these examples tended to be male-

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^{37} ‘Footy’ is an Australian slang term for Australian Rules Football.
^{38} Grand Final Day is the grand final of the season of Australian Rules Football. In the days before and after the grand final there are many celebrations and events held around the country.
^{39} The Melbourne Cup is a major horse race which is held annually in Melbourne. It is a public holiday in Melbourne and most people in Australia stop whatever they are doing to listen to the race as it is run. Horses travel from around the world to race in the Cup.
^{40} The MCG is the Melbourne Cricket Ground, the site of AFL games, the AFL grand final and cricket matches.
dominated sporting activities. Women’s sport was less likely to be linked to the Australian image. Nina (Australia, 24, SE) made the following comment:

_You don’t hear much about women’s netball, women’s basketball, it’s always the male sport; footy. You hear more about the males than the females._

This may be indicative of a greater interest in men’s sport than women’s that exists not just in Australia. For example Nyad (2010: 3) writes of television coverage of women’s sport in America:

_In these times of women’s empowerment and success in most spheres of our society … the overall coverage of women’s sports has declined to a level of outrageously small numbers._

It is of note that the key sports mentioned when considering Australianness were male dominated and thus reinforce a masculine interpretation of the Australian national identity.

Emily (Malaysia, 19, SEA) noted her parents’ new interest in sport since settling in Australia. She said:

_They have sort of got addicted to sport since we came here. And gym, they have started going to gym … my father is always at the TV watching sport._

However whilst making the connection between Australian national identity and sport Emily was also eager to explain: ‘I’m not into it.’ She was able to confidently identify herself as Australian and recognise the significance of sport in representations of Australian national identity without having to embrace sport herself. Emily was
not alone in her lack of enthusiasm for sport. Erin (Canada, 19, SEA) felt similarly saying:

*Sport is such a huge thing here, like the footy, which I actually hate ... I can’t stand cricket but the Aussies seem to love it.*

Lana (Australia, 20, AI) concurred:

*People who don’t like cricket are said to be un-Australian [but] I hate cricket.*

Many respondents explained that they were not sporting enthusiasts, despite endorsing it as a central Australian attribute. They were able to still feel Australian and not be ostracised due their lack of interest in sport.

Yet the link between Australian national identity and sport retained resonance. Leah (Malaysia, 24, SEA) noted:

*I have friends who are Asian but they are more Aussie than I am because they enjoy sports more.*

People were classed as more or less Australian by respondents according to their commitment to sport. Hage (1998: 53) proposes that in order to gain recognition as Australians people must acquire cultural capital. The accumulation of such capital bolsters a person’s claim to recognition as an Australian. The more capital a person has attained the more secure is their Australian national identity. Thus a devotion to sport could enhance a person’s capital and strengthen their claim to being Australian. This could perhaps partly explain Emily’s (Malaysia, 19, SEA) parents’ newly acquired passion for sport. An interest in sport could provide valuable cultural capital which would assist their acceptance and identification as Australians.
Whilst Elder (2007: 288) stated that Australians are ‘sports-mad’, she also recognised that, ‘for many Australians sport is marginal in their lives’ as was the case for Emily, Erin, Lana and Leah. Elder’s statement accords with the respondents’ comments that not all Australians care about sport. Only one quarter of Australians are involved in organised sport (ABS, 2007b) and only 44% of Australians attended a sporting activity in 2005 – 2006 (ABS, 2009b). The image may be that Australians love sport but not all Australians share a passion for it. Whilst an enthusiasm and infatuation with sport may contribute to a person’s cultural capital, to love sport is not a compulsory requirement for Australian national identity.

Sport was not the only outdoor activity noted. Many outdoor activities were associated with being Australian. Mackie (2004: 32) cites love for the outdoors as a ‘national characteristic’ of Australia. The respondents reiterated this. Beck (Australia, 20, AI) felt that having a beer and an outdoor barbeque was part of Australia’s culture. Jenny (Australia, 22, SE) talked about the significance of ‘barbeques, beer and thongs in summer’. Jade (Ireland, 24, AI) suggested that Australia’s weather may contribute to this:

*I’ve tried to explain to my parents [who live in Ireland] that you get up in the dark to go to school and you go home in the dark and it’s so cold so why would you go out [referring to her parents’ life in Ireland]… whereas I’ve found here [Australia] because of the weather … it’s more of a sociable place … you can go out and do things after work … you can still do things because the weather is nice.*

Mackie (2004: 33) endorses Jade’s idea as ‘the densely populated subtropical, Mediterranean and temperate climate regions [in Australia] are all conducive to these outdoor activities all year round.’ Much of
Australia has a comfortable climate. Certainly there are areas which suffer extremes of heat and cold, however the majority of the Australian population does not live in the dry, arid centre where high summer temperatures predominate or on the chilly isolated southerly islands of Australia. The cooler months in Australia are mild in comparison to the severe winters many countries experience. Summers in the more populous areas are warm. This climate encourages an outdoor lifestyle. Thus Australians’ perceived love of outdoor activities has been made possible by the climate which makes such a lifestyle viable and pleasurable.

However, Emily (Malaysia, 19, SEA) who had not embraced sport also had not adopted a love of the beach or the outdoors:

_I don’t get out [outdoors]. A lot of Australians go out more, they like to go to the beach. I am quite afraid of the sun._

Like loving sport, loving the outdoors is not a requirement for Australian national identity.

Beaches are a significant aspect of the outdoors in Australia and spending time at the beach was mentioned by many respondents. The beach features in many tourist books and brochures about Australia as ‘Australians have always had an affinity for the beach’ (Australian Financial Review, 2009). It is a place where many Australians enjoy spending time during the hot summer months. The majority of Australia’s population is spread around the coastline with fewer Australians inhabiting the inland areas.

Mackie (2004: 225) suggests that Australian beaches can be gender, ethnic and age equalisers as all people can easily access public beaches. Elder also (2004: 225) notes that this love of beaches and the outdoors reflects Australians’ beliefs in egalitarianism as differences
disappear when people are on the beach to ‘share the sun, sand and surf.’ However Elder (2007: 304) also notes that the Cronulla riots can be understood as presenting an alternative perspective. In December 2005 riots broke out at Cronulla beach in Sydney’s southern beachside suburbs between Anglo background Australians and Lebanese background Australians. Elder (2007: 304) suggests that the beach in this example was regarded as a white space and non-Anglo-Australian visitors to the beach were regarded as a threat. Poynting (2006) also argues that the riot was racially motivated. However Barclay and West (2006: 75) disagree, explaining that specific circumstances such as a previous altercation and media agitation were contributors to the disturbance on that beach at that time and, as no similar events have occurred, it would be imprudent to assume that Australian beaches are sites of racial disharmony. It is common to see people of many varied backgrounds enjoying Australian beaches together and since Cronulla no other riots have occurred. The significance of egalitarian ideals to Australian identity will be discussed in detail later however the connection between outdoor social activities and notions of equality is noteworthy. Certainly beaches appear to be associated with Australian national identity, yet spending time at the beach is also not deemed to be mandatory for Australian national identity.

Many respondents also included alcohol consumption as an aspect of Australian national identity. Amanda (Philippines, 22, SEA) said, ‘beer drinking is up there’ when talking about Australian pastimes. Jess (Australia, 25, AI) spoke of Australia’s ‘pub culture’ while Beck (Australia, 20, AI) laughingly listed ‘grog’ as one of the things that Australians value. Jonathon (Australia, 24, SE) agreed:

*People like to relax with a drink with friends. I think that to me defines Australian culture.*
The respondents are not alone in associating alcohol consumption with Australian national identity:

Alcohol is accepted as an important part of Australian life and culture. It is consumed in religious and cultural ceremonies, social and business functions, and in conjunction with celebrations and recreational activities. For many Australians, ‘having a drink’ is synonymous with relaxation, socialisation and good times (NEACA, 2001 cited in CATI TRG, 2003: 4).

In 2003 each Australian over the age of 15 consumed 9.8 litres of alcohol (Finfacts, 2007). This consumption can be compared to that of other countries: Luxemburg 15.5 litres, Ireland 13.5 litres, New Zealand 8.9 litres and Italy 8.1 litres (Finfacts, 2007). Australia is ranked within the top 30 highest alcohol-consuming countries (Key Trends in Alcohol Consumption, 2010). This data suggests that Australians are not the most excessive consumers of alcohol. However the respondents saw a strong link between social gatherings and alcohol in Australia. Amanda (Philippines, 22, SEA) explained that ‘at every social event you have a beer.’

The respondents’ ages may have influenced their strong endorsement of alcohol consumption as being important to Australian national identity. Alcohol consumption is legal in Australia from age 18 and the respondents were aged between 18 and 25. For some of the respondents the legal consumption of alcohol may have novelty value as it is a new experience. In Australia binge drinking is most prevalent in the 20 to 29 year old age group (Key Trends in Alcohol Consumption, 2010).

An association between drinking alcohol and Australian national identity has the potential to impact upon both people’s adoption of an Australian national identity and others’ acceptance of them as being
Australian. It could potentially marginalise non-alcohol-drinking Australians, particularly those whose culture or religion does not support the consumption of alcohol, as they may be regarded as different or lacking in Australian cultural capital. No respondents mentioned that they abstained from alcohol so no insights into the experiences of a non-alcohol-drinking person were obtained. It must be noted that none of the respondents suggested that alcohol consumption was a pre-requisite for Australian national identity.

For the respondents, sharing a passion for sport, enjoying the outdoors, going to the beach and drinking alcohol were social activities related to an Australian national identity. Yet none were regarded as compulsory. The respondents felt that a person could feel and be accepted as Australian without these. In fact some respondents readily declared their lack of passion for some of these whilst solidly espousing their Australian national identity. These factors may be part of the array of cultural capital that can be drawn upon to construct an Australian national identity that is comfortable for the individual and sufficiently acceptable for others to recognise. Embracing these attributes could contribute to cultural capital (Hage, 1998: 53) and thus acceptance as an Australian. However, an individual whose sporting, outdoors, beach-loving and alcohol-drinking capital was low may be able to boost their Australianness by more strongly adopting other identified Australian features such as particular social values.

Social Values

Respondents claimed that Australians share a range of social values, most notably a strong devotion to family and friends. Cara (Australia, 23, AI) said:

* Australians value family life and family connections … and the friendships that they have.*
Mary (Australia, 24, SE) noted ‘we are still very much family oriented’ while Angie (China, 25, SEA) stated that Australians valued ‘family number one and then friends.’ The family has been recognised as a key social institution in Australia since colonisation (Winter, 1998: 6). Politicians have reinforced family as a key Australian value. John Howard, in his time as Prime Minister, repeatedly spoke of the importance of family (Australianpolitics.com, 2008; Winter, 1998: 5; Maddox, 2005: 69). A central feature of Kevin Rudd’s 2007 electoral campaign was his commitment to ‘working families’ (Uhlmann, 2007).

However Minh (Australia, 25, SEA) commented that some Australian families are not close and that as a child she found this difficult to fathom:

> When I was growing up I found it really strange, your brothers and sisters live in a different state ... why on earth would you not call them, see them on their birthdays and have massive weddings and things like that, it was all bizarre to me.

Yet she acknowledged that her closeness to her own family may be ‘unique’ to her family rather than due to her Vietnamese heritage.

Whilst the respondents noted the importance of family to Australian national identity it must be noted that historically this importance has not been officially extended to all families. Some families have in fact been discriminated against by the Australian government and media. Over a period of many decades Indigenous Australians were subjected to policies which involved the removal of Indigenous children from their families.\(^41\) The aim was to ‘break the child’s connection with

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\(^{41}\) The forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families was official government policy from 1909 to 1969. However the practice took place both before and after this period.
their family, Aboriginal culture and traditional land, and ultimately they would be assimilated into white society’ (Cassidy, 2006: 112). This government policy was a direct contradiction of the rhetoric which espoused the crucial role of the family (Gilding, 1997: 69). The families of Indigenous Australians were not treated with the same regard as non-Indigenous families. However in February 2008 the then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd offered an official apology to the ‘Stolen Generations’42. His act recognised the dramatic effect of loss of family and thus the significance of family for all Australians.

As the young adults in this research are of an age where some are considering moving from their birth family to establish more independent lives the influence and role of the family would be evident to them. Family importance would also have been reinforced by political leaders’ repeated reference to the value of families (Gilding, 1997: 1- 9). It is therefore readily understandable that they would note the significance of family in Australian life. However it would also be unwise to suggest that only Australians value the family. Whilst this may be identified by the respondents as a key Australian social value, it is not unique to Australia.

The respondents also noted that Australians value friendships. When talking about friends they often used the term ‘mate’. A mate is a friend with whom a person feels a strong bond. Mateship has long been regarded as a key Australian characteristic (Nile, 2000: 2 – 3), an attribute that was keenly promoted by John Howard in his time as Prime Minister (Dyrenfurth, 2005: 1). Shaun (Australia, 22, AI) said:

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\textit{Mateship is up there [in importance] it’s certainly been a big thing. Mates are the people you surround yourself with, different groups of people.}
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42 The Stolen Generations is the term used to refer to the generations of Indigenous Australians removed from their families.
Lana (Australia, 20, AI) felt similarly:

*That’s a massive, massive part of it [being Australian]. Loyalty to your mates is really highly considered. You are really loyal to them and they are really important to a lot of Australians. I would do anything for my mates so I think that is a big part of it.*

Angie (China, 25, SEA) spoke of the significance of mateship as an Australian characteristic:

*I think mostly mateship, you hear it every day, seriously that word ‘mate’, almost every hour you come in touch with it.*

In the time that Angie had spent in Australia she had come to recognise the significance of mateship to Australian national identity. The extent to which mateship is associated with Australia is illustrated on an official Australian government website which claims the term as being Australian (Australian Government Culture and Recreation Portal, 2007). There appears to be a strong connection between the respondents’ ideas about the importance of mateship to the Australian character and those of the Australian government, the ex-Prime Minister John Howard and many texts about Australia (Mackie, 2004: 215; Mackay, 2007: 157; Elder, 2007: 100). The concept of mateship is utilised to create a sense of unity between Australians. All are mates who care for each other thus reinforcing the idea of a cohesive ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 2006).

Yet Rebecca (Australia, 23, AI) and Nick (Australia, 20, SE) felt that mateship was not uniquely Australian. Rebecca said, ‘everyone has their friends and will look after their friends’ and Nick noted ‘all around the world you have friends’. It is reasonable to believe that Australians are not the only people to value the principles of mateship. Strong bonds between friends are apparent in most cultures and stories
of heroism and self-sacrifice abound in the literature and symbols of many countries. Mackay (2007: 157) supports this saying that caring for friends is ‘hardly unique to Australians.’ In 2006 when a gold mine in Beaconsfield43 collapsed the mammoth effort to rescue two trapped miners was touted as an example of Australian mateship by Australia’s political leaders (ABC News on line, 2006). The Federal Opposition Leader at the time, Kim Beazley said:

Australians just witnessed a rolled-gold miracle and a great Australian epic, an epic of mateship, an epic of family, people taking responsibility for each other, of skill.44 (ABC News on line, 2006)

Mackay however suggests that miners in any country would work to rescue colleagues trapped underground and that the heroic efforts in Beaconsfield were representative of this rather than the unique Australian trait of mateship (2007: 157). The dramatic rescue of trapped miners in Chile in 2010 illustrates that a concern for and commitment to others cannot be regarded as a solely Australian attribute. Jess (Australia, 25, AI) suggested:

*We talk up our mateship a lot stronger than it is … we like to talk it up because that is what we perceive us to be.*

Perhaps the use of the term is more uniquely Australian, as well as its strong incorporation in the everyday vernacular of Australians. Certainly the concept has significance in the respondents’ understanding of Australianness.

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43 In 2006 a gold mine in Beaconsfield in Tasmania collapsed killing one miner and trapping two miners underground. It was two weeks before these miners were rescued. Rescuers worked tirelessly to save the men and the story became the focus of national media coverage at the time.
44 This comment also recognises the significance of family in Australia.
Michael (Australia, 19, AI) spoke of the First World War stories of mateship and self-sacrifice between the diggers, ideas supported by the Australian government’s own website (Australian Government Culture and Recreation Portal, 2007). This mateship existed between men. Nina (Australia, 24, SE) noted that the idea of mateship was ‘male dominated’. The Australian government appears to agree with this as its website states that ‘mateship is a term traditionally used among men, and it is a term frequently used to describe the relationship between men during times of challenge’ (Australian Government Culture and Recreation Portal, 2007). Elder and Mackie also articulate this idea saying ‘mateship is the dominant national story of men loving men’ (Elder, 2007: 100) and ‘mateship involves beliefs in fraternity and comradeship, where men give and expect to be given mutual support’ (Mackie, 2004: 215). The masculine overtones of mateship are indicative of a strong male domination of Australian iconography as noted by Ganguly (1997: 20) and Phillips and Smith (2000: 210). Mackay (1993: 31) goes so far as to say that ‘when we are in the throes of a fundamental redefinition of gender roles, such imagery appears outrageous if not offensive.’ The female respondents noted these masculine overtones and the absence of distinctly female Australian cultural images.

Some respondents felt, however, that there had been some shift in the meaning of mateship from its original masculine slant to a more inclusive understanding of the term including women as well. Charlotte (Australia, 20, SE) said that she felt that ‘women have it [mateship] as well, not just men,’ an idea supported by Terrill: ‘today the mate is female just as often as male’ (2000: 12). While in the eyes of some respondents the term may be undergoing some reformation, expanding its meaning to also include women as mates, there is little

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45 Digger is a term used to refer to Australian soldiers, initially derived from their experiences in the trenches of World War One. It is a term dear to Australians.

46 It is important to note that Elder also notes that this love is in no way sexual and ‘a man’s erotic desire is directed toward a woman’ (2007: 100).
literature to support this notion. Mateship appears to remain a masculine domain. Furthermore, whilst the term may have masculine connotations, the ideal of mateship, of caring for your friends, cannot be regarded as merely a male trait. Respondents felt that generally all Australians cared for each other.

Annabell (Australia, 24, SE) explained how mateship extended to a general sense of caring for others:

*I think that's a huge value [mateship] that Australians have. It means helping each other out, being friendly, just looking after each other.*

The idea of looking after each other was further developed by Gemma (Australia, 25, AI):

*I think we are good at volunteering and it is like part of being an ANZAC, like going to war and being a lifesaver and being a good friend. It is that part of being part of the community ... It has just been instilled in us from a young age that we just help each other.*

Ness (Australia, 25, AI) also stated that ‘volunteering is very much a part of it’. In fact this idea of helping each other and caring was voiced by many respondents. Angie (China, 25, SEA) and Minh (Australia, 25, SEA) noted Australia’s massive humanitarian responses to international disasters. In less than two weeks after the Boxing Day Tsunami in Asia Australians had donated over $100 million in aid (*The Age*, 2005). The Australian response to the ‘Black Saturday’ bushfires that destroyed huge tracts of land in Victoria in February 2009 is another example of Australians’ commitment to others. After

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47 Searches of databases revealed no specific literature about the term mateship in relation to women. There was much literature about mateship and men.
48 According to an ABS Voluntary Work Survey 34% of the adult population in Australia volunteer (Volunteering Australia, 2009)
the event ‘Australians came together in an unprecedented display of support for people affected by the Victorian bushfires. The Victorian Bushfire Appeal raised more than $375 million’ (Australian Red Cross, 2009). Some respondents felt that the generosity and assistance Australians provide in times of disaster were important as indicators of Australians’ care for others.

Some respondents also made links between Australians’ care for family, friends and the community and Australia’s pioneering history and rugged terrain. Gemma (Australia, 25 AI) talked about the importance of caring for each other in the Australian bush:

Well it’s that mateship again, looking after each other. In the outback you are so isolated you rely on your neighbours, whether they are thousands of kilometres down the road you rely on them to shut the farm gate, to tell you that the fence is broken.

Sharna (Australia, 19, SE) said:

We help each other, that shows through our droughts and floods and things.

Due to Australia’s climate which can produce floods and droughts Australians were seen as needing to assist and support each other in times of hardship. Similarly in remote regions inhabitants must rely upon each other due to their extreme isolation. In the outback areas of Australia people may live hundreds of kilometres from any town. They must rely on neighbours, who may also be many kilometres away, in times of need. Sharna felt this had worked to instil in Australians a commitment to take care of others.

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49 These interviews were conducted during a time when much of Australia was suffering from extensive drought. The respondents would have heard many reports about the impact of weather extremes in the media.
Emma (Australia, 23, AI) provided a detailed example of the way that Australians care for each other:

When I crashed my car into a barrier on the road, I was stopped at the side of the road and I had a bit of a smashed bonnet and I reckon about 20 people stopped to see if I was okay. In London a friend got knocked off her bike by a car and she was in front of a bus stop with about 30 people there and nobody checked to see if she was okay.

Emma was extremely eager to highlight what she saw as a key difference in the way that Australians care for each other in comparison to the English. As an Australian she was shocked to hear a story where no-one came to assist a person in need of help. Deb (Australia, 25, SE) made a similar comment about Australians helping each other:

Not helping someone out, that’s very un-Australian. If someone is stuck on the side of the road and can’t change a tyre, not to help would be un-Australian.

For Deb the expectation that all Australians care for each other and provide assistance whenever they can was deeply entrenched. Deb felt that any uncaring behaviour could only be described as un-Australian. Australians were regarded as caring for their family, their mates, their friends and their fellow human beings whether in Australia or overseas.

Mackie sees the development of the Australian notion of mateship as being related to Australia’s egalitarian tradition (2004: 216). He argues that the term ‘mate’ was used as an ‘equaliser or way of avoiding the use of titles and other social status symbols’ (Mackie, 2004: 216). The
principle of equality was valued by the respondents and was regarded as one of the key political values associated with Australian identity.

**Political Values**

The respondents were strong in their appreciation of being Australian due to the freedoms they experienced, such as equality before the law and democracy. Many explained why they were ‘happy’ or ‘proud’ to be Australian:

> I think Australia treats everyone the same, probably because I am from Malaysia and the Malays get really good benefits and we don’t get it, but in Australia, the government, they really treat everyone equal. Every race is equal here.

(Emily, Malaysia, 19, SEA)

> Australians believe in equal opportunity, like everyone has the right to a fair go.

(Sharna, Australia, 19, SE)

> Through our courts, through our legal system everyone gets a fair go … every one is equal and there is democracy.

(Michael, Australia, 19, AI)

These respondents vocalised the political values of freedom within the law, freedom of speech and freedom from discrimination which are promoted by the Australian government (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2007a). Thus their inclusion in the respondents’ ideas about important political values for Australians is not surprising.

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50 Emily has Chinese ancestry and felt that in Malaysia the Chinese were treated differently to the Malays. The Malaysian government has a ‘Bumiputra’ policy which positively discriminates in favour of the Malays.
Lana (Australia, 20, AI) felt that freedom of expression was also important to Australians. She said:

*I would say that we are not constrained, because you see all over the world that there are constraints, you can’t say things against politicians or you can’t do this or you can’t do that. I think we value being able to do that.*

Nick (Australia, 20, SE) also noted his appreciation of freedom of speech:

*I get the distinct impression that I can say anything I want to any political leader, I can write a letter to the editor of an Australian newspaper.*

Nick valued his freedom to engage in political debate and noted the fact that he felt he could speak with powerful political figures without fear of retribution. He recognised that this freedom was not readily available in all countries. Nick’s comment about writing to newspapers illustrates his awareness that the freedom of Australia’s press is not curtailed by state censorship. Freedom of speech is one of the five fundamental freedoms identified by the Australian government (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011). The respondents would also have been exposed to discussion of this idea through the media, their education and literature:

Australians are free, within the bounds of the law, to say or write what we think privately or publicly, about the government, or about any topic. Australia does not censor the media and people may criticise the government without fear of arrest. Free speech comes from facts, not rumours, and the intention must be constructive, not to do harm. There are laws to protect a person’s good name and integrity against false information. There are laws against saying or writing things to incite hatred against others.
because of their culture, ethnicity or background. Freedom of speech is not an excuse to harm others. (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2009a)\textsuperscript{51}

Whilst this view is espoused by the government, Celermajer (2008: 497) notes that, ‘Australia has a relatively weak regimen protecting free speech as an overriding concern; there is neither a Bill of Rights nor specific constitutional protection of free speech.’ Some countries have freedom of speech enshrined as a constitutional right so could possibly be regarded as giving more credence to this right; however in practice Australians experience significant freedom of speech. In the interviews the respondents did not mention the political source or limitations of this freedom. However there was recognition that Australians are able to speak more freely than citizens of some other countries and respondents valued this. Rebecca (Australia, 23, AI) said:

\textit{One of my friends from China she doesn’t question her government at all, she is not really allowed to.}

Brett (Australia, 24, AI) perhaps sums up the respondents’ attitudes toward political freedoms. He noted that freedom, in general, was important but then explained:

\textit{I don’t really think about it and appreciate it [but] if it was taken away from me I would really appreciate what it means for me.}

Brett’s comment may well be the key to understanding this. Freedom is a right with which most respondents had always lived. Many respondents had not experienced the impact of the curtailment of this right.

\textsuperscript{51} Whilst freedom of speech is endorsed by the Australian Government it does not mean that people have total freedom to say anything. Laws exist to protect people from slander and vilification.
Erin (Canada, 19, SEA), who had lived much of her life in Singapore, commented on Australians’ passionate commitment to freedom which she regarded as a particularly Australian trait:

*For Australians, one thing that is important to them is freedom. In Singapore they don’t value freedom half as much and I’m a bit in between. Freedom to me is good but not if it has to compromise security ... Singaporeans don’t value that [freedom] as much, we value security more* (Erin).

For Erin Australians’ deep seated belief in freedom set them apart from other nationalities and hence was a unique aspect of Australianness.

Australia’s system of government is based on liberal democratic traditions (DFAT, 2007). Democracy was also noted as being an Australian attribute, another attribute that is not Australian alone. Australia inherited much of its political and legal system from the British Westminster and United States traditions (Australianpolitics.com, 2009, Mackie, 2004: 92). The adoption of these systems was established at Federation in 1901, a process which was negotiated, not fought for as was the case in many countries. Whilst democracy was noted as fundamental to Australia’s identity it was not discussed in depth in the interviews.

Respondents also noted Australians’ belief in the importance of equality and egalitarianism as Australian values. These beliefs can be linked to Australia’s brief history since colonisation. They can be understood as a conscious break from the traditions of aristocracy, privilege and hierarchies of Britain (Elder, 2007: 53). Hirst argues:
Migrants from Britain in the nineteenth century wanted to escape a society where birth gave privileges; they wanted opportunity to be open to all. In 1853 when William Wentworth proposed that an aristocracy be created in New South Wales to provide for a House of Lords on the English model, there was an uproar. (2007: 149)

Principles of egalitarianism were encouraged by the rebellious Irish settlers, the freed convicts and the union movement (Mackie, 2004: 216) in early Australian history. Yet it must also be noted that at the same time Australians strongly endorsed the establishment and maintenance of the White Australia Policy (Hirst, 2007: 12) and the removal of half caste Indigenous children from their families. Therefore principles of equality were only available for a select group of Australian people in Australia’s early history. Yet notions of equality have come to be entrenched in Australia over time. As a result, a variety of anti-discrimination legislation (Australian Government, Attorney General’s Department, 2009) including legislation which prohibits discrimination due to ethnic appearance has been established in Australia.

Discussions about the meaning of equality abound in academic texts. Different people may have different understandings of equality and these understandings may influence their attitudes to social policies in Australia, hence the array of political perspectives that exist within Australia:

52 Whilst principles of equality were espoused it must be noted that this equality was between men, women were not included. Nor were the ‘unfortunate Chinese’ (Bean cited in Hirst, 2007: 154) Bean noted that Australian democrats were happy to admit that there were ‘any number of grades below him.’

53 There is considerable academic and political debate about the notion of equality. Is it equal opportunity thus necessitating the provision of additional resources for those who are at a disadvantage? Or is it treating all the same regardless of circumstances? Some argue that provision of additional support to assist those who are disadvantaged has discriminated against those who are not disadvantaged. Others argue that to provide equal opportunities some require additional support to enable them to compete on a more equal playing field.
The radical tradition of rights language wants everyone to finish up with roughly equal shares of whatever social good is being discussed (or at least, in some versions, an equal opportunity of acquiring it). If some are starting behind, equal rights means they should be given extra help to bring them up to a fair starting point. Right wing equality, as re-invented by the neo-conservative think tanks in the closing decades of the twentieth century, wants everyone treated identically, regardless of where they start. Any extra help to some groups, however disadvantaged, amounts to ‘special privileges’, which breeds ‘resentment’ among those who do not qualify. (Maddox, 2005: 111)

The Howard government, from 1996 to 2007, understood equality as ‘sameness’ and regarded extra assistance provided for disadvantaged groups as ‘special privileges’ (Maddox, 2005: 111). This was a considerable shift from the direction of the previous Labor government, from 1983 to 1996 which backed additional support systems for those deemed less advantaged in order for them to have the opportunity to achieve equal outcomes. This difference in understanding of equality considerably influenced the social policies of the different governments. It was evident in public debate when political parties and their supporters couched their arguments in terms of maintaining equality which was represented as a key Australian value. For example in debates about how funding for private and public schools should be allocated and whether additional resources should be allocated to schools that are identified as disadvantaged.

The respondents noted the importance of equality to Australians. However when their ideas were more closely scrutinised there was recognition that in Australia not all people are equal. The respondents noted the marginalisation of females in the Australian concept of mateship and the lesser focus on women’s sport. They also spoke of discrimination towards certain groups and the existence of racism.
They expressed concern over past treatment of Indigenous Australians. These factors will be discussed in later chapters. These observations suggest that they were aware that equality is mediated by many factors, so ‘while all animals are equal some animals are more equal’ (Orwell, 2003).

Whilst the respondents did not elaborate upon their understandings of the political values of freedom of speech and equality they were very clear that they regarded them as key features of Australian life. Certainly the Australian Government’s promotion of these values would have influenced the respondents’ thinking, as would their education. Such political values are not unique to Australia as they are advocated by many countries but they were central to the respondents’ understanding of Australia. Developing from the respondents’ belief that certain political values were central to Australian identity was their endorsement of multiculturalism as a vital aspect of Australianness.

### Multiculturalism

Respondents referred to Australia as a multicultural country. They strongly supported the notion that when migrants come to Australia they should be allowed to bring with them their own cultures and traditions. Their celebration of Australia’s multiculturalism is reflected in these comments:

*It’s great. You have friends from all over the world; you can eat almost anything you want. I go to Richmond market, I go to Victoria Street which I love.* (Wendy, Australia, 22, SEA)

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54 Richmond market in the suburb of Richmond in Melbourne is very multicultural.
55 Victoria Street in Richmond, Melbourne is renowned for its array of Asian, especially Vietnamese stores. There are also specialty stores from many other cultures.
I don’t even know if I notice it. It is just the way that it is … it’s a good thing, it brings so much to Australia. It doesn’t take anything away. It brings everything that a mixed culture can bring. (Cara, Australia, 23, AI)

Brett (Australia, 24, AI) was fervent in his recognition of the fact that Australia was multicultural. He strongly contended that Australia had never been mono-cultural:

Before colonisation Australia was still multicultural because the Aborigines didn’t all have one culture. They spoke so many different languages and had so many different stories and ways of life. There were people from the islands up north coming down and sharing their culture. If you can’t accept the fact that Australia is multicultural in any sense then it’s pretty dodgy.  

The respondents recognised that multiculturalism brought many benefits to Australia. The range of foods available was celebrated by many. However this is a fairly superficial reason to endorse such a policy, simply to be able to eat at a variety of restaurants. Others felt that multiculturalism led to a more accepting and inclusive culture in Australia:

I think it’s a positive thing. Without it I wouldn’t be here. And I think that multiculturalism allows for diversity, it broadens horizons. Diversity is a good thing, it helps break down ethnocentrism. (Melinda, Australia, 22, SEA)

I think it’s great because with other nationalities coming into Australia you get their cultural beliefs which are totally different usually from Australian, you get all different foods come in. People become more tolerant. I don’t know if they want to become

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56 Dodgy means unsound, dishonest or suspicious.
more tolerant, but they have to become more tolerant because of the laws of acceptance and what not. (Beck, Australia, 20, AI)

I think it’s a good thing, if people would accept others more and hopefully living with people over time it will and being brought up and at school and stuff with people of other nationalities I think you would be more likely to accept it than one set group and then being brought up, being taught that other people are wrong, like their religion is wrong or whatever. Whereas if you are brought up with them and played with them as a kid you are not likely to grow up hating them. (Rebecca, Australia, 23, AI)

These comments reflect the respondents’ positive attitudes toward multiculturalism. For them it created an exciting, dynamic and varied culture. It also led to increased acceptance and understanding of diverse cultures and lifestyles. They rejoiced in Australia’s multicultural population.

However multiculturalism is not fully endorsed by all Australians. Some consider ‘multiculturalism as a threat to Australian values, unity and identity’ (Alwis, 1998: 69). Edwards (2009) argues that the language of multiculturalism suggests that a country is divided into different groups as there are multiple cultures. She then suggests that it is then a simple step to believe that the different groups or cultures cannot unite together as a state. She argues that ‘we need an approach that supports people when they arrive, that acknowledges their heritage and that encourages us all to mix. The language of the melting pot seems like our best hope’ (Edwards, 2009). However such a vision could also be understood as a version of assimilation whereby new arrivals to the country lose their distinct cultural heritages and melt into a homogenous Australian soup. My respondents did not seem to regard Australians as melding together in this manner:
They say it is a mixing pot here where everything just kind of blended in but I call Australia a whole fruit salad where, yes we are all thrown in there but we all retain our identity so we’re not like blended in, so I find that a stereotype, a cliché. (Amanda, Philippines, 22, SEA)

Amanda notes the lack of a singular Australian national identity. A key feature of Australian national identity may thus be its plurality.

Some respondents, whilst supportive of multiculturalism, also noted its limitations. On the day of Minh’s (Australia, 25, SEA) interview The Age newspaper featured an article about young Australians who had migrated from countries all over the world. The aim of the article was to demonstrate the diversity within multicultural Australia. Minh was incensed by the article. She said ‘if we are so comfortable with that it shouldn’t be so strange.’ She felt that the existence of the article, rather than demonstrating acceptance of diversity, actually focused on difference and portrayed these young Australians as novelties. She felt it reinforced white-Anglo hegemony and marginalised non-white, non-Anglo Australians as interesting accessories to the dominant culture. She noted:

The expectation that if you are an immigrant you have to come good and you have to always justify why you are allowed to be here and be part of the Australian story. That’s what makes me so cynical.

Minh was aware of her cynicism; she felt that migrants were always marginalised and had to work to gain a place in the Australian story. They did not automatically have a place in it despite the rhetoric of inclusion and multiculturalism.
Ness (Australia, 25, AI) was also critical of multiculturalism, but for another reason. She said:

*Multiculturalism is just a clever word for assimilation as far as I am concerned. We use multicultural terms, such as Australia is a mixed nation and we accept all people and we expect that of people who come here, so that’s assimilation. We expect people that come here to fit in with what we do … I don’t think it’s all that different to the old assimilation policies. They have changed what the Australian values are rather than how you come here. I’m not a history buff but originally you came and you were Christian and had your Anglo type traditions and that was what was expected of you. Now we have a multicultural expectation of people so you can’t come here and live the same life as from wherever you are coming from, you are expected to come here and fit into a multicultural lifestyle. It’s still assimilation, it’s just what the expectation is, it’s now multiculturalism, the process is still the same.*

Ness felt migrants were still expected to quickly conform to the culture of Australia. In the past they were expected to quickly assimilate into the dominant Anglo culture, but now they were expected to assimilate into a multicultural culture. In reference to the US, Levey (2008: 268) discussed the notion of the ‘melting pot’ and suggested that it could be understood in two ways: as ‘a kind of democratic assimilation in which all the various immigrant cultures would combine to create a “new American” identity’ or as migrant cultures melting or disappearing into the dominant culture (Levey, 2008: 268). Ness suggested that migrants were now less required to adopt an Anglo-Australian culture as through the arrival of migrants Australia had developed a new Australian multicultural culture. Yet she argued that the principle that migrants assimilate to Australia’s
culture remained only now they were expected to adopt a multicultural Australian culture.

Jamrozik, Boland and Urquhart (1995: 111) refer to multiculturalism as ‘assimilation in slow motion’; however rather than focusing on new arrivals having to assimilate into a multicultural Australia they argue that multiculturalism merely allows migrants to assimilate into the Australian Anglo culture at a slower rate. They argue that ‘the cultural differences of migrants may have to be accepted but the second generation will integrate with and assimilate to the Anglo-Australian mainstream of society’ (Jamrozik et. al. 1995: 111), thus the Anglo culture will continue to remain dominant. Galligan and Roberts (2008: 211) also offer the notion of ‘transitional multiculturalism’ whereby migrants are gradually assimilated into the mainstream. This is a different perspective to that of Ness. She felt that the dominance of Anglo culture had been somewhat reduced (note that at other times in the interview Ness acknowledged the ongoing significance of Anglo culture in contemporary Australia) and that multiculturalism, in terms of respecting others’ cultures, was now an important aspect of Australian culture. Thus she felt that it was multicultural Australian culture that migrants were expected to adopt and migrants who did not respect the variety of cultures that exist in Australia were censured.

Other respondents suggested that the ideal of multiculturalism was not fully realised as some cultural groups tended to isolate themselves from other Australians thus negating the image of all cultures mixing together harmoniously. Some respondents spoke of their own experiences:

_I’ve found that when I’ve gone to uni on the first day all the Italians, as soon as they got there they all found each other and they grouped together and became friends. So it was kind of like they segregated themselves from other nationalities. Or the Asians_
grouped together. And there were all the Anglo-Saxons and they all grouped together as well. (Beck, Australia, 20, AI)

If you look around I still see the Indians hanging around with the Indians, I see the Asians hanging around with the Asians … It might be good to ask some Anglos how many Asian friends they have. Who do they hang around with? I can tell you, I have a feeling they can count on their fingers how many they really know. (Angie, China, 25, SEA)

These respondents had asserted their support for multiculturalism in Australia yet Beck and Angie suggested that people tended to associate with others of similar heritage. This segregation may suggest that Levey’s (2008: 268) melting pot is not applicable to the Australian context. Ongoing divisions along lines of heritage have been associated with social fragmentation and lack of unity in the Australian population (Hirst, 1994: 3, Brown, 2002: 72, Jayasuriya, 1997: 90). Yet Hirst (1994: 4) contends that residential segregation is short lived, marriage across boundaries is high, the English language is quickly adopted and migrants are eager to adapt their behaviours to become more Australian. It is of note that some of my respondents did not feel this way.

Other respondents noted reservations about multiculturalism and suggested that a heterogenous population had the potential to create tensions. Amanda (Philippines, 22, SEA) spoke of the potential for ‘friction between groups’ while Alex (Australia, 24, SE) mentioned his perception of ‘clashes, like Greeks and Italians don’t get on.’ Fears that multiculturalism may divide and destroy a nation are not new (Jayasuriya, 1997: 89; Jones, 1996: 17; Hirst, 1994: 3) and were employed by Pauline Hanson to garner support in her election campaigns in the 1990s (Jones, 1996: 17).
Whilst most respondents were tolerant and supportive of multiculturalism and migration the opinions of two respondents were markedly less supportive. These respondents felt that the arrival of migrants had had a negative impact upon Australia. Will (Australia, 18, AI) vehemently stated that:

_The people that have come here have turned the place to nothing but crime and destruction._

He was also concerned about gangs explaining that:

_I’d rather stay away from Indians, that’s only because the people that I have known have tried to hurt me and have succeeded. I have actually been attacked by a couple of gangs before … people were trying to hit me because I was different to them._

Will identified certain groups of people as being a perceived threat. These groups were non-Anglo. At no time did he voice concerns about British heritage migrants. He felt threatened by particular groups whom he perceived, due to their heritage, as being different to ‘Australians’ and felt that they similarly regarded him as being different to them. His comments reflect an ethnic understanding of Australian identity rather than a civic one. Pakulski and Tranter (2000: 35) and Jones (1999: 23) noted that those with an ethnic understanding of national identity tend to be less educated and Will was the least educated of the respondents. Thus Will may be an example of the ongoing significance of ethnic understandings of national identity amongst those with lower levels of education. Will may be like Hage’s ‘Granny’ (1998: 8 and 9) who had not read many books yet felt that her ‘life’ had taught her sufficient for her to comment authoritatively on any topic. Alex (Australia, 24, SE) also voiced concerns about the ability of some migrant groups to ‘fit into’ Australia. He stated:
I think it’s harder for other countries where they are not so lucky, I guess, like Africa. They come over here; they are used to being in Africa where if they can’t get something they fight for it or meet someone in the street and bash them up for what they want. They come over here and they are used to that and they come over here and they don’t understand that over here it’s not like that and they continue those ways and it creates conflict. If that happens we sort of get scared. Like on the train coming home, if one of them gets on, you think, what are they going to do?

Both respondents were apprehensive about migrants that they felt did not ‘fit in’ to Australian culture. They appear concerned that the Australian culture that they know and value may be damaged.

However to view Will and Alex as simply racist or desirous of a white, Anglo-Australia does not stand up to closer examination. Will’s comments suggest that this is too simple an explanation of his opinions. He stated:

*I know some Indians and they are fine … I don’t care, anyone can come into this place because it is a good country and make friends.*

He explained that some of his best mates were Greek, Turkish, German, Indonesian and Croatian. Alex also had friends with varied backgrounds and described them as being ‘full Australian, German, Greek, Mauritian, Egypt, English, American.’ These respondents’ mixed heritage friendship groups seem to contradict their initial negative statements. Alex’s response to African migrants is complex. While he is concerned about the potential negative impact their arrival may have on Australian society he also shows compassion for people who live in less fortunate circumstances. His response to these migrants is a complex combination of both fear and sympathy.
Alex and Will expressed a fear that new arrivals in Australia may pose a threat to other Australians. Such a fear is not new as migrant minorities have long been thought to be linked to crime in Australia (Collins, 2007: 4). Their comments could be a repetition of populist impressions of ‘real’ Australians and their values (Hage, 1998: 10). They may be an example of how readily and widely such discourses are accepted. At times both are inclusive and accepting, especially when referring to their friends. They stand out from the other respondents. However their comments must be recognised as they are not alone in holding such opinions as was shown in the support for Pauline Hanson and One Nation in the late 1990s.

Cara (Australia, 23, AI) spoke about the reasoning behind the fears expressed by Alex. She blamed the media for these perspectives and explained:

*Pointing out subcultures or just cultures in the media is quite un-Australian. It happens quite often like the Sudanese youth ... I think that is promoting sectionism rather than inclusion ... it can have an impact in different ways, like the Sudanese who are here, feel like they are being ganged up on ... It also has an impact on other people, I think maybe like a scare campaign, they might cross the street and it’s a kind of cycle that keeps continuing when it happens.*

Collins (2005: 5) supports Cara’s views when stating that ‘sensationalist tabloid print and broadcast media’ were responsible for creating images of new arrivals in Australia as a threat to Australians’ safety and security. Cara’s comment provides empirical evidence to support Collins’ claim. For example the media have presented the Sudanese community in a negative light and thus have given ‘rise to a false belief that crime rates had rocketed since the Sudanese had arrived in the region’ (Victoria Police Dandenong, 2009). Alex
appears to have accepted the media stereotype and this has led to his concerns. Alex’s perceptions reflect the power of the media given ‘Sudanese youth are actually under-represented in crime statistics’ (Victoria Police Dandenong, 2009). While these respondents’ fears may not be based upon factual data they exist as powerful concerns and work to shape these respondents’ understanding of multiculturalism.

Overall the respondents were keen to support Australia’s multicultural image. They endorsed migrants’ rights to bring their cultural traditions with them to Australia. However they set very clear limits to this. They fervently believed that all new arrivals to Australia must also respect Australia’s multicultural stance and as such must respect the various cultures of their fellow Australians. They were extremely intolerant of migrants’ criticism of what they understood to be Australian culture. Whilst they acknowledged migrants’ rights to retain their traditional cultures they were averse to any suggestions that they should alter or modify Australian cultural ways to accommodate migrants:

*I think if they have a different culture they should keep it to themselves and if you come to Australia it should be known that not everyone is going to have the same beliefs as you and you come into a country where we have our own cultures and stuff and if you want to live here you have to accept our cultures just like we have to accept yours.* (Mary, Australia, 24, SE)

*I think for someone to want to come and live in our country that they’ve got to, not live by our beliefs, but at least respect them, our ways and the way we live. It’s not so much sticking by ours, but not pushing theirs.* (Shaun, Australia, 22, AI)
I don’t like it when people from different cultures come and they won’t accept our cultures and change our way of life, like Easter not being allowed to be celebrated at school any more. I think that sucks because our way of life is being altered. (Jenny, Australia, 22, SE)

These respondents valued what they regarded as Australian values and the Australian way of life (despite their difficulty in defining these terms). For them part of the Australian way of life was multiculturalism and they appreciated the richness that migrants who have settled in Australia have contributed. They were however very strong in their belief that acceptance is a key feature of multicultural Australia and new arrivals must respect and accept the existing ways of life in Australia. Such thinking, as suggested by Ness (Australia, 25, AI), is similar to past assimilation policies. It expects migrants to leave behind aspects of their own cultures and to adopt the Australian multicultural culture. Thus they are expected to merge into Australian culture and not ‘disrupt’ it. Mary’s comment that they ‘keep it [their own culture] to themselves’ reinforces the notion that those who are already living in Australia have the authority to set the standards and require migrants to adhere to them, especially in the public realm.

Such strong opinions are not surprising given recent debates. In 2006 Sheik Hilaly, a Muslim cleric, suggested that women who suffered sexual abuse were partially responsible for the abuse due to their immodest dress. He referred to immodestly dressed women as uncovered meat and suggested that a cat could not be blamed for eating such meat (SBS, 2006). Whilst this comment was the opinion of just one cleric it initiated much discussion. The response to his comment reflects the respondents’ beliefs that migrants adopt multiculturalism. They expected migrants to show acceptance of others’ cultures and were incensed that the cleric did not respect the dress standards of most Australian women. The vehement opposition
to his statement may have been fuelled by debate about Muslims that has emerged post September 11. In 2002 there was also much discussion about whether Christian celebrations such as Christmas and Easter should be celebrated in kindergartens and schools for fear of offending non-Christian Australians (Leone, 2002). This created much discussion and many respondents were adamant that they were opposed to banning such celebrations. For them mutual respect and acceptance were central to their understanding of multicultural Australia. They were adamant that no person or group had the right to impose their beliefs and traditions on others. Yet they still felt it was acceptable for them to expect all migrants to accept the celebration of Christian festivals. Their opinions at times appear to be contradictory. However, virtually all felt that they had the authority to be ‘national managers’ (Hage, 1998: 62) and ‘impose a specific national order’ (Hage, 1998: 65, italics in original). Thus, even those who were not white appeared to have felt that they had acquired sufficient cultural capital to exercise ‘governmental belonging’57 (1998: 65) which Hage associates with whiteness. This likely reflects the high levels of capital held by the non-white participants, as revealed in their high levels of education, rather than the status of all non-white residents of Australia.

Kymlicka (1998: 66) notes that Australia has set clear limits to multiculturalism. Australia expects migrants to ‘accept the basic structures and principles of Australian society … multicultural policies impose obligations as well as conferring rights …. [and all Australians have] a reciprocal responsibility to accept the rights of others (Kymlicka, 1998: 66). The respondents appear to have adopted this perspective. He argues that whilst cultural practices should be respected so migrants can continue their traditions this does not mean acceptance of all cultural practices, such as clitoridectomy (Kymlicka, 1998: 65), inequality of the sexes or child labour. Kymlicka strongly

57 Governmental belonging refers to people not only feeling at home in a country but also feeling that they have the right and authority to impose standards and values upon others.

Rather than interrogating complex issues of human rights the main reason the respondents felt that Australia was multicultural was due to the simple fact of its diverse population. When discussing multiculturalism Jonathon (Australia, 24, SE) said:

_I think it’s a good thing. That’s one of the defining things about Australia. You can go down the street and there are Asian restaurants, Italian, Greek, Japanese, Indian, anything you want you can get in Australia and Australia wouldn’t be without migrants so multiculturalism, to me, is one of the most important things that Australia is as a culture. If I was to define Australia as a culture I would say it is multicultural because I’ve never seen an Australian food shop, we don’t have Australian food, our food is made up of cultures, we don’t have a dress sense, like our dress is made up of different cultures. It’s mainly casual but we have different cultures coming in and influences. Unlike other cultures that have been around for centuries and have distinct foods or maybe traditional dress I don’t think we have that. I think why we don’t is because our culture is made up of heaps of different cultures and that is what Australia is._

Jonathon used multiculturalism as an adjective to describe the cultural mix of people that live in Australia. It is however different to endorsing a policy of ‘hard multiculturalism’ (Hirst, 1994: 2). Jonathon was not alone in seeing multiculturalism as being a defining feature of Australianness. Delphi (Greece, 18, SE) voiced similar ideas:

_Central to the idea of being Australian is the idea that you live with people that, like they come from very different backgrounds. I_
reckon central to Australia is multiculturalism and the idea that lots of different countries live together peacefully, lots of different nationalities live together peacefully and the reason this society works is because if you are Australian you are meant to be laid back about this kind of thing so therefore different cultures can co-exist because you are not imposing your beliefs on others because you are laid back, and it works.

Overall the respondents embraced multiculturalism even though most saw it as conditional upon migrants respecting all cultures in Australia. They regarded it as a description of Australia and as a system whereby Australians recognise the diverse composition of the population and live together relatively harmoniously. A final comment made by Delphi, (Greece, 18, SE) perhaps sums up the ideal image of Australian multiculturalism as understood and supported by the respondents. She said:

*I am the embodiment of Australia, because I am more cultural*\(^{58}\) *I understand what Australian culture means and I integrate into that society, on the other hand in my private sphere I am part of another different culture which is essentially what Australia is all about.*

Delphi strongly believed that Australian national identity was inclusive and presented herself as an example of a twenty-first century Australian who lived in a diverse, multicultural society. She saw herself as being Australian whilst also able to maintain and celebrate her Greek heritage. She felt Australians could readily embrace both their background customs and Australian traditions and that her fellow Australians also supported this all-encompassing image. For Delphi, multiculturalism and the ability of people from all different

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58 She described herself as this as she adhered to more than one culture.
backgrounds to live together happily and harmoniously was the essence of Australian national identity.

The respondents appeared to endorse ideas of soft or uncontroversial multiculturalism, whereby people living within Australia show tolerance to each others’ cultures and traditions (Hirst, 1994: 2, Jones, 1999: 21). They understood that people with hugely diverse backgrounds live in Australia and that for Australian society to function efficiently and peacefully mutual respect was essential. When discussing multiculturalism no respondents mentioned ideas of hard multiculturalism, whereby some groups are provided with additional assistance to maintain their traditions (Hirst, 1994: 2). They were content to promote soft or uncontroversial multiculturalism and the idea of reciprocated acceptance between all Australians. Yet at times the level of their acceptance and tolerance could be questioned as it was conditional upon migrants ‘assimilating’ into their understanding of Australian culture. They did not want to see their understanding of multicultural Australia altered by the migrants. Also, as much as the respondents wanted to promote their idealised image of multicultural Australia they also recognised the flaws in this image.

Tolerance

When discussing multiculturalism many respondents spoke about tolerance and acceptance of difference as underpinning a successful multicultural society. It was noted that people must accept others’ differences in order to live together harmoniously:

I think we are [tolerant]. I think we’ve had to be with all these new nationalities all moving into the country. You have to learn, you have to adapt to how they are, they bring their ways over here and
you have to adapt a little bit. Muslims continue to wear their head scarves. You can’t tell them you have to take them off, it’s not harming anybody so let them do it. (Alex, Australia, 24, SE)

Australia is a lot more tolerant than New Zealand\textsuperscript{59} … Here is a lot more tolerant, look around you, you can’t really get away from the fact that there are all the Asians so you can’t hate Asians and there is always going to be the Africans and Aboriginals. (Erin, Canada, 19, SEA)

Compared to Malaysia Australia is really receptive … they [Australians] just find everything else that’s different interesting, they don’t feel others are inferior. (Emily, Malaysia, 19, SEA)

However many were sceptical about how tolerant Australians really are:

I think we like to say that we are but I don’t think the majority of us are that tolerant. In the car the other week when my boyfriend was driving the car an Asian pulled out in front of him and he started going ‘fucking Asian’ and I know that they [individuals like her boyfriend who make such statements] are not being racist to people when they say that and they say, ‘it’s just a joke’ but it obviously isn’t. I don’t think it’s to the point where they wouldn’t talk to someone if they were a different nationality but I don’t think they would go out of their way to be friends with them. (Beck, Australia, 20, AI)

Beck felt that her boyfriend and his friends would not be openly rude to Australians with different backgrounds, however she noted that they would not quickly embrace these Australians or actively seek them out.

\textsuperscript{59} New Zealand has policies to promote cultural harmony and this comment is based upon Erin’s perceptions. Erin lived in New Zealand for a period and has New Zealand citizenship.
as friends. She noted that when she suggested that her boyfriend was racist\(^6\) because of this comment he denied it and argued that it was just joking. (Racism is discussed in more detail in the next section.) However she felt ‘they were still being racist.’ Her discussion of jokes is noteworthy. Racist jokes and comments may be considered by some to be funny and innocuous however they can be demeaning and reinforce racist and essentialist perspectives of particular groups (Gunaratnam, 2003: 28). Such jokes highlight the divisions that exist within Australia. They also place the joke-tellers in a position of power as they feel they have the right to belittle others and do not expect to be censured for their comments. Such jokes place those who are the butt of the jokes in a powerless position thus reinforcing their lesser status as Australians.

Several respondents noted that intolerance and racism was prevalent in Australia. Emma (Australia, 23, AI) felt that ‘most Australians will say that they are tolerant of everything but most people are racist.’ Jenny (Australia, 22, SE) said, ‘I have friends who are very accepting and others that I know are very set in their ways and can be quite racist sometimes.’ Delphi (Greece, 18, SE) added:

*They [my friends] seem to think they are, they seem to think they are really tolerant … I found that even Italians are racist toward Greeks, like racism between the minorities … so I would conclude that all Australians are a bit intolerant and Australians, even though they have experienced racial discrimination [themselves] can be intolerant.*

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\(^6\) Racism can be understood as ‘all those theories and practices that are derived from the assumption that one ethnic group is superior to another because of genetic inheritance’ (Siraj-Blatchford, 2007a:413). Racism can also be understood as ‘the process whereby social groups categorise other groups as different or inferior, on the basis of phenotypical or cultural markers’ (Castles and Miller, 2003: 35) or as ‘prejudice based on socially significant physical distinctions’ (Giddens, 2006: 493).
Knowing others who they considered to be intolerant or racist was common. The respondents’ references to those who are intolerant as ‘they,’ can be read as a strategy to distance themselves from these people. Whilst Beck reported questioning her boyfriend’s racist comments others did not discuss how they reacted to such comments.

Other respondents found the notion of tolerance reprehensible. Minh (Australia, 25, SEA) was scathing in her criticism of the notion of tolerance:

*Australia is tolerant on its terms. Tolerant when it suits them. Tolerant, that just says it all, we’re tolerating you, we’re putting up with you, be thankful ... it’s a very arrogant sort of attitude, I can’t stand it ... I don’t think anyone stops to think how ridiculous that concept is, being tolerated, being put up with ... we all tolerate the fact that we are being tolerated ... whoever thinks that they are legitimately Australian and I would tend to think that would be the Anglo, like a couple of generations of living here, they are tolerating anybody else including people who have already been here for 40,000 years.*

She suggested that tolerance involved a hierarchy. Those in the position of power are able to give or deny tolerance. Minh also clearly identified those she regarded as the privileged ‘tolerators’. They were those of ‘Anglo’ background who regarded themselves as holding a position of dominance in Australia, who perceived of themselves as authentic Australians and thus in a position to determine what would and would not be tolerated. Minh highlighted the arrogance of such a stance when she noted that these ‘tolerators’ feel they have the legitimacy to not only determine degrees of tolerance towards recent migrants but also of Australia’s original Indigenous inhabitants.

Angie (China, 25, SEA) also found the idea of tolerance offensive:
I think tolerance is the wrong word to use because tolerance is saying you are just trying to put up with something and I think it’s got a negative side to it. It’s acceptance as well you know. It’s acceptance, it’s acknowledgement, it’s being inclusive, that’s how I see it. If someone says, ‘I tolerate you’ I don’t feel they are actually accepting me at all. So I would probably be quite negative and say, ‘Why are you just tolerating me?’ I’d say, ‘If you are tolerating me what do you think I feel about you? Do you think I’m just tolerating you?’

Angie felt that rather than tolerance it was acceptance that was required if Australians are to live together on an equal footing. To be tolerated is to be placed in a position of powerlessness and inferiority. It confers on the tolerator the authority to remove tolerance thus leaving the tolerated as permanently vulnerable. Tolerating can be understood as a strategy utilised to maintain dominance and control. Gill (Australia, 23, AI) also noted the power differential in tolerance:

We are tolerant to an extent so long as white is dominant … people may feel threatened if they are not dominant, like living in fear.

She felt that white Australians’ granting of tolerance was provisional. It was only granted so long as their dominant position was uncontested. Thus the powerful were able to utilise tolerance as a tool to keep the tolerated in their place (Hage, 1998: 95).

Melinda (Australia, 22, SEA) identified the significance of the difference between tolerance and acceptance. She felt Australians were:

Tolerant, yes. Accepting, no. Tolerance is the first, accepting is the next. When I think of tolerating certain behaviours or nationalities,
you might not accept them, you might not like them, you put up with them.

Melinda noted that being ‘put up with’ kept the tolerated in a position of lesser power. She also made a clear differentiation between tolerance and acceptance. She condemned the notion of tolerance. Like Angie she felt that acceptance was required for all Australians to live together as equal citizens. Melinda and Angie provide evidence to support Hage’s (1998: 79 – 97) theoretical criticisms of tolerance. They identify that young people are aware of the distinction between tolerance and acceptance and that this plays a crucial part in their daily lives and thus their construction of national identity.

Hage (1998: 79 – 97) is similarly critical of the notion of tolerance. He argues that tolerance can only be granted by those holding power (Hage, 1998: 79) and thus it can be seen as actually reinforcing the powerful position of the dominant white-Anglo majority. He also condemns the notion of tolerance because if one has the power to grant tolerance one also has the power to withdraw it (Hage, 1998: 85). Hage (1998: 88) is even more critical than Minh and Angie and explains that ‘those in a dominated position do not tolerate, they endure.’

Whilst the respondents identified equality as an Australian attribute these comments suggest that inequality is very prevalent in Australia as some are in the privileged position of not needing to seek tolerance whilst also being the privileged ones who are able to determine who and what will be tolerated. Those who must wait upon the goodwill of the tolerators are less equal. It is of note that those who condemned the notion of tolerance were mostly of a South East Asian background. Minh (Australia, 25, SEA) noted that she felt the tolerators were of ‘Anglo’ background, thus this group held greater privilege. Minh’s comments reinforce Forrest and Dunn’s (2006: 208 - 210)
observations about the privileged position of ‘Australians of Anglo backgrounds’. Whilst Australia’s population has undergone considerable change in the past 200 years Minh acknowledges the ongoing powerful resonance of past white Australian superiority.

Respondents with an Anglo background may not have experienced the denigration of being tolerated. They had not had to live with the vulnerability arising from the fear that others may at any time withdraw their tolerance. Those who did not have a British or European background may have had more personal experience of dependence upon the tolerance of others and so been more aware of its impact.

These comments made by the respondents shed considerable light upon their understanding of Australian national identity. Some suggested that Australia is a tolerant society. However many were also very critical of this idea. They noted that many Australians are not tolerant, or are only tolerant when it suits them. The Australians who hold power, those who have a white-Anglo heritage, are able to maintain their dominant position as they have the authority to grant or deny tolerance. Thus non-white, non-Anglo Australians can be controlled and kept in their place. Hage (1998: 64) outlines the notion of a social hierarchy within Australia. He argues that people can acquire capital, such as a prestigious job or educational qualifications, in order to progress up the social hierarchy yet they can never attain the position of the ‘aristocracy’ (Hage, 1998: 67). The aristocracy are those who are white and perceive themselves as being the guardians of a ‘natural national order’ (Hage, 1998: 67). They use their power to regulate degrees of tolerance to retain their position at the top of the hierarchy of Australianness. My findings endorse Hage’s ideas and provide evidence of the on-going relevance and currency of his argument despite the passing of years and much change in multicultural policy. Rather than tolerance some respondents advocate
acceptance, which is not provisional. Only acceptance can create a more egalitarian society where groups with particular backgrounds are not able to restrict other groups’ access to full Australian recognition. It would appear that within Australian society there exists a hierarchy where white-Anglo background Australians hold the dominant position.

**Racism**

In contrast to Australia being accepting and multicultural, some respondents noted that Australians could be racist. Rebecca (Australia, 23, AI) explained that, ‘we do have prejudice\(^{61}\),’ while Beck (Australia, 20, AI) regretfully said, ‘I’d like to say we are not racist, but I think we are.’ Issues of racism regularly appear in the Australian media. In 2009 and 2010 violence toward Indian international students and Australians of Indian appearance was prominent in the Australian media. This led the then Prime Minster Rudd to set up a special task force to address the problem (Banham and Gilmore, 2009). Furthermore in 2009 Sol Trujillo accused Australia of being racist when he resigned as head of Telstra\(^{62}\) and left Australia (Costa, Zappone and AAP, 2009).

Whilst the Howard Liberal government was less supportive of multicultural policies than the Labor government preceding it, it did espouse a commitment to racial equality (Das, 2006). In 1996 John Howard put forward a motion in Parliament:

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\(^{61}\) Prejudice can be understood as ‘opinions or attitudes held by members of one group towards another … often based on hearsay rather than on direct evidence’ (Giddens, 2006: 490). This is different to discrimination which refers to ‘actual behaviour towards another group’ (Giddens, 2006: 492).

\(^{62}\) Telstra is a large telecommunications company in Australia. Sol Trujillo was head of the organisation. He was born in America and has Mexican heritage.
That this House reaffirms its commitment to the right of all Australians to enjoy equal rights and be treated with equal respect regardless of race, colour, creed or origin. (Official Hansard, 1996)

Such actions work to reduce systemic racism (Blum, 2004: 50) where official policies are racist in nature and discriminate against people on the grounds of their race or ethnicity. Australia’s White Australia policy, its lack of recognition of the citizenship of Indigenous peoples and its policy of removing Indigenous children from their families are examples of systemic racism. Australian Federal and State governments have introduced policies which aim to eradicate systemic forms of racism. In fact Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2007: 62) argue that ‘Australia has some of the most stringent antidiscrimination legislation.’ Any attempt to instigate a ‘White Australia Policy’ in contemporary Australia would be met with heated opposition from the majority of the population and would not be tolerated. Yet according to the respondents racism remains evident in Australia. This is supported by the respondents who noted that some people were racist. The racism evident in Australia can be understood as everyday racism where some people are marginalised through the exaggeration of cultural differences, the use of stereotypes and telling of racist jokes (Noble and Poynting, 2010: 493).

Racism can also exist in more subtle forms whereby the traditions and culture of some groups are given preferential treatment. Whilst this may not necessarily be a direct form of discrimination it sends strong messages that some are more valuable and respected than others. For example Jakubowicz (1994: 74 - 75) notes ‘the absence of non-Anglo Australians’ in prime time television advertising marginalises non-Anglo Australians. While representations of Australians as being white and Anglo in the media are not overtly racist they send strong messages about who is automatically included and who is not.
The respondents were overall well-educated and cognisant of Australia’s history. Some, like Brett (Australia, 24, Anglo/Irish) noted dark aspects of Australia’s past including the massacres of Aboriginal communities and lack of recognition of non-white settlers in narratives of Australian history. Given the respondents’ awareness of this past they may have been eager to promote a more inclusive and egalitarian image of twenty-first century Australia. The respondents would also have been aware that the government endorses the ‘ideal’ of acceptance and this may have informed their responses. Many also said they were ‘proud’ to be Australian and this pride may have prompted them to present a more inclusive image of Australia. They wanted to portray Australia in a positive light, as a country that they had reason to be proud of. The respondents acknowledged the existence of racism, yet appeared keen to promote the image of a country with a diverse population. Healy (2007: 49) states that ‘since the 1980s, there has been an orthodox view amongst Australian government, political and intellectual leaders that promoting Australian society as multi-ethnic or multicultural is beneficial.’ Elder (2007: 142, 143) suggests that Australians promote the idea of Australia which includes all, no matter what their appearance, due to their ‘anxiety about past racism’ as ‘some Anglo-Australians are so ashamed or conscious of a strong racist past that they are creating new stories and new ways of being, such as multiculturalism.’ Jess (Australia, 25, AI) made the following comments:

*We put ourselves up there pretty high with being not racist and stuff but I think there is quite a racist undertone in Australia. Lots of people say racism is un-Australian, but I think it is quite thriving in Australia, but we don’t like that about ourselves so we claim that it is an un-Australian thing, but I think it’s there.*

Jess’s comment may also explain the discrepancy between the idyllic image and the reality identified by the respondents. She explained that
Australians liked to present themselves as inclusive and accepting. Certainly my respondents were eager to portray themselves and the majority of their fellow Australians as being welcoming and happy to embrace new arrivals of any appearance. However they also understood that such acceptance was not always the reality of life experienced by minority groups in Australia.

**Australian Appearance**

Appearance can be associated with national identity. A person’s outward appearance can serve to automatically include or exclude them from a national identity. This is particularly significant to those with an ethnic understanding of national belonging. Thus an understanding of how people think Australians look is relevant to understanding who is automatically recognised to be Australian and who is not. Forrest and Dunne (2006: 208) argue that Australia retains a legacy of Anglo privilege. Those with an appearance that aligns with understandings of Australians’ appearance will have little difficulty constructing an Australian national identity as others will reinforce this identity through their ready acceptance of them as Australians. Those with a different appearance will face challenges to constructing an Australian national identity as others will not automatically assume their Australianness and may question it. When asked to describe what Australians looked like the majority of respondents highlighted the variety of people that live in Australia and are Australian:

*If you look around no one looks the same or speaks the same. We may dress similarly, behave in a similar way but our hair colour, skin colour, height, weight is all different now.* (Melinda, Australia, 22, SEA)
I don’t think you can say that an Australian looks like anything in particular really – you might think white ... but people come from a whole range of different backgrounds. (Ness, Australia, 25, AI)

Australians look, well all different things, European, Asian, African, Indigenous, Middle Eastern, pretty much everything is covered. (Rebecca, Australia, 23, AI)

These days there is no real Australian face. We are changing as a country and anyone can be Australian, you can have someone that looks like they have Chinese descent and they come out with the full Australian accent. It’s changed from what it used to be. (Shaun, Australia, 22, AI)

Shaun’s comment can be regarded as being reminiscent of a time when he felt there may have been a clearer understanding of what Australians looked like, perhaps to a time when most Australians were of British descent. Here he notes that a person with an apparent Chinese heritage may be as Australian as anyone else. For him this Australianness is revealed through an Australian accent.

These responses might suggest that people in Australia live in an environment of acceptance and harmony. However the respondents clearly understood that this was not the case. Amanda (Philippines, 22, SEA) reflected that she had felt her Australian national identity was questioned when in ‘rural, country Australia’ due to ‘the whole race issue.’ Amanda explained that her Asian appearance labelled her as ‘other’ and that due to this she was not automatically assumed to be Australian when in rural Australia. This was quite different to her experiences in Australia’s major cities where she had not felt such exclusion. Her experience was in direct contrast to the inclusionary

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63 There is less diversity in the population of many rural areas of Australia and so Amanda felt that her ‘Asian’ appearance set her apart in those situations. This is in contrast to the major cities where there are far more multicultural populations.
comments made by the respondents. However the respondents also commented that their perceptions, that Australians do not need to have a specific physical appearance, were not shared by all in Australia.

Even though white settlers have a short history in Australia and migrants from all areas of the world are now established Australians there remains a lingering connection between Australian national identity and whiteness and British background. The respondents seemed genuine in their belief that ‘Australians have a lot of different backgrounds’ (James, Australia, 21, SE) and that ‘there is no stereotype of what an Australian is’ (Mary, Australia, 23, SE). They seem to have adopted the rhetoric that people of any appearance and background can be Australian, however the language they used to describe their fellow Australians retained strong overtones of a connection between ethnic background and genuine Australian national identity. Emma (Australia, 23, AI) described her understanding of a traditional perception of an Australian:

_The true blue Aussie … [as] the white Australian that has descended from just Australians._

Mary (Australia, 24, SE) spoke about her grandparents’ understanding of Australians:

_I guess my grandparents see Australians as being blonde hair, white skinned, English-like people and anyone else is just living in the country and they would never be like a real Australian no matter how many generations they have been living here._

Similarly Delphi (Greece, 18, SE) said:

_The Australian Australians, like Anglos._
Thus Delphi is suggesting there is a hierarchy of Australian national identity as espoused by Hage (1998). Beck (Australia, 20, AI) clearly noted the association between Anglo appearance and acceptance as an Australian:

*If you see two Asian girls walking down the street you don’t straight away think they are Aussies. They may have been born here and their parents may have been born here and they may be Australians, but you don’t know that. But if you see someone with an Anglo background you automatically do, you automatically think Australian.*

So, according to these respondents, to be instantly identified as Australian a person required a white-Anglo appearance. It would appear that non-white, non-Anglo Australians may be regarded as Australian but are not immediately labelled as such. They are more commonly labelled according to their ethnic heritage. Those with a non-Anglo appearance had to demonstrate acquired Australian cultural capital such as accent or adoption of the Australian lifestyle (as identified by the respondents) to be deemed Australian and be differentiated from tourists.

The respondents also made a distinction between their friends according to appearance. When asked to identify their friends’ backgrounds the respondents often made the distinction between the ‘Australian’ friends and the ‘others’. For example Angie (China, 25, SEA) said ‘I do have my Australian friends and my Asian friends as well.’ Minh (Australia, 25, SEA) described her friends as:

*They are all Australian. Most of them were born here, most are a similar age, some come from interstate and they are just about all from Anglo-European background.*
According to appearance the respondents’ friends were labelled as Australian when they had British heritage. Other friends were labelled according to their national or ethnic heritage. So the Australian friends with a British background had gained the privilege of immediate acknowledgement as Australians. Only a few referred to their Australian friends of British background as Anglos. Emily (Malaysia, 19, SEA) explained this by saying, ‘the English have been here for a really long time and we just came here.’ When the respondents spoke of their fellow Australian citizens as Asians or Africans they were referring to ethnic heritage rather than current citizenship. This reflected the ongoing resonance of ethnic background and the underlying assumption that Australians with white and Anglo background hold a privileged claim to Australian national identity. No respondents suggested that non-white, non-Anglo appearance Australians were not Australian; rather these attributes provided a more certain and unquestioned acknowledgement of Australian national identity.

Even Anglo background Australians with a very short family history in Australia saw their own Australian national identity as uncontested but referred to others by their ethnic background. Both Michael (Australia, 19, AI) and Shaun (Australia, 22, AI) had a British born parent but readily adopted a fully Australian national identity. This reinforced the underlying belief that having Anglo background and appearance provided immediate access to Australian national identity. If a person is regularly described by others as having a nationality that is not Australian it can potentially create a sense of differentiation from the ‘real’ Australians. This differentiation was articulated by Zevallos’ (2005) Latin American respondents who felt that their Australian national identity was constantly questioned and that they were required to justify their inclusion in the group of Australians. This demonstrates a hierarchy of Australian national identity where
some are regarded as more authentic Australians than others (Hage, 1998).

Hage (1998: 213) also notes that some whites fear their privileged position is at risk due to the success of non-white migrants. Thus for some Australians the recognition of changes in Australia’s population has been threatening. Forrest and Dunn (2006: 208) explain the electoral backlash against the former Labor government by Anglo-Australians in the 1996\(^64\) elections as being a result of their perceived loss of privilege. Fearful white-Anglos have a vested interest in maintaining the image of Australians as being white as it reinforces their sense of ownership of the land, pushes others to the position of outsiders and reasserts their position of hegemony. Comments made by Danna Vale\(^65\) in 2006 which suggested that Australia could become a Muslim nation (Peatling, 2006) reveal this fear; that Australia could change and the current dominant group could lose its privileged position. Jamrozik, Boland and Urquhart (1995: 112) argue that such a fear is not new in Australia as ‘each new wave of immigrants was perceived to be a threat to ‘national cohesion’, to the ‘Australian way of life’ and to the ‘standard of living.’ As far back as the 1800s fear of non-white migration was strongly proclaimed in the Australian colonies (Hirst, 2007:12). In the 1990s there was a similar fear of the Asianisation of Australia (Jamrozik, Boland and Urquhart, 1995: 112). The new fear of Muslims could be regarded in a similar light: as a fear that the dominant position of white-Anglo Australians may be threatened.

Several respondents however did feel that whiteness remained a feature of Australian appearance. Wayne (England, 24, AI) said:

\(^{64}\) Pauline Hanson, in the 1990s, was prominent in Australian politics and spoke of her fear of Australia being taken over by Asians.

\(^{65}\) Danna Vale, in 2006, was a member of the House of Representatives, the lower house of the Australian parliament.
Australians look no different to any other nationality, any white nationality obviously. I don’t think there is a massive difference between the English, the Irish, the Scots, the Australians or pretty much any white or Caucasian race.

This reflects a fairly accurate picture of Australia in the past when Australia was defined by its British-ness (Mackay, 2007: 138) and most Australians had a British heritage. This has changed dramatically since the 1960s, yet the large numbers of past and present migrants from The United Kingdom\textsuperscript{66} and from Europe still give the majority of Australians a white appearance. Notions of an ongoing association between whiteness and Australian national identity may also be based upon this fact. However when speaking about Australians’ appearance, Beck (Australia, 20, AI) said:

\textit{Because you are Anglo-Saxon doesn't mean you are Australian because there are so many different cultures in Australia. I think they are Australian [people with a non-Anglo background] but obviously their heritage is more of a fact to them than Anglo-Saxons who originated from England because physically looking at them they don’t look, in inverted commas, Australian}\textsuperscript{67}.

Beck’s comment highlights her belief that the majority of Australians share a British heritage and so they can be regarded as the norm. Thus those Australians whose appearance does not fit this norm are constantly aware of their difference. Those with an Anglo appearance are automatically deemed Australian, they are the majority so their appearance has less impact upon their lives than for those who look

\textsuperscript{66} In the 60s 45% of migrants were born in the United Kingdom, by 2006-7 this had fallen to 17%. (DFAT). However, the UK was still the largest source of permanent arrivals in Australia in the year to mid 2002 (ABS, 2002: 32 cited in Forrest and Dunn, 2006: 210).

\textsuperscript{67} Beck uses the term ‘in inverted commas Australian’ to refer to what she regards as the commonly accepted image of an Australian.
different to the ‘inverted comma Australian’ (Beck) and are in the minority. Ness (Australia, 25, AI) commented:

*Chinese migrants came as some of the very first migrants and you hear a lot of Chinese Australians still struggling with, ‘where are you from?’*

Despite many generations of family living in Australia some people of distant Chinese heritage are still denied automatic recognition as Australians due to their non-white appearance. For such people their appearance plays a large part in their life as an Australian. Tan (2006: 68) argues that those of Asian appearance have an Asian identity imposed upon them by others due to their appearance. One of Tan’s (2006: 71) respondents explained that due to her appearance she was treated as a foreigner in Australia. Thus her Australian national identity was regularly denied by others. Another of Tan’s respondents (2006: 73) angrily stated, ‘I can live in this country for five hundred years … but I’ll always be Chinese.’

Minh (Australia, 25, SEA) also felt that Australians ‘are generally Anglo,’ and suggested that those of non-Anglo appearance were just ‘pretenders’. Minh explained this:

*I just say they [Australians with a non-Anglo appearance] are pretenders because … they think they can get away with calling themselves Australian, having the accent.*

Minh’s comment adds to the complexity of understanding national identity. Her comment suggests that the dominant image of Australians is that they are white. She believed those of Asian appearance could ‘pretend’ to be Australian by having an Australian accent, but they would never achieve full Australian status. Minh explained that this was because those of Asian heritage sometimes
‘play[ed] up the Asian side’ and adopted a non-Australian national identity when it suited them. Because of their Asian appearance they were able to choose to present either an Asian or an Australian national identity. As they had not chosen to identify with just one national identity Minh seemed to believe that they were, in reality, neither one nor the other but always pretending. She felt that others saw them as pretending and they also saw themselves as pretending. She exhibited a negative opinion of hybrid national identities. For her a person could only have one national identity or be labelled a pretender. This is a very different perspective to that noted by the other respondents.

Hage (1998: 51) suggests that there exist ‘different modalities of national belonging’ (italics in original) and that whiteness is the most crucial form of cultural capital (61). Hage explains:

No matter how much cultural capital a “Third World-looking” migrant accumulates, the fact that he or she has acquired it, rather than being born with it, devalues what he or she possesses compared to the “essence” possessed by the national aristocracy [those of white appearance]. (1998: 62)

Non-white Australians may seek to acquire cultural capital to gain full acceptance as Australians. Ivliano and Baldassar (2008: 3) note how Italian migrants have gained cultural capital through economic success and argue that this has contributed to their ‘whitening’ and their acceptance as Australians. However no matter how much cultural capital many migrants gain, their non-white appearance, the most significant form of cultural capital, will ensure their marginalisation. Hage’s comment is supported by Minh who felt that without a white-Anglo appearance people would never achieve the status of automatic recognition as being Australian. Forrest and Dunn (2006: 209) are
more specific and suggest that the dominant form of cultural capital is more than just whiteness: it is Anglo appearance.

The writings of Tan (2003), Zevallos (2005) and Ganguly (1997) also argue that people are marginalised from full Australian national identity due to their appearance. This thesis finds that white-ness is not a fixed concept and that it has changed over time. Those with Southern European backgrounds, who in the past may have been labelled as non-white, are now more widely embraced by respondents as being white. However it highlights the on-going importance of white-ness (even with a re-formulated definition) to immediate and unquestioned acceptance within the category of Australian. It suggests that should definitions of whiteness alter in the future those granted instant Australian national identity will alter. It also reflects the vast, ongoing repercussions of Australia’s past ‘White Australia’ policy; despite changes in multicultural policy it retains powerful resonance as the association between white appearance and Australian national identity remains strong. The marginalisation of certain groups is further reinforced through their exclusion from images of ‘stereotypical’ Australians.

**Stereotypical Australians and Social Constructions of Australians**

Respondents were adamant that there is now no such thing as a typical Australian, yet there was much commonality in their understanding of a stereotypical Australian. Words used to describe the stereotypical Australian include:\(^{68}\) bogan, ocker, yobbo and bloke. Stereotypical Australians were regarded as wearing stubbie shorts, a blue singlet top (often referred to as a ‘bluey’ or a ‘wife beater’), tight jeans, Yakka trousers, Akubra hats and thongs. Stereotypical Australians were seen to be interested in sport, mainly football and cricket, spending time at the pub or having a barbeque and drinking beer (most often VB or XXXX). They were of Western appearance, rugged, with blonde or

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\(^{68}\) Terms used in this section are explained in the glossary.
sun-bleached hair, were white skinned, though tanned and were often associated with the country side and hard work on the land.

Nile (2000: 2 – 3) identifies the key figure in social constructions of Australianness as a strong white male who believes in egalitarianism and mateship. It is not a feminine image. Thus the stereotype is far from reflective of most Australians. Attwood (cited in Castles, 1988: 102) suggests that these rugged male characters are no longer the typical Australians, but that ‘the urban accountant would be much closer than the larger than life bushman to being the typical Australian. And he would very likely be Greek or Vietnamese – or a woman.’ Attwood’s critical statement recognises that the stereotype is far from typical. Australia’s population in urban areas is growing whilst in rural areas it is declining (ABS, 2009b). In 2006 less than 290,000 people were employed in agriculture, forestry or fishing (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2010). Since the 1970s the number of Asian migrants has steadily increased (Mackie, 2004: 163), and ‘Melbourne hosts the 3rd largest Greek-speaking population of any city in the world’ (City of Melbourne, 2009). Further, over half the population are female. Only two respondents talked about a stereotypical female Australian image. Mary (Australia, 24, SE) felt that a stereotypical Australian female would be ‘very much a yobbo stereotype where they are very loud, overweight and drink a lot.’ Of course as with the male stereotypes, it is not indicative of all Australian women. Charlotte (Australia, 20, SE) felt that the stereotype could be ‘both’ genders, however did not elaborate on her understanding of a stereotypical Australian woman.

The remainder of the respondents were adamant that the stereotypical Australian was a man. Nick (Australia, 20, SE) said:

*I think that’s the key, it’s a bloke … I don’t know if I could explain a typical Australian woman. I just couldn’t even think of it.*
His perception of the stereotypical Australian was so deeply entrenched as being masculine that he was unable to even imagine what the stereotypical female might be. When the notion of a stereotypical female was raised James (Australia, 21, SE) felt similarly:

I’ve never actually thought about it, you just straight away think of the typical Aussie bloke.

Gill (Australia, 23, AI) commented that ‘we [women] are not portrayed.’ It would appear that while the respondents acknowledged the absence of a feminine stereotype they also found it difficult to formulate an image of one.

The stereotypical image of an Australian is not only male: he is also white. Brett (Australia, 24, AI) noted social constructions of the typical Australian:

Reflect historic parts of our history that have happened, but they miss a whole other side of it like the people coming from across the shores and what they have brought … so they are focussing on the white, or the majority are white symbols I suppose.

These constructions may reflect aspects of Australia’s past, yet they certainly do not reflect all aspects as they tend to ignore the early non-British migrants and the Indigenous population. A respondent in previous research (Lohm, 2007: 30) noted:

I think there are a lot of things in recent Australian history, like things that usually get sanitised a lot, like when we do the First
Fleet\textsuperscript{69} in Grade Four, they arrive on the ships and land and everyone says wasn’t it great and they shake hands with the Aborigines and they live happily ever after … I think the way it is sanitised does everyone a disservice, [it’s] incredibly fairy tale and also eliminating in history the first people who lived here … I think there is way too much emphasis put on the First Fleet and all that sort of thing and British settlement. I think there is too much emphasis placed on things like Captain Cook\textsuperscript{70} and the Eureka Stockade\textsuperscript{71} and all that sort of thing. They are very white stories, very Anglo stories and it is fine for them to be told if they are told in conjunction with other stories as well.

These ‘white stories’ of Australia’s history ignored the contributions and perspectives of non-white Australians. It was from these stories that images of Australian national identity were formed, hence they carry a strong white-image. In contemporary Australia these can serve to automatically include some and exclude others as they do not reflect all the current population and many Australians may feel no affiliation with these stories or characters.

These stereotypes were seen by many respondents as outdated. Deb (Australia, 25, SE) felt that Australia had ‘progressed since then.’ Jenny (Australia, 22, SE) felt that now Australian men are becoming more ‘metrosexual\textsuperscript{72}’ while both Beck (Australia, 20, AI) and Shaun (Australia, 22, AI) felt the stereotypes related to the ‘past’. Jade (Ireland, 24, AI) noted that all countries have stereotypes and these are not necessarily relevant to reality. For example Germans are

\textsuperscript{69} The First Fleet arrived in Botany Bay in New South Wales in 1788 carrying convicts to establish the first British colony in Australia.

\textsuperscript{70} Captain Cook mapped the East coast of Australia and claimed it for Great Britain in 1770.

\textsuperscript{71} In 1854 a rebellion broke out in the Ballarat mine fields. It became known as the 'Eureka Stockade'. It arose because the gold miners were opposed to the government miners' licenses.

\textsuperscript{72} The term metrosexual is used to refer to sensitive heterosexual men who care about their appearance.
stereotypically associated with wearing lederhosen\textsuperscript{73} and dirndls,\textsuperscript{74} yet these costumes are not worn by contemporary Germans in their everyday lives.

Whilst it is readily acknowledged that these ideas are stereotypes and do not reflect the reality of contemporary Australia, they exist as powerful stories of Australian national identity and as such their impact must be acknowledged. Of significance in the discussions of typical Australians by respondents was also the invisibility of the Indigenous peoples of Australia.

**Indigenous and Non-Anglo Background Australians – What is Their Place in the Narrative of Australian Identity?**

The original inhabitants of Australia appear to be absent in social constructions of Australianness; instead they have been displaced by a strong Anglo image. Perhaps this can be explained by the fact that stories about Australia are told from a white perspective. Brett (Australia, 24, AI) noted that social constructions of Australia are ‘white symbols’ and that the other side of the story is missed out, especially the ‘dispersals of communities’ and ‘dispersal means a massacre’.\textsuperscript{75} Castles (1988: 109) asserts that because the Aboriginal culture ‘shaped the Australian environment’ in a manner that was not recognised by the British, the colonisers were able to conveniently rationalise their own superiority and ‘conquer’ the Aboriginals. The Aboriginals’ perceived inferiority\textsuperscript{76} may have caused them to be ignored in constructions of identity and the focus placed upon the allegedly superior new arrivals, an opinion shared by Hollinsworth (1998: 191).

\textsuperscript{73} Lederhosen are leather shorts with braces.
\textsuperscript{74} Dirndls are traditional dresses with close fitting bodices, they are often decorated with embroidery.
\textsuperscript{75} Disease killed an estimated 90\% of the Indigenous Australians in coastal areas between 1788 and 1850 (Mackie, 2004: 68) and many Indigenous Australians were also massacred by settlers (Evans & Thorpe, 2001).
\textsuperscript{76} According to Castles (1988: 108, 109) notions of ‘social Darwinism’ were used to justify their belief in the superiority of the British and white men and the inferiority of others.
It is significant that not all respondents mentioned Indigenous Australians when initially describing their understanding of an Australian. However some did note their role:

*I don’t think there is an Australian type unless we are describing the Aborigines.* (Jonathon, Australia, 24, SE)

*The original Australians are the Aboriginals, obviously.* (Mary, Australia, 24, SE)

*If you say Australian the immediate image you get is white, even though it is probably supposed to be Aboriginal.* (Lana, Australia, 20, AI)

Lana’s comment indicates the marginalisation of the Indigenous population. It also suggests that there must be a singular view of Australian national identity; that Australian national identity can be just one thing rather than a combination of things. If the view is taken that only one group can ‘represent’ Australianness it means that other groups cannot be included in a perception of Australianness. However a view that was not singular but recognised variety would be more inclusive and more representative of the reality of contemporary Australia.

The Indigenous peoples’ historic links to the land now recognised as Australia are long standing yet their significance in the respondents’ understanding of Australian national identity was limited. Brett (Australia, 24, AI) commented on this:

*I suppose those kinds of examples [talking about Australian icons] don’t really represent the Aborigines … you don’t really learn
about the dispersals of communities and things like that until a bit later in life and you actually go to university.

Charlotte (Australia, 20, SE) noted that, ‘people tend to forget the Aboriginals.’ Alex (Australia, 24, SE) agreed:

_The Aboriginals have just seemed to have been forgotten, shafted I suppose, and although they were the ones that were here first they seem to be the ones that get picked on, they’ve always been more out of it [ignored in images of Australian identity] compared to us [referring to white Australians]._

These comments can be seen as a reflection of the neglect with which Australian Indigenous people have been treated. Birch (1977: 20 – 21) reinforces this notion:

Many Australian histories authenticate themselves by drawing on ‘the available myths and discourses of national character and identity’ (Turner 1986). These histories often speak of Australia’s ‘pioneer spirit’, where the ‘settlers’ toiled in a harsh and empty land. They celebrate a hybridised Australian male: fiercely independent, but imbued with just enough British heritage to remain above the ‘natives’, who hover around the fringe of such histories or are disposed of in the ‘prehistory’ of the text.

Like my respondents Birch notes that Indigenous narratives of Australian national identity have become peripheral and supplanted by white, British narratives. Indigenous Australians’ stories and lives have been little recognised in the construction of an Australian national identity. This was certainly prevalent in the past when Australia was regarded as the ‘new Britannia’ (Jupp, 1996: 2), and according to the respondents, has not changed.
Certainly the Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples suffered at the hands of the white colonials. Many died due to the introduction of European disease and settler actions such as massacres, resettlement and poor nutrition (Evans and Thorpe, 2001; Mackie, 2004: 68, 69). Large numbers of children were forcibly removed from their families (Burnside, 2007: 131). Indigenous Australians suffered in the past and still suffer materially in terms of having poorer health (Public Health Association of Australia, 2009: 2), lower school retention rates, lower levels of employment and far higher levels of imprisonment than other Australians (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2008). However this thesis suggests that they could also be regarded as suffering symbolically through their lack of representation in understandings of Australian national identity. They have little visibility in Australia’s history or in the cultural iconography and images of Australia. Such invisibility in the Australian narrative places them as lacking in significance, a further affront given their past harsh treatment.

Not only are the Indigenous peoples missing in images of Australian national identity so are other non-Anglo cultures. In the 1850s vast numbers of migrants rushed to the goldfields in Australia. Some of these migrants came from Britain, but great numbers also came from China, Russia, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland and America (ABC, 2001):

In 1854 there were about 25,000 diggers on the Ballarat goldfields. The majority of these were British, especially Irish, but also included Americans, French, Italian, German, Polish and Hungarian exiles as well as many other nationalities. The largest nationality group was Chinese. Aboriginal people were also

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77 In 1851 gold was discovered in Australia, this precipitated a huge influx of migrants and in 1852 370,000 migrants arrived (Australian Government Culture Portal, 2007). Gold was discovered in Victoria, New South Wales, Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory.
The stories of these migrants, as well as those of Indigenous Australians, have not been incorporated into the constructions of Australian national identity. In 1861 3.3% of Australia’s population was of Chinese heritage (Australian Government Culture Portal, 2007). In the 1950s the most popular name in the Darwin (Northern Territory capital) telephone book was Chin (Egan, 2003: 137). Yet these migrants are absent from most historical stories of Australia.

The image created by artist Leong (Elder, 2007: 138) of a Crocodile Dundee character of Asian background (see Image 1 below) critiques the lack of non-British images in social constructions of Australian national identity as the image of an Asian looking Crocodile Dundee character appears incongruent given popular understandings of the stereotypical Australian. It highlights that the on-going Australian stereotype remains Anglo, an understanding that was recognised by the respondents in their comments on the inappropriateness of this stereotype in the early 21st century.
Many present day Australians have no connection to these stereotypical images and hence may feel excluded from well-recognised images of Australian national identity. Australia has undergone enormous change in the past 200 years and particularly in the past 50 years yet the stereotypical image of an Australian has not altered to accommodate these changes. A British heritage stereotype may be recognised as the past, yet it is also not the full story; rather it is a just one version. It has very little resonance with either the reality of today or the reality of the past.

Image 1: An Australian (Source: Elder, 2007: 138)
Chapter Review

The respondents paint a complex picture of Australian identity. There is no one feature that can be recognised as being the essence of Australian national identity. Rather the respondents identify a variety of features including the adoption of certain social activities. Guibernau (2007: 10 – 11) concurs with the respondents’ comments explaining that not all people in a nation share the same features, nor do they share them with the same intensity. Respondents noted that Australians embraced activities that revolve around the outdoors. These included a perceived passion for sport as well as an enjoyment of the beach, barbecues and the consumption of alcohol. Whilst there was support for these images of Australianness many respondents also voiced a lack of enthusiasm for these activities. They could still regard themselves and others as Australian without embracing these activities. These activities could be regarded as a form of cultural capital (Hage, 1998) which enhanced an individual’s claim to an Australian national identity. As noted by Leah (Malaysia, 24, SEA) some of her friends were ‘more Aussie’ because they ‘enjoy sports more’ than she does. Thus a hierarchy of Australian national identity appeared to exist with some being regarded as ‘more Australian’ than others.

An appreciation and practice of social values and a commitment to political values were also regarded as important to Australians. Australians were regarded as people who cared for and were loyal to their families and their friends. This was exemplified in the importance placed upon the notion of mateship. Yet the respondents noted that these attributes are not unique to Australians as people from around the globe also care for their families and friends. Certain political values such as a belief in equal opportunity, respect for democracy and commitment to freedom of speech were also regarded as fundamental Australian values. However it was also noted that such values are also not unique to Australia and Australia’s legal
endorsement of such values may not be as strong as in some other countries. These social and political values were identified as being prominent aspects of Australian national identity. To not support these values was considered to be un-Australian, yet it was noted that they could not be considered to be uniquely Australian values.

All respondents recognised the multicultural make-up of Australia. The term multicultural was utilised as an adjective that described the fact that people of diverse backgrounds live in Australia and have Australian citizenship. Many respondents noted the benefits, such as increased tolerance, that multiculturalism had brought to Australia. Support was voiced for soft multiculturalism as respondents agreed that migrants should be able to retain their traditions and culture in Australia. This is in contrast to past policies and expectations of assimilation. Yet multiculturalism was not so fully endorsed that there were no criticisms of it. Concerns about segregation between different migrant groups, fears of certain groups and apprehension that some migrants may want to impose their beliefs and traditions upon other Australians were expressed. Will (Australia, 18, AI) and Alex (Australia, 24, SE) voiced their concerns that migrants threatened to alter the culture of Australia. Their views cannot be disregarded simply as an anomaly. It must be recognised that others may hold similar opinions and as such they have served as a reminder that multiculturalism and immigration are not supported by all Australians. They also serve as an example of the contradictions that can exist in people’s attitudes towards migrants and multiculturalism. Whilst their criticism of migrants was clear they also endorsed migrants’ rights to maintain their culture and identified that many of their close friends were of non-Anglo migrant heritage. It would appear that the respondents’ appreciation of multiculturalism in Australia is complex. There are aspects of it that they support but this support is also tempered with concerns.
In their discussions about multiculturalism respondents explored the notion that Australians were tolerant. Some suggested that Australia presented a façade of tolerance. The notion of tolerance also elicited strong emotional responses from some who regarded the notion as abhorrent. Tolerance was regarded as a strategy that could be utilised by the dominant group, those of white-Anglo heritage, to maintain their position as they held the power to grant or withdraw tolerance. As noted by Minh (Australia, 25, SEA) Australians could be ‘tolerant when it suits them.’ Many noted that acceptance, which unlike tolerance is not conditional, was preferable.

When asked about the physical appearance of Australians the respondents’ replies noted that ‘there is no Australian face’ (Shaun, Australia, 22, AI). They understood that Australia was multicultural and as such the appearance of Australians was wide-ranging. Yet the experiences of some suggested a very different understanding of Australian appearance. Respondents, despite their avowal that there was no specific ‘Australian appearance’ differentiated their friends into the ‘Australians’, those of white-Anglo heritage and the ‘Italians’, the ‘Asians’ or the ‘others’. Some referred to the ‘true blue Aussie’ as being ‘the white Australian’ (Emma, Australia, 23, AI). The respondents’ understandings of Australian appearance indicate that whilst they endorse a broad, inclusive belief that Australians are diverse and thus have varied appearances their experiences and their language suggest an ongoing association between white-Anglo appearance and Australian national identity. Their labelling of friends according to their heritage and only referring to the white-Anglo heritage friends as Australian serves to maintain an image that Australians are white and of Anglo appearance. No respondents suggested that a person of non-white, non-Anglo appearance was not Australian, however their identification as an Australian was not automatic. White appearance, as suggested by Hage (1998), is
valuable cultural capital as it provides preferential access to an Australian national identity.

The association between whiteness and Australian national identity is reinforced by stereotypical images of Australians. As identified by the respondents these tend to be white males. Similarly the narratives that are told about Australian history tend to be white stories which focus on the achievements of Australia’s white settlers. The stories of Indigenous Australians and non-white migrants are rarely acknowledged. They do not hold the same significance in the social constructions of Australian national identity.

In order to attain identity as an Australian an individual must adopt a range of social and political values; none are compulsory, yet they combine to create the complex mosaic of Australian national identity. These values carry cultural capital and their possession contributes to the ability to construct an Australian national identity which is not only recognised by the individual but also by others. Along side these values sits appearance. According to the respondents this is not a crucial factor in Australian identity. However the existence of an association between Australian national identity and whiteness, in particular Anglo appearance remains. The dominance of white and Anglo images in social constructions of Australia reflects the strong association between this appearance and authentic Australian national identity. Whilst the respondents were eager to note that these images are tied to the past and are stereotypical rather than typical they provide the background upon which an Australian national identity must be constructed. This places white-Anglo appearance Australians in a position of advantage when constructing their Australian national identity. Australia has changed in the last 200 years and the respondents were keen to acknowledge and embrace this change. However, stereotypical images and stories of Australia remain. Factors such as the respondents’ understanding of Australian national identity...
play a crucial role in the construction of national identity for residents in Australia. These understandings serve to grant or restrict access to an Australian national identity. The next chapter will explore how the respondents understood their own national identities.
Chapter Five

Respondents’ National Identities

The previous chapter considered how the respondents understood Australianness. This chapter will examine the respondents’ understandings of their own national identities. Given the diverse backgrounds of the respondents it was anticipated that their understandings would be varied, and this was certainly the case. Each had constructed a unique appreciation of their national identity. For some it related to their state and ethnic identity while for others this was not so. While all incorporated Australianness as an aspect of their national identity the importance of this differed considerably. Some understood their national identity as being fundamentally Australian and recognised little, if any, other identities. Others rejoiced in their non-Australian identities and regarded them as integral to their sense of self.

Some claimed hybrid national identities made up of two or even more identities. The respondents’ understandings of these hybrid national identities varied considerably. Some took great pleasure in recognising their hybrid national identity and explained how it enriched their life. In contrast others spoke of their hybrid national identity with less enthusiasm. It was not an aspect of their self-image that was of importance to them; rather they would have preferred to be able to ignore it. For them their non-Australian identity held little personal significance. While they did not actively wish to deny their heritage it was simply not an integral part of their lives and was virtually irrelevant to their understanding of their national identity. Yet others expected it of them. It served as a form of ‘othering’ (Castles and Miller, 2003: 248) whereby they were reminded of their non-inclusion in the group of Australians who are immediately accepted as being
Australian. In this chapter I will examine the respondents’ different understandings of their own Australian and hybrid national identities.

The fluidity of the respondents’ understandings of their national identities was striking. During the interviews many respondents referred to themselves in a variety of ways. It seemed impossible to grasp a clear hold on their appreciation of their national identity before it rapidly morphed into something different. The title of Berman’s book *All that is solid melts into air* (1988) came to mind. At times their responses appeared to be almost contradictory. Yet the respondents did not appear to feel the need to develop one fixed and unwavering national identity; instead they appeared to be comfortable with their fluid national identities. They appeared to have a strong sense of ‘who they were’ and utilised various facets of their national identities to adapt and feel comfortable in the range of social settings within which they found themselves. While to an observer these fluid national identities may appear as indicators of disorientation and disconnection, they serve the young adults well and provide each of them with a unique sense of self which serves to link them to the many parts of their lives.

**Australian Identities**

Identification with a state is often understood to be a key feature of a person’s sense of identity. Notions of state and nation are often conflated, thus there is a belief that one should give supreme allegiance to the nation of people who reside in your state. This identification with a synonymous state and nation is regarded by some as being more significant than other loyalties (Halliday, 2001: 443). Bulbeck (2000: 116) states that national identity is the second most important aspect of personal identity, closely following family relationship. Guibernau (2007: 13) suggests that national identity is an emotional bond to fellow nationals. The power of people’s affiliation
to their state and nation is no better illustrated than by some people’s avowal that they would fight to defend their country, its interests and its people. Associated with this idea of the centrality of national identity is the belief that a person should assign loyalty to just one state and that ‘allegiance between two or more sovereign states is akin to bigamy’ (Brown, 2002: 71). In the past migrants to Australia were expected to relinquish any attachments to their countries of origin and become Australian. After this the policy of multiculturalism recognised migrants’ difficulty surrendering all affiliation with their country upon arrival. Yet there remains an underlying belief that migrants should do this and commit fully to an Australian national identity. This support for migrants’ adoption of Australianness can be seen in the research by Markus and Dharmalingam (2007: 47) whose respondents felt that migrants should integrate into the Australian way of life. Similarly Humphrey (2005: 145), when writing about Muslims in Australia, notes the pressure for Muslims to assimilate or ‘be kept under surveillance and controlled.’ He notes the concern that is felt by some in Australia due to the perceived commitment of Muslims to their religion (Humphrey, 2005: 145). This is a commitment which, according to Halliday (2001: 443), some regard should be less significant than their commitment to the state.

Most respondents did not hold a single national identity. However, all respondents felt that Australian was an aspect of their national identity. Nick (Australia, 20, SE) spoke about his Australian national identity:

I don’t know what Australian is or what it feels like. I just know that it’s in me and I know that I feel different to the rest of the world because I am here. But even after answering all these questions I honestly can’t explain it properly.

Whilst so many of the respondents had faced difficulties defining exactly what it meant to be Australian, they had far less difficulty
claiming to be Australian themselves. Whatever the amorphous notion of Australianness may be they all, in some manner, identified with it. Whether it was because their families had lived in Australia for many generations, they had been born in Australia, they now lived in Australia or they had adopted aspects of the ‘Australian’ lifestyle they all identified as being Australian.

Relatively few respondents viewed themselves as only Australian; most explained that their national identities were constructed through attachments to more than one state. The respondents who identified solely as Australian were of predominantly Anglo-Irish background.78

Lana (Australia, 20, AI) said:

*I am Australian. When you talk about national identities and people have these backgrounds I have never felt it. My background isn’t strong enough to affect my national identity. My grandpa’s Dad was Lebanese. I only found out that a couple of months ago, but I haven’t got strong enough ties anywhere else to have a different identity other than Australian.*

Similarly Gemma (Australia, 25, AI), Brett (Australia, 24, AI) and Cara (Australia, 24, AI) felt no association to any other state. Their parents and grandparents were all Australian born so they had no recent familial ties to any other state. It is of note that only four of the respondents had all parents and grandparents born in Australia. The remainder had either a parent or grandparent born elsewhere.

Having all parents and grandparents born in Australia appeared to be strongly associated with a sole Australian national identity. This may be linked with notions of ‘blood ties’ or ethnic understandings of

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78 Anglo/Irish was the background identified by those who regarded themselves as being only Australian; however many had other heritages to which they occasionally referred during the interviews. Respondents were asked to only identify their predominant heritage.
national identity (Pakulski and Tranter, 2000: 36). These respondents felt a right to claim an Australian national identity as their family had lived in Australia for a long time and had been Australian for several generations. Also, as noted by Lana, her ties to a country other than Australia were so far in the past that they no longer had any impact upon her life. She had no attachment to Lebanon, where her great-grandfather was born, and had only very recently learnt of her familial connection to that country.

In comparison, Shaun’s (Australia, 22, AI) father was born in England yet when asked about his national identity Shaun said:

Definitely Australian. I am in Australia and was brought up with Australian values.

When asked if he felt an attachment to any other country Shaun adamantly stated: ‘No, none at all.’ Shaun felt no connection to England which was his father’s birthplace. Shaun spoke of a strong civic (Pakulski and Tranter, 2000: 36) affiliation to Australia based upon his birth and residence in the country and his commitment to Australian values. He regarded these as a sufficient basis for him to claim not only an Australian national identity but to also reject any other. As he had not lived anywhere else and did not feel he had an appreciation of the values of any other country he understood himself as just Australian. However I suggest that there is also an element of ethnic (Pakulski and Tranter, 2000: 36) understanding of national identity in Shaun’s identity. Shaun’s non-Australian background is English. As noted by Mary (Australia, 24, SE), Delphi (Greece, 18, SE), Emily (Malaysia, 19, SEA) and Beck (Australia, 20, AI) there is a strong connection between an Anglo background and Australian national identity.

In the past Australia was understood as an outpost of Britain and the British Empire and Australians were considered British (Mackie,
2004: 151). Many of Australia’s institutions, such as the legal system, are based upon British models. This history has created a powerful and ongoing association between the countries. I suggest that it has provided British migrants and their descendants with preferential access to an Australian national identity. British migrants have had to assimilate little as the institutions, culture and lifestyle of Australia have grown from British roots. They are more able to easily slip into Australianness without having to make large changes to their way of life. As the majority of Australians still have a white appearance and many have a British background new British migrants are less ‘visible’ as migrants than migrants with a non-Anglo appearance. British subjects, who were on the Australian electoral role prior to 1984, even if they are not Australian citizens, are eligible to vote in Australian Federal elections and referendums (Australian Electoral Commission, 2010). Thus until 1984 British migrants gained voting rights without having to obtain Australian citizenship - an entitlement not granted to other migrants. Many of the values identified by the respondents as being Australian are also inherited from Britain, for example the belief in equality, democracy and an impartial judicial system. Thus an Australian national identity may not seem to be markedly different from a British national identity facilitating a simple adoption of Australianness and an unproblematic relinquishment of British-ness.

A migrant from a vastly different culture may more strongly note the disparities between Australia and their country of origin. As they may maintain aspects of their past culture this would more strongly differentiate them from the majority of Australians, thus reinforcing the non-Australian aspect of their national identity. For these reasons it would appear that having a British migrant background is advantageous in the construction of an Australian national identity. Hence Shaun’s construction of a solely Australian national identity has been facilitated by his ethnic background as well as his birth in Australia. Shaun’s understanding of his national identity was unique.
as he had a non-Australian born parent yet had no affiliation to another country. Many other respondents who had were born and lived their entire lives in Australia and upheld Australian values constructed quite different national identities.

The respondents who identified as only Australian were in the minority. Most respondents felt some affiliation to another nation or state. That the respondents associated with other nations and states was not surprising given Australia’s history of immigration and its multicultural stance since the 1970s. Australia’s past assimilation and integration policies discouraged migrants from retaining an ongoing affiliation with their past homelands. For migrants to acknowledge strong feelings for a country other than Australia was frowned upon. Tan (2003: 105) described the pressure she felt as she grew up to abandon all aspects of her Chinese heritage and become as ‘Australian (read: white) as possible’. However my respondents grew up only in multicultural Australia. They were born after the government’s change in policy away from assimilation and integration. As such pressures to discard attachments to heritages would have been less pervasive. It is likely that they had experiences, such as cultural festivals, where their heritage was celebrated and thus reinforced. They were more able to adopt Australianness as well as acknowledging the ongoing significance of their ethnic background. A hybrid national identity was commonly presented by these respondents.

**Hybrid Identities**

Given Australia’s history as a country predominantly inhabited by migrants or their descendants it is not surprising that most respondents were aware of having some non-Australian heritage even if for some it was in the distant past. Most of the respondents noted various heritages. For many respondents these backgrounds were significant
elements in their national identities. They had not forsaken their heritage.

Many respondents did not identify as solely Australian; instead they said they were ‘Vietnamese Australian’ or ‘Australian with an Italian background’. Respondents had utilised various aspects of their backgrounds, as well as their experiences in Australia to construct hybrid national identities. These hybrid national identities were not just a compromise where aspects of certain identities had been shed to replace others. Instead they were powerful new constructions, a kind of ‘third space’ (Bhabha, 1990). Anzaldua (1987: 79 – 80) explained the construction of a hybrid national identity as adding an extra element to a person’s identity:

In attempting to work out a synthesis, the self has added a third element which is greater than the sum of its severed parts. (Anzaldua, 1987: 79 – 80)

My respondents, at times, felt their hybrid national identities incorporated more than two identities. Some had incorporated these heritages into a multifaceted hybrid national identity. This construction of a hybrid self was richer than just the individual aspects of the identities combined. It is of note that this positive interpretation of hybridity is not the only one. Hybridity has also been construed in a very negative manner. It can be understood as ‘loss of purity’ (Nederveen Pieterse, 1994: 171) and derogatory terms, such as half-breed (Marotta, 2008: 295) have been used to describe individuals with combined heritages. These notions suggest that hybrids are unable to fully belong to or fit in with ‘pure’ heritage peoples. With the exception of Minh (Australia, 25, SEA) the respondents in this research did not understand their hybrid national identities in this negative manner; for them their hybridity was a source of enrichment or recognition of their heritages as well as their residence in Australia.
The notion of hybridity is a valuable tool when considering national identity in Australia. It is a shift from essentialism, which suggests that ethnic groups have fixed traits, and the ‘fetishism of boundaries’ (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001: 221). It moves from compartmentalising people into simplistic unitary identities and instead recognises the dynamic interchange and blending between cultures that has always existed. Cultures have never been pure; they have always been impacted upon by external influences. Nor have cultures been static; they have always adjusted and modified to allow for altered circumstances. So hybridity is not new. Rather the rapidity and degree of hybridisation may have altered due to the profound impact of globalisation (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001: 222, 231). Hybridity offers individuals the option of ‘multiple identities’ (Nederveen Pieterse, 1994: 168).

In the Australian context this can be understood as liberating. Individuals are freed from the restriction of having a singular national identity. They are also freed from the confinement of adhering to all facets of an identity. It provides flexibility and enhanced choice for individuals. They are able to select aspects of various identities and construct their unique national identity. This is evident in the respondents’ explanations of their hybrid national identities. None are the same. They have forged a sense of self that suits them, their life experiences and their future plans. Australia’s principle of multiculturalism endorses the establishment of hybrid national identities through its recognition of the diversity of Australia’s population and the interchange of lifestyles that exists in contemporary Australia. In this thesis a hybrid national identity is understood to be an identity that incorporates a connection to two or more nations’ cultures and the development of a new position that arises from this (Bhabha, 1990: 211). The degree of connection to each nation may vary. For example a person may have a hybrid national identity where
their Australian national identity plays a more dominant role than their English national identity. The degree of connection may also vary according to the circumstances in which the person finds themselves. How a person interprets and engages with their multiple national cultural connections provides new lenses through which to negotiate the life.

It must be noted that for some aspects of their hybrid identity is not freely chosen. Their non-Australian identity may hold little significance to them. It may be an identity that others impose on them due to their appearance and they have come to accept due to this pressure from others. In this case a hybrid national identity may not be liberating as it is not what they would have chosen to construct without the intervention of others. In fact it could be understood as an unwelcome requirement.

Given the extent of hybridisation that is present in the world it could be argued that the term has lost significance. If everyone is hybrid does the term provide any insights into understandings of individuals’ national identities (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001: 227)? Nederveen Pieterse (2001: 227) argues strongly that the term has considerable relevance as it is a shift from a preoccupation with boundaries. It also asserts the importance of giving recognition to those who are in-between, rather than maintaining the focus on the pure. It provides a platform from which to interrogate the construction of contemporary national identities in Australia.

The varying significance of heritages in national identities is a feature of hybridity. Each individual’s construction of their national identity was unique as they individually selected and rejected aspects of available options to create their own new and novel ‘third space’ (Bhabha, 1990). For some their heritage played only a small role in their sense of self and they thought of themselves as fundamentally
Australian. When Ben (Australia, 18, SE\textsuperscript{79}) spoke of his background he said that it was ‘not a very demanding part’ of his life:

*There are several customs that my family brought in trying to raise me, like I have a Croatian custom to always ask people if they are hungry and provide food.*

Ben recognised that he had adopted some Croatian customs yet he saw his daily life as being predominantly Australian. Annabell (Australia, 24, SE) made similar comments when explaining the prominence of her Greek background:

*It’s probably not such a big part of my life. Maybe it’s a bit of the values that I have just because I was raised like that, but not really in any other aspect. Maybe the food, the Greek food, that’s about it.*

For Annabell Australian was her primary national identity, but her Greek identity could not be disregarded. It remained an important part of her life and thus her national identity. Deb (Australia, 25, SE) made similar comments about her Maltese background:

*We have a few dishes that we like to cook that are Maltese, but it’s more a novelty not because it’s Maltese.*

Deb’s only connection to her Maltese heritage was ‘a few dishes.’ Her family enjoyed this facet of their heritage as it added some ‘novelty’ to their lives rather than because they felt a strong affiliation with Malta or because others identified them as being Maltese. Similarly

\textsuperscript{79} Note that Ben self-identified himself as having a predominantly Southern European background. The respondents’ self-identified backgrounds did not always correspond with the background that an objective observer might expect. Given that the research focus was on the respondents’ understandings of their national identities, not outsiders’ understandings, their understandings were respected and accepted.
Rebecca\textsuperscript{80} (Australia, 23, AI) sometimes attended Swiss National Day celebrations. These celebrations linked her to her heritage but made no demands on her everyday life. Wendy (Australia, 22, SEA) described her family’s celebration of Hari Raya:

We always have Hari Raya at the end of Ramadan. We always have a big Hari Raya feast and we invite family and friends over … I don’t think my Dad’s fasted in his life … More cultural. We eat a lot of food, have a lot of friends around you. We wouldn’t recognise it but for Dad. His family’s never been … particularly religious … it’s more a cultural thing than a religious thing.

Wendy’s family enjoyed celebrating Hari Raya with friends and family, yet her Malaysian heritage played little part in her life. She also celebrated Easter and Christmas.

Whilst their non-Australian side was a small part in these respondents’ lives it remained an element in their sense of self. It added another dimension to their lives, a dimension that would have been missed had they been compelled to forsake it. Gans (1979) suggests that such an attachment to heritage can be understood as symbolic ethnicity whereby individuals can enjoy the idiosyncrasies of their heritage without being encumbered with the negative connotations that may have been attached to these identities in the past. The theory of symbolic ethnicity argues that ethnic connections continue to exist due to people’s choice and ‘ethnicity is … disconnected from its objective social basis’ (Henry and Bankston, 1997:224). Thus as migrants, especially second and third generation migrants, meld into the fabric of their new country they become less conspicuous. They are less visible as new migrants and become a part of the general population. They are less likely to suffer the discrimination and hardships experienced by new migrants. As such their past heritages could fade.

\textsuperscript{80} Rebecca had some Swiss heritage.
However Gans (1979) argues that the descendant of migrants may choose to adopt non-demanding aspects of their past heritages as symbols that differentiate them from the homogenous population.

This symbolic ethnicity is assumed only when convenient and is not a focal part of a person’s national identity. For Wendy the celebration of Hari Raya could be regarded as a form of symbolic ethnicity. Similarly Annabell was able to celebrate name days in the Greek tradition while the cost of her Greek identity is ‘slight’ (Gans, 1979: 15). Annabell did not need to relinquish her Greek heritage to ‘gain upward mobility’ (Gans, 1979: 15). This may be a very different situation to that faced by her migrant parents as in the past migrants faced discrimination and pressure to assimilate (Tan, 2003: 105). When respondents’ heritage played just a minor part in their lives they were able to experience a ‘nostalgic allegiance to the culture … without [it] having to be incorporated in everyday behaviour’ (Gans, 1979: 15). As such this aspect of their heritage impinged very little on their day to day lives, yet offered them the opportunity to engage in distinct cultural activities as they suited them. At times these respondents referred to themselves as Australian and at others described themselves as having a hybrid national identity. The non-Australian aspect of their hybrid national identity played a lesser role in their understanding of their national identity than the Australian.

For others their heritage was a more integral feature of their national identity. These respondents had a lived ethnic identity (Waitt, Galea and Rawstorne, 2001: 78) where their ethnicity regularly influenced aspects of their daily lives. Lived ethnicity ‘relates to cultural performances, including rituals, attitudes and daily actions and interactions of people within families, work and leisure pursuits (Waitt et. al., 2001: 78). James’s extended Greek family played an enormous role in his life. It permeated much that he did:
Just seeing how different I am with my family ... one of my cousins is a mechanic and he services all our cars for us. I am pretty good with computers so I look after all of them. A lot of things are done in the family. (James, Australia, 21, SE)

James felt that his close and supportive relationship with his extended family was markedly different to the relationship that his friends had with their families. All members of his extended family worked closely together to support and assist each other. He felt this was a direct consequence of his Greek heritage. Thus his heritage was ever present in his familial interactions. Angie’s (China, 25, SEA) heritage similarly impacted on much of her life:

I actively seek out information about my countries and I know a lot about China. I’ve travelled there. I know a lot about South Korea, for example I really like the music there. I like a lot of the movies that come from Korea, the food. I kind of actively engage myself in these things so I am up to date.

Angie chose to maintain strong links to the countries of her ancestors and to preserve certain characteristics as fundamental aspects of her heritage. Both James and Angie had chosen to embrace their heritage. On his questionnaire Jonathon (Australia, 24, SE) identified himself as having both an Australian and an Italian nationality. He noted how his Italian background had worked to shape his values and lifestyle thus it played a more significant role in his construction of national identity:

I say I am Australian but I have an Italian background. I think that’s how I would identify. Australia is my home but I also recognise that a large part of me is Italian. I think that is relevant because those values are what makes me different to people that haven’t grown up with Italian parents and an Italian background. From a value point of view what I value, certain behaviours and
things like that come from the Italian side. So I think it’s important but I’d still say Australia is my home.

Jonathon recognised that his national identity was a combination of Australian and Italian. He noted that many parts of his life had been shaped by his heritage. He noted, ‘I have a different idea of hospitality’ and explained that, ‘eating is a massive part of Italian hospitality.’ Jonathon also felt that his family had encouraged him in his ‘drive to do well in studies and succeed because my grandparents came here with practically nothing.’ He wanted to ‘make them proud.’ These parts of his life highlighted the Italian side of his national identity.

Despite being born in Australia Emma (Australia, 23, AI) felt that her British heritage was a significant part of her national identity. Emma grew up with a strong British influence which enshrined in her a sense of being British. This sense of a British component to her national identity was melded with her Australian national identity as she grew up. Of significance is the fact that she felt she ‘immediately fitted in’ upon her arrival in Britain:

To most people I would describe myself as Australian because I was born here but I have grown up with my grandparents and Mum [all from the UK] … and I’ve always had that weird influence … I suppose I describe myself as Australian but I don’t feel that strong connection to Australia that other people do. But as soon as I got to the UK I felt that I immediately fitted in. The culture and the people are very much like me.

Emma felt attachments to both Australia and England and recognised that each played a part in her national identity:
I definitely do feel a connection to the UK, but when I am overseas and I see Australians I do feel the love for Australia and I do miss it so I am half-half. It may be strange for me to be that way but I suppose that a lot of people are.

Emma felt that her national identity transcended borders. Emma also noted that such a national identity may be common amongst those living in Australia as so many Australians have heritages from countries other than Australia. Australia’s policy of multiculturalism has supported the maintenance of cultures and traditions from migrants’ countries of origin. The ongoing influence of these heritages along with the fact of living in Australia would act to support the construction of hybrid national identities.

Leah (Malaysia, 24, SEA) identified with Australia, Chinese and Vietnamese national identities on her questionnaire. She spoke about how her links to countries other than Australia impacted upon her life in Australia:

I tend to say I’m half Chinese and half Vietnamese purely because I have relatives in Vietnam and China and that’s where my ancestors are from.

We follow religious holidays, like the Lunar calendar ... we celebrate the Chinese Lunar New Year more than the Vietnamese version ... we go to a Chinese temple ... my grandparents ashes are at the Chinese temple and the people we pray to are all Chinese based and Vietnamese based.

Leah appeared to be comfortable straddling cultures. Leah’s non-Australian identity was strongly aligned to an ethnic understanding of national identity (Pakulski and Tranter, 2000: 36). This was in contrast to her Australian side, where she had no ancestry, but still had
constructed a strong sense of belonging. Leah had merged these three elements to construct a national identity that reflected her background and her life. All three aspects were important to her and were crucial to her sense of national identity. It is of note that Leah was born in Malaysia, yet Malaysia did not play any role in her sense of national identity. Leah mentioned no association with the country of her birth. For some country of birth is considered an integral component of national identity (Rusciano, 2003: 363). Yet Malaysia was not of significance in Leah’s sense of self.

Emily (Malaysia, 19, SEA), like Leah, identified herself as Australian yet acknowledged the ongoing resonance of her Chinese Malaysian background in her newly formulated national identity:

\[I \text{ am Australian, Malaysia is the past [...] we are sort of Chinese} \]
\[\text{... we eat rice, at New Year we give money. In Australia when you} \]
\[\text{give someone a gift you are inclined to give them something, you} \]
\[\text{don’t give them cash but in Malaysia we just give cash.}\]

She went on to say:

\[\text{In some ways I am still quite Malaysian.}\]

Despite her strong belief that she was now Australian Emily’s background remained prominent in her sense of herself. She was also Malaysian. Her Malaysian Chinese heritage permeated much of her life and contributed to the formation of her new hybrid national identity. Emily’s background retained resonance in her new home in Australia so could not be abandoned.

Some respondents identified with a variety of different nationalities. Erin (Canada, 19, SEA) felt a strong affiliation to some nationalities while others merely played a minor part in her sense of self:
I was born in Canada but I don’t feel like I am Canadian at all. I probably can’t find my home town on a map […] New Zealand [where she lived for many years], I have mixed feelings about this one … I will always be an All Blacks\(^{81}\) fan but other than that I don’t see myself as being Kiwi\(^ {82}\) […] for me to really identify as Australian, that isn’t important to me at all […] Being Singaporean is more important to me because that’s my roots … I feel that I belong there.

Erin was a citizen of all four countries - Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Australia, yet her strongest ties were to Singapore. She felt that she ‘belonged there.’ Her belonging can be tied to her family heritage and thus an ethnic sense of national identity (Pakulski and Tranter, 2000: 36). Yet Erin had constructed her hybrid national identity recognising the contributions of various countries to her sense of self. As noted by Jenkins (2008: 5) identity is ‘not something that one can have, or not; it is something that one does’ (italics in original). Erin, over the period of her life, had adapted her sense of national identity to incorporate her experiences in each country. While certain countries held more significance than others in Erin’s life she had combined the influences of Canada, New Zealand, Australia and Singapore to formulate her own distinctive hybrid national identity. Canada, New Zealand and Australia, to which she had no ancestral connection, were still of some significance to her.

For Delphi (Greece, 18, SE) both Australia and Greece played pivotal roles in her life. Delphi spoke of the discrimination faced by her parents and grandparents when they were ‘called wogs’ and faced the ‘hardship’ of living in a new country upon their arrival in Australia. For them their difference to other Australians and thus their Greek heritage was highlighted everyday through this discrimination. Thus

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\(^{81}\) The All Blacks is a rugby union team from New Zealand.

\(^{82}\) A Kiwi is an affectionate term to describe a New Zealander.
the Greek aspect of their national identity was far more than ‘symbolic’ (Gans, 1979). It was a daily experience that meant their Greek identity could never be put aside in favour of a more Australian national identity. The Greek aspect of Delphi’s identity was also lived (Waitt et. al., 2001: 78). Delphi’s hybrid national identity was fundamental to her sense of self and permeated all aspects of her life. She was passionate about her attachment to her Greek identity which was based upon her birth in Greece and her Greek ethnic heritage (Pakulski and Tranter, 2000: 36). The Greek aspect of Delphi’s life was ever present and impacted substantially on her everyday actions. When talking about a future partner she explained:

*In the marriage sense for me it’s just so hard to make someone else understand my culture. Like I just can’t bring someone home that couldn’t speak to my parents, couldn’t have a conversation with them … and just couldn’t understand cultural things so in that sense it’s really important for me to have a Greek boyfriend and for my family as well.*

Delphi’s commitment to marrying a person of Greek heritage is significant as according to Hirst (1994: 4) marriage outside ethnic groups is high. She explained the significance of her heritage:

*Even if you live in Australia, your roots are really important to who you are.*

Again ‘roots’ or ethnic (Pakulski and Tranter, 2000: 36) heritage were regarded as a crucial aspect of her national identity. Gil-White notes the ongoing importance of biology in ethnic identification amongst groups of people living in Mongolia (1999: 789). Yet Australian was also a fundamental part of Delphi’s national identity. Her sense of being Australian cannot be regarded as being ethnic (Pakulski and Tranter, 2000: 36) as she clearly considers her ‘roots’ to be firmly
Greek. Yet Delphi did not just have a civic notion (Pakulski and Tranter, 2000: 36) of her Australian national identity whereby she was only connected to the state through living in Australia, her adherence to the laws and acceptance of civic rights and responsibilities; she also had an emotional attachment to Australia. She noted that she felt ‘nourished by the Australian values’ and freely spoke of her love for Australia. Her attachment to her Australian national identity does not readily match the theoretical understandings of national identity as being either just civic or ethnic. She lives (Waitt et. al., 2001: 78) her hybrid Greek-Australian or Australian-Greek national identity every day.

Many respondents thus can be identified as having hybrid national identities. What differed greatly was the formulation of these hybrid national identities and the degree to which the respondents incorporated their past heritage into their vision of themselves as Australians. For some it was just a minor and perhaps interesting feature of their national identity as understood by Gans’ (1979) notion of symbolic ethnicity. For others it was manifest as an intense attachment to two or more cultures which impacted upon almost all aspects of their lives. What appears to be the key to understanding the respondents’ hybrid national identities was their heterogeneity. Nederveen Pieterse (1994: 172) suggests that a ‘continuum of hybridities’ (italics in original) can be constructed ‘according to the components and centre of gravity of the melange.’ Thus some will adopt a hybrid national identity where the dominant culture predominates while others will focus on the alternative features of their national identity. Phinney (1990: 501, 502) suggests that:

Acculturation is a two-dimensional process, in which both the relationship with the traditional or ethnic culture and the relationship with the new or dominant culture must be considered, and these two relationships may be independent. According to this view, minority
group members can have either strong or weak identifications with both their own and the mainstream cultures, and a strong ethnic identity does not necessarily imply a weak relationship or low involvement with the dominant culture.

The respondents reflect this idea. Some had adopted a predominantly Australian national identity in which their heritage played a minor role. Others had a stronger focus on their heritage. Such flexibility in identity construction is in stark contrast to past more traditional societies where identities were more rigid and predetermined (Giddens, 1991: 33). As people move around the globe perceptions of national identity are re-evaluated and reconstructed.

In the contemporary world individuals are able to identify with a nation or nations which are not their place of residence, thus ‘expanding the notion of “home” to encompass both here and there’ (Waldinger and Fitzgerald, 2004: 1180). For Delphi (Greece, 18, SE) both Australia and Greece were her homes:

*The trips back to Greece reinforced how much I love the place, how much it’s important to me because when I land in Athens airport it’s just like I am home. It is best the best feeling and you go and have your Greek coffee and wow!*

She showed an intense emotional attachment to not just the culture but also the land of Greece. It was home and she felt she belonged there. However despite her intense affiliation with her Greek-ness she also felt a similarly powerful attachment to Australia. She also explained:

*When I am in Australia, like when I am on the way back from the airport and you see Melbourne and the lights and all that, then this*
Delphi acknowledged the strength of her connection to her two homes and the two aspects of her national identity. She felt no need to deny either aspect. Her sense of national identity transcended the state borders of both countries. Her belonging to both countries was not just a rational decision but was deeper and based more upon a sense of affective or emotional belonging. She fervently believed that she belonged in both states. O’Flaherty, Skrbis and Tranter (2007: 818) suggest that persons such as Delphi can also be understood as transnationals. A transnational is a person who maintains social, economic and cultural links with their country of birth whilst living elsewhere (O’Flaherty et. al., 2007: 818). Certainly Delphi has strong cultural and familial connections to Greece and these have been reinforced through her regular visits to Greece. Delphi has blended these two aspects of her life to create her unique hybrid national identity.

For Wayne (England, 24, AI) and Jade (Ireland, 24, AI) their hybrid national identities reflected powerful emotional connections to their countries of birth. They said:

*I’m always going to be English … it’s where I am from and that’s it. This is where I am now and I think that about sums it up.* (Wayne)

*I definitely see myself as Irish … as much as I love it here there is a tie there. There is just something about it. It’s something you don’t let go of.* (Jade)

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83 Flinders Street Station is a central railway station in Melbourne.
For Delphi, Wayne and Jade the strong ongoing attachment to their places of birth could support a primordial (Anderson, 2001: 210; Shils, 1957: 130)) approach to national identity whereby national identity is regarded as fixed at birth and is unchangeable. Yet this argument cannot be sustained as the respondents have not maintained just one national identity but have constructed hybrid national identities. They have remoulded their birth national identities to incorporate their new experiences and new home country:

*I’d say that if I was just English I wouldn’t be able to fit in ... I am willing to fit in with other people ... I’ve become a lot more laid back than I was.* (Wayne)

*It’s been an interesting few years learning the culture ... My parents call me their Aussie daughter and just the way I speak and I’ve become more forward a bit like the Australians. And the way I speak and my lifestyle is more an Australian lifestyle now.* (Jade)

Whilst preserving ties to their cultural roots these young adults have been able to embrace Australian traits. Wayne explained that he had adapted to Australian work practices and Jade explained that she ‘had to toughen up’ as Australians are ‘more forward’ than the Irish who do not say things directly to people. They have been able to ‘fit in’ and develop a ‘lifestyle [that] is more an Australian lifestyle’ (Jade) and so adopt Australianness as a facet of their national identity. Multiculturalism has supported their autonomy in incorporating aspects of two or more nationalities to forge their own hybrid national identities. Hybrid national identities have been constructed by many to incorporate the diverse aspects of their heritage and current living circumstances. The respondents have constructed their own distinctive hybrid national identities based upon their individual life experiences and requirements. Through their constructions of hybrid national identities many respondents have maintained an attachment to their
heritages and thus may perceive themselves as being part of a diaspora.

Jade (Ireland, 24, AI), Delphi (Greece, 18, SE) and Wayne (England, 24, AI) explained how they would always be connected to the countries of their birth thus they were part of Irish, Greek and English diasporas which extend around the world. Regardless of the actual country of their birth the respondents with Chinese heritage noted their affiliation to Chinese traditions, culture and identity. As such they may be considered part of the Chinese diaspora:

*I am Chinese … things like the Chinese myths and legends I know them pretty well, the stories and things, but that’s not Singaporean, more the Chinese thing.* (Erin, Canada, 19, SEA)

*I actively seek out information about my countries and I know a lot about China, I’ve travelled there.* (Angie, China, 25, SEA)

*I speak Cantonese at home. The fact that we are originally from China and I guess I identify in a way more with the Chinese culture than the Vietnamese culture so that links me to China more than Vietnam as well.* (Leah, Malaysia, 24, SEA)

There are about 55 million people of Chinese heritage living outside China (Cohen and Kennedy, 2000: 186) and for many there remains a strong affiliation with their Chinese heritage, thus creating a large Chinese diaspora worldwide. Yet none of the Chinese heritage respondents mentioned a strong connection to the state of China; rather their association was with Chinese culture and the people of Chinese heritage regardless of their home.

Changes in the Australian government’s immigration policy may have encouraged migrants to maintain a connection to their place of birth
and regard themselves as hybrids. With the adoption of multiculturalism migrants were no longer expected to forgo their pasts; instead, support was given for the preservation of culture and heritage. This support, along with more accessible communication between states would have reinforced the sense of ongoing ‘belonging’ to a past heritage. The mobility of people around the globe has led to the development of groups which serve diasporic communities. Some of the migrants’ countries of origin such as Italy and Switzerland even provide the opportunity for those who retain their original citizenship to vote in their elections even if these migrants are also Australian citizens (Parliament of Australia – Senate, 2005; Arcioni, 2006: 1 and Swissinfo.ch, 2010). These factors bolster the sense of connectedness between members of dispersed diaspora and thus their development of hybrid national identities. The respondents discussed have all constructed hybrid national identities. These identities are fundamental to their sense of self and play a role, whether just minor or more significantly, in their lives. Many have embraced these hybrid national identities and celebrate them.

This is not the case for all with hybrid national identities. Other respondents, whilst acknowledging their hybridity, were less enthusiastic about constructing a hybrid national identity and noted the pressure they felt to acknowledge their non-Australian side. These respondents noted their hybrid national identities but explained that they felt these were demanded by the people with whom they interacted. In the questionnaire Melinda (Australia, 22, SEA) identified as being Pakistani and Australian. Yet her attachment to Pakistan was minimal. She said: ‘I am proud of being Australian. I hate it when people ask me what nationality I am and when I say Australian they sort of question it,’ said Melinda (Australia, 22, SEA). She explained, ‘I feel sort of discriminated against because I physically look un-Australian.’ Her parents had migrated from
Pakistan. Despite being born in Australia, having lived her entire life in the country, and never visited Pakistan she was regularly queried about her adoption of an Australian identity. Melinda did not wish to hide or deny her heritage; she willingly spoke about her Pakistani background however it held little meaning for her. Still she was constantly reminded that her claim to an Australian national identity was not automatic. She was different to those who were immediately accepted as being Australian – those with an Anglo appearance.

It would appear that it was only through others questioning her Australianness that Melinda came to acknowledge her Pakistani national identity. This reflects the thinking of Mead (1956: 227), Coleman and Higgins (2000: 63), Fromm (1960: 219), Hall (1994: 122) and Taylor (1994: 32, 33) that self-understandings are dependent upon the recognition of others. Melinda’s hybrid national identity was constructed in response to the expectations of others. She was not unique in facing this dilemma. It is a situation faced by many migrants and their children. Melinda and many other respondents identified with an Australian national identity because they felt a bond to that identity. They felt resentful when this was questioned. Yet in response to others’ questions they had begrudgingly constructed hybrid national identities that recognised a degree of connection to a nation other than Australia.

However not all respondents embraced the idea of hybrid national identities. Minh (Australia, 25, SEA) saw them as problematic. She suggested that those with hybrid national identities were not genuine; rather they just pretended to be whichever national identity best suited their objective. Minh appeared to regard hybrid identities as being ‘a loss of purity’ (Nederveen Pieterse, 1994: 171) and merely ‘tactical’ (Noble et. al., 1999: 42) rather than a valid form of national identity which gives recognition to the complex heritages of many.

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84 Melinda self-identified as having a South East Asian background despite her Pakistani heritage.
Most respondents endorsed the idea of hybrid national identities. They provided a means by which many could live in Australia as Australians and also recognise the vital part that their heritages played in their lives and their understanding of themselves. It is of note that most respondents’ viewed their hybrid national identities as an amalgamation of practices and beliefs taken from two or more background cultures rather than the development of a new alternative (Bhabha, 1990). Thus these new hybrid identities are based upon essentialist notions of culture.

**Pragmatic Citizenship**

Citizenship is different to national identity. Individuals can construct their own national identities according to life experiences and they have an element of choice in this construction. Citizenship is the legal belonging to a state with recognised entitlements and responsibilities. I use the term pragmatic national citizenship to refer to the adoption of a national citizenship simply because it has practical benefits and where there exists little or no emotional attachment. This notion of citizenship is discussed by Batrouney and Goldlust (2005: 187 – 196) and Fozdar and Spittles (2010: 136) who note that their migrant respondents offered many practical reasons for their adoption of Australian citizenship. They note that decisions to attain Australian citizenship are not necessarily related to affective attachment to the state but may be based on far more practical issues such as economic opportunities and ease of travel (Batrouney and Goldlust, 2005: 187 – 196; Fozdar and Spittles, 2010: 136) Many respondents voiced their desire to live and work overseas. Some saw their actual or potential dual citizenship as a major asset. Wayne (England, 24, AI), who had
British citizenship, explained why gaining Australian citizenship was important for him:

_In January I intend to start to get my Australian passport … it is my intention to get my dual passport because my visa runs out in 2011 and I can stay in the country after that but if I leave I can’t come back … I want it because I think it will make life a lot easier. I won’t have to be messing around with visas and things like that._

Wayne intended to live in Australia however had not yet established the emotional attachment to Australia that he felt toward England. His desire for Australian citizenship was simply practical, not related to any emotional bond with the country. Others noted how gaining an additional citizenship to their Australian citizenship would benefit them:

_Hopefully later in my career I’d like to live and work in Europe so I’d probably get an English passport because of Dad._ (Michael, Australia, 19, AI)

_Dual citizenship would only be for work purposes … I’d work in England … now that Italy is part of the EU if you have Italian citizenship you have EU citizenship so I could stay in the UK for as long as I wanted to so it would be easier to stay in one place without having to come back and forth to renew visas._ (Jonathon, Australia, 24, SE)

These respondents saw a non-Australian citizenship as a means to gain uncomplicated access to other countries for future work opportunities. They did not want to gain these citizenships due to an intense enthusiasm for, or sense of belonging to, the countries concerned. They planned to utilise their dual citizenships for purely utilitarian purposes. A finding similar to that of Fozdar and Spittles (2010: 143)
whose research noted ‘proceduralist, pragmatic and instrumental’ reasons for the adoption of Australian citizenship.

Other respondents who already had dual citizenships also regarded their non-Australian citizenships in pragmatic terms. Gill (Australia, 23, AI) spoke about her Swiss citizenship:

*I’d like to say it is more important than it is. But I like the fact that if I want to travel I can get myself a Swiss passport and travel much more easily through Europe … I’d like to think that if I wanted to live overseas that I could live in Switzerland.*

The comments made by the above respondents highlight the disconnection that can exist between an individual’s legal citizenship and the sense of belonging to a nation that the individual constructs. While a connection between national identity and citizenship might be expected, the above respondents illustrate that this is not always the case. They simply saw their non-Australian citizenship or second citizenship as useful and practical addendums to their lives. Citizenship can be obtained in Australia through the achievement of various requirements, as set out by the Federal government. Some other countries have systems through which a person may obtain citizenship. Other countries do not provide the opportunity for migrants to obtain citizenship. However a person’s legal citizenship status may bear little or no resemblance to their understanding of their national identity.

The idea of pragmatic national identity has not generally been embraced by the Australian public. Rupert Murdoch attracted considerable criticism when he renounced his Australian citizenship to become an American in order to further his business interests (MacCallam, 2009: 1). Yet some of my respondents were pragmatic in

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85 Gill had inherited Swiss citizenship through one of her parents. Whilst she had Swiss citizenship, her strongest identified familial roots were Anglo/Irish.
their outlook. They saw no issue with gaining another citizenship, even if they had no emotional attachment to that country, in order to obtain benefits. The additional citizenship would be useful to enhance their career and travel prospects. It was a legal factor which may be beneficial but was not necessarily incorporated into their sense of self as part of their national identity. Therefore the concept of citizenship may be altering. The emotions associated with ‘Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori’\(^\text{86}\) (Owen, 1971: 55) are very distant from these pragmatic perspectives of citizenship. With the increase in hybrid identification the expectation that citizenship also entails an emotional element may wane.

However, most respondents who were Australian citizens valued their Australian citizenship and unlike Murdoch were not prepared to relinquish it. This was particularly the case for those born in Australia. Mick (Australia, 19, AI) stated he would not give up his Australian citizenship to obtain another citizenship. Even if he lived in another country he wanted to retain his Australian citizenship because ‘Australia is my home. I feel a real strength toward it.’ Sharna (Australia, 19, SE) agreed as Australia was ‘her home’. Their Australian citizenship did not just provide useful benefits but was an integral part of who they were. They echoed the voices of the migrant women in Ganguly’s research who felt they could not give up their citizenship of their country of heritage as it ‘would be like cutting off some part of me’ (1997: 22).

Despite having lived all her life in Australia, and only having Australian citizenship, Wendy (Australia, 22, SE), however, expressed a pragmatic view of her Australian citizenship:

\[\text{Obviously I have to be a citizen of somewhere, to be a displaced person would be awful. I would want to have somewhere to belong}\]

\(^{86}\) It is sweet and right to die for your country
and to have some sort of national identity. I would prefer to be an Australian citizen than a Malaysian citizen ... being Australian means you can pretty much travel quite freely wherever you want. You don’t have any overly restrictive visa requirements.

Wendy’s pragmatic attitude to her Australian citizenship set her apart from the other respondents born in Australia who had noted that their Australian citizenship was the one with which they more strongly aligned. It was the one for which they held a heartfelt, sentimental attachment. Birth in Australia, along with long-term residence, had imprinted Australian citizenship as a central aspect of their national identities.

Yet for some their desire for citizenship of a country other than Australia was not merely pragmatic but related to their understanding of their national identity. Nick’s (Australia, 20, SE) desire for British citizenship was not for pragmatic reasons. Rather he felt a deep connection to Britain and felt that official citizenship would reflect this:

A massive proportion of my life was spent in a country [UK] that looked after me ... I am almost a British patriot now and I would love to have a British passport. It would be something that would identify with my life spent there.

Nick felt an emotional bond to Britain. His passion for Britain was evident as he spoke and his desire for British citizenship sprang from this enthusiasm and the recognition of the role that Britain had played in shaping his life. Nick’s attachment to Britain is the more commonly accepted idea of citizenship, that it is an aspect of the construction of national identity. Despite no longer living in Britain and having no British ancestry Nick had constructed a robust hybrid identity that incorporated both being Australian and British. Nina (Australia, 24,
Southern European) similarly wanted to gain Maltese citizenship. She felt a bond to Malta through one set of grandparents:

*I'd definitely like to get citizenship of Malta as well. It's like you've got citizenship of Australia, you were born here but to also have citizenship of where your grandparents grew up, like that heritage sort of stuff, it ties you as well.*

Her desire for Maltese citizenship was founded on her affective attachment to the country rather than for pragmatic reasons. She also had constructed a hybrid national identity incorporating both Malta and Australia. For both Nick and Nina gaining an additional citizenship would formally endorse the hybrid national identities they had constructed. Other respondents also felt affective links to their non-Australian identities, such as Delphi felt for Greece (Greece, 18, SE) and Erin (Canada, 19, SEA) felt for Singapore.

Given the incidence of dual citizenship prevalent in Australia the respondents’ feelings about this were sought. Brown (2002: 76) argues that it reduces migrants’ commitment to Australia as they are able to retain their commitment to their country of origin. Soutphommasane queried how a person with citizenship of two countries might respond should the countries go to war (2009: 87). However the respondents voiced little concern about fellow Australians being citizens of more than one state:

*I don’t really mind it. I’d probably do it so I don’t want to be hypocritical to anyone else.* (Michael, Australia, 19, AI)

*I think they are lucky.* (Cara, Australia, 23, AI)

*I think it’s a good thing because you shouldn’t neglect another part of yourself.* (Ben, Australia, 18, SE)
None suggested that it would be inappropriate for a person to have citizenship of more than one country. Rather they appreciated that in contemporary Australia, with its diverse population, many would have bonds to a country other than Australia. They recognised that an individual’s past and their citizenship of a country could be integral parts of their national identity. To deny recognition of this past and citizenship could fracture a person’s construction of their national identity. Michael, (Australia, 19, AI) noted however that it might ‘knock the Australian citizenship … a little bit’, but this was a minor consideration. Michael’s comment reflects the thinking of Brown (2002: 76); that to have multiple citizenships could weaken the devotion to each. Such concerns were not expressed by the other respondents; they were amenable to people having a variety of citizenships and did not mention any anxieties. Rebecca (Australia, 23, AI) explained her cosmopolitan perspective:

_I don’t think having a passport to somewhere or having two passports defines who you are or how you feel about a country … you can get work visas, you can travel, people are generally quite open to moving around, people tend to move around a lot more._

Rebecca did not feel that her citizenship defined her. She noted that many people moved around and lived and worked in a variety of locations. A person’s actual citizenship was, for her, of minimal consequence in defining them. Thus, for the respondents, there did not need to be a connection between a person’s citizenship and the sense of national belonging that they constructed. They readily accepted that individuals may have dual or multiple citizenships and that these may or may not be incorporated into their understanding of their national identity. Their recognition and acceptance of multiple citizenships and hybrid national identities demonstrates a marked shift from essentialist and primordial understandings of national identities.
Fluid or Strategic Hybridity

Rather than the respondents’ understandings of their national identities being essentialist and primordial, a key feature of them was their fluidity. Brettell and Nibbs (2009: 679) note that ‘today’s second generation no longer necessarily chooses to emphasise one identity over the other but that their identities are more fluid and multifaceted.’ Rather than feeling pressure to choose between their heritages and Australia to construct a national identity my respondents were able to integrate all. This appeared to serve them well as it provided comfortable access to the traditions of both their heritages and Australia. They felt a sense of belonging to all aspects of their national identity and possessed the ability to adjust these to suit the situation in which they found themselves. Few maintained a consistent view of their national identity throughout the interview and the completion of the questionnaire. For Minh (Australia, 25, South East Asian), fluid identities caused her anxiety (this is discussed in more detail in the next section). However this was not the case for the other respondents who freely moved from one description of themselves to another with no sign of concern:

*I am proud to be an Australian citizen […] When I go overseas and visit my home countries […] I am part Australian […] I am seriously part of all three countries.* (Angie, China, 25, SEA)

*There were a few other Greek girls and we would sort of stick together […] I am more Australian than I am Greek […] I am Australian.* (Annabell, Australia, 24, SE)

These comments appear to be contradictory at times. It could be assumed that the respondents had national identities that were unstable and variable. Yet this did not appear to be the case. Rather they
seemed to have clear constructions of their national identities and spoke confidently about how they understood them. The respondents’ fluid hybrid national identities were utilised in different circumstances where specific aspects of their identities became prominent. For example Angie (China, 25, SEA) explained how different aspects of her hybrid national identity came to the fore in specific circumstances:

\[\text{When I watch footy, I barrack for Essendon}\] so when I say, ‘Go Essendon!’ … when I watch certain movies, certain Australian movies I feel Australian … when I watch the swimming I feel really Australian, especially when the Olympics are on watching our swimmers do so well. Watching shows, when I listen to certain music, Australian music, I feel Australian.

Yet her heritage was of major significance in other circumstances:

\[\text{Like if I was celebrating Chinese New Year with my family I’m not going to feel like a bogan. I feel very much a part of the cultural celebrations that I grew up with and know of.}\]

Angie was able to readily emphasise either the Australian or Chinese aspect of her hybrid national identity and retain a coherent sense of self. Erin (Canada, 19, SEA) described her similar experiences:

\[\text{When I am watching rugby I feel like definitely I am a Kiwi, when I am studying or doing a test or watching a movie that relates to Singaporean culture I am definitely Singaporean, if I am having a barbeque or at the beach with my friends I feel a bit more Aussie I guess than I normally do.}\]

Erin moved fluidly through these three aspects of her hybrid national identity. At times she felt more one than the other. She noted ‘I don’t

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87 Essendon is an AFL team based in Melbourne.
know if I have an identity in that sense’ explaining that she had no singular national identity; rather she had a hybrid national identity that adapted according to circumstances.

This is similar to the experiences of Arab speaking youth that Noble et al. (1999: 41) investigated. They found that the ‘intensity of being Lebanese varied from moment to moment’ (Noble et al., 1999: 41). My respondents similarly presented different versions of themselves and their national identities in different contexts. There did not appear to be rigid boundaries between these identities; most respondents moved seamlessly from one to another. For example Annabell (Australia, 24, SE) felt more Greek at ‘big functions like christenings and weddings.’ She could comfortably be Greek when it suited her but also be Australian in other circumstances. Rather than feeling that her national identity was splintered she navigated these various aspects of her national identity with ease. Similarly Erin (Canada, 19, SEA) lived comfortably in Australia as an Australian but also enjoyed participating in the Chinese ‘moon lantern festival, where everyone takes lanterns and we have moon cake.’ She also moved seamlessly between these cultural activities which were representations of the components of her hybrid national identity. These two respondents are examples of the fluidity of national identity which was exemplified by many of my respondents.

While virtually all the respondents felt comfortable with their own construction of their national identity, no matter how simple or complex a construct it might have been, Minh (Australia, 25, SEA) was far less comfortable about her national identity. She discussed her inability to reconcile her Vietnamese heritage with her perceptions of Australianess. She called herself a ‘pretender’ and described Australians with a non-Anglo background as ‘pretenders like me.’ Minh was scornful of those that she regarded as utilising various aspects of their national identities for their own advantage. She berated
a recently elected local councillor for the tactics she felt he had used to
gain political support:

*He used his background politically. He schmoozed the Vietnamese people by speaking to them in Vietnamese, saying the right thing to them and appealing to their prejudices.*

She felt that he presented a Vietnamese national identity to his
Vietnamese constituents only as a means to garner their support. She
criticised other political activists, including her father, for similar
behaviour. She explained:

*You are taking advantage of the fact that you are ethnic and ethnic people will vote for you and then when it suits you; you are Australian.*

She was vehemently opposed to people adopting different national
identities for their own gain. Such behaviour appeared to be immoral
to her. For Minh moving from one central national identity to another
was not acceptable. She disapproved of the incorporation of dual or
multiple national identities into the construction of a hybrid self. Yet
despite this ardent criticism she recognised that she had also used her
heritage to her advantage:

*I do think that if you are a little bit different there is a real advantage in that, being female, being young, being tertiary educated and different looking got me into a lot of places.*

*I have been at the receiving end of all this generosity of people that want to give to poor little old Asian kids like me.*

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88 Schmooze is Australian slang, it describes a person ingratiating him/herself to others in order to obtain personal gain.
Through her heritage she felt that she had been given special opportunities that were not available to other Australians. For example she noted that her ‘Australian’ boyfriend had not experienced the same opportunities as her. She had had opportunities to speak publicly and express her opinions due to her background. Here Minh recognised the existence of some positive discrimination whereby those deemed to be ‘disadvantaged migrants’ were provided with extra opportunities. She faced the moral dilemma of having accepted these opportunities whilst at the same time working to deny her migrant background. There may also have been an element of shame in being identified as a ‘disadvantaged migrant’ as she was aware of discrimination faced by her family:

*I play up to the Asian side of me like the immigrant story, the good immigrant story.*

She noted that her fervent criticism of others may be a response to her own behaviour as she recognised that she had utilised the Vietnamese side of her national identity in a similar fashion to the politicians she so readily condemned. She claimed she had also brought the Vietnamese side of her hybrid national identity to the fore for personal advantage:

*You know that saying that you hate the things that you deny in yourself.*

However Minh admitted to having diminished the Vietnamese aspect of her national identity for most of her life. As she grew up she refused to attend language school. She noted however that she was now keen to learn Vietnamese. Her friends were ‘all Australian, most of them were born here … they are just about all from Anglo-European backgrounds.’ She noted how she had worked to be more Australian:
Most of the time I deny the Vietnamese side of me, I am very uncomfortable with it.

There has been a lot of denying that I do look Vietnamese and there are Vietnamese things about me.

Minh’s perception of her national identity was problematic for her; she acknowledged the tensions which existed between her identities and the inability to satisfactorily reconcile them. She had difficulty fusing her ethnic heritage with living in Australia. She appeared caught between ethnic and civic understandings of national identity (Pakulski and Tranter, 2000: 36):

I was this close to not being a proper Australian. I am only Australian because of a piece of paper that says I was born in a Melbourne hospital. Apart from that, my blood, my heritage is in some place I have never been.

Her birth in Australia was very significant to her and she believed that this was a crucial factor in her construction of an Australian national identity. Yet she felt her heritage detracted from this identity. As a consequence she felt in limbo and was not able to comfortably envelop herself in either national identity nor had she been able to forge a comfortable hybrid national identity.

Minh’s quandary must be noted. She readily acknowledged that she had not been able to sort out the contradictions that she felt existed in her national identity:

It’s very difficult to explain because I haven’t resolved that and I don’t know that I ever will, about how Australian I am, how I am supposed to fit into this place.
Whilst the other respondents said that they had constructed national identities which met their needs, a comfortable and non-problematic national identity is not readily achievable by all. To deny this would be to paint too idealistic a picture. Tensions certainly exist and it is not always easy or possible for people to reconcile disparate aspects of their identity. Some may be comfortable with these apparent contradictions in their national identities, but for others like Minh they pose a significant and ongoing dilemma.

**Cosmopolitan Perspectives**

Given the multicultural nature of Australia and the respondents’ access to modern communication technologies, as well as the complex hybrid national identities adopted by many, it is not surprising that respondents expressed cosmopolitan perspectives. Cosmopolitanism, whilst difficult to define, can be regarded as a ‘series of beliefs, attitudes and person qualities’ (Skrbis *et al.*, 2004: 129). Mobility, an attitude that respects and values different cultures and lifestyles and the ability to interact with those of other cultures can be regarded as key characteristics of cosmopolitan dispositions (Skrbis and Woodward, 2007:732).

Recognition of the rights of migrants to maintain their cultures could be regarded as either a cosmopolitan outlook or a betrayal of Australian culture (Calcutt, Woodward and Skrbis, 2009: 1). Prior to the 1960s when migrants were expected to assimilate on arrival and Australian culture was very much an adaptation of British culture it would have been considered a betrayal. However Australian culture has altered significantly since then and according to the respondents a key aspect of contemporary Australian culture is multiculturalism. With varying degrees of enthusiasm they all supported others’ rights to retain their heritage cultural practices whilst living in Australia and being Australian.
Jonathon (Australia, 24, SE) noted how other cultures had enriched Australian culture. He explained: ‘our culture is made up of heaps of different cultures and that is what is Australian.’ Alex (Australia, 24, SE) explained how Australians had become more tolerant due to migration. He felt Australians had learned to be ‘adaptable’ as migrants brought their cultures to Australia. The respondents also demonstrated their flexibility as they all noted their friends came from a diverse range of heritages. These respondents demonstrated the cultural competence necessary to ‘tolerate or engage with others’ and thus be considered as cosmopolitans (Calcutt et. al., 2009: 1).

Several respondents, including Jade (Ireland, 21, AI), Nick (Australia, 20, SE), Wendy (Australia, 22, SEA), Erin (Canada, 19, SEA), Amanda (Philippines, 22, SEA), Emma (Australia, 23, AI), Wayne (England, 24, AI) and Jess (Australia, 25, AI) had lived in countries other than Australia. Each had the necessary cultural competences (Calcutt et. al., 2009: 173), such as adaptability to a new culture, to reside in another country. In particular Jade, Nick, Erin and Wayne spoke of the positive experiences of having lived in more than one country. Jade spoke about new cultural insights she had gained when she moved to Australia from Ireland. She outlined how she had ‘practised’ fitting into Australian culture and the aspects of the Australian lifestyle she now loved and had adopted. Erin spoke about the cultural traits that she had embraced from the various countries in which she had lived. She loved the All Blacks\(^{89}\) and also valued her Singaporean approach to life. These respondents were sufficiently open to the cultures that they had encountered that they not only respected them but also incorporated aspects of them into their lives.

While others had not lived overseas many spoke of their desire to do so in the future. For example Rebecca (Australia, 23, AI) explained that she would like to live in ‘multiple countries’. Many others had travelled widely and experienced various cultures. These young people

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\(^{89}\) A New Zealand rugby team.
were mobile and readily travelled overseas. Their current and future lives were not constrained by Australia’s borders.

A concern for and attachment to all humanity is often associated with cosmopolitanism (Cohen and Kennedy, 2000: 345) and many respondents spoke of their concerns for refugees. Cara (Australia, 23, AI) said: ‘they [the government] should look at the refugee situation ... they should get the opportunity [to come to Australia] and not just be stuck in camps for years and years.’ Brett (Australia, 24, AI) concurred and said:

When the illegal people, the boat people or the refugees come in don’t send them to camp for years where they go insane and get mental problems and try to commit suicide. Don’t send them off to islands in the middle of no-where so they don’t set foot on Australian soil and have no right to appeal in Australia. They are people.

These and other respondents demonstrated a concern for the human rights of others that transcend national borders (Woodward et. al., 2008: 1). They had a commitment to the well-being of global humanity. Thus they can be understood to have a cosmopolitan perspective to their identity which transcends national identities.

Most of the respondents appeared to have adopted a cosmopolitan outlook however it is crucial to note that this had not eliminated their recognition of, and commitment to, nation states. None had rejected national identities. All identified strongly with one or more national identities. Wendy (Australia, 22, SEA) said: ‘I have to be a citizen of somewhere, to be a displaced person would be awful.’ She reflected the ideas of Skrbis et. al. (2004: 124) who note that people remain tied to nation states through their citizenship. It is not possible to relinquish citizenship of a nation state and become a citizen of the world.
However, most respondents’ horizons extended beyond national boundaries. They exhibited openness and a non-judgemental willingness to engage with other cultures.

Chapter Review

The respondents’ understandings of their national identities were complex. Whilst many had experienced difficulty defining what it meant to be Australian they experienced no such difficulty claiming to be Australian themselves. All felt that, to some extent, they were Australian. Some felt that they were only Australian and recognised no identification with other national identities. These respondents were in the minority. Most augmented their Australian national identity with an affiliation to another national identity. This may have been a result of the targeted recruitment of respondents from specific backgrounds in this research. The respondents based their ideas of their national identities on both ethnic and civic understandings of national identity. At times they spoke of the importance of their roots and their heritage thus endorsing an ethnic appreciation of national identity. However they also spoke of the significance of living in Australia and the importance of Australian values and lifestyle thus endorsing a more civic notion of national identity. They utilised both notions to explain their national identities.

Many had adopted hybrid national identities. Generally the respondents did not understand their hybrid national identities as a lack of purity and did not regard themselves as half-breeds (Marotta, 2008: 295). Instead these hybrid identities were rich and complex. They were more than the amalgamation of different national identities: they were a new creation that was ‘greater than the sum of its severed parts’ (Anzaldua, 1987: 79 – 80). For some the non-Australian aspect
of their hybrid national identity was a minor aspect in their national identity. It could be understood as symbolic ethnicity (Gans, 1979) where they enjoyed adopting aspects of their heritage national identity without having to endure the unpleasant consequences that past generations in Australia may have experienced. For example Rebecca (Australia, 22, AI) was able to enjoy Swiss festivities without suffering any discrimination. Other respondents were far more intensely involved with the non-Australian side of their national identity and it played a fundamental role in their daily lives. They ‘lived’ (Waitt et. al., 2001: 78) their non-Australian national identity each day. Thus there was a continuum (Nederveen Pieterse, 1994: 172) in the extent to which those with hybrid national identities connected with Australia and the non-Australian part of their hybrid national identity. The respondents’ willingness to embrace their hybrid national identities also varied. For some all aspects of their hybrid identity were valued. They spoke of the enrichment it gave to their lives. However others felt less strongly about their hybrid identities.

These hybrid national identities were not fixed; they mutated according to circumstances. Fundamental to the respondents’ understandings of their national identities was their fluidity. The respondents referred to their national identities in various ways, and at times appeared to totally contradict themselves. Despite this they appeared to have robust understandings of their national identities. They did not feel the need to adopt a singular national identity. Nor did they feel the need to adopt a fixed hybrid national identity. They recognised that many factors had contributed to their sense of national identity and were comfortable to adjust their sense of national identity to suit different situations.

However it cannot be assumed that all people were able to easily construct satisfactory hybrid national identities. Minh’s (Australia, 25, SEA) story highlighted that for some the construction of a national
identity was fraught with complexities that were difficult to reconcile. Minh may reflect the experience of many Australians who have difficulty reconciling their Australian residence with their non-Australian heritages.

While all respondents identified strongly as having national identities many also viewed the world from a cosmopolitan stance. They were open to alternative cultures, willingly engaged with people from different backgrounds, travelled outside Australia and expressed concerns for global humanity. These cosmopolitan perspectives were however voiced from a strong commitment and attachment to a nation state. The next chapter will examine how the respondents came to construct their national identities.
Chapter Six

Development of national identity

Chapter Five noted that national identities cannot be conceived of as being fixed and primordial. The respondents’ identities were not clear reproductions of their ethnic backgrounds or simple reflections of the country in which they were born or lived. They were complex constructions that forged together multiple aspects of their lives to produce an identity that ‘worked for them’ at that particular time and was able to be renegotiated at a moment’s notice to suit altered circumstances. As such their national identities could be understood as being socially constructed (Cornell and Hartman, 1998: 73). They were shaped through the people they met, the places they visited and their existence as young people born at the end of the twentieth century. All respondents spoke of the influence of others on the construction of their national identity. Their identities could not be constructed in a vacuum. They relied upon others to reinforce their presented identities as they were constructed. Through this reflexive process (Mead, 1962: 134) they constructed a sense of who they were.

This chapter examines what shaped their identities. Some influences were overtly recognised by the respondents while others were subtly alluded to during the interviews. The range of influences and the various ways that they impacted upon the respondents highlights the complex nature of national identity development. It is not a simple process whereby various influences can be put into an algorithm and a result achieved. It relies upon not only the objective experiences of each individual but also their subjective understanding of them. The influences that will be discussed in this chapter include family, place, education, language, appearance, accent, religion and the impact of the contemporary world and Australia in the 21st century. These are by no means an exhaustive list of what may contribute to identity.
construction. They are simply the key influences mentioned by the respondents.

Family

When asked about what had influenced their understanding of their national identity, all respondents mentioned their families. That they so readily identified families as being influential was not surprising. As the respondents were aged from 18 to 25 many were still living with their birth families or had just recently moved from the family home. This current or recent cohabitation with family members would have rendered them as significant figures in the respondents’ day-to-day lives. They had lived with their families for many years so their influence had been present for an extensive period of time. In contemporary Australia families are recognised as fundamental elements of society. Two recent Prime Ministers, John Howard and Kevin Rudd, championed the important role of families (Winter, 1998: 5; Maddox, 2005; Compass, 2006). The family has also been recognised by sociologists as the site of primary socialisation (Abercrombie et. al., 2000: 329). Umana-Taylor et. al. (2006: 407) in their study of familial ethnic socialisation in the United States found that families were ‘critical … for adolescents’ ethnic identity formation.’ Similarly Muldoon et. al. (2007: 590) in their study of young people’s national identity construction found that ‘parents and family were perceived as being central to young people’s understanding of nationality’.

Respondents spoke of the crucial roles played by their families. Emma (Australia, 23, AI) explained how her extended family enshrined in her a connection to Britain:

I was born here but I have grown up with my grandparents who I spent most of my time with and they are from the UK and my Mum is British and I’ve always had that weird influence. Like even the
food that I cook is all British food … we used to listen to the bagpipes a lot … we used to watch a lot of British film and British TV.

Emma noted that her grandparents and mother retained strong connections to Britain. Due to this upbringing she was reminded every day of her British-ness. Annabell (Australia, 24, SE) similarly explained how her family had emphasised her Greek heritage while she grew up in Australia. She said, ‘My parents influenced me … what my parents and everyone else that lives here have brought with them.’ Through her immediate and extended family she learnt about Greek culture and values and came to understand that she was a part of that culture. As Annabell’s father ‘doesn’t really speak much English’ her connection to her Greek heritage was also constantly reinforced whenever she spoke with him. Language is a crucial signifier of cultural belonging, thus her use of the Greek language with her family developed her attachment to Greece as it was a vivid part of her everyday life. The importance of language is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

In contrast Deb’s family had worked to diminish any attachment to her heritage and thus reinforce her Australian national identity. She (Australia, 25, SE) specifically noted the influence that her grandmother had had on the family and its understanding of national identity:

She was very strong that they were going to do it the Australian way, they were over here; they lived here. She couldn’t speak English and she would listen to the radio and speak and learn. So at home it was always English, it was never Maltese. I guess that her choices have kept going down the line and the Maltese side has been weeded out a bit.
Deb’s grandmother’s behaviour is in stark contrast to the findings of Waitt et. al. (2001) who found that first generation Maltese migrants had maintained their cultural heritage despite the assimilation policies that existed when they migrated to Australia in the 1950s. Deb explained that her father ‘classifies himself as 100% Australian’ and has no interest in visiting Malta due to his mother’s influence. Yet the comments made by Emma and Annabell suggested that their families were similar to the Maltese families in Waitt et. al.’s. (2001) research as their first generation parents had retained solid ties to the countries of their births. Whilst Emma’s, Annabell’s and Deb’s families had shaped their senses of national identity they had shaped them in very different ways.

Amanda (Philippines, 22, SEA) and Wendy (Australia, 22, SEA) also spoke about how their parents’ decisions and beliefs about national identity had strongly influenced them and reinforced their connection to Australia. When speaking about the significance of her Australian national identity over her Philippine identity Amanda explained that it was the national identity that her parents had promoted. Wendy made similar comments about her parents’ influence:

*My Dad came from Malaysia but he came here and married Mum and I went to a very Anglo-Saxon school and I grew up in very white Australia.*

Wendy’s parents chose a white, Anglo-Saxon environment for her to grow up in, followed Australian traditions and led an Australian lifestyle. As she grew up she celebrated Christmas and Easter and attended a Christian school. Her parents’ decisions and lack of emphasis on her Malaysian background helped Wendy construct Australianness as a key component of her national identity. She noted Malaysian was part of her hybrid national identity but it was of little significance in comparison to the Australian part.
When a non-Australian national identity was not encouraged by parents the respondents’ focus became Australian. Australian culture and ways of being surrounded them and so without an alternative national identity being presented to them by families it was their only familiar option. Kymlicka (1995: 89) argues that people must be aware of different identity options if they are to be incorporated into national identity.

When a family presents alternatives to a solely Australian national identity this can assist in the development of a hybrid national identity. Leah (Malaysia, 24, SEA) explained:

_We sort of came over and my parents never tried to shield us from Australian culture, it wasn’t purely you have got to do this the Chinese way. They gave us the Chinese culture like we have the Chinese New Year dinners, go to the temples, have celebrations on our Lunar birthdays and things like that … we also celebrated Easter and Christmas, say for Easter for example, we didn’t celebrate the true sense of Easter but we used it as an opportunity to get together … it was never like we’re not Christian so we’re not going to do Easter or Christmas._

Leah’s parents provided an environment where Leah was able to retain her Chinese heritage and embrace her new Australian culture. She was encouraged to combine different religious practices despite the fact that they might initially appear to be quite incompatible. She visited temples and also celebrated Christian festivities. Leah’s parents’ openness to Australian cultural traditions assisted Leah to develop her hybrid national identity which incorporated Australian, Vietnamese and Chinese traditions.
Mary (Australia, 24, SE), who had railed against her extended family’s attempts to mould her into an Italian national identity, still recognised the extent that her family had influenced her as she grew up:

*My Italian background does play a big influence on me even though I’ve never even been to the country … I suppose in terms of the whole family being Italian and a lot of their views. When they left Italy was a certain way and they have brought their views and values here and that’s how they have raised their kids … we’ve got a big family of like 60 people that I keep close contact with … And they have all got an influence on what I do, where I can be, who I can be with and what I can say and what I shouldn’t say, what I can wear and what I shouldn’t wear … They pretty much put on like this is how you need to be because you are not an Australian girl. It’s okay for those Australian girls to do it, but for you to do it, that’s disgusting.*

As Mary grew up she was unable to relinquish her Italian national identity due to her family’s influence. This was further highlighted given the size of the extended family and her family’s belief that they should guide her as she grew up and formulated a sense of national identity. Her difference to other young women living in Australia was repeatedly emphasised when family members stressed that she was ‘not an Australian girl.’ This was despite her being born in Australia, as were her parents and both grandmothers. Such persistent comments reinforced the Italian aspect of her national identity. It had to always be taken into account as she constructed her national identity.

Even though Mary had found it ‘pretty hard’ when her ‘extended family’ tried to shape her national identity and despite the fact that she felt many of their ideas were ‘narrow minded … not accepting of other cultures and other religions’ and ‘women’s rights’, she remained close to them. She referred to the family as a ‘tight family’ and through her
relationship with them recognised that she had adopted Italian as part of her national identity. Certainly it is possible for young people to ignore the pressures of family; however this would come at a cost. Gutman (2003: 198) explains that it is costly to leave a culture. It would also be costly to leave or ignore family expectations. Mary spoke of how she had retained her family ties, despite her grandmother’s occasional disapproval, and created her own national identity as ‘an Australian with an Italian background’. Mary’s family’s ongoing attachment to their Italian national identity over several generations is in contrast to Hirst’s (1994: 4, 5) argument that migrant families encourage their children to be more Australian and merge into the broader Australian society.

Angie (China, 25, SEA) also described how her family had profoundly influenced the development of national identity:

_There were times when we were doing the Chinese thing at home and I thought I don’t want to be doing this when I was young whereas later you realise how important it is and how special and privileged that you are still able to experience this away from the country … it’s like people who don’t know who their parents are or they find out they are adopted or something, well why do they want to seek out their real parents? They are starting to realise that over all these years I don’t know fully my real identity and I should find out more. I think that’s the same process for me._

Despite sometimes resenting her family’s Chinese and Vietnamese traditions Angie came to realise that recognition of her roots was essential for her to truly understand her identity. She felt privileged to be able to embrace her parents’ cultures as part of her national identity. The desire to connect with family culture can be regarded as recognition of the ongoing power of blood ties to identity formation. Whilst she freely referred to herself as Australian, this aspect of her
national identity seemed to have been constructed upon the strong foundation of her Chinese-Vietnamese ethnic national identity. Gil-White (1999: 814) in his research on ethnic identity in Mongolia noted the fundamental importance of ‘biological descent.’ The current popularity of genealogy and people’s desires to know their pasts also supports the connection that some people feel to their roots and past heritages. For Angie her national identity required acknowledgement of her biological ancestry. These examples illustrate how the choices made by influential family members such as parents and grandparents helped shape the national identities of the respondents.

Family can work in other ways to influence the development of national identity. Cornell and Hartman (1998: 81) argue that:

Identity construction involves the establishment of a set of criteria for distinguishing between group members and non-members. These criteria might include skin colour, ancestry, place of origin, a cultural practice, or something else – or a lot of things at once. The point is not the specific criteria used as boundary markers but the categorical boundary they signify – the line between “us” and “them.”

Boundary markers are not verbalised or written down. They are powerful silent constructions that exist to distinguish between people who share a group’s characteristics and those who do not. When Leah (Malaysia, 24, SEA) visited Vietnam she felt that her relatives saw her as being more Australian:

I think they view me as Australian … they started calling me by my Chinese name and by the end of it, most of, a few of, the relatives started calling me by my English name. So they see me as more Australian. I have got more Australian attitudes, like even certain foods that I like are more Australian than Asian.
Her family had established criteria that they felt designated being Vietnamese. As Leah did not meet these criteria she was regarded by her relatives as being more Australian and not one of them. The way that they treated her and the name they called her reflected back to her an Australian identity and not a Vietnamese one. These relatives were crucial ‘others’ in the formulation of her national identity (Coleman and Higgins, 2000: 63; Hall, 1994: 122; Noble, 2007: 332). Leah ‘imagined’ (Hall, 1994: 122) how they saw her, as not being Vietnamese, and utilised this in the construction of her national identity.

The intense emotional relationship that exists within a family and the powerful impact that significant adults, such as parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, have on children situates families as key socialising agents able to influence development of national identity. The respondents’ families were strongly identified as having played a central role in the formulation of their hybrid and fluid national identities.

**Place**

Cornell and Hartman (1998: 165 – 166) also note the role that place can play in the development and maintenance of national identities. Christou and King (2010: 640) similarly note that ‘identities are constructed in response to space and place.’ Hannerz (2002: 218) also contends that place can profoundly impact upon sense of belonging. The environment in which a person lives both limits and grants opportunities to investigate and experience identity options. Places can be recognised as social constructions, because while they are physical spaces their importance and relevance is construed (Easthope, 2009: 72). Individuals attach meanings to places and they feel ‘at home’ in
places where they understand the social expectations and norms (Easthope, 2009: 74).

Place of birth can play a crucial part in constructing national identity. Many respondents were born in Australia, lived in Australia and regarded themselves as Australian. A child born in Australia with one parent already a citizen or permanent resident is immediately an Australian citizen based on the principle of *jus soli* (law of the soil) that links citizenship with birth in a particular country (Levanon and Lewin-Epstein, 2010: 421). Prior to 1986 most children born in Australia, regardless of their parents’ citizenship status, were immediately Australian citizens (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011). This is not the case in all other countries. In some countries the principle of *jus sanguinis* (law of the blood) is more prevalent where citizenship is based upon descent (Levanon and Lewin-Epstein, 2010: 421). This aspect of Australian law may have influenced their ideas. The respondents born in Australia were always legally Australian as was almost anyone else that they knew that was born in the country. Minh (Australia, 25, SEA) spoke of the importance of her place of birth to her sense of national identity. She noted that her birth in Australia, rather than in a refugee camp, gave her the right to claim Australian citizenship and thus being Australian despite the fact that both her parents were Vietnamese.

Despite moving to Australia and adopting Australia as her home, Jade (Ireland, 24, Anglo/Irish) noted the significance of the place where she was born and grew up and how it would always remain a part of her national identity:

*As much as I love it here there is a tie there. There is just something about it. It’s something you don’t let go of ... I think I*
left at too late an age. I left when I was 19, my whole childhood was an Irish one, my whole upbringing was the Irish thing.

Wayne (England, 24, AI), also a new arrival to Australia, made similar comments about a connection to the place where he was born and grew up:

*I’m always going to be English … it’s where I was from and that’s it … no matter where I go I will always be English.*

These attitudes may initially appear to support a primordial understanding of national identity - that people are born with a particular national attachment (Cornell and Hartmann, 1998: 48) – or a *jus soli* perspective (Levanon and Lewin-Epstein, 2010: 421) as both respondents recognised the powerful and ongoing ties to their birth national identities. Jenkins (2008: 84) notes that young people are ‘voracious learners’ and that at an early age they learn ‘who’s who and what’s what.’ The place in which this intense learning occurs is influential and identities formed at this time are ‘less flexible’ (Jenkins, 2008: 84) than identities acquired later. Butcher (2009: 1369) suggests that place matters in identity construction as it is:

*Imbued with meaning and shaped by cultural context, including history, economic and social organisation. The shared meanings embedded in relationships reaffirmed the practices of identity associated with that place.*

This could explain the ongoing powerful significance of Jade and Wayne’s childhood national identities. They retained strong associations with the places of their early years due to the degree of familiarity with them and the ‘everyday practices’ and relationships formed there (Butcher: 2009: 1365). These places created a sense of ‘belonging’ (Easthope, 2009: 71). It must however also be noted that
both Jade and Wayne had only lived in Australia for a few years and as most of their lives had been lived elsewhere this could also explain their strong attachment to their former homes.

However Jade and Wayne also noted that their perception of their national identity had undergone considerable change since arriving in Australia. Their connection to their birth country remained powerful but had been augmented by a new association with Australia. Their previous mono-national identities had been replaced by new hybrid national identities where they had been able to fuse both national heritages to formulate a fresh appreciation of their national identity cognisant of both past, present and possible future influences:

*The way I speak and my lifestyle is more an Aussie lifestyle now.*  
(Jade)

*I’m an English Australia. That’s what I think. I adapt to my own surroundings.*  
(Wayne)

Both these respondents had altered their lifestyles and their understandings of their national identities due to living in a different place. Their identities were not primordial but had been reformulated through their reflexive responses to living in a new environment.

However several other respondents did not retain strong ties to the countries of their births. Erin (Canada, 19, SEA) was born in and spent her very early years in Canada yet had little affiliation with that country. Rather her strongest national allegiance was to Singapore. Erin’s experience suggests that place of birth and early socialisation may not be significant in all constructions of national identity. Erin spent many years living in Singapore thus Singapore was the place where she felt most comfortable, where she felt a connection to the
country’s history, economic and social organisation (Butcher, 2009: 1369). Like Erin, Amanda (Philippines, 22, SEA) and Leah (Malaysia, 24, SEA) also voiced little affiliation to the countries of their birth. It would appear from these respondents’ experiences that place of birth may be a feature in the development of national identity for some, but not for all. Further, while place of birth was significant for many it appeared that place of early socialisation was also important. Jade and Wayne lived in their birth countries until early adulthood whereas Erin, Amanda and Leah left them at a very early age and spent their childhood and adolescent years elsewhere in countries that they, as young adults, more readily identified with.

Other respondents explained the impact of their migration to Australia upon the construction of their national identities. Upon arrival in Australia they modified their sense of national identity to incorporate the new place in which they found themselves. Emily (Malaysia, 19, SEA), who had recently moved to Australia, noted a dramatic shift in her national identity when she migrated:

*If someone asked, ‘What nationality are you?’ I would say Australian. Malaysia is in the past.*

From this statement it would seem that Emily had made a decision to redefine herself and take on a new national identity that acknowledged her new home. Easthope notes that possibilities are opened up with migration and individuals are able to use migration as a means to redefine their identity (2009: 69). Emily may also be an example of *jus domicile* (law of residence), whereby the place that a person lives is regarded as crucial for citizenship and a person may attain citizenship through ‘naturalisation’ (Levanon and Lewin-Epstein, 2010: 421). While the ‘laws’ of *jus soli*, *jus sanguinis* and *jus domicile* relate to citizenship rather than national identity they may impact upon the way a person develops their national identity. A strong commitment to any
one of these beliefs about national identity could assist or hinder the construction of amended national identities after migration. However despite Emily’s assertion that Malaysia was in the past she also noted the ongoing influence of her time spent there. She had not totally forsaken her Malaysian identity:

\[
\text{I grew up there. I still speak the Malaysian languages and I think in some ways I am still quite Malaysian ... probably the way I do things would be a bit different [here she is making a comparison to the ways Australians might do things].}
\]

Migration had altered Emily’s appreciation of her national identity. She no longer always regarded herself as wholly Malaysian. She now regarded herself as Australian but also recognised a Malaysian part of her identity. Emily here shows the flexibility of many of the respondents’ national identities. She moved between being ‘now Australian’ to being ‘still quite Malaysian’ within the period of the interview. Emily’s experience resonated with that of Wayne and Jade. She had reconstructed a new national identity that reflected her new residence yet also recognised the profound impact of her birth place. For these new arrivals to Australia places from their past were not totally superseded by their migration to a new place. Angie (China, 24, SEA) explained the importance of having grown up in Australia to the development of her national identity:

\[
\text{My origins are Chinese and South Korean but I have been raised in Australia so I am part Australian. Some people say that you are only part of the country that you were born in, I know people who believe that. But it’s more about what you’ve grown up with, what you’ve grown up to believe and the fact that I’ve spent more of my years in this country, that’s what makes me say that I am part Australian ... I’m proud to be an Australian citizen ... that’s not to disregard the place that I have come from but this is the place that}
\]
Angie’s heritage was influential in much of her life but her presence in Australia had also worked to shape her hybrid national identity that incorporated a connection to three countries. The fact that she had spent many years in Australia and regarded it as her ‘main home’ gave Australia a special significance. It was the place where she felt that she ‘belonged’ (Easthope, 2009: 71).

These respondents’ experiences highlight the malleability of national identity. National identity is never a finished product but a lived experience that is forever altering. Thus migration is a significant part of national identity formulation. When my migrant respondents came to live in Australia they reassessed their national identities to recognise their new place of residence.

While the above respondents spoke about how moving to another country had resulted in an adjustment to their national identities, James (Australia, 21, SE) noted how particular locations in Australia had influenced his national identity development. He explained:

*I spent the first eighteen and a half years of my life in a country town so my family and I were the only Greeks in the town and in primary and secondary school I played up the stereotypical wog.*

James highlighted his difference to the other townspeople because of his Greek heritage. He built a distinct national identity that differentiated him from the homogenous country community. James’ desire to ‘play the stereotypical wog’ provided him with a means to establish his difference from others (Gans, 1979: 17). James celebrated his Greek-ness and highlighted it more strongly than he may have done in a place where being of Greek heritage was more common,
such as the inner Melbourne suburbs. Thus for James the place where his family was the only Greek family was significant in his construction of national identity. Umana-Taylor et. al. (2006: 391, 392) note the significance of ‘microecological factors’ such as ‘representations of the adolescent’s ethnic group in the neighbourhood’ as playing a role in the construction of ethnic identity. They also note that being in schools and environments where individuals are an ethnic minority promotes interest in ethnic identity and affiliation with that identity (Umana-Taylor et. al., 2006: 393 - 396) as they are different to the norm. For some being the only person of a different heritage and appearance may have been alienating and resulted in a desire to downplay their heritage. However for James being the only Greek in his area resulted in him choosing to highlight his Greek-ness and thus worked to reinforce his attachment to this aspect of his national identity.

Amanda (Philippines, 22, SEA) also spoke of the impact of growing up in a small town where her family was the only one with an Asian heritage:

I was in a country town and there was not an Asian community there so being the only Asian person, or person of Asian appearance, my sisters are of Caucasian appearance so they blend in whereas I don’t, so you feel it. You are more aware of the fact that you are a little bit different to the other kids.

In the reflexive (Giddens, 1991: 33) development of her national identity Amanda had to recognise her Asian appearance and incorporate this into her sense of self (Giddens, 1991: 54), a requirement that she said she had not felt as strongly in other places where there was a more diverse population. Migrants have tended to settle in larger cities rather than small rural towns (Markus et. al., 2009: 68) so when she lived in cities Amanda’s difference was not so
marked. Like James (Australia, 21, SE) her ethnic isolation may have worked to consolidate the Philippine aspects of her national identity (Umana-Taylor et. al., 2006: 395, 396).

In comparison to James and Amanda, Mary (Australia, 24, SE) explained the impact of growing up in a very multicultural suburb of Melbourne:

*I grew up in a very multicultural area and went to school there. My parents are very different to the rest of the family and they associated with different religions and different nationalities. I never saw myself as anything other than just Australian. And I thought Australian people were just anyone who lived in the country.*

Given the place that Mary was raised she developed a very inclusive understanding of Australianness. Mary noted that her parents mixed with people of many backgrounds which contrasted with her extended family who preferred to only socialise with those of a similar Italian background. In such a place her Italian background did not have the same implications as James’ and Amanda’s backgrounds. Hers was not the only non-Anglo family in her area, thus she did not experience the differentiation that they had felt. Mary melded into the place that she lived and her non-Anglo background was the norm. Thus she felt no different to the other Australians of diverse backgrounds and her Italian-ness did not set her aside.

Comments made by Emily (Malaysia, 19, SEA) provide an alternative perspective. After moving from Malaysia and adopting an Australian national identity she noted:

*I think the place where you live makes a lot of difference. I think I felt a bit more Australian when I lived in Adelaide. Adelaide has*
more English Australians, you really don’t get Malaysians or Chinese there. It is really, really Australian. But in Melbourne, I think it is because of where I live, there are lots of Malaysians in my area. Your thinking changes a bit, you feel less Australian and more Malaysian.

The findings of Waitt et al. (2001: 89) support Emily’s experience. They found that their second generation respondents of Maltese descent, who lived in places with diverse backgrounds, identified less closely with their Maltese side than those who lived in places with a more concentrated Maltese population (Waitt et al.: 2001: 89). This is in contrast to the ideas espoused by Umana-Taylor et al. (2006: 395, 396) who claim that being in an ethnic minority stimulates affiliation with that minority. It is of note that the experience of being part of a minority group in a particular place had very different effects on James, Amanda and Emily. Whereas Emily understood her experience in a very Anglo place as an opportunity to forge her Australian national identity and leave behind her Malaysian side, for both James and Amanda it highlighted their difference and strengthened the importance of their non-Australian national identities.

Some respondents spoke about how living in a different place such as living overseas had influenced their appreciations of their national identities. Nick (Australia, 20, SE) spoke about his experience of living overseas:

A massive proportion of my life was spent in a country [England] that looked after me better than my parents did [he attended boarding school during his time in England] and I don’t know how to put it but I think at that young age you are easily moulded. I was very easily moulded into the British way of thinking … I do certainly identify with everything there a great deal … part of me
is English, if anyone asks me I will tell them that a big part of my life is English.

Nick’s comments are significant as his background was not English and he was not born in England yet he strongly identified with an English national identity. The time he spent in England had impacted upon his sense of self and inculcated itself into his hybrid national identity. He wanted to acknowledge an English side to his national identity and also wanted others to acknowledge it. Among his friendship group and family he was referred to as being ‘the English one’. Nick’s siblings had not developed a similar attachment to England. Nick spoke of his time living in England as being very happy as he had felt nurtured and cared for there. His story of living in Australia was not so happy and was tinged with sadness due to stresses he experienced living with his family. For Nick England was a ‘homely’ and ‘comfortable’ place (Easthope, 2009: 72).

However living in another country did not have the same effect on Amanda (Philippines, 22, SEA). Amanda lived in the United States for some time, and did not feel the need to incorporate America into her national identity. On the contrary she said:

*Having lived overseas made me more aware that I was an Australian and that I preferred living in Australia. I think when we first moved over there I really just detested living there and I guess that because I detested it my whole sense of my Australian identity grew. I want to be here, this is where I wanted to live and living in the States just made you realise what you didn’t have any more.*

*I feel more strongly about being Australian having lived overseas. With my education [when deciding which university to attend], I knew that I wanted to live here so I moved back.*
Amanda’s overseas experience strengthened her affiliation with Australia, a very different response to that of Nick. Amanda was unfamiliar with the American lifestyle and did not feel ‘at home’ there (Easthope, 2009: 72). Her reaction to living in America was also in contrast to that of her sisters who readily adopted an American outlook and had no intention of returning to Australia. When living in a different place she came to recognise the significance of her Australian national identity and the depth of her attachment to Australia. Responses to living in other countries were varied. Certainly the experience shaped the respondents’ national identities but not in a consistent manner.

While many respondents identified themselves as having hybrid national identities, forged through their various life experiences, these hybrid national identities were not constant. Different places served to highlight and diminish parts of the respondents’ hybrid national identities. Leah (Malaysia, 24, SEA) explained:

> When I went on holidays to Vietnam to visit my relatives I felt more Australian than I felt Vietnamese or Chinese. I guess because I was in a culture that I wasn’t normally in. I was out of place there, just the way I looked, the way I am and the way I acted.

Easthope (2009: 72) suggests that when an individual travels to a different environment the identities that have previously been taken for granted become more prominent. Leah’s Australian national identity had less significance in Australia as she was just one of many, many Australians. However in Vietnam this national identity gained new resonance. Zevallos’ (2003: 89) Latin American respondents also noted that they identified themselves more strongly as Australian when overseas. When they were overseas ‘others’, in Vietnam and Latin America, saw Leah and Zevallos’ respondents as different. They
were thus forced to consider their national identities from the perspective of these ‘others’ and recognise their ties to Australia.

For Melinda (Australia, 22, SEA\(^{\text{90}}\)) being in another place through travel worked to mould her national identity in a different manner:

\[\text{Before I travelled and people would ask me my nationality I would say Australian straight out … I think that now that I have travelled, not actually to Pakistan, but to that part of the world, I’ve seen what it is. It has kind of made me prouder; it made me less embarrassed to say my parents are from Pakistan.}\]

Cornell and Hartman note that identity ‘construction is energised when groups of human beings encounter new forces or altered circumstances that encourage them to rethink their ideas of themselves, to see themselves and the world around them in new ways’ (1998: 195). When Melinda and other respondents found themselves in changed circumstances such as a new place, like overseas, they re-evaluated and revised their sense of national identity. They brought to each new location their individual understandings of their national identities and then reviewed these in the light of new experiences.

The respondents strongly endorsed the notion that place plays a key role in shaping national identity. They noted the significance of being in a particular place and how the culture and lifestyle of that place brought about re-evaluation of national identity. As a result new modes of understanding the self were adopted. Some respondents readily absorbed influences from particular places and integrated them into their national identities. Others rejected such influences and this rejection served to bring other aspects of their national identity into prominence. Whist it is evident that place worked to shape these respondents’ national identities, the way that place influenced them

\(^{\text{90}}\) Melinda self-identified as having a South-East Asian background.
varied. From this limited sample it would be impossible to suggest that place influences national identities in any particular manner; however these findings highlight the complexity of national identity construction.

**Education**

Respondents also noted the influence of education in shaping their national identities. Students spend a large proportion of their time in school environments, thus education is recognised as being a key source of socialisation (Abercrombie *et. al.*, 2000: 329). Young people are taught the ‘physical and mental states … [it considers] ought to be found among those who make it up (Durkheim, 2006: 79 – 80).’ As schools teach students about Australia’s history, culture, population, geography and values they inculcate in children an image of Australia and Australianness. As argued by Guibernam (2007: 31) ‘national education continues to play a fundamental part in defining the national community and supplying a sense of continuity and purpose to the very existence of the nation state.’ What this image of Australia is and who determines it can substantially impact upon people’s construction of Australian national identity and their acceptance by others as being Australian.

Some respondents explained that through learning about Australian culture and the cultures of other countries their understanding of their national identities had developed. Lana (Australia, 20, AI) said:

> **Education has broadened my understanding of different countries because there wouldn’t be an Australian culture if there wasn’t something different out there. Learning about other cultures and the way other cultures work and the way of life everywhere else shows the difference and I have learnt about our history and all of that so that gives you ideas about being Australian.**
Howard and Gill’s (2001: 99) research supports the idea that a way ‘to identify what it means to be Australian consisted of comparing Australia with other countries.’ Like Lana, the children in Howard and Gill’s research learned ‘about different ways of being brought up and different “cultures”’ (2001: 99).

Thus Lana used the information provided by her education to distinguish a boundary between members and non-members of the Australian group (Cornell and Hartman, 1998: 81) and then locate herself within the category of ‘us’ - the Australians. The division between ‘us’ and ‘them’ is a simple division that denotes membership with one group and not another. It can also carry implications of power and rank (Cornell and Hartman, 1998: 81).

Lana noted that she had learnt about Australian ‘history and all of that’ which shaped her ‘ideas about being Australian.’ Given historical links to Britain, Australian history has often been presented through the lens of Australian-British relations and as such may have contributed a skewed image of Australian national identity which associated Australians with this heritage rather than other heritages. The Australian ‘us’ has then automatically incorporated those of British heritage and has thrust those of various non-British heritages into the category of ‘them’. How the category of ‘us’ is defined carries considerable importance in people’s ability to construct a national identity that includes Australianness. What history, cultures, values and lifestyles are taught as being Australian will affect who is included as ‘us’ and who is labelled ‘them.’ Cornell and Hartman’s (1998: 81) notion of boundary markers suggests that there is a single boundary between those who are considered Australian and those who are not. However Hage (1998: 42) suggests that a hierarchy of Australianness exists. Rather than a binary division between Australian and non-
Australian a continuum exists. Some groups can be thought to ‘belong’ as Australians more than others.

Beck (Australia, 20, AI) also spoke about how she had learned what constitutes Australianness at school. She explained that this had influenced her appreciation of Australian identity and thus her own national identity:

*We studied cultural diversity and basically went through all the Aussie battler stereotype and what we studied broadened my ... not that I was ever narrow minded, but it made me look at all aspects of things ... I think just the way in the subject we looked at what it is to be Australian, all this stuff we are talking about now and it made us think that it’s not just going to footy because we have got so many cultures in this country now.*

Beck’s criteria for inclusion as an Australian had been altered through education. Jenny (Australia, 25, SE) and Ben (Australia, 18, SE) also said that they had learned about Australia and ‘being an Aussie’ at school. Amanda (Philippines, 22, SEA) explained in more detail:

*You spend so much of your time in school as a child and you do celebrate all this in school and you are taught things and the holidays that you celebrate as well. We did the whole ANZAC Day before you went on your long weekend and there was Remembrance Day as well and you learn about Australian history in school and that we are all Australian and that we live in a multicultural country and it’s a big mixing pot.*

For these respondents school provided them with ways of thinking about Australia that shaped the construction of their national identities. They reflexively considered what criteria established a person as being Australian and how this construction of Australianness matched their
understanding of themselves. They located themselves within the boundary of Australians (Cornell and Hartman, 1998: 81).

Leah (Malaysia, 24, SEA) also recognised education as an influence in her identity development. However it was not the formal learning at school that Leah felt had influenced her but the informal learning. Much is learned in schools that is not a part of the official curriculum (Giddens, 2006: 704). Leah explained:

*My family formulated my Asian identity whereas it was more my social environment that formulated my Australian identity. Just the high school I went to, the friends I had, the things I did. They helped a lot, they showed me things from their perspective that I probably didn’t see from my Asian perspective.*

Leah’s informal school experiences supplemented her Asian identity enabling the construction of her hybrid national identity. Through their experiences at school these respondents had learned, either formally or informally, about Australian culture, values and traditions. These had then been integrated into their developing sense of national identity.

Education worked in various ways to facilitate the respondents’ constructions of their national identities. As they learned about Australia and other cultures they were able to locate themselves as belonging or not belonging to certain national identities. They also learned that various criteria existed in order to belong and that there were degrees of belonging to both an Australian national identity and to other national identities.

**Language**

Language can be understood as playing a pivotal role in the development of national identity as ‘it is through the language or
languages that children speak that they actually form their sense of identity, community and belonging’ (Siraj-Blatchford, 2007a: 414). Language is an integral aspect of group identity (Colic-Peisker, 2002: 158). A common language serves to unite people as it provides the means by which individuals communicate. Anderson (2006: 44 - 46) explains how the development of ‘print capitalism’ served to fix and establish dominant languages. Languages which were endorsed by those in power and were utilised in the publication of books and documents came to carry more authority. Those who did not speak or read the officially endorsed languages became marginalised and their voices less heard.

Without a common language there is a major barrier to effective communication reducing the likelihood of the development of a shared understanding of community (Anderson, 2006: 7), thus of shared national identity. The sharing of a language is able to ‘create unified fields of exchange and communication, which contribute to the strengthening of national identity’ (Guibernau, 2007: 14). Sharing a language serves as a key identifier of belonging. Fluency in a language can either label a person as an ‘insider’ or an ‘outsider’.

A number of respondents noted the important link between language skill and national identity. Jenny (Australia, 25, SE), Melinda (Australia, 22, SEA) and Amanda (Philippines, 22, SEA) mentioned their inability to speak the language of their heritage to emphasise their alienation from it. For them competency in the language of a nation was a crucial criterion for belonging. Wendy (Australia, 22, SEA) noted the impact of her inability to speak Malaysian:

*When I met Malay people and went to Malaysia I was not one of them. I couldn’t speak to my grandparents, they didn’t speak English, so it was very clear, you are not Malaysian.*
Wendy’s inability to speak Malaysian highlighted her otherness (Castles and Miller, 2003: 248) and set her apart from being Malaysian. Others such as Angie (China, 25, SEA) also noted the importance of language. Angie spoke about a friend of Malaysian-Chinese background and said, ‘He is much more Australian than I am, he doesn’t even speak a word of Chinese.’ Angie regarded her friends’ inability to speak Chinese as reducing his connection to his heritage and thus bolstering his claim to an Australian national identity.

Some respondents spoke of attending language schools and the impact of this upon the development of their national identities. Annabell (Australia, 24, SE) felt that ‘twelve years of Greek school’ had reinforced and enriched her sense of being Greek. Such schools provide students with the criteria of language skills and cultural comprehension that position them as belonging to their national heritage group (Cornell and Hartman, 1988: 81). Unlike Annabell, Minh (Australia, 25, SEA) refused to attend Vietnamese language school:

> Around primary school is when kids start going to Vietnamese [language] school on Saturdays ... I just refused to go to Vietnamese school because I was really, really uncomfortable with it.

Minh claimed that ‘most of the time I deny the Vietnamese side of me, I am very uncomfortable with it.’ In the previous chapter Minh expressed her difficulties in recognising both the Australian and the Vietnamese aspects of her national identity. Her refusal to attend Vietnamese language school is another indicator of her rejection of her Vietnamese heritage. Attendance at such a school would probably

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91 As there are large numbers of migrants resident in Australia there are many language schools. These schools are separate to regular schools and tend to operate on Saturday mornings. They provide classes for children whose parents want them to learn the language and culture of their heritage.
have reinforced an aspect of her cultural identity that she wished to
disregard. Lack of competence in language and comprehension of
cultural details can serve as markers of difference and distance a
person from ‘belonging’ to their heritage group (Cornell and Hartman,
1988: 81). Minh chose to avoid gaining the criteria that would situate
her strongly within the group of Vietnamese-Australians. Instead she
worked to boost her Australian cultural capital through her focus on
achieving well in formal schooling and developing qualities she
perceived to be Australian.

Delphi (Greece, 18, SE) however saw her ability to speak Greek as a
connection to her Greek national identity. She said: ‘My background is
completely Greek, I speak Greek.’ In fact she spoke Greek everyday
so it was part of her lived experience. She explained: ‘Dad doesn’t
speak English so I am forever speaking Greek.’ Her constant use of
the language made it impossible for her to disregard her Greek
identity. For Annabell (Australia, 24, SE) being able to speak Greek
also served as a connection to her heritage:

*Speaking Greek is significant only because it means I can
communicate with the relatives and it is nice to know that if I was
to go to Greece I can talk to relatives there and I have that
connection to the country.*

Had she been unable to speak Greek she may have lost this close
connection to these distant relatives, thus losing some connection to
Greece.

Jonathon (Australia, 24, SE) experienced contradictory feelings about
his national identity when socialising with his Italian speaking family.
He explained:
When I am with the whole family and they are all speaking Italian I feel more Italian but also I can’t speak Italian so that emphasises the fact that I am Australian. It’s kind of like a double-edged sword.

Scholte (2000: 161) suggests that others with a hybrid national identity may feel similarly. While they feel a connection to more than one national identity they may also feel that they do not fully belong to either. In the eyes of the dominant majority such people have some of the capital required to meet the criteria of belonging but lack other capital. A person may be partially ‘us’ and partially ‘them’ (Cornell and Hartman, 1988: 81). Jonathon acknowledged the Italian aspect of his national identity but was unable to fully embrace it as his inability to speak Italian forced him to remain on the periphery of Italian culture and national identity. Jonathon’s experience at such family events could be regarded as an example of the negative side of hybridity where a person belongs no-where. Yet I suggest that Jonathon did not feel an intense sense of non-belonging. Certainly he lacked Italian language skills and thus could not be fully Italian. Yet he at no time claimed to be fully Italian as it was just part of his hybrid identity. However the possession of Italian language skills may have enhanced his sense of Italian identity and others’ recognition of it.

All of the respondents in this study were fluent in English. Many noted how this had assisted them as they grew up and constructed their Australian national identities:

I speak English and I have an Aussie accent so I’m considered being Aussie … if I didn’t speak English I think I would have been outcast a bit … it would be very difficult if you couldn’t speak English because it is the most dominant language in Australia.

(Beck, Australia, 20, AI)
I think growing up in an English speaking family and household and really only knowing how to speak English actually helped me to become Australian. It’s been a lot easier; it means I don’t stand out. I don’t have people criticising me and telling me to go back home. (Brett, Australia, 24, AI)

Wendy (Australia, 22, SEA) also explained that speaking English had ‘meant that I could not be an outsider.’ She went on to elaborate that a work colleague who ‘just can’t speak English properly’ was ‘never, ever going to be fully Australian.’ Wendy had stated earlier that there was no typical Australian as ‘everyone is so different’. Yet her statement about her friend exposed a strong belief that a real Australian must be fluent in English. The English language was brought to Australia by early white British settlers. A strong command of the language could provide a form of connection to this group of long standing Australians and thus diminish being identified as being ‘not quite’ Australian.

Despite at times being marginalised due to her heritage Wendy marginalised her friend due to her limited English skills. Wendy’s comments about her friend served to illustrate the hierarchy or continuum of Australianness (Hage, 1998: 60) where some are more Australian than others. She also demonstrated that it is not only white Australians, those of Anglo-Irish background, that maintain boundaries. Through voicing the belief that a person cannot be fully Australian due to limited English proficiency Wendy fortifies the division between native English speakers and those who have had to learn the language. This division can serve to keep ‘others’ in a position where they have a less secure claim to Australian identity. Minh (Australia, 25, SEA) felt that people, even those not born in Australia, ‘internalise those prejudices.’ She provided an example of how she sometimes reacted when her mother did not speak English correctly:
I get upset with her … I think you have been here for 25 years … you can do better than this, why aren’t you trying to fit in?

Minh was aware of the conflicting nature of her reactions and provided this example to illustrate how readily beliefs about the importance of language competency are adopted. Minh was very self-aware and had spent much time pondering issues related to Australian identity. Despite these insights she acknowledged that she had still succumbed to the subtle pressure to question the desire of those who do not speak English fluently to be Australian and thus to ‘other’ them.

Leah (Malaysia, 24, SEA) also spoke about the importance of competence in English in her Australian national identity. She said:

*I used to work in a Chinese restaurant and people would say, ‘oh you speak perfect English’ and I would say, ‘yes I can.’ I guess I am more Australian. If you want to look at me physically then yes definitely I am more Chinese with an Asian background but once they’ve heard me speak and seen me work I am probably more Australian to them.*

Like Wendy, Leah identified English language proficiency as significant capital for acceptance as being Australian. In fact Leah’s comment highlights the significant value of this capital as it so quickly modified people’s ideas about her that were originally based on appearance. She also illustrates the powerful part played by others in the construction of national identity. She noted that she was ‘more Australian’ in response to others’ ‘recognition or acknowledgement’ (italics in original) (Coleman and Higgins, 2000: 63) of her Australian language competency. Others’ perceptions of her were internalised and incorporated into her appreciation of her national identity.
The Australian Government states that it expects all Australian citizens to have a ‘basic knowledge of English’ (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2010). Many respondents also felt that all Australians should learn English:

*I think people should try and adapt a little bit to how we are. In particular the English language, it makes it difficult if people want to be over here and fit in to who we are and want to be Australian but we can’t communicate.* (Alex, Australia, 24, SE)

*I think if they have been here a long time and want to be an Australian citizen then they should learn some of the language.* (Gemma, Australia, 25, AI)

For both the respondents and the government there was a strong association between English language proficiency and Australian national identity. Thus for the respondents competence in English was regarded as vital in their development of an Australian national identity. A lack of this competence could indicate the lack of a key criterion of Australian cultural capital necessary to construct, and have others recognise, an Australian national identity.

**Appearance**

Despite feeling that English fluency provided valuable capital for Australian identity, some respondents felt their appearance set them apart from those automatically assumed to be Australian, and impacted upon the development of their national identity. Erin (Canada, 19, SEA) made a strong connection between her friends’ appearance and their national identities:
They are not the white Australians … I used to say, “you guys are not Australian, come on,” but they are so adamant that they are and I think that’s funny because I’m not. I’m not really Australian.

She was very clear that appearance created a significant distinction between Australians and non-Australians.

When others asked the question, ‘Where do you come from?’ it was regarded by many respondents as a signifier that these others assumed they were not Australian or not just Australian. The respondents who had been asked this question did not have a white-Anglo appearance (with the exception of Jade (Ireland, 21, AI) and Wayne (24, England, AI) who will be discussed later). Some were of Asian or Southern European appearance. Many respondents who identified very little with their heritages were infuriated when asked the question:

*I find it annoying because I don’t think they should make assumptions from the way that I look to identify me as that [Italian] … it’s just weird how people make assumptions depending on what you look like.* (Mary, Australia, 24 SE)

*I will respond with, ‘I come from Berwick’ or something. I actually get a bit narky*92 and force the person to ask, ‘What is your ethnicity?’ if they want to know what my ethnicity is. (Amanda, Philippines, 22, SEA)

*When people would ask what was my nationality I would say Australian straight out and if people said but where are you from or you are a different colour or something I would just blatantly crack it*93 and say I’m Australian. (Melinda, Australia, 22, SEA)

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92 ‘Narky’ is slang. It means annoyed.
93 ‘Crack it’ is slang, meaning lose her temper.
These respondents felt that being questioned differentiated them from other Australians. What annoyed these respondents was that the question revealed a discrepancy between their personal understanding of their national identity and that of others. They did not feel that their ancestries defined them.

While some of these respondents had little ‘feeling’ (Melinda) for their non-Australian national identities they were unable to put them aside:

_Whenever anyone asks me I say I am Australian, that’s what I’d always say. But they often say, ‘but you don’t look Australian.’ My Dad’s Malaysian but I don’t think of myself as Malaysian. I’m Australian. I’d maybe say half Malaysian._ (Wendy, 22, SEA)

_I would say Australian. I know Dad was Maltese … everyone knows that I have Maltese in me, like even in night clubs and things I’ve been asked where I come from by people, like it’s one of the first things they ask._ (Jenny, Australia, 22, SE)

_I feel Australian, but when people ask me what nationality I am I will tell them that my parents are Pakistani, but that’s more the title than feeling it._ (Melinda, Australia, 22, SEA)

These respondents all had a non-Anglo appearance. The question, ‘Where do you come from?’ can be understood as a form of ‘othering’ reminding them that they did not fully belong. This opinion is supported by Mapedzahama and Kwansah-Aidoo (2010: 6):

_In Australia, the public imaginary of who “is” an Australian still centres white skin and marginalises our black skin in the imagined Australian nation (Hage, 1998). Underlying the idealised rhetoric of a “multicultural” Australian nation, organised around the norm of cultural plurality and “tolerance” (see for example Ang, 1996; Zevallos, 2006), is still (necessarily) an assumption that an_
Australian would be white skinned (see, for example, Stratton, 2006; Hage, 1998).

In multicultural Australia the respondents felt that it was unacceptable to be labelled according to appearance as it challenged their belief in the diversity of Australian people. The question reinforced the ongoing belief that Australians are white and Anglo-looking. It thus contributed to the respondents’ recognition, if at times reluctant, of a hybrid national identity which melded their sense of being Australian with others’ expectations of a non-Australian aspect to their national identity. These respondents did not align with an ethnic notion of national identity based upon ancestry (Pakulski and Tranter, 2000: 36). The significance of their ‘roots’ or their ‘blood’ only became important as ‘others’ constantly reminded them of it.

Some respondents of South East Asian background included Chinese as an aspect of their national identity. The ongoing resonance of Chinese heritage, despite some people of Chinese heritage having lived in Australia for many generations, can also be associated with appearance. Due to having an Asian appearance those with a Chinese heritage have been less able to blend into the predominantly white-Anglo looking Australian population. Tan (2006: 66) argues that those of Chinese heritage have a Chinese identity imposed upon them due to their non-Anglo appearance. She contends that ‘having “Asian looks”’ (marked by phenotypical features such as skin colour, hair type and eye shape) serves as a “cue” denoting perpetual “foreignness” and “Otherness”’ (Tan, 2006: 66). This may have created a sense of differentiation from other non-Chinese looking Australians and thus accentuated their sense of connection to their heritage. Emily (China, 25, SEA) noted this when she said, ‘you just have to look at my face.’ She felt that her appearance would always connect her with her Chinese background.
For these respondents the questioning of their background and imposition of a non-Australian identity did not match their understanding of Australianness as being inclusive of all migrants regardless of appearance. It reinforced their difference. When discussing Australianness they had noted that anyone, no matter what their background or appearance, could be Australian. Yet they felt their access to an Australian national identity was challenged by those who queried their heritage. Their sense of self as an Australian had to be repeatedly reviewed in light of what they perceived to be others’ questioning of their Australian national identity. Thus their own understandings of their national identities were constantly challenged, and this appeared to be what they found most frustrating. They had difficulty reconciling their inclusive sense of Australian national identity with their perception of others’ narrower understanding of Australian national identity.

Yet James (Australia, 21, SE) considered the question of where he came from very differently from these respondents. He explained:

*Everyone here assumes that everyone else here is Australian. That’s not why they are asking when they ask, ‘What are you?’ They want to know what your background is. I am Greek … so that’s what I identify myself as in Australia.*

Instead of regarding the question as a means of labelling some as Australian and others as partly or non-Australian, James saw it as being inclusive. For James there was no suggestion that people of non-white, non-Anglo appearance were not Australian. Rather he felt the question served to demonstrate the diversity of Australia’s population. Only if James was outside Australia would he identify as Australian; whilst he was in Australia he felt that this was just a given.
From James’ comment it would appear that the question, ‘Where do you come from?’ can elicit different responses. As noted by Mapedzahama and Kwansah-Aidoo (2010: 3) it can be understood as a form of welcome or as a conversation starter. Jenny (Australia, 22, SE) noted that she often asked people that she met where they came from as ‘general conversation’. Jenny also made the perceptive comment that it was not the question that concerned her but the way that it was asked. Jenny said some people are ‘genuinely interested’ but also explained that it annoyed her when ‘some people ask it negatively.’ Minh (Australia, 25, SEA) said:

> When I meet people I like to know their background and after that sort out how much it means to them.

Yet when others asked her the same question she ‘felt a little bit embarrassed’ as she felt others thought she was ‘a bit different.’ It could be said that the question itself is not the issue. Rather the issue is the intention that is understood by the person who is asked it. It could be recognition of Australians’ diverse heritages and a means to learn more about this, it could be an innocent introduction to a conversation or it could be a strategy to differentiate a person from those automatically assumed to be Australian.

Yet it is of note that respondents with an Anglo appearance, unless they had a very strong accent, were not asked where they came from:

> Because I’m Anglo people don’t think that I might not be an Australian citizen, I just am. (Gill, Australia, 23, AI)

> My nationality is never challenged. I am assumed to be Australian. My accent is Australian. I look Anglo-Saxon. (Ness, Australia, 25, AI)
This was the case even if their background was not Anglo:

*People say that I don’t appear to be Italian so people just assume I am Australian.* (Alex, Australia, 24, SE)

*I look quite Australian … I’ve never been called not Australian.* (Jonathon, Australia, 24, SE)

These responses clearly highlight the power of appearance. Alex and Jonathon differentiated between looking Australian and looking Italian. Looking Australian meant not looking Italian. Australian appearance remained fixed to Anglo appearance. For them the issue was more than whiteness. To look like a ‘real’ Australian one had to have an Anglo white appearance.

Appearance was the key determinant as to whether a person was asked about their background. These comments also appear to challenge James’ (Australia, 21, SE) inclusive perspective as those with a white, Anglo appearance were so rarely asked. It appears that an Anglo appearance provided some respondents with preferential access to an Australian national identity. Rebecca (Australia, 23, AI) spoke of her white, European appearance: ‘It is the majority so you don’t suffer from racism and things like that.’ She went on to explain ‘in Australia I am probably not noticed that much’ Most Australians still have a white-Anglo appearance; in 2002 most permanent arrivals in Australia still came from the UK (Forrest and Dunne, 2006: 210) and thus are assumed to be the norm. Colic-Peisker argues that because of this Australian whiteness is unquestioned thus rendering those who are white ‘invisible’ (2005: 619). The normativity of whiteness in Australia is taken for granted and deemed unproblematic.

Despite the ongoing rhetoric of Australia being a multicultural nation the young adults with a non-Anglo appearance were unable to merely
refer to themselves as Australian. They were required to insert a modifier before their Australian identities. Respondents in Zevallos’ (2003:88) research made similar comments: one said, ‘people don’t treat me like I’m Australian when I’m in Australia’ (Zevallos, 2003:88). My non-Anglo appearance respondents were constantly asked where they came from. Some respondents, like James (Australia, 21, SE), felt that this demonstrated the multicultural nature of Australia and did not consider it to be discriminatory or a denial of people’s Australian national identity. However others felt very differently about the question and saw it as questioning the legitimacy of their Australian national identity. For those whose heritage held no relevance to their lives and understood themselves as having only an Australian national identity it was an unwanted and resented imposition. While their non-Anglo appearance did not deny Australian identity it denied them a singular Australian identity which was the national identity that, without others’ comments, they would have preferred to adopt.

These respondents’ experiences highlight the limitations that exist in the freedom to construct identity. While Giddens (1991: 33) argues that in the contemporary world the restrictions of the past are no longer as inflexible and people have increased choice in the construction of their identities, my respondents’ experiences illustrate that total freedom in identity construction does not exist. My respondents had to integrate others’ perceptions, based upon their appearance, into their construction of identity. The question, ‘Where do you come from?’ reinforced repeatedly that there had to be a non-Australian aspect to their identities. Through the question they were required to view themselves from the standpoint of others (Ritzer, 1996: 342).
Accent

Accent can also act as a signifier of a person’s national identity. As such it can identify if a person is a local or not. McCrone and Bechhofer (2008: 1251; 2010: 937) note that in Scotland and England accent is an important national identity marker. In research in Berwick-Upon-Tweed, an English town near the border of England and Scotland, the importance of accent as a signifier of national identity was identified:

Having what sounds to others like a Scottish accent obviously makes it harder to claim to be English, even if you do possess other appropriate markers of Englishness. This linguistic marker is a key reason why people from Berwick-upon-Tweed are often attributed with a Scottish nationality by others and may have their claim to being English challenged. (Kiely, McCrone, Bechhofer and Stewart, 2000: 4.9)

Australians speak with a distinctive accent. This can serve to identify people as being Australian or not. Some respondents with an Anglo appearance and who spoke English were also asked where they came from as they lacked an Australian accent. Both Jade (Ireland, 24, AI) and Wayne (England, 24, AI) had distinct accents and felt that these differentiated them from other Australians. An observer may have assumed them to be Australian due to their white-Anglo appearance however as soon as they spoke their difference was noted. Wayne said:

Every time I speak to anyone they say I’ve been here 18 months and my accent hasn’t changed … the way I speak will always be the same I believe … it’s the one thing that sets me out I think.

He was very aware that he sounded different and also noted that ‘some people are very curious’ about his background due to his accent. Jade made similar comments:
I know my accent has changed, but I don’t want it to ever completely change … and I like being different, you get so much attention with an accent, you get asked where you come from.

Like Wayne, Jade liked her accent as it retained a connection to her past. It also reminded her of her uniqueness when people asked where she had come from. Both wanted to retain this connection with their heritage. They liked the individuality it provided them. Jade said, ‘it’s an ice-breaker. It’s great,’ while Wayne said, ‘most people only ask me because they are curious.’ Unlike some of the respondents who had resented being asked this question in relation to their appearance these respondents enjoyed it. However Jade noted the significance of her white appearance:

*It is a lot easier for me [than migrants who are not white] because I am white and because there is a good relationship between the Australians and the Irish, they are definitely loved.*

She knew that her Irish background provided her with a privileged entrance into Australia as she was white and thus the norm. Furthermore, given the strong historical bonds that exist between Australia and Ireland due to past immigration she did not have to face being questioned about her right to be in Australia. Jade’s accent served to make her interesting but her white appearance ensured that she was differentiated in a positive manner. Rather than people ‘othering’ them because they had an accent they were embraced due to both their appearance and their specific accents. These accents carried positive capital. Their accents provided them with uniqueness at no cost. As Jade and Wayne were recent migrants to Australia their connection to their newly acquired Australian identity was not as strong as their connections to their English and Irish identities.
Emma (Australia, 23, AI) also had an English accent however; unlike Wayne and Jade, she felt that this set her apart in a more negative manner. She explained:

*People really hate the fact that I don’t have an Australian accent... an accent makes you Australian. I don’t personally feel that an accent will make me Australian. I have always felt alienated and un-Australian because I don’t have an Australian accent.*

Emma felt that she had an English accent due to growing up with a British family. Emma’s discomfort at being questioned about her accent may have been due to the fact that she was born in Australia and, until very recently, lived all her life there. Unlike Jade and Wayne it was not a new place of residence and she felt that she should have fully ‘belonged’. This highlights the complexity of identity development and the interplay of many influences such as accent, place of birth and residence. Due to their accents the construction of Jade’s, Wayne’s and Emma’s national identities were partially ascribed by those with whom they interacted. The question, ‘Where do you come from?’ reinforced that another identity, besides Australian, existed in their national identities. Their accents acted as a part in the reflexive (Giddens, 1991) process of identity construction as they were expected by others to acknowledge a non-Australian aspect of their national identities. Jade and Wayne enjoyed this, while for Emma it was less appreciated.

Others explained how their Australian accents bolstered their claim to Australian identity despite their Asian appearance. Melinda (Australia, 22, SEA) explained how people’s understandings of her national identity changed as soon as she spoke to them:
I think a lot of people hear the accent and are taken back by it and think, ‘she’s a domestic student’ [rather than an international student].

Leah (Malaysia, 24, SEA) also spoke about the importance of her accent when she said: ‘I don’t have an Asian accent’. She then explained: ‘if they hear you speak with no Asian accent they will probably think, ok she’s a bit more Australian than Asian.’ Her accent ranked her more highly on the hierarchy of Australianness as having an Australian accent carries cultural capital.

Erin (Canada, 19, SEA) noted that the importance of accent in national identity was not limited to Australia. She explained how her lack of a Singaporean accent meant that Singaporeans did not think of her as Singaporean. She explained:

*I say, ‘It is a Singapore accent.’ And they say, ‘No it’s not.’ I say, ‘I talk like you’ and it’s not good enough.*

For these respondents accent played a role in determining others’ understandings of their national identities. It worked to identify them as belonging or being ‘Other’. These findings support the work of Ganguly whose non-Anglo background respondents noted ‘the importance of accents’ and that having a non-Australian accent set them apart from those assumed to be Australian (1997: 24). For some respondents being marked as different was valued and provided them with an individuality that carried no negative consequences due to the privilege of their whiteness. For others, whose appearance initially set them apart, an Australian accent provided valuable capital in their claim to Australian identity.
Religion can play a strong role in identity development. Australia is a secular state. In Australia there is no national religion and people are free to follow, or not follow, any religion (Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act, 2003). Australians are also protected against discrimination due to their religion (Mason, 2006). Australia however has a long history of Christian traditions brought to the country by early settlers who were mostly of British origin. Some early Chinese and Afghani settlers brought with them non-Christian religions but these gained little status within early Australia. In Australia the majority of the population still report Christianity as being their religion (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007c). It can also be regarded as the most privileged religion in Australia. National holidays are held at Christmas and Easter while the significant days of other religions are not given such recognition. Australian Parliament also opens with the Lord’s Prayer (Blake, 2008; Fozdar, 2005: 622). In his time as Prime Minister John Howard stressed the significance of Australia’s Judeo-Christian traditions (Das, 2006; Maddox, 2005; Fozdar, 2011: 623). When he was Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd also strongly espoused his Christian beliefs (Compass, 2006; Fozdar, 2011: 625). Australia’s past Christian traditions continue in contemporary Australia, and the privileging of Christianity in Australia could potentially marginalise those of other faiths and heighten their difference from mainstream Australia.

Religious affiliation can be related to national identity in some countries as links between certain countries and specific religions have long existed. England is the home of the Church of England (The Church of England, 2004) and many nations are regarded as Islamic (Islam.com, 2000). India and Pakistan were divided along religious lines after Independence. The former Yugoslavia broke up along
ethnic lines which were strongly associated with religious adherence (Dingley, 2009: 368). Those adhering to the religion affiliated with their country may have a stronger sense of belonging than those with an alternative religious affiliation. Adherence to the religion linked to one’s country could work to reinforce one’s sense of national identity. Non-adherence to the religion could result in the absence of an important criterion for the development of a national identity (Cornell and Hartman, 1998: 81). Thus religious affiliation can be regarded as influential in the construction of national identity.

Respondents were asked to identify their religious affiliation in the questionnaire. About half did not identify with any religion. Bouma and Ling (2008: 44) note that there has been an increase in the number of people who ‘nominate “No Religion” in national censuses’ and thus this response is not surprising. However it is of note that most Australians still do nominate a religion, even if they do not regularly practise the religion. The respondents who did acknowledge a religion identified as Pagan, Greek Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant and Christian. Some of these respondents explained that their religious affiliation was not particularly important in their lives and thus had no connection to their sense of national identity:

- I am Catholic …I have never been to church, the only time I have been to a church was for a wedding once and when I was made a Catholic. (Will, Australia, 18, AI)

- I was christened so I am Greek Orthodox but I probably take a more atheist, agnostic view toward religion now. (James, Australia, 21, SE)

- I was raised Catholic …, but it’s not something that I have kept. (Amanda, Philippines, 22, SEA)
As religion did not play a significant role in the lives of these respondents it was unlikely to have had a strong influence upon their construction of identity. However for others religion played a more significant role in their lives and in some cases helped link them to their heritage and their national identity. Charlotte (Australia, 20, SE) explained the connection she saw between the ancient Greek gods of her Pagan religion and her Greek heritage:

*A lot of the Greek buildings, like the Parthenon and stuff are temples for my religion ... I like that it is Greek.*

She felt that her religion heightened her ability to construct a Greek national identity as part of a broader hybrid national identity.

Annabell (Australia, 24, SE) also noted the connection between her Greek Orthodox religion and her Greek identity:

*I probably feel more Greek at big functions like christenings and weddings where the religion comes in to play a lot. I've been to weddings of a different culture and that's when I notice how different it is. At a Greek wedding there is a lot of Greek dancing and obviously there is the church, the ceremony, that's a huge difference. And maybe our sense of Christmas and Easter ... Easter is like a huge deal in our religion. It pretty much goes for a whole week and each day there is something different. There is a lot of baking and dyeing the eggs and there is church on most nights and then there is the celebration in the end with a lot of family and food.*

Annabell’s religion was intricately entwined with the Greek traditions that she followed. The religion supported and maintained her sense of Greek national identity through her adherence to these traditions. She explained:
I’d say religion is very important but I don’t know why … it’s only really important in big events like Christmas and Name Days, we celebrate Name Days at church … I think there is a huge connection between religion and my national identity. It tends to be with everything that I do Greek here, it’s linked to the religion aspect so they sort of come hand in hand.

These activities were very much a part of her life and she visited the church regularly to celebrate Greek traditions. Annabell’s involvement in the Greek Orthodox Church connected her to other people who had a Greek national identity. It also differentiated her from her non-Greek friends who did not attend church for such celebrations. Delphi (Greece, 18, SE) also explained that her Greek Orthodox religion had worked to reinforce her Greek national identity:

Religion for me is like, it’s important in cultural terms, it’s not important in a theological way … for me church is a cultural thing. We go for Christmas and Name Days. Name Days are like a saint day and everyone who is called that … they get, it’s like a birthday party so that’s why it’s important to me.

Delphi also spoke about the importance of Greek Easter:

The most important tradition is Easter, during the week we fast, meaning we don’t eat any animal products and on the Friday we don’t eat anything with oil in it, that’s really hard, but that’s what it is supposed to be like. People eat chocolate in front of me and I think ‘Oh my God!’

Delphi’s religion connected her to her Greek roots. It differentiated her from other Australians as the traditions associated with her religion are not followed by all Australians. These traditions also bonded her with
others of a Greek national identity as they shared with her these traditions and understood the significance of certain practices such as not eating animal products and so impacted upon the construction of her national identity. This belief is shared by Bouma and Ling (2008: 41) who note that ‘religion, or more properly religious difference, continues to stand as a factor in the negotiation of identity.’ Greek Orthodox celebrations of Easter do not always coincide with other Christian faiths’ Easter celebrations. However Delphi also noted that:

I think Greek culture blends in pretty well with Australian culture because we are Western. I know with things like Ramadan and other Islamic festivals and cultural things, it’s really hard for me to even understand ... I think for Greek people it’s not such an issue.

Whilst Delphi noted the difference between her religious traditions and those of the majority of Australians (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007c) she was also very aware that sharing a Western Christian religion, like Greek Orthodox, did not differentiate her as much as following a non-Western, non-Christian religion. Delhi felt that adherence to a non-Christian religion might marginalise a person from many Australians as they may have less understanding of the religion and its traditions.

Minh (Australia, 25, SEA) noted that her lack of religious affiliation had helped her to blend into Australia’s more secular society. She explained:

I think that if I had the baggage that I have right now [referring to her concerns about her national identity] as well as having to wear a hijab that would be really bloody hard.

94 Minh did not have a Muslim background. Her mother was Catholic and her father was Buddhist, but she did not nominate any religion for herself.
Wearing a hijab would have set her apart from the Australian Christian majority. Melinda (Australia, 22, SEA) explained how religion could emphasise a non-Australian identity and limit a person’s adoption of an Australian identity:

*I think religion is a big part of it [shaping a person’s national identity] because we [she and her family] are not Muslim. One of my mates was born in Pakistan and is Muslim and he is very loyal to Pakistan whereas I am not. Because he is Muslim he speaks a lot more Pakistani (sic) than I do. He practices his religion that is more affiliated with Pakistan. With 9/11 when it all happened he felt discriminated against whereas people didn’t target me, no-one said anything to me.*

Islam may be a key criterion for belonging (Cornell and Hartman, 1998: 81) in Pakistan but it does not carry the same significance in Australia. Melgard Watkins (2011) notes the existence of Islamophobia in Australia. Wendy (Australia, 22 SEA) also felt that being Muslim might limit a person’s ability to construct an Australian national identity:

*If I had been [Muslim] maybe I’d identify as Malaysian a bit more, especially if I wore a headscarf. If you wear a headscarf it separates you. In everyone’s minds you can’t be Australian.*

Islam does not have the same historical status in Australia, or connection with Australianness, as Christianity. Being Muslim could act as a barrier to acceptance by others as being Australian. Thus it could inhibit the reflexive construction of Australian national identity.

Islam also does not have long historical connections in Britain either, however the findings of Manning and Roy (2010: 9) note that in Britain, a country with a strong Christian heritage, non-Christians felt
no less British than Christians. It is of note that Muslims make up a higher percentage of the population in Britain than Australia and this may contribute to their sense of belonging. Religion may also play a different role in national identity construction in different countries.

Humphrey (2005: 143) states that a ‘measure of Muslim immigrant identification with Australia is the very high levels of naturalisation. Humphrey (2005: 143) argues that Muslim migrants seek to adopt Australian identity in the form of legal citizenship. Whilst Muslims may be able to attain Australian citizenship this does not necessarily mean acceptance by others of an Australian national identity due to a perceived incompatibility between Islam and Australian identity. As noted by Wendy and Minh, the religion acts to ‘other’ them. It cannot always be assumed that a religious affiliation may diminish or accentuate the development of national identities as Humphrey (2005: 143) and Manning and Roy (2010: 9) note that Muslims were able to develop strong connections to Britain despite the predominantly Christian population.

Jonathon (Australia, 24, SE) saw a connection between his Catholicism and his Italian identity. He spoke of this:

*Italy is the hub of Catholicism so both my grandparents, the women at least are quite Catholic so I think that in that sense there is a connection ... if I wasn’t an Italian then there wouldn’t be the connection to Catholicism.*

Jonathon went on to explain that:

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95 The term ‘naturalisation’ in itself demands interrogation. Things that are natural are deemed to be good and uncontaminated. The term could insinuate that prior to naturalisation people are bad or contaminated requiring the bestowal of Australian citizenship to be attain goodness. Such language subtly promulgates ideas of the difference of non-Australians and justifies apprehension about them.
If there is some Catholic reference it doesn’t automatically mean Italian. I think Catholicism is a religion that stands across a whole lot of cultures.

While being Catholic does not mean that a person is Italian there is a strong association between Italian culture and Catholicism because ‘Religion is an all-pervasive force in Italy’ (Demetri, 2010) and has become infused into Italian cultural practices. Giddens (2006: 557) also notes that there exists a strong connection between certain European countries and particular forms of Christianity. Being Catholic reinforced for Jonathon his attachment to Italy and thus the development of the Italian aspect of his hybrid national identity. Amanda also felt that her religion tied her to her non-Australian identity stating that her Catholicism ‘ties me more to the Philippine side, just because Catholicism plays a massive part in their lives.’ Similarly Nina (Australia, 24, SE) ‘definitely’ felt that her Catholicism tied her to Malta.

In comparison to Jonathon, Alex (Australia, 24, SE) identified as not having a religion and he explained how this had lessened his connection to his Italian heritage and strengthened his Australian identity. He explained:

I do not have the Catholic traditions and I was not raised as a Catholic, but Dad and all his brothers’ kids have been raised as Catholic. So not having that I think has made us feel more Australian as opposed to more Italian. They’ve all gone to Catholic schools and we’ve just gone to normal schools so they’ve had Catholic all the way through their lives so they’d probably class themselves as Italian … because I don’t have a Catholic upbringing I don’t feel Italian really at all.
Whilst the respondents identified as having varied commitments to religion, virtually all acknowledged that they celebrated Christmas and Easter. For many these days lacked religious meaning and were simply a means to gather with family. Lana (Australia, 20, AI) explained:

_We don’t really celebrate Christmas because of the birth of Christ … everyone does it no matter. It is just assumed that everyone is having Christmas lunch regardless of whether you are a Christian or not. Like I know I’m not but I still have Christmas and Easter._

Brett (Australia, 24, AI) made similar comments:

_I know that I said I’m not Christian, I still celebrate Christmas and Easter because to me they are a big family celebration … they are still really important because of the family aspect to it._

For these respondents Christmas and Easter were important days, despite their lack of any religious relevance. Even respondents who did not have a Christian heritage noted that they celebrated Christmas. Angie (China, 25, SEA) explained:

_I still celebrate Christmas of course, which is funny because Christmas is led by the church so technically if I don’t believe in that then I shouldn’t believe in Christmas. I believe in the gathering of Christmas, so you are looking at the underlying values of Christmas – giving. It’s the giving, the spending time together and I think that’s great._

Leah (Malaysia, 24, SEA) also spoke of her family’s celebrations of Christmas and Easter:

_It was never like we’re not Christian so we’re not going to do Easter or Christmas … we still do Christmas, still do the presents_
and we also understand what it is all about and even though it isn’t our religion we understand it and acknowledge it and we do our own little celebration as a family together.

Christmas and Easter are important dates in the Australian calendar. They are widely observed, many celebratory events are held and shops promote Christmas giving. The majority of Australians participate in these festivities. Involvement in these celebrations may have assisted the respondents to construct an Australian identity as they participated in these celebrations along with most of the Australian community and did so not stand out as being different.

Ford (2009: 30) argues that in Australia it has become socially unacceptable to exclude people on the basis of race. However she argues that race has been replaced by the notion of culture as a more acceptable means of differentiation. Exhortations to protect Australian culture have thus become a more acceptable means by which to exclude those who are different from the Christian majority. In this context Muslims are able to be ‘othered;’ not due to their race, but because their religion is not deemed to be compatible with Australian culture (Ford, 2009: 30 – 31).

Religion is a key aspect of identity for many in Australia (Bouma and Ling, 2008: 47) and some of my respondents felt that it influenced the development of national identity. Religious affiliation had contributed to the construction and reinforcement of some respondents’ non-Australian identities. However many respondents reported having no religious affiliations so religion had not influenced their constructions of national identity. The significance of religion and other influences in national identity development must be considered in the contemporary early 21st century context.
The contemporary world is described by many as a globalised world (Giddens, 1991: 21, Cohen and Kennedy, 2000: 11). While not mentioned by the respondents, globalisation must be considered as contributing to the development of their national identities.

In past centuries people living in different parts of the world had little interaction with each other. People may have lived their entire lives in small villages and rarely travelled more than a few kilometres from home. Now time and space have dwindled in significance as forces shaping human actions (Cohen and Kennedy, 2000:24). Many respondents noted that they had travelled overseas; some had lived in other countries for periods of their lives. The respondents spoke of how their travels had influenced the construction of their national identities. Migrants who arrived in Australia in the 1950s and 1960s had few thoughts that they would be able to visit their birth countries on a regular basis. Most arrived by ship, a voyage of months from Europe. Now people can fly to Europe in one day.

Due to past constraints on travel and communication migrants would have been less able to keep close ties to their birth country. Australia was their future. More recent migrants may be less inclined to diminish their birth identity as it can remain a prominent aspect of their lives due to easy communication and frequent return visits. As noted by Markus et. al. (2009: 5) when writing about the impact of modern communications and travel opportunities, ‘the option for migrants to maintain multiple identities has been greatly augmented: geography is no longer the tyrant it once was.’ The power of this ability to spend time in both Australia and a birth country was vibrantly illustrated by Delphi (Greece, 18, SE) when she spoke of her passion for both Greece and Australia. She said that she ‘loved’ them both. As strong connections are able to be maintained to countries of birth or countries of heritage these countries maintain a more
prominent role in people’s lives and thus the formation of their national identities. O’Flaherty et. al. (2007: 821) support this contention when they state that ‘persons outside their country of birth are now increasingly able to remain part of not only the national “imagined community” (Anderson, 2006), but also of the political and legal framework of their home state.’

Rebecca (Australia, 23, AI)⁹⁶ provides an example of how changes in travel and communication can influence the development of national identity. She had visited many European countries on numerous occasions and she planned to live overseas:

_The travel probably made the Swiss thing [her Swiss heritage] more [significant], having been there … all the European countries I feel the same level [of belonging], like its not anymore comfortable in Switzerland than it would be in France. The more time that I have there, the more familiar I get … I don’t really have any sense of being anything [in terms of a specific national identity]._

Rebecca’s access to travel had intensified her connection to her Swiss heritage and thus her Swiss national identity. She had also learnt to respect and adapt to the cultures of other places and thus felt ‘comfortable’ in them. For Rebecca places other than Australia felt ‘homely’ (Hage, 1998: 66) and thus her tie to Australia, her country of birth, had altered. She planned to live in a variety of countries so had developed a more cosmopolitan sense of national identity. In comparison, Leah (Malaysia, 24, SEA) felt that her visits to Vietnam had highlighted her difference and thus enhanced her Australian national identity:

⁹⁶ Whilst Rebecca has a predominantly Anglo-Irish heritage she had also inherited Swiss citizenship.
I was more direct and outspoken … the way I dress was different. Like I’d wear a mini skirt because it was hot and even though it’s hot over there my relatives don’t really wear mini skirts.

Leah’s visits to Vietnam reinforced the fact that she was different from her Vietnamese relatives. She felt that this bolstered her connection to her Australian national identity as she felt her behaviour and dress were Australian. These three respondents (Delphi, Rebecca and Leah) had reacted to their travels in different ways. For Delphi it emphasised her hybrid national identity, for Rebecca it helped develop a cosmopolitan sense of self and for Leah it reinforced her Australian national identity.

It cannot be suggested that the ready availability of international travel affects peoples’ constructions of their national identities in any particular manner, however it has created a very different environment in which these national identities are constructed. Rather than a national identity being constructed based upon limited travel with limited interactions with people some of these respondents have had broad life experiences and thus much richer experiences upon which to build their national identities. These experiences provide them with a greater range of options and their choices to construct national identities are far less constrained. Kymlicka (1995: 121) notes that diversity allows people greater options and choices. My respondents’ travels expanded the boundaries of ‘imaginable’ (Kymlicka, 1995: 89) national identities and opened up new ways of being which transcended simple national identities that could only incorporate adherence to one nation state.

Communication technologies are also swifter, more readily available and less expensive. Annabell (Australia, 24, SE) explained how her Australianness was highlighted through telephone conversations with relatives in Greece:
When I talk to cousins that are over in Greece and even hearing the things that they are doing, it’s the lifestyle, there’s such a big difference and that’s when I realise that I am more Australian than I am Greek.

Without such conversations the Australian aspect of Annabell’s national identity may not have been so strongly developed. Her difference to other Australians through her adherence to Greek traditions may have pushed her to identify more strongly as Greek and feel she had more in common with other Greeks than she had with Australians. Guibernau (2007: 13) notes that as people become socialised within a culture they internalise the culture until it becomes a part of them. Annabell internalised Greek culture, however her regular communication with relatives emphasised that the culture she had more strongly internalised was Australian culture. However these conversations also allowed her to retain a strong link to her Greek heritage.

It must be noted that access to international travel and modern communication technologies are not available to all. Nonetheless most of my respondents had travelled overseas. Their travel had enriched their lives and impacted upon the construction of their national identities. They had ready access to sophisticated communication technologies. There are many in the world for whom travel and communication technologies would have little impact on development of national identity as many are not in a position to travel widely and freely or access these communication technologies.

As some are more able to communicate and travel, cultural interactions across the globe have increased for them:
The cultural interactions arising from increased contact between peoples have gradually exposed all humans to the growing flows of cultural meanings and knowledge coming from other societies. (Cohen and Kennedy, 2000: 27)

As time and space have ‘dwindled in significance’ (Cohen and Kennedy, 2000: 25) with globalisation, people are far more aware of other cultures and they are more exposed to different lifestyles and different world perspectives. The complexity and variation of cultures becomes evident. This awareness of a wider world with a multitude of different cultures has impacted upon the respondents’ development of national identity. As people can only select from the ‘imaginable’ a person’s life choices are limited by what is known to them (Kymlicka, 1995: 89). Knowledge of diverse cultures can open up choices. It provides the context from which people can explore options (Poole, 1996: 411) to construct their national identities.

The sharing of cultural features between countries also allowed respondents to retain or build connections with the cultures of their heritage. Erin (Canada, 19, SEA) spoke of celebrating the ‘Moon Lantern Festival’ and watching ‘Hokkien’97 movies’ in Australia which connected her to her Singaporean background. Similarly Angie (China, 25, SEA) sought out information about the countries of her heritage and enjoyed South Korean music, movies and food. Cultural interactions allowed these respondents to maintain a stronger bond to their non-Australian identities. They were not isolated from the cultural traditions of their heritages but able to enjoy them and relate to them in 21st century Australia.

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97 Hokkien is a Chinese dialect
Chapter Review

This chapter examined the respondents’ constructions of their national identities. They identified a plethora of influences that had worked to shape their understandings of themselves. No one or two could be identified as the key influences in the development of national identity. Family, place, education, language competency, appearance, accent and religion were all noted as significant in the respondents’ developments of their national identities. Each respondent incorporated these influences into their sense of national identity, yet the power of each influencing feature varied across the respondents. How important or significant each influence was in an individual’s life affected how much it moulded their national identity. For example Nick (Australia, 20 SE) had lived away from his family for many years in boarding school. He expressed little attachment to his family, actually saying that England had treated him better than his parents. He spoke openly about having different viewpoints to his family. Thus it appears that his family had a lesser impact upon his development of national identity than other influences, including the time he lived in England, and thus constructed an English part of his national identity. This is in comparison to his co-interviewee James (Australia, 21, SE) who spoke warmly of the strong bonds and love that existed between members of his extended family. Through his powerful, positive bonds to his family and their Greek heritage and customs he readily embraced Greek as an aspect of his national identity. Whilst many influences worked to assist respondents construct their national identities which influences were prominent and how they affected identity construction was subjective. Each respondent utilised the many influences to create a national identity that met their needs at the time.

Families, as a site of primary socialisation, were seen as being influential. The cultural practices followed by their families served to shape how they viewed themselves. Where families retained a strong
adherence to heritage traditions the young adults developed a closer affiliation with these heritages. Family blood ties were also influential as some respondents felt a need to recognise their roots. The respondents noted that their families had been significant in the construction of their national identities yet none suggested that their family’s identity had simply been stamped upon them. Given the diversity in lifestyle and ways of being that exist in contemporary Australia they felt that they were provided with considerable resources beyond the family that were utilised in the construction of their national identities.

Place also played a prominent role in identity development. The places that the young adults felt comfortable in were significant in the development of their national identities. These places may have been the country of their birth, where they had lived for their early years or may have been a particular location in Australia. Being of non-Anglo background and living in a predominantly Anglo country had worked to reinforce difference for James (Australia, 21, SE) and Amanda (Philippines, 22, SEA). It had highlighted their heritages and thus gave them a stronger affiliation with the non-Australian aspects of their national identities. In contrast, living in a predominantly Anglo environment had assisted Emily (Malaysia, 19, SEA) to feel more Australian. Travel had highlighted Leah’s (Malaysia, 24, SEA) difference from her Vietnamese relatives and reinforced the Australian aspect of her national identity but had enhanced Rebecca’s (Australia, 23, AI) attachment to her Swiss heritage. However there was no pattern to how place had impacted upon the respondents. If respondents felt comfortable and accepted in a place their connection to it was enhanced. Where they felt less at home their attachment diminished. Thus according to their individual experiences places impacted differently upon the respondents’ understandings of their national identities. Places also highlighted the fluidity of the respondents’ national identities. When they found themselves in
different places certain aspects of their national identities were accentuated.

Respondents identified that they had learnt about Australia and Australian identity through their education. This provided them with an appreciation of what it meant to be Australian and thus they were able to construct aspects of Australianness as part of their national identity. They also noted that they learnt distinctions between Australians and those who were not Australian. Along with formal education Leah (Malaysia, 24, SEA) noted the informal learning that took place in a school environment. She explained how her friends at school had informally taught her much about what it meant to be Australian as they showed her ‘things from their [Australian] perspective.’ Considerable socialisation takes place in educational environments thus the respondents’ identification of education as prominent in identity formation was not unexpected.

Many respondents explained that their ability to speak the language of their heritage linked them to that aspect of their national identity. Language serves as a fundamental tool of communication. The ability to communicate with one another serves as a device that assists people to develop a sense of imagined community (Anderson, 2002). In contrast those who were unable to speak their heritage language felt excluded from that heritage. Language competency could thus be regarded as important as it served to increase or decrease affiliation with a non-Australian aspect of national identity.

Some respondents said that others readily assumed that they were Australian. Others noted that their adoption of an Australian national identity was regularly queried when they were asked where they came from. Many respondents with a non-Anglo, non-white appearance were affronted when asked to explain their backgrounds. Appearance seemed central in whether or not an individual was assumed to be
Australian. For those with a non-white, non-Anglo appearance a lack of automatic recognition as Australians reinforced their non-Australian national identities. They lacked the crucial cultural capital of whiteness which Hage (1998: 60) argues is necessary for immediate acceptance as Australian. Thus physical appearance worked in shaping national identity. Respondents were required to acknowledge others’ perceptions of them in their constructions of their national identities. Similarly some of those without an Australian accent were also required to acknowledge others’ perceptions of their national identities.

Whilst Australia is a secular country the Christian religion is the most prominent. Christian traditions maintain a position of privilege as their traditional festive days are declared Australian public holidays while those of other religious traditions are not. Some respondents of Greek Orthodox faith noted that their different religious festival times differentiated them from other Australians. These respondents, as well as some of Catholic faith, noted the strong connections that existed between their countries of origin and their religious faiths. Adherence to these faiths was regarded as a link to the country of their heritage. Through religious practices they remained attached to their heritage cultures. This worked to reinforce certain aspects of their national identities.

As the respondents had grown up in the globalised world of the late 20\textsuperscript{th} and early 21\textsuperscript{st} century this would certainly have also influenced the development of their national identities. Ideas of national identity are not pre-ordained; rather their construction is influenced by myriad factors. It would appear that the way in which they influence the development of national identity also varies. The respondents clearly relied upon ‘others’ in the ‘dialogical’ (Taylor, 1994: 32) construction of their identities. How others viewed them played a crucial role in how they understood themselves. They relied upon the reinforcement,
or rebuttal, of presented identities to construct an identity that met
their understanding of themselves but which was also accepted by
those with whom they interacted. Recognition of the many influences
on national identity construction highlights its complexity. National
identity construction is not simple as it involves the interplay of many
influences. The individual must ‘reflexively’ interpret and consider the
significance of each influence in the on-going and never ending
process of national identity construction.
Chapter Seven

Conclusion

Since my early school days Australia has undergone remarkable change. No longer is Australia assumed to be a subset of Britain and no longer is the vast majority of the population white with British heritage. Contemporary Australia is part of a globalised world and its population has diverse heritages. Within this context this thesis investigated how young adult residents of Australia understood their national identities. It explored their understandings of Australian identity, their understandings of their own national identities and what factors had worked to shape their thinking about their national identities and those of others.

Data was gathered through a simple questionnaire as well as semi-structured interviews. The respondents were young adults who were Australian residents or citizens aged between 18 and 25, with self-identified Anglo/Irish, Southern European or South East Asian backgrounds, and were recruited through ‘snowballing’.

This thesis is premised upon the belief that people are not born with a national identity but that like all aspects of identity, national identities are constructed. Thus national identity cannot be understood as primordial but just one aspect of the sense of self that is formulated and reformulated throughout a person’s life in response to their day-to-day experiences. Nations are relatively new phenomena, most having come into existence only in the last 200 years. Thus a sense of attachment to a nation, as a key part of identity, is also a new phenomenon replacing or complementing past identity attachments to tribes, clans, villages or regions.
The thesis also differentiates between citizenship and national identity. Citizenship is a political and legal form of belonging that is bestowed upon a person due to the circumstances of their birth, either place or parentage, or to the legal acquisition of a new citizenship through processes decreed by a country. It is clear-cut. A person either is, or is not, a citizen of a country. My respondents were able to easily identify their citizenship(s). In contrast to citizenship national identity is subjective. National identity relates to the personal sense of connection, ‘belonging’ and homeliness that a person feels toward a nation(s). This is integrally related to how a person understands the identity of a nation – whether the nation is generally thought to include or exclude people like them.

What is meant by the term Australian in the early 21st century proved difficult for my respondents to define. Understandings of Australian identity have altered over time. Before European settlement and in early colonial times no notion of ‘Australia’ existed as Indigenous communities lived in their own groups and the colonies were understood as distant British outposts. Through colonial times when people from around the globe rushed to seek their fortunes, through the eras of the White Australia Policy and the Multicultural Policy to contemporary times, ideas about what it meant to be Australian changed. The literature, some based upon previous research, illustrates the uncertainty that exists about what constitutes contemporary Australian identity. Some of the understandings of Australian identity presented in the literature reflected recent changes in Australia’s population while others were reminiscent of past eras. My respondents’ blurry, and at times contradictory, attempts to identify what it meant to be Australian reflected this. It would appear that for them there is no definitive definition of an Australian. Rather there are multiple ways of being that can be understood as Australian. Certain criteria were regarded as ‘generally’ being ‘Australian’ but these were
not compulsory; rather they work to build a nebulous, rather than precise image.

The lack of clarity about what it meant to be Australian could be understood as liberating and an acknowledgment of contemporary Australia’s diverse population and cultures. Such an understanding is reflected in the respondents’ comments that there is no such thing as a typical Australian and that Australians are varied and have different backgrounds. The respondents seemed eager to present an image of multicultural Australia. I do not suggest that their responses were untruthful, rather that when answering the specific question about what constituted an Australian they presented just one image of Australians – possibly the image projected by their education and government policies, but this was not the full picture.

Closer inspection of the respondents’ comments and language revealed that this inclusive understanding of Australian identity was only a part of their understanding of Australian identity. Understandings of Australian identity commonly attached to the past, when Australia was fundamentally white and Anglo, were ever present, even if not specifically stated. No respondent spoke of whiteness or Anglo appearance as being a prerequisite for acceptance as an Australian, yet when they spoke of the ‘real’ Australians they were white and Anglo while others were differentiated according to their heritage rather than being spoken of as Australian. The respondents noted the existence of racism and a lack of tolerance toward those who did not adhere to the dominant white-Anglo appearance and traditions indicating that not all in Australia were granted the same degree of belonging. Questions about where they came from, asked of those who were not white and Anglo, constantly reminded those respondents of their marginal position in Australia. Despite years of multicultural policies, anti-discrimination legislation and government statements that recognise the varied backgrounds of those who live in Australia there remained a
strong, underlying belief among the respondents in a connection between white-Anglo appearance and Australian identity. Past images of white Australia and ties to Britain retained powerful resonance. Thus those with a non-Anglo appearance remained on the periphery – sometimes included, but not always. Hage (1998) refers to this as a hierarchy of Australianness whereby some hold positions of uncontested national belonging while for others the belonging is tenuous and conditional. His ideas were strongly endorsed by my findings.

The elusiveness of a definitive understanding of Australian national identity that accurately reflects contemporary Australia and the current diverse population can be utilized by the dominant group to maintain their position of power. Just as the granting of tolerance privileges those in a position to grant it over those who need to be tolerated (Hage, 1998), so does the ability bestow or withdraw recognition of Australian identity. Those whose Australian identity was uncontested were able to control the inclusion or exclusion of others. The Australian identity ‘managers’ are more easily able to maintain their dominance if the criteria for acceptance as an Australian are unclear. Unclear criteria can be easily adjusted thus making them impossible to meet. This lack of clarity about Australian identity leaves many in uncertain positions as they work to construct their sense of national identity. As noted by Minh (Australia 25, SEA): ‘I feel like I am in this constant fight to justify why I am allowed to be here and why I should be allowed to do the things that I do.’ None of the respondents who were white and Anglo mentioned having to justify their place in Australia. Those who are not part of the white-Anglo-background majority walk a precarious line where their sense of Australian national identity may be questioned or rejected at any time thus limiting their power and ensuring that they are not a threat to the dominant group. It is of note that it was not only those of white-Anglo appearance who made distinctions between Australians. Respondents
from all backgrounds, at times, differentiated between those who were unquestioningly Australian and those who were not. Thus it cannot be argued that only those in the dominant position work to perpetuate less inclusive or unclear understandings of Australian identity. It would appear that the maintenance of the division is subtly, and likely unknowingly, perpetuated by most Australians through the questions and words that they utilize daily. The young respondents had constructed their national identities in the context of this vague and uncertain idea of Australian identity.

All respondents noted that being Australian was part of their national identity but for many their identity was more complex. Many had utilized not just their residence and, for some, birth in Australia but also their heritages in the construction of their national identities. Their senses of their national identities were reflective of the varied population of Australia and the intermarriage between migrant groups (Hirst, 1994: 4). Many noted that they had hybrid national identities.

These hybrid identities had been constructed in recognition of the multifaceted nature of my respondents’ lives in Australia. In the past when migrants were expected to relinquish their heritages when they landed in Australia such hybrid identities may have been perceived in a negative light as they detracted from a purely Australian national identity. Most of my respondents did not regard their hybrid identities in this negative light but instead embraced them. They did not see themselves as lacking in purity or a clear sense of their identity (Marotta, 2008: 295, 305). Rather their hybrid identities were creative, positive blends (Beltran, 2004: 595) which enabled them to recognise their multiple connections (Kabir, 2008, Poynting, 2009). Such hybrid identities can be understood as being reflective of the reality of the lives of many who live in contemporary Australia.
Whilst Nederveen Pieterse (2001: 225) argues that hybridity has little meaning without a prior belief in the purity and bounded nature of cultures I suggest that despite a lack of clear-cut distinctions between cultures this term accurately reflects the lived experiences and senses of national identity of many of the respondents. Their senses of hybrid national identity were not simplistic gatherings of unrelated aspects of different cultures. Instead their hybrid national identities were vital living senses of self that reflected their lived experiences. They were rich and multifaceted. The respondents had forged meaningful national identities that reflected their unique life experiences and current circumstances. No two hybrid identities were the same – as no two respondents’ lives were the same. Their vibrant hybrid national identities illustrate the dynamic nature of identity development. It is not the mere uncritical adoption of certain characteristics but the constant creative amalgamation and revision of self described by Giddens as ongoing reflexivity (1991). The young respondents engaged in constructing a sense of who they were and how they would live their lives through their daily activities and interactions. They adopted aspects of cultures that had resonance for them and discarded aspects that lacked meaning and so created their own distinctive hybrid national identities.

However not all the respondents so happily embraced their hybrid national identities. A few would have preferred to consider themselves as solely Australian but felt obliged to note another identity due to pressure from others. They appeared resigned to the need to succumb to pressure from others to acknowledge a hybrid identity even when it felt false to them. The experiences of these respondents highlight the fact that identity construction is not undertaken in a vacuum and is a product of both agency and structure (Ceisal, 2009: 668). Identity development is dialogical (Noble, 2007: 332) and others’ recognition and acceptance of identity (Coleman and Higgins, 2000: 63) is crucial. Through questioning about where they came from some respondents
were constantly reminded that they could not adopt just Australian as their identity but had to include a modifier that acknowledged another national identity as well. These respondents’ were not white and Anglo in appearance. The respondents spoke of their frustration at having to incorporate, as part of their national identity, an aspect that they felt had no meaning to them. The imposition of a hybrid national identity served to marginalize (Marotta, 2008: 306) them. All those who expressed these feelings did not have a white-Anglo appearance. It is of note that many who were of white-Anglo appearance mentioned that, unlike their non-white-Anglo, counterparts they had never been queried about where they came from. The marginalization and imposition of a hybrid national identity upon those who did not have a white-Anglo appearance can be linked to the lack of a strong, inclusive definition of Australian national identity and the on-going legacy of Australia’s ties to Britain and beliefs that Australians are white and Anglo.

Many respondents’ hybrid national identities were also able to readily alter and adapt to different circumstances. As respondents spoke about themselves during the interviews the way that they described their national identities changed. This fluidity of national identity was also found in Noble et. al.’s (1999: 39) research of young Arabic speaking men. According to the circumstances in which they found themselves the respondents highlighted or diminished aspects of their identity. This fluidity served them well in multicultural Australia and overseas as they were able to participate in a variety of cultural situations and feel comfortable and ‘at home’.

Such fluid national identities could be construed as unstable and emblematic of confusion in the respondents but this did not appear to be the case. Rather the respondents were in control of their identities. They asked themselves the question – ‘How shall I live?’ (Giddens, 1991: 14) but did not appear to feel the need to arrive at a definitive
answer. Rather they developed an answer that suited that specific situation and readily developed an alternative answer for the next situation. Their national identities were narratives that they told about themselves that were well grounded, yet flexible.

The respondents’ hybrid and fluid national identities can be understood as a form of cosmopolitanism where boundaries are transcended and people develop individual ways of being (Woodward et. al. 2008: 1) that enable them to readily belong in different cultural spaces. Such interpretations of national identity may better equip young people to successfully live in the contemporary globalised world than an adherence to the notion of a rigid, singular national identity. They may also be indicative of the need for an alternative approach to Australian national identity such that it recognises cosmopolitanism and diversity rather than attempting to develop one set of fixed criteria to which all are expected to conform. However this will not be achieved so long as the strong association between white-Anglo appearance and Australian identity endures.

This research has provided insights into how some groups of contemporary young people understand Australian identity and their own national identities. The sample included respondents with self-identified Anglo-Irish, Southern European and South-East Asian heritages. Future research into the understandings of young people with different heritages such as Middle Eastern, South American or African would build upon this foundation and provide further insights into this issue which is significant for social cohesion and harmony. As this research was undertaken in Melbourne the opinions of some groups were not gathered. The perceptions of young people in other large Australian cities and those in rural areas would provide a more extensive appreciation of how young people feel. My respondents tended to be middle class and lived comfortable lives, the opinions of marginalised young people could be explored in future research. A
vital group not examined in this project is Indigenous young people. Future research to investigate their understandings of their own national identities and Australian national identity would provide a valuable contrast to the understandings of young people whose heritage is linked to countries other than Australia.

The findings from this research have implications for contemporary Australia. They suggest that many young adults have rejected the notion of fixed, singular national identities and instead constructed new ways of understanding their national identities that recognise contemporary mobility and communications which enable them to retain and develop attachments to multiple nations. Their outlooks are cosmopolitan allowing them to comfortably live and belong to more than one nation. Yet the experiences of these young adults are not entirely rosy. Their choices in the construction of their national identities are not unconstrained. Their identities are constructed, either fully or partially, within contemporary Australia. A nation can be understood as an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 2002: 6) with a shared ‘soul’ (McCrone, 1998: 3, 5). However from my research it appears that there are various imaginations and that the perception of who fully belongs to the community of Australians varies. While a new, more inclusive notion of Australian identity which appears in governmental documentation initially seems to have been adopted by the respondents the on-going resonance of past exclusionary perceptions of Australian identity is evident. This, along with the fuzziness of any definition of Australian identity provides an environment where some are forever placed in a marginal position and those whose identity is uncontested retain power. Thus Hages’ concept of a hierarchy of belonging within Australia remains (1998). Despite having opportunities to construct their own national identities and for those to be hybrid and fluid ongoing attachments to white-Anglo perceptions of Australian as well as the lack of a well-defined, shared
alternative perception restrains choice and leaves some in an insecure, marginal position.

This research has provided important insights into the fluid, hybrid national identities that are constructed by young people in contemporary Australia where consensus of what it means to be Australian is lacking, and where an association between white-Anglo appearance and Australian identity retains resonance. It identifies the manner in which young people in Australia are adapting to the contemporary global environment and thus constructing national identities that reflect the diversity of the Australian population, the extent of blending that exists between peoples of various heritages in Australia and the globalised world that they inhabit. As such, this thesis provides a vital understanding of the complex nature of national identity development, particularly amongst young people, and contributes to our existing knowledge about Australian national identities in 21st century Australia.
An akubra hat is a wide brimmed hat made from rabbit fur felt. Often worn by farmers.

The ANZACS were the soldiers in the Australian and New Zealand army corps during World War I. They are renowned for their bravery when fighting at Gallipoli in Turkey.

ANZAC Day commemorates the landing of Australian and New Zealand troops at Gallipoli on 25th April 1915. The day recognises the contributions made by all soldiers (ANZAC Day, 2007).

Bloke is a slang word for a man.

A bluey is a singlet top. They are often referred to as a bluey because they are frequently navy blue.

Bogan is an Australian term used to describe a stereotypical section of the working class. Bogans tend to wear flannelette shirts, short shorts and torn jeans. It is often used as a derogatory term.

‘Bush men’ refers to the early pioneers of Australia who struggled in the harsh Australian bush, these figures are much romanticised.

Crocodile Dundee is a fictional character who appeared in Australian films. He was depicted as a rugged character who lived in the outback.

‘Digger’ refers to Australian and New Zealand soldiers. The term has its origins at the Battle of Gallipoli where the ANZAC forces dug out trenches in their battle against the Turks.

Sir Donald Bradman, often referred to as ‘The Don’ was a famous Australian cricketer.

The Dreamtime –‘According to Aboriginal belief, all life as it is today - Human, Animal, Bird and Fish is part of one vast unchanging network of relationships which can be traced to the great spirit ancestors of the Dreamtime.’ (Aboriginal Art, Culture and Tourism Australia, 2010)

Grand Final Day is the grand final of the season of Australian Rules Football. In the days before and after the grand final there are many celebrations and events held around the country.

Grog is a slang term for alcohol.
The **Jolly Swagman** is the key character in the iconic Australian song ‘Waltzing Matilda’. A swagman was a transient worker who wandered the countryside carrying his swag (bed roll).

The **Man from Snowy River** is the key character in A. B ‘Banjo’ Patterson’s poem. He is a rugged horse riding bush character.

**Mateship** is an integral aspect of Australian folklore. Mateship generally occurs between males and is brought into focus in times of adversity when men bond together and support each other to overcome great odds. Of recent times the term has been expanded to also include women, though it remains a predominantly male concept.

The **MCG** is the Melbourne Cricket Ground, the site of AFL games, the AFL grand final and cricket matches. At the football finals there are huge crowds and celebrations at the MCG, there is an atmosphere of great excitement and shared passion for the game which is a particular Australian version of football.

The **Melbourne Cup** is a major horse race which is held annually in Melbourne. It is a public holiday in Melbourne and most people in Australia stop whatever they are doing to listen to the race as it is run. Horses travel from around the world to race in the Cup.

An **ocker** is an Australian term for an uncultured Australian male who drinks a lot and loves football.

A **pub** is a slang word for a hotel.

**Stubbies** are a brand of men’s short shorts.

**Thongs** are casual slip on sandals, often made of rubber.

**Victoria Bitter and XXXX** (Four ‘X’) are certain brands of beer commonly associated with workers.

**Wife beaters** are singlet tops.

**Yakka** is a brand of men’s working clothes.

A **yobbo** is similar to an ‘ocker’, an uncultured male who is often untidy.
Appendices

Appendix One

Questionnaire
How do young residents of Australia perceive their own national identities?

Could you please supply the following details to assist me in my data collection. Please note that the supply of information is entirely voluntary and your details will remain confidential. (There will be no information to connect your responses on this questionnaire to you). Any references made in my project to the information that you supply will be anonymous.

In which year were you born? 

At what level did you complete your education?

What is your religion?

In which country were you born?

Do you consider yourself to be Australian?

Do you consider that you have other nationality(ies)?

(Note: you may feel that you have a number of nationalities)

If ‘yes’ which nationality(ies)?

Which countries are you a citizen of?

In which area do you now live?

In which areas have you lived in the past?

Which languages did you speak at home as you were growing up?

In which countries were your parents born?

Do your parents consider themselves to be Australian?

Mother Yes No

Father Yes No

Step-parents, foster parents, adopted parents Yes No
In which countries were your grandparents born?

Grandmother 1  ..................

Grandmother 2  ..................

Grandfather 1  ..................

Grandfather 2  ..................
Appendix Two

Interview Questions

Proposed interview questions (semi-structured interview)

Australian identity: the variety of characteristics and traits that are perceived by people to encompass the essence of what it means to be Australian.

National identity: an individual’s perception of their attachment to a particular nation or nations.

Perceptions of Australian identity
If you were talking to someone who knew nothing about Australia, how would you describe Australians? (beliefs, where/how they live, appearance, language, activities, interests, values, festivals, religion, celebrations)

Is there a typical Australian? What would he/she be like? Please give examples of people you would regard as typical Australians. Why do you think they are typical?

Are there certain people, behaviours, activities that you would regard as definitely not Australian? What are these?

There are many myths about Australian identity (ANZAC, life savers, mateship, battler, outback etc). How do you feel that these reflect Australian identity?

Perceptions of national identity

Which countries are you a citizen of? How do you feel about this? How important is it to you?

Given your family background, how would you describe your national identity? Why do you feel this way?

Why do you think this/these is/are your national identity?

What factors influenced the development of your national identity? (Friends, family, media, education, travel, strangers) Please give examples.

Are there times/situations where you feel that your national identity(ies) change? (For example if overseas, in specific situations, with certain people) Please give examples.

Has your perception of your national identity altered over time? Please explain/give examples.
How does your citizenship of XXX affect the way that you regard your national identity?

How important is religion to you? In what ways does it impact upon your understanding of your national identity?

What traditions do you follow? How do you celebrate? (births, deaths, marriages, birthdays, religious events, cultural events) In what ways do these impact on your understanding of your national identity?

How do you feel that speaking XXX language as you were growing up has affected your sense of national identity?

How do you think others view your national identity? Why?

Can you give me examples of situations where you have felt accepted/not accepted as an Australian? Why do you feel you were regarded this way?

**Interactions**

Australia is a multicultural nation. How do you feel about this? Please explain.

Should Australia increase/decrease its migrant intake? Please give reasons.

Should Australia change its policies that determine the backgrounds of people that are accepted as migrants? Please give reasons.

Please tell me about the people with whom you mix. (Work, clubs, sport, religious activities, friendships, community organisations) How do you feel about these interactions?

What are the national backgrounds of your friends? Why do you feel this is the case?

Some people have said that they have more than one national identity. How do you feel about this? Please explain why you feel this way.

Australia has been referred to as a tolerant society. Are there any activities/behaviours that you find unacceptable/difficult to tolerate? Why do you feel this way? How do you feel Australia should respond to this?

Are there people with whom you prefer not to mix? Who are they? Why do you feel this way?
Appendix Three

Flyer

How do young residents of Australia perceive their national identities?

Are you a permanent resident or citizen of Australia?

Do you have an Anglo/Irish, Southern European or South East Asian background?

As part of my PhD I am conducting research into young adults’ understandings of their national identities.

I am seeking volunteers who would be prepared to offer an hour of their time to complete a brief questionnaire and discuss their views and experiences regarding their national identity/ies.

If you would like to learn more about this project and are interested in participating in the project please contact me.

Many thanks

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Clayton
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Email: [redacted]
Appendix Four

Australian values
Australian Values Statement – Provisional and Permanent

Applicants for provisional, permanent and a small number of temporary visas are required to have read, or had explained to them, material made available by the government on life in Australia which is contained in the Life in Australia book. These applicants are also asked to understand what may be required of them if they apply for Australian citizenship. This statement is included in affected visa application forms and all applicants aged 18 years and over will need to sign the statement.

Australian Values Statement

You must sign this statement if you are aged 18 years or over.

I confirm that I have read, or had explained to me, information provided by the Australian Government on Australian society and values.

I understand:

- Australian society values respect for the freedom and dignity of the individual, freedom of religion, commitment to the rule of law, Parliamentary democracy, equality of men and women and a spirit of egalitarianism that embraces mutual respect, tolerance, fair play and compassion for those in need and pursuit of the public good
- Australian society values equality of opportunity for individuals, regardless of their race, religion or ethnic background
- the English language, as the national language, is an important unifying element of Australian society.

I undertake to respect these values of Australian society during my stay in Australia and to obey the laws of Australia.

I understand that, if I should seek to become an Australian citizen:

- Australian citizenship is a shared identity, a common bond which unites all Australians while respecting their diversity
- Australian citizenship involves reciprocal rights and responsibilities. The responsibilities of Australian Citizenship include obeying Australian laws, including those relating to voting at elections and serving on a jury.
If I meet the legal qualifications for becoming an Australian citizen and my application is approved I understand that I would have to pledge my loyalty to Australia and its people.

**Signature of Applicant**

(Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2010b)
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