

The construction of national identity on Australian political parties'

Facebook pages

Abstract

Social media provide new opportunities for the construction of national identities. Political parties now have the opportunity to reach a wide range of constituents with direct messages about who is, and who is not, part of the national community. Using 'frame analysis', this paper reports representations of Australian identity in the lead up to the 2013 election on the Facebook pages of the two major Australian political parties, Liberal and Labor. Qualitative analysis revealed three consistent framings of national identity across both major parties – family, whiteness and nation. Identity was represented conservatively across both sites, focusing on white, nuclear-families, and the nation, and devaluing global interests and internal diversity. In a context of growing calls for postnational political formations and consciousness, and previous political moves by Australian politicians to foster a more inclusive identity, we argue this is a retrograde step.

Key Words : National identity; social media; cosmopolitanism; frame analysis; political campaigning

Introduction

This country of ours, Australia, is one of the best countries in the world. We have a strong and dynamic economy, recognised as such around the world. We believe passionately in a fair go, and a fair go for all. We're also by instinct a positive people and we prefer to work together rather than tear each other apart. That's who we are as Australians. (Kevin Rudd, quoted by Guardian Media Group, 2013)

This quote, from a speech by then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd during a 2013 Australian election debate, illustrates the importance of election campaigns for the construction of national identity. Campaigns provide opportunities for politicians to construct versions of national identity that align with their political ideals, at the same time as framing their message in ways that fit with pre-existent cultural values. While previously such framing required politicians to negotiate a small number of media platforms – television, radio, newspapers - new media has changed the game. It affords constant, on-demand access to news and information; multiple platforms for ‘sharing’; and new processes of ‘democratisation’ that allow the public to communicate with, or about, politicians.

This research explores the ways national identity, political discourse and new media come together in the Australian context. There is a small but growing literature on how constructions of Australian-ness are woven through political discourse (Younane Brookes, 2010; Younane Brookes, 2012; Curran, 2004; Johnson, 2002), and the use of new media by Australian politicians (Highfield & Bruns, 2012; Jericho,

2012; Grant et al., 2010; Gibson & McAllister, 2011). In this paper we contribute to this field with a study of the ways Australian identity is framed on political parties' Facebook pages during the 2013 Federal election campaign. Through frame analysis of the Facebook sites of the two main Australian political parties we show how the parties use key constructs of Australian-ness to convey their messages on this new social media platform.

Nation, identity & politics

Australian identity is the subject of much debate. It has been described as fundamentally Anglo Celtic and based on the Anzac legend of larrikin mateship; or alternatively as predominantly civic, characterised by a commitment to the rule of law and valuing of diversity (T. Phillips & Smith, 2000; Smith & T. Phillips, 2006). While identity construction is engaged in by all sections of the community, social elites, including politicians, play a key role (Younane Brookes, 2012). Most recently in Australia this was evident in the leadership of former Prime Minister John Howard (1996-2007), who articulated an anachronistic, Eurocentric version of Australian-ness (Tate, 2009). Assuming his vision was shared by all, he asserted that 'We no longer navel gaze about what an Australian is...all of us...know what an Australian has always been and always will be" (Howard, quoted in Curran, 2004: 356).

However, settler nations like Australia have a fundamental problem when it comes to identity. They are composed of disparate groups of individuals, mostly of migrant stock, who may not share a common culture (Jupp, 2007). It is therefore necessary for political leaders to establish some grounds of common cultural identity: "...the

nation-state has *as an objective* the creation of a common culture, symbols and values” [italics added] (Guibernau, 1996: 48).

It is unsurprising then, that national identity permeates the discourse of state leaders. Hall, (quoted in De Cillia et al., 1999: 155) noted that the ‘elite’ are “designers of national identities and national cultures [and] aim at ‘linking membership within the political nation state and identification with national culture’ (Hall, 1994: 205)”. National leaders’ *raison d’être* resides in the nation-state, thus one of their main foci is to present (and re-present) national identities for the general populous to consume and re-construct. This becomes a two way process, a “reciprocal influence between the identity designs provided by the political elites...and those of everyday discourses” (Wodak & Kovacs, 2004: 214).

In this sense, the discourse of politicians is not solely concerned with political issues, but with a broader construction of ‘who we are’. Kevin Rudd’s speech highlights this, constructing Australians as: lucky to be in ‘*one of the best countries in the world*’; wealthy because of a ‘*strong and dynamic economy*’; valuing equality (‘*we believe passionately in a fair go... for all*’); innately ‘*a positive people*’; and team players who ‘*prefer to work together*’. This does not present party political solutions in the context of an election campaign leadership debate, but generates a sense of pride in a particular version of national identity among its audience.

National identification is in tension, however, with current geo-political trends toward globalisation, international collaboration, and cosmopolitanism (Beck, 2006).

As ties to the nation are contested by trans- and supra-national loyalties, the relevance of national identity is increasingly threatened. In their own interests, politicians from both the Left and Right have responded by 'ramping up' efforts to build patriotism and a sense of national identification and belonging, even as the economy and society become more global (Jenkins, 1996; McNevin, 2007; Hollifield et al., 2008).

The Australian Context

The two major political parties in Australia are the Labor Party (left) and the Liberal Party (right). Both are fairly centrist, but the latter has a more conservative political agenda, similar to that of the US Republican or British Tory parties. T. Phillips (1998) meta-analysis of research on Australian identity demonstrates a link between political affiliation and perception of Australian identity. Those on the Right are more likely than those on the Left to be stronger nationalists generally, and to espouse traditional forms of nationalism. Jones (2000) also found that Labor (left) voters tend not to subscribe to a 'nativist' version of Australian identity (seeing it as innate, relying on native birth and Christian heritage, together with a strong sense of nationalism). Similarly, Pakulski and Tranter (2000) reported civic nationalists (those who value citizenship, felt attachment and civic values) favour the Labor Party - 48.7% compared to 42% nativists) and nativists the Liberal Party (46.8%, versus 39.7%). Data from the latest Australian Survey of Social Attitudes, reported shortly, supports these findings.

Political leaders play to these preferences, but also carry a significant role in their construction. In the most comprehensive review of Australia's Prime Ministerial discourse on national identity (Curran, 2004), it was found that until the 1960's, Prime Ministers presented Australian-ness as 'Britishness'. This changed when Britain opened its doors to non-white migrants, as well as loosening colonial ties; Australians no longer knew what it meant to be 'Britishers', and hence a search for a new identity began. Exploring in detail versions of national identity promoted by Prime Ministers from Gough Whitlam through to John Howard (the 1970s through to 2007), Curran argues that a new civic Australian-ness was encouraged, emphasising "tolerance of diversity and a respect for the freedom of the individual rather than a unity deriving from the bonds of blood and culture" (237). Multiculturalism came to be a significant aspect of Australian identity during this time.

Others note that in recent years this trend has reversed. Johnson (2007) argues that under Prime Minister Howard national identity was narrowed, and "although people of different ethnic origins may not, for example, be expected to pass as being ersatz Anglo-Celts, they are expected to be integrated into values that the Prime Minister has identified as British" (198). These 'values' Johnson identified as including liberal democracy, free trade, Britishness, Judeo-Christian heritage and hetero-normativity, amongst others. Numerous academics support the view that under Howard Australian identity regressed to an Anglo-Celtic, Christian ideal, demanding assimilation of the 'Other' (Holland, 2010; Tate, 2009; Dyrenfurth, 2007; Warhurst, 2007; Crabb, 2008; Robbins, 2007; Fozdar & Spittles, 2010).

Processes of Othering become part of the identity construction that is a key focus of election campaigns (Younane, 2008). In a study of spoken political communication since Australian Federation (1901), Younane-Brookes (2012) found national identity was constructed in relation to a perceived threat from the Other, notably anxiety about the Asia Pacific region, and that this is pivotal in winning elections. More recently the threat has been constructed as asylum seekers and Muslims (Pickering, 2001; Hage, 2004; Hollinsworth, 2006; Tate, 2009; Fozdar, 2011). Such language makes national identification more salient, and simultaneously “confrontational and intolerant towards other nations” (Colic-Peisker, 2011: 28) and people within the country perceived as being outside the national norm.

While the existing research provides some insight into the relationship between politicians and national identity construction, we seek to extend this body of research by focusing on political parties’ representations in one of the principle spheres of communication – social media – asking how is Australian-ness being promoted to ‘average Australians’ online.¹

The use of social media in political campaigns

Numerous international studies have explored the use of social media, and Facebook specifically, by politicians. They tend to show that it is used by political parties to ‘get their message out there’ rather than engage in dialogue with voters (see for example

¹ The latest AUSSA data shows that around half the population (52.4%) spends at least 1-2 hours per day online, with little variation by political affiliation (Labor voters 51.7%; Liberals 48.6%), although Greens’ (68.5%) (and other minor parties’ – 67.6%) voters are more likely, and Nationals’ voters less likely (39.1%), to be online. It is unknown how much of this time is spent engaging with political information. Available at <http://www.ada.edu.au/social-science/aussa>

Valtysson, 2014). For instance, Gurevitch et al. (2009) analysed the internet's challenge to mainstream media use by politicians in the United Kingdom, arguing politicians struggle to keep up with the demands of image management in diverse media environments. Consequently such media tend to offer few interactive features. They argue government "has not proved to be a particularly good conversationalist" (173).

There is little Australian research investigating the political use of Facebook specifically, although studies of social media more broadly are common. Studies have addressed how Australian politicians and government bodies use blogs (Highfield & Bruns, 2012; Jericho, 2012), Twitter (Grant et al., 2010), and Youtube (Gibson & McAllister, 2011), for example.

The value of politicians' uses of online space in Australia is unclear. Some argue that the Internet provides new ways for the public to connect with politicians, and vice versa, while avoiding the mediated and contentious channels of traditional media (Grant, Moon, & Busby, 2010). However others suggest that the Web perpetuates pre-existing socio-economic divisions, as well as creating new social stratifications, due to issues of access (Moyo, 2009; Norris, 2001; Myers, 2010).

In the Australian context there is some evidence to support this latter perspective.

Politicians use Twitter (Grant et al., 2010), the blogosphere (Jericho, 2012) and online engagement generally (Gibson & McAllister, 2011) as a vehicle to broadcast rather than converse. Communication is one way, with politicians using it "to

broadcast their messages rather than respond or engage in conversation.”

(Macnamara & Kenning, 2011: 16).

It is clear, however, that politicians are in fact using these new media. Facebook use by politicians during campaigns has increased dramatically, by 1725% between the 2007 and 2010 election campaigns (Macnamara & Kenning, 2011). Simultaneously the population is increasingly using social media to access information and engage in social interaction as, “digital technologies are no longer just an additional way of engaging, but are the primary means of interaction for everyday activities” (Middleton, 2014).

These studies show *how* politicians use Facebook; in this paper we consider *what* is being promoted. Our study focussed on the ways Australian-ness was presented on the Facebook pages of two key political parties in the lead-up to the 2013 Australian federal election. This site was selected for its increasing significance as a space where people work, live, play and connect. Experian’s Hitwise shows Facebook is consistently the second most accessed website in Australia, after Google.

During the campaign political parties were highly active on their pages, posting daily updates and changing slogans, cover images (top of screen banner), profile pictures and campaign material.

Method

Our analysis focuses on the two key Australian parties – the Labor Party (ALP) and the Liberal Party (a Coalition consisting of the Liberal Party of Australia, Liberal National Party (QLD), National Party of Australia, and Country Liberal Party (NT)). This selection was partly pragmatic, as there were 57 parties registered by the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC, 2014), which would make exploring all difficult. More importantly, these two parties represent the vast majority of Australian voters, as pollsters Newspoll (2013), Galaxy (2013), and Essential Report (2013) all report over 75% of Australian voters prefer either a Labor or Liberal/Coalition government, and official results support this (AEC, n.d.). These parties (in one iteration or other) have held government since 1910 (APH, 2014). Hence to best understand the versions of Australian-ness being promoted to the general populous, we focused on these two major parties².

Analysis was limited to a selection of the material. Attacks on the opposition, policy comparisons, and public ‘comments’, ‘likes’ and ‘shares’, were not included. The latter may have been useful to explore the public uptake or response to party postings, however a decision was made to limit the analysis to what the political elite wished to convey – to their representational elements (Dahlgren, 2005), rather than attempt to measure uptake, given research shows Facebook is used by politicians to proclaim rather than converse.

² We recognise, in line with global trends that show many democracies are now governed by minority coalitions, that there has been an increase in micro-parties (Page 2013), as well as a continuing influence from the longer established left-wing Australian Greens’ party, which gained the balance of power in the 2010 election, securing their place as a third voice in Australian politics (McCann 2012). However these represent minority voices at present, and are not the focus of this article.

Data was collected by periodically checking each party's Facebook account during the entire campaign period (4 August - 7 September, 2013) to gather material progressively and avoid loss of information 'taken down' later. All postings were collated and explored for salience (being obvious on the page and noticeable to viewers), repetition, and relevance to the national identity literature. Frame analysis was then used to explore the multiple, competing representations of Australian-ness.

Frame analysis was first developed by Goffman (1974) as a way to analyse how people understand social situations, but it has been taken up by media studies to identify the ways a communication source defines and constructs an issue. Framing involves selecting "some aspects of a perceived reality [to] make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation." (Entman, 1993: 52). Frame analysis literature draws a distinction between frames, that are understood as primarily cognitive, and offer tools for people "to locate, perceive, identify, and label occurrences within their life space and the world at large" (Snow et al., 1986 : 464); and 'framing', which considers the shaping processes of discourse and communication, draws from sociology, and emphasises processes of social construction as integral to framing (Vliegenthart & van Zoonen, 2011; Van Gorp, 2007; Price et al., 2005). It is the latter that is used for this analysis (although both are linked), namely, looking at how the parties frame Australian-ness.

The process of framing does not occur outside of culture, but involves the process of cultural construction to create shared meaning (Benford & Snow, 2000). Desrosiers (2012) notes that framers make use of a 'cultural stock', i.e. a set of frames that are limited by the shared values, norms and beliefs of a society (Van Gorp, 2007). Framings can be employed by opposing sides in a debate that does not necessarily indicate allegiance to the frame, but rather recognises its' salience in society (Reddens, 2014).

Gamson (1992) argue that framing processes are one factor that account for the correspondence between personal and collective identities because they provide both theoretical and empirical links. Collective frames help delineate 'us' from 'them'; 'us' who share common values and aims, and 'them' who become our adversaries. In this sense, using frame analysis to explore the political parties Facebook accounts can help show the 'Other' both within (between parties) and beyond the nation.

In investigating the national identity frames that each party was (re)producing, we used a Grounded Theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1999) to condense issues that were prevalent and relevant to existing national identity literature. We used deductive and inductive techniques to identify the 'cultural stock' and found three main elements: whiteness; the family; and nation-centrism. The core task of these framers is to identify and highlight problems, provide solutions and motivate action from supporters (Benford & Snow, 2000), and so we particularly focus on the ways that problems and solutions are highlighted in relation to these elements (clearly the

action being motivated is to vote for the party). We explore these before concluding with a discussion of the ways these intersect with broader political messages and frames of national identity.

Findings

Whiteness

On the announcement of the election, the Liberal Party posted a 46 second advertisement ('New Hope' - 5 August³) in which the leader of the Party, Tony Abbott, proclaimed Australia 'the land of opportunity' and 'having a go', stating that the forthcoming election was an important opportunity for Australians to choose new hope, rewards and opportunities for all. Scrolling background images included mothers and babies, children playing sport, men at work (in high visibility gear, suggesting blue-collar workers), women shopping, young women studying, surf life-savers, men and women exercising, and the Australian citizenship kit, including the Australian flag. The image was one of an active, sporting, working population, with men and women generally portrayed in traditional roles. The emphasis was on family values and an outdoor lifestyle, with a nod to civic engagement.

This is a fairly typical portrayal of Australian identity using various 'stock frames' – the sporting nation of people who love the great outdoors, and take pride in civic values (Hogan, 1999; Tranter & Donoghue, 2007; T. Phillips & Holton, 2004; Jones,

³ Reference to campaign material released by Australian Labor Party and Liberal Party of Australia is taken from their respective Facebook accounts (www.facebook.com/LaborConnect?fref=ts and www.facebook.com/LiberalPartyAustralia?fref=ts), with the date of release specified, unless otherwise stated. We have endeavoured to specify where content has been 'taken down', but we can not be certain that access is still possible at time of publication.

2000). However, beyond the expected rhetoric of Australian-ness was its white embodiment.

All but two people in the advertisement were white. The two non-whites - an Indigenous welder portrayed with Mr Abbott surveying his work, and a man of central Asian appearance gaining Australian citizenship – signalled the 'right' sort of diversity; namely an Aboriginal working rather than stereotypically on welfare, and a migrant becoming a citizen and integrating, rather than maintaining a separate identity. The hierarchy of race in Australia was represented through the clearly subordinate role of the Aboriginal worker. Further the provision of citizenship to a person of colour, while offering a self-congratulatory representation of Australia's valuing of diversity, reinforces the distinction between white people who possess practical cultural acceptance and belonging in the nation, and people of colour who can only attain institutional acceptance through citizenship (Hage, 1998).

This subservience was typical of the portrayal of people of colour on the Liberal's Facebook page. For example a video posted towards the end of the campaign (31 August) entitled 'How well do you know Tony?' included 8 individuals praising Abbott's community involvement and various acts of public service. These included surf life-saving, volunteering for the rural fire brigade, his response during the Bali Bombings (2005) and fund-raising for a women's shelter. In the clip Abbott was depicted as a 'good Aussie bloke' actively helping out his mates, a stereotypical portrayal of Australian-ness embodied in whiteness. In relation to Aboriginal voters, Ms Alison Anderson (MLA) stated that Mr Abbott 'understands Indigenous

Australians...the poverty we all live in...and is always asking people 'how can I make things better for you?'. While an apparently benign statement of praise for Abbott's concern, it perpetuates the colonial image of *noblesse oblige* - the white man helping the colonised, to their eternal gratitude, and the stereotype of Indigenous Australians without agency living in poverty (Hollinsworth, 2006; Moreton-Robinson, 2000).

While people of colour were portrayed as subservient, whiteness was also normalised. The first banner image pictured the leader with five colleagues – Malcolm Turnbull, Joe Hockey, Julie Bishop, Warren Truss, and Andrew Robb – all white (apparently, one is half Armenian) and middle aged (and all bar one, male). Further, in a collection of 52 portraits of Liberal MPs and candidates (28 and 29 August) only 8 included people visibly of colour.

From this, we suggest that the Liberal party is presenting a colour-based frame of Australian-ness on their Facebook page. Through the normalisation of whiteness, and subordination of people of colour, 'coloured' is problematised and whiteness is correlated with 'true' Australian-ness. By drawing on stock frames of a white masculine Australia (Tranter & Donoghue, 2007; Fee & Russell, 2007), the party is highlighting whiteness as at the centre of 'who we are'. While this may remind some people of conservative and historic White Australia and assertions that white people are the true Australians, the party has tried to re-framed this by including approving Aborigines and acceptance of the migrant 'Other', providing legitimacy to their claimed benevolent hegemonic power. As such the Liberal party is complicit in

promoting normalised whiteness as a frame of Australian-ness to become “embedded in the national subconscious” (Birch, 2001: 20).

Whiteness was also a feature of the Labor Facebook page, however, where present, people of colour were portrayed with more agency and power. From campaign announcement to election-day none of the photographs posted on Labor’s timeline included people of colour. This suggests that both Parties promote White Australian-ness. However Labor’s national field-day photographs (in the photo album section of Facebook - 11 Aug) included a number of non-Anglo individuals, and were subtly different from the Liberal photographs. While the Liberal page portrayed people of colour as subordinate to white authority, Labor represented them with power and agency. The field-day images appeared more than a token nod to inclusivity, depicting a number of non-white individuals campaigning, supporting and embracing candidates, and standing for office themselves, including an Indigenous candidate from Northern Queensland. Thus, while people of colour had a limited presence, those who were included were positioned as equals to their white peers in terms of power and agency.

This frame is complex; while, like the Liberal party, whiteness is normalised, there is some inclusion of equally positioned people of colour. It is not an obvious inclusion (only in difficult to find photos), suggesting it is not something the party wishes to highlight in their frame; rather, the inclusion of powerful people of colour seems to be an admission of their existence. In Rietveld's (2014) frame analysis of the interaction between national identity and multiculturalism in Britain she notes a

'conservative frame'. This frame "downplays the significance of multicultural inequalities" (61), advocates assimilation, sees diversity as "a result of history, but the nation itself is one: national identity in this frame trumps multiculturalism" (62), and calls for migrants to adapt. Indeed the photographs included perhaps portray migrants who have adapted well.

Overall, whiteness framed both major parties' Facebook accounts, supporting the suggestion of other researchers that there has been backtracking in terms of political support for celebrations of ethnic diversity as a core aspect of Australian identity (Johnson, 2007; Dyrenfurth, 2007; Hage, 1998; Tate, 2009; Hollinsworth, 2006).

Family

Family was the second frame evident in the construction of Australian-ness on the sites – an issue that is associated with national identity through notions of belonging and inclusion, as well as social stability (Johnson, 2007; Elder, 2007).

On the Liberal page, over the course of the campaign, numerous photographs were posted of politicians with children (again, all white) (9, 19, and 29 August and 3 and 6 September); and Mr Abbott with his own family (11 August and 7 September). While this was partly to engage women's vote, in a context where polls signalled Abbott's significant unpopularity with women (McKenzie, 2013), primarily it represents who the party sees as its key constituency. Election promises featured on the page frequently focused on the family; indeed the caption supporting the party's second cover photograph (25 August) was 'this election is about you and how a better

government can *help your family ...*' (italics added). This reinforces a message about family that successfully returned this party to power three times under John Howard, who coined the term 'working families' to attract traditional Labor voters.

Perhaps the clearest representation of who these promises were being made to, who the party sees as the Australian family, was provided on August 6th when a photograph of the 'average family' was posted. This consisted of a nuclear family - white mother and father, son and daughter.

Firstly this 'average family' uses a 'stock frame' of heteronormativity. Much political, religious and legal infrastructure is built on the family, and cultural norms value the nuclear family unit. Further, Australian constructions of masculinity – mateship, beer drinking, blue collar workers – highlight heteronormativity. This construction has been promoted by the Liberal Party (Johnson, 2007), with Howard's push to frame policies as being about the 'working family', rather than big business, yet the Australian population is in fact far more diverse (Lumby, 2010). Nuclear families are in decline and couples with dependent children constitute only a third of the population (AIFS, 2014). It has been suggested that debate around family and family values has been co-opted to symbolise the rights, values and norms of a nation. Lumby, 2010 (110) states "if the debate about the needs of Ordinary Australians revolves around fears that our public sphere is changing too quickly, the family values debate is its equally paranoid private-sphere mirror".

Thus, *promoting* the nuclear family as the ‘average Australian’ family potentially reinforces fear of other formations, positing them as the problem, and certainly shows no attempt to reach or represent the diversity of family formations – single people, Indigenous kinship structures, same-sex relationships, migrant families, and so on. It serves ideologically to reinforce a conservative framing of the Australian household, linking this to Australian-ness.

The Liberal party, even when promoting an arguably progressive policy maintained this heteronormative, nuclear family frame. On August 18th, the so-called ‘fair dinkum’ paid parental leave scheme was announced.⁴ This policy challenged the exclusion of women from the public sphere resulting from their reproductive capacities (see Baker, 1999; Greer, 1999; Woolf, 1992) by offering substantial financial support for those in the paid workforce. However it did so within a framework of the traditional nuclear family and gender roles that assume primary parental responsibility belongs to the mother (Leslie & Manchester, 2011). Provision for those in different family structures was absent. The policy was also oddly masculinised on the site through the use of colloquial language – the phrase ‘fair dinkum’, for example.

Labor’s Facebook page appeared to endorse a more inclusive frame of family; they appeared more progressive on family matters, promoting: marriage equality (13 August), positive reforms for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex

⁴ The scheme promised 26 weeks full paid parental leave for mothers, plus superannuation, and two weeks leave for fathers (now removed from Facebook; available at <http://www.liberal.org.au/latest-news/2013/08/18/tony-abbott-coalitions-paid-parental-leave-scheme>).

(LGBTI) communities (25 August), and including the opinions of older people (25 August).

Based on a presumption about the tolerance and inclusiveness of the Australian people, the Labor Party launched their campaign to support same-sex marriage - 'It's time for marriage equality' (itstimeformarriageequality.org/ -13 August), and shared leader Kevin Rudd's Youtube video declaring that all people, regardless of sexual orientation, should have the freedom to marry. Such legislation necessarily challenges conservative views about the nuclear family (Savage, 2012), moving towards a more 'progressive' and diversified Australian identity.⁵ This 'civil union/equal rights' approach has been noted as a progressive and supportive frame (Price et al., 2005), and positions those who oppose it as the problem.

The solution is found in a more inclusive version of the family, which (along with the same-sex legislation) the ALP site represented with a greater range of ages, and reference to previous generations. An image of the former Prime Minister Bob Hawke (now in his 80s) emailing his supporters (6 September), as well as a Youtube posting of an elderly woman (25 August), engages with an older audience. Even the slogan used to promote marriage equality - 'It's time' - was recycled from a 1972 campaign designed "*to capture the mood of a nation on the threshold of rediscovering and redefining its cultural identity*" (NFSA, 2014) (at that stage one of multiculturalism). The re-use of this slogan speaks to the 'baby boomer' generation,

⁵ Interestingly, Australian advocates of same-sex marriage use the language of equality, human rights, discrimination, and justice (<http://www.australianmarriageequality.org/12-reasons-why-marriage-equality-matters/>) to appeal to a sense of universal identity, over and above Australian identity.

reassuring the older generation that changes to Australian-ness are not progressing too quickly.

Unlike the Liberal party's heteronormative familial frame, Labor framed family more broadly and inclusively.

Nation-centric identity

The third significant frame was a strongly self-focused (even self-absorbed) version of Australian-ness.

The Liberal's Facebook page was oriented inward - nationally, rather than globally. This was visually portrayed through the permanence of the national flag in the profile picture (also the party logo), making use of 'cultural stock' – flags link automatically with nationalism – to draw attention to a certain type of Australian-ness. In recent years, the Australian flag has come to be associated with exclusionary forms of national identity (Jones, 1997; Connell, n.d. ; Fozdar et al, 2014); and commentators have argued that the flag symbolises a history of colonisation (Kwan, n.d.), as well as contemporary voices of exclusion such as Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party and the Cronulla Riots (Noble, 2006; Perera, 2007; Orr, 2011). Thus there are implications for more than just simple patriotism in the prominent use of the flag.

Beyond this, the site directs voters' attention towards Australia, rather than broadening their vision. Key election promises displayed on the page, such as those

to 'scrap the carbon tax'⁶ (22 August, and 1 and 3 September) framed supra-national concern – global climate change - within nation-focused policies that privilege Australian interests over global concerns. There was no portrayal of a broader humanity, thus framing Australian-ness as essentially unique and oppositional to all other forms of identification - not just other nationalities, but other 'level' identities also – sub or supra-national.

Labor's page appeared more engaged with the world and Australia's place in it. One example comes from a Youtube commercial entitled 'Selling Abbot's internet to the world' (27 August). It shows two young men travelling globally, to try to street-sell the Coalition's plan for Internet infrastructure. A montage of potential buyers from across the world consistently responds negatively. The advertisement concludes with the question 'If the rest of the world laughs at this broadband plan, then why does [leader of the Liberal Party] Tony Abbott say it's good enough for us?'. While the question positions Australia as an important actor on the world stage, deserving to be globally competitive, the primary concern is Australia. The focus is on how Australia is seen by, and compares with, other nations, rather than engaging with more global concerns. This may be playing on Australians' fear of inadequacy, its 'cultural cringe' which is evident in 'an inability to escape needless comparisons...asking "...what would a cultivated Englishman [sic] think of this?'" (A. Phillips, 2010: 55). While this also frames Australian-ness as distinct from the 'other' non-national, it differs in that it shows some engagement.

⁶ This was a catch phrase for a policy to end the carbon pricing introduced to decrease greenhouse emissions, an initiative of the previous Labor administration (July 1, 2012).

There was also some interest in global issues on Labor's page. Labor voiced concern about global warming (21 and 31 August, and 3 September), proposed plans to 'restore our rivers to health' (31 August) and endorsed a leader 'who is serious about protecting the environment' (21 August). While these were contextualised within the national debate, the proposals connect with broader, global concerns (clean energy and climate change), suggesting a more universalist ethic, but not at the expense of national interest.

In this sense, Labor did not frame national identity as exclusive or distinct from other identities, as did the Liberals. Otherness was only seen as a threat if it is not incorporated within Australian-ness.

Discussion

We conclude with a comparison between the two main parties, and some remarks about further research possibilities.

The socially constructed frames of Australian-ness on the two major parties' Facebook pages showed some similarities and some differences. Both major parties (re)constructed a predominantly white Australian identity; both focused on the family as a significant source of Australian-ness, although they varied in who was included as a family member; and both showed a tendency to value Australian concerns over others, yet small nuances suggest some variation.

So, what do the similarities and differences between the two major parties' tell us about how Australian identity is being framed by Australian politicians online?

Firstly, the focus on family connections on both these sites may be an attempt to bridge the gap between citizenship and culture, linking national with familial bonds of identification. This conjunction demonstrates the fuzziness of the distinction between cultural and political constructions of national identity, and perhaps attests to the influence of Howard's reconstruction of Anglo-Australianness (Fozdar & Spittles, 2010; Fozdar & Low, forthcoming; Hage, 1998; De Cillia et al., 1999; Betts & Birrell, 2007). Imagining the nation as a family also has implications for growth and immigration, asking who will 'we' welcome into 'our' family and home (see Joppke, 2004; Hage, 1998)?

The Liberals' emphasis on the family may construct a sense of solidarity more akin to ethno than civic nationalism. Historically the nation was understood as similar to an ethnic group or tribe, with members bound by shared ancestry – they were literally one family (Guibernau, 1996; Gellner, 1994). The Liberal framing did this through emphasising conservative family ideals that value social stability and reproductive capacity. In this sense, the nation is framed as a blood-bonded community, able to perpetuate its own existence, thus marginalising the 'unnecessary' - migrants, singles, elderly, and those in same-sex relationships.

Labor promoted a more civic construction of Australian-ness, by framing family as both intergenerational and inclusive of same-sex relationships. In this sense the

family incorporates those who are not 'useful' to national growth, and Australian-ness is based on self-identification and civic participation. As noted, civic nationalism is built on rational commitment to citizenship, economic market participation, and civic inclusion (Rex, 1995), and is essentially inorganic in nature, requiring nation-states to work to construct a sense of belonging and identity (Guibernau, 1996).

Yet, while families were framed differently, both parties emphasise whiteness in their frames. This plays into the fear of the Other, unifying Australians by establishing fictive blood bonds that civic notions of national identity lack. As Hage (1998: 47) observed:

“A nationalist practice of exclusion is a practice emanating from agents imagining themselves to occupy a privileged position within national space... It is a practice orientated by the nationalists' attempt at building what they imagine to be a *homely* nation. In this process, the nationalists perceive themselves as spatial managers and that which is standing between them and their imaginary nation is constructed as an undesirable national object to be removed from national space.”

Considered in light of the ways whiteness was promoted on both Facebook pages, we see how whiteness increases the sense of entitlement and power of this segment of the Australian community. This is a significant contrast to the decades of support by both parties in the latter part of the last century, for an Australian identity based on multiculturalism and diversity (Curran, 2004; Brett and Moran, 2011).

Labor's nation-centric framing presented national identity as just one of many (Smith (1991: 4), yet it was the salient identity. It has been argued that Australian identity is sufficiently empowered by its multiculturalism to engage both national and global (cosmopolitan) values and orientations simultaneously (Brett & Moran, 2011; Castles et al., 1992). As such, making national identity salient could encourage Australians to be active global, as well as national, citizens. Yet for politicians to construct national identity as most important - particularly in the face of increasing demands for international collaboration on issues such as climate change, poverty reduction, and refugees – may encourage insularity, promoting Australians' rights over others, and detachment of Australian identity from global concerns. In terms of identity, these policies position Australians primarily as Australian (rather than, say, global citizens) (Vas Dev, 2009). In a context of growing calls for postnational political formations and consciousness, this seems a backward step.

Finally, we want to highlight the similarity between the two. There was a certain model of Australian-ness framed by both parties as the national ideal; one which empowered white Australia, valued family, and prioritised national, over global, concerns. The socially constructed nature of frames means there may be various reasons for this similarity – interaction with the views of the populous, influential voices from the media or other powerful 'elites', or competition between the parties. Political framing does not occur in a vacuum, and this similarity tells us something about a reframing of Australian identity away from cultural and other forms of diversity. The fact that the more conservative party won the election tells

us that this framing is currently most popular, despite the work done by previous governments to broaden Australian-ness.

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