



Exclusive and Inclusive Constructions of 'Australia' in the Australian Parliament

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Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis across Disciplines
<http://cadaad.net/journal>
Vol. 7 (1): 51 – 65
ISSN: 1752-3079

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Abstract

Due to the way racism is now hidden behind discourses of 'cultural difference' rather than relying on beliefs of biological inferiority, capturing instances of racism has now become a difficult task. The discourse of 'difference' in recent times has strongly manifested itself as exclusion from a discursively constructed nation: borders of the nation are redrawn along cultural essentialist lines so that undesirable 'others' are always excluded. Taking data from Australian parliamentary debates on immigration and citizenship during 2006-2007, this paper uses critical discourse analysis to explore how politicians discursively (re)construct borders of 'Australia' to either exclude or include immigrants. This paper argues that exclusion and inclusion in national constructions are more conducive ways of seeing how racism and anti-racism towards immigrants are enacted.

Key words: racism, anti-racism, nation, identity, discourse-historical approach

1. Introduction

Over the past few decades in Australia, manifestations of racist attitudes have changed in shape and form. Contemporary social norms have meant that overtly racist talk and actions have become largely taboo. This, however, has not meant that racism itself has now been eliminated. Fears of different 'Others' and beliefs in the superiority of the 'Self' still abound. The way in which people express these fears and beliefs has simply shifted.

This change in the expression of racist attitudes has led to the rise of 'new racism', a form of racism that emphasises cultural differences among people rather than biological hierarchies (Barker 1982; Sears 1988; Stolcke 1995; Taguieff 1990; Wieviorka 1997). The 'problems' with immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers that speakers highlight often do not touch on innuendos of biological inferiority. Rather, they argue that the problems are such things as immigrants' cultural differences, lack of fluency in the national language, and an unwillingness or inability to integrate into the host society. Such arguments can lead to proposals of physical or social exclusion; for example, to restrict or stop immigration or to implement tougher policies on immigrants to learn the national language and integrate into the local culture.

These proposals are inevitably dubbed ‘not racist’ by their advocates because they do not mention ‘race’, genetic inferiority or differences. Despite this, attitudes based on essentialised ‘cultural differences’ still have negative consequences for minority groups who are discriminated against or vilified due to their perceived ‘Otherness’. This creates many challenges for anti-racism, which according to (Bonnett 2000: 4) is ‘forms of thought and/or practice that seek to confront, eradicate and/or ameliorate racism’. If racism based on ‘cultural differences’ is unacknowledged or dismissed as ‘not racism’, this means that those who try to contest racism have difficulties even pointing out racism in the first place, let alone trying to confront or eradicate it.

1.1 Background

In October 2007 the Australian Government introduced a nation-wide citizenship test which applicants would have to pass in order to naturalise as Australian citizens. Earlier that year, in July, the new Australian Citizenship Act had been implemented, which increased the residential requirement for naturalisation from two to four years. These legal amendments came amid broader attempts by the Howard Government to limit conceptions of Australian multiculturalism and instead, propagate a more narrow understanding of Australian identity based on British heritage and Anglo-Saxon cultural values (Johnson 2007).

The changes came amid a general backlash against multiculturalism in many Western countries with large immigrant populations, whereby citizenship tests were implemented to ‘encourage’ adherence to national values and the country’s liberal-democratic traditions. For example, the Netherlands integrated a ‘civic integration’ exam for naturalisation in 2003, the United Kingdom a citizenship test in 2005, and Germany a naturalisation test in 2008, all with similar aims of promoting integration and ensuring adequate mastery of the national language. Under the rhetoric of so-called integration, however, lies a strong form of exclusion towards immigrants, not only in the sense that they are expected to potentially possess more formal knowledge about the country than those who inherit citizenship by blood, but also in that the tests presume a state of ‘unbelonging’.

Proponents of the Australian citizenship test and increased residency legislation argued that the changes made Australian citizenship more valuable and ‘allow more time for new arrivals to become familiar with the Australian way of life and the values to which they will need to commit as citizens’ (John Cobb, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, 09/11/05). The Howard Government’s initiatives were designed to use citizenship as a tool for social inclusion and aimed to increase the value of citizenship by restricting access to it and more clearly defining what it means to be ‘Australian’ (Fozdar and Spittles 2009). The pre-occupation with defining and being ‘Australian’ has become much more pertinent in recent years, especially due to fears stemming from 9/11, the War on Terror, Bali bombings and Cronulla Riots¹ (Collins 2007; Hodge and Carroll 2006). A ‘ritual of allegiance’ has become a response to the possibility of terrorists living among us in which the public’s attention is diverted to measure whether one’s level of ‘Otherness’ constitutes a threat to Australia (Saniotis 2004: 54).

Investigating how levels of ‘Otherness’ are ascertained and how one is excluded from or included in an Australian identity has implications for the ways in which racism and anti-racism are enacted in the present day. Due to anti-racist norms, those who wish to speak negatively about ‘Others’ take care to present their views as rational and reasonable to avoid charges of being racist (Every and Augoustinos 2007). The delegitimisation of racial hierarchies based on inferior or superior biology in the post-war era did not of course eradicate racist thoughts or actions. Rather, racism became ‘hidden’ through discourses of ‘difference’, especially cultural difference (Barker 1982; Taguieff 1990; Wieviorka 1997) as a form of ‘differentialist racism’, in which ‘Otherness’ is valued to the point that different groups should not mix (Taguieff 1990) or whereby differences between races lead to irreconcilable cultural differences in which the ‘other’ is a threat (Wieviorka 1997).

In recent years, this kind of cultural racism has been intensified in the form of discursive exclusion from the nation (Bauder and Semmelroggen 2009). National identity is constructed around the idea of the ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 1991) with fluid, changing boundaries to both create and exclude the undesirable (immigrant) ‘Other’. Here, the rhetoric of inclusion and exclusion that emphasises the distinctiveness of cultural identity, traditions, and heritage among groups ‘assumes the closure of culture by territory’ (Stolcke 1995: 2). That is to say, the physical boundaries of a nation are discursively redrawn along cultural lines. Wren (2001: 144) argues that ‘By imagining a territorially bound community with a “common interest”, there must, by implication, also be “others” who do not share the “common interest” and should be excluded’. In the Australian case, the usage of the term ‘Australian values’, which mark what immigrants need to subscribe to in order to belong, are constructions of an imagined Australia. ‘Values’ have the appearance of openness while allowing for closure (Harris and Williams 2003), since the definition of ‘values’ can always be used to include or exclude as needed.

However, the categorical denial of racism and exclusion, oppression and demonisation of minorities is a defining feature of contemporary responses to ‘Others’ (Every and Augoustinos 2007: 411). As Augoustinos and Every (2010: 252) ask, ‘how can racist or discriminatory practices be challenged, when there are increasing social taboos around identifying, naming and categorizing persons, groups, events and practices as “racist”’?

Based on Stolcke’s (1995: 2) argument, this paper argues that discursive constructions of the nation can capture contemporary enactments of cultural racism and anti-racism and thus enable racist talk to be identified and challenged. In Australia, much of the government rhetoric has focused on ‘Australian values’ and immigrants’ adherence (or non-adherence) to them in deciding who is allowed to be Australian, both discursively and legally. By investigating how discursive constructions of ‘Australia’ are both constructed and deconstructed, we can gain insight into the contemporary workings of racism and anti-racism in a Western liberal-democratic immigration country.

2. Data and Method

The data for this paper consists of parliamentary speeches from the Australian *Hansard*. The speeches were downloaded from the Australian Parliamentary website at www.aph.gov.au. Speeches that dealt with issues of citizenship, immigration, multiculturalism and migrant integration that occurred between 1 January 2006 and 2 December 2007 were chosen. The time period was chosen to capture debates about the new citizenship bills, concerns about integration and multiculturalism following the Cronulla Riots in December 2005, and heightening concerns about 'home-grown' terrorism following the London bombings in July 2005.

This research uses the approach of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA is a 'research programme' (Wodak and Meyer 2009) that has as its basis a focus on discourse, critique, power and ideology (Reisigl and Wodak 2009), and specifically focuses on the 'role of discourse in the reproduction of power, dominance and inequalities' (van Dijk 2000: 28). However, it has never been or attempted to be one single or specific theory, nor ever prescribed a specific methodology. CDA is not a true method, but rather an approach to the data that combines a number of principles: it follows a problem-orientated, interdisciplinary approach and is characterised by 'the common interests in de-mystifying ideologies and power through systematic and retroductable² investigation of semiotic data' (Wodak and Meyer 2009).

The methodology for this study is based on the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) developed by Reisigl and Wodak (2001; 2009). As a strand of CDA, DHA also focuses on critique, ideology and power but with the following emphases that make it appropriate to this research. First, while DHA sees ideology as a vehicle for establishing and maintaining unequal power relations through discourse, one of DHA's specific aims is to 'demystify' the hegemony of the specific discourses by deciphering the ideologies that establish, perpetuate or fight dominance' (Reisigl and Wodak 2009: 88). Furthermore, for the DHA, language is not powerful on its own, but rather is made powerful by powerful people. It therefore critically analyses the language use of those who have the power to change and improve conditions (Reisigl and Wodak 2009). For this reason, it is a useful and relevant method for a study on parliamentary discourses.

Furthermore, in my adaption of CDA to analyse anti-racist discourses, I investigate both the discourses that maintain power inequalities as well as the discourses that themselves critique these aforementioned discourses. CDA is 'critical' in that it aims to reveal the role of discursive practices in the maintenance of the social world, including social relations that involve unequal relations of power (Phillips and Jorgensen 2002). However, anti-racist political discourse appears to have a different aim. Research on politicians (elite members of society and belonging to the 'in group') defending immigrants (minorities and members of the 'out group') questions this social world in two ways. Firstly, anti-racist politicians may be attempting to equalise power relations rather than maintain unequal relations. Secondly, anti-racist research not only offers a critique of the social world, but also provides an analysis of this very critique made by others.

Analysing anti-racist discourses in parliament provides a unique setting for a CDA study. CDA scholars are typically interested in the way discourse (re)produces social domination--that is, the power abuse of one group over others--and how dominated groups may discursively resist such abuse (van Dijk 2009). However, parliaments are unique settings that contain several dominant groups fighting each other for power. Politicians are all members of the elite, but they simultaneously belong to different groups, and other social practices they engage in may also determine their membership in other groups; for example, gender, cultural or religious groups. Van Dijk (1997) argues that since members of society are usually members of several social groups, they therefore participate in several group ideologies. These groups are not always consistent with each other, so that the actual practices of social actors may show contradictions and variation, depending on the measure of identification with a specific group and ideology.

If we only consider the setting of the parliament, overlapping group identities create an unusual situation for a CDA study. On a macro level, politicians are all elite members of society who have the power to change legislation and influence the lives of many people. McAllister and Studlar (1992: 232), for example, classifies politicians, irrespective of their individual characteristics, as political elite who are likely to share fundamental acceptance of the 'rules of the game'. Yet on a micro level within parliament, certain groups have more power than others do. The ruling party or parties by nature have more power to implement legislation than their opposition. In the case of anti-racism speeches in parliament, it is usually one side of parliament accusing the other side of racist legislation or action, rather than accusing out-groups or members of the public of some kind of wrongdoing. When dominant groups assist dominated groups to resist power abuse, the dominant group must fight against members of their own elite group. This is an atypical situation for CDA studies and provides a different context to study group and power relations.

This study, however, still aligns with the basic tenets of CDA. Fairclough (2003: 203) situates CDA within critical social research whose aims are to explore 'how societies work and produce both beneficial and detrimental effects, and how these detrimental effects can be mitigated if not eliminated'. Rather than solely focusing on the analysis of racist discourses to deconstruct inequalities in society, however, this study also aims to look at discourses that themselves aim to question and improve unequal social and power relations.

To this end, I employ the DHA to ask the following questions:

1. How is 'Australia' linguistically constructed and referred to? How are migrants or 'Others' referred to and how are they placed in relation to the construction of 'Australia'?
2. What qualities and attributes are assigned to 'Australia'? What qualities and attributes are assigned to migrants or 'Others' and in what ways do they overlap or differ?
3. What argumentation schemes (topoi) do the speakers use to legitimise their constructions of 'Australia' and their positioning of migrants/'Others'?
4. From what perspective or viewpoint do the speakers construct the Self ('Australia' or 'Australian') and 'Others'?

3. Analysis and Discussion

The following section presents exclusive and inclusive constructions of 'Australia' based on the argumentation scheme (topoi) that the speakers used. Two exclusive constructions and two inclusive constructions were chosen from the data set. The extracts were chosen because they are considered to exemplify the kind of arguments that were typical of their 'genre' (exclusive or inclusive).

3.1 Exclusive Constructions

These constructions not only 'redrew' borders of Australia based on imagined values and heritage but fortified these borders. The speakers here argued that these borders are non-negotiable and immigrants must acceptance the dominance and superiority of 'Australian values' and culture.

3.1.1 Topos of superiority: Depicting Australian values and laws as superior

The speakers using the topos of superiority always presented Australia and Australian citizenship in positive light – Australia was regarded as a much sought after destination for immigrants, and Australian citizenship a prized possession. This 'topos of superiority' was a running argumentation thread in the 'exclusive' speeches which often occurred in a 'since x then y' formula, for example, 'Since Australia is a better country than their own, immigrants must unquestioningly accept our values'. By representing Australia as a quasi utopia, it gives the speakers space to argue that immigrants must adhere to certain standards of behaviour and attitudes if they want to 'be Australian'. They imply that it is not only those standards that create the utopia that is Australia, but they are also the reason why immigrants choose to come to Australia in the first place. It therefore seems logical that all immigrants must adhere to those standards and unreasonable for immigrants to expect any opt-out clauses.

Some of these speakers went as far as to say explicitly that Australian values are more advanced than in other countries and therefore newcomers are obligated to accept Australian values and beliefs. In the following extract, Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells states that whoever comes to Australia from a less progressive society must accept Australian values and beliefs. It is clear that she believes Australian values and beliefs are rigid and uncompromising and not subject to negotiation. It is also clear that she demarcates Australia from other societies and relegates other societies, especially those markedly different from Australian society, to a lower position.

Australia today is a country forged from different cultures and tied by a set of common beliefs and values - a belief in a free and competitive market system, freedom of choice, respect for human life and respect for the rule of law. **This means that those who come from societies which are less contemporarily progressive than our own need to have an acceptance of these values and beliefs.** And those values and beliefs may be different from those in the country whence they came--for example,

equality of men and women. (Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, LP, Senate Hansard, 05/09/06)

Senator Fierravanti-Wells does not acknowledge that immigrants might come from a country that is more progressive than Australia, that such a society might even exist, or that such subjective criteria as 'progressive' are liable to multiple interpretations. In these exclusive and narrow constructions of Australia, there does not appear to be room for new input into how Australia functions. Ironically, she still recognises that Australia is an immigration country which was created with input from many different cultures. This appears to be a face-keeping device to recognise Australia as an immigration country because she herself came to Australia with her parents as a child immigrant³.

Yet there does not seem to be any true recognition that this is an ongoing process and that even shared values and beliefs will inevitably change over time with different contributions by different immigrants. Senator Fierravanti-Wells shifts the notion of 'common beliefs and values' to one of superior beliefs and values, which have the potential to be tainted those from by allegedly inferior societies. While it appears immigrants from the past have all had something in common in their culture, it also seems that the values and beliefs of newcomers to Australia in the present day have no overlaps with Australian values and beliefs. There is not only a delineation between Australia and other supposedly less progressive societies, but also 'old' immigrants and 'new' immigrants.

As Farrell (2010: 172) argues, the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship at that time, Kevin Andrews, in a speech on the citizenship test, implied that the responsibility for 'successful integration' is 'placed in the hands of those who wish to migrate *into the already formed Australian society*' (emphasis added). It appears that from Andrews's point of view, the development of Australian society has been completed, and the time for accepting input from newcomers has stopped. That is to say, no further improvements can be made to the already perfect Australian society and culture and further contributions are not just no longer necessary or welcome, but are actually detrimental to Australia.

Notions of superiority are taken for granted in the next extract in which discourses of control and dominance are manifested in the patriarchal construction of 'Australia'. In the following extract, MP Stuart Henry depicts Australian citizenship as inherently superior, so that immigrants would be willing to take on the conditions of becoming Australian citizens:

Australia rightly defends its freedom to choose who enters this land of ours and when and how people enter. It wholeheartedly welcomes all those who seek to be Australian citizens, accepting our values and our laws. **In return it shares with them the democratic privileges, obligations and responsibilities that go with being Australian.** (MP Stuart Henry, Liberal Party, House Hansard, 31/10/06)

Oddly, what Australia will 'share' with those seeking to be Australian citizens is not necessarily beneficial to potential citizens. Forcing people to accept 'our values and laws' only has positive connotations if 'our values and laws' are

considered better than all others. Accepting values is also vastly different to accepting laws. Democratic privileges are by all means positive, but if someone has to share ‘obligations and responsibilities’ this appears to be more of a burden than a privilege. Blackledge (2006) discusses the effect of using a string of unrelated words when analysing how politicians in Britain blamed non-English-speaking families for street rioting and violence. By using a list, things that are not naturally related become associated with each other. In this case, because ‘obligations and responsibilities’ follow ‘democratic privileges’, ‘obligations and responsibilities’ appear to be positive things.

The ‘them and us’ division is also clear in the nomination ‘who enters this land of ours’. The attempt at inclusion in ‘it wholeheartedly welcomes ...’ is only a pseudo inclusion because it is still ‘our’ land and not ‘theirs’ and therefore ‘we’ determine who enters and becomes Australian or not. It is not merely about the process of officially obtaining Australian citizenship but rather also about defining Australianness, that is, ‘accepting our values’. Since adhering to ‘our values’ is wholly subject criteria, the self-appointed guardians of Australia have the right to decide who has met this criteria or not. The personification of the country ‘Australia’ renders the exclusion of non-compliant people an almost natural phenomenon, as if these guardians are naturally built into the borders of Australia. By depicting the control and exclusion as pseudo-natural, the welcoming or not welcoming of immigrants seems almost automatic and out of the hands of the Australian Government.

3.1.2 Topos of fact: Australian culture as a historical fact

Explaining away domination and exclusion as a natural and automated process appears in arguments that describe Australian culture as a historical fact. Here, MP Michael Johnson argues that those seeking to make Australia must accept its dominant culture and dominant language:

English is our dominant language. **It is a product of history that our language is English and that our culture is grounded in a Judeo-Christian heritage.** There is no other reason for it. It might well have been Chinese or Spanish had those empires sent sailors to this part of the world centuries ahead of the British. But **the fact is that, in the last millennium, it was the British who settled this land. Surely there is nothing sinister about this. Surely there is nothing contentious.** (Michael Johnson, MP, Liberal Party, House Hansard, 27/02/06)

By presenting the construction of Australia as an English-speaking, Judeo-Christian country as a mere fact, ‘our’ culture, heritage and language are not liable to critique and deconstruction. There is a blatant disregard for such things as the way the British illegally colonised Australia⁴, the brutal treatment of indigenous peoples and their continued marginalisation in Australian society. His claim that there is ‘nothing sinister’ about British colonisation is a rebuttal to all those who do not accept it as an objective historical fact. According to MP Johnson, we should not question the historical events that led to European settlement in Australia.

The ‘English is our dominant language’ discourse can allow the social and labour-market exclusion of those who do speak fluent Australian English. Since, as MP Johnson argues, ‘Australia’ did not deliberately set out to be an English-speaking country and it became English-speaking on its own accord,

it cannot be held responsible for such exclusion. There is evidence now that language is being used more and more as a marker of exclusion that is disguised under discourses of deficiency that put the onus of inclusion onto immigrants (see e.g. Blackledge 2006; Horner 2009; McPherson 2010). Citizenship and language tests that many Western countries have implemented in recent times, including Australia, form a new gate-keeping device which is installed to marginalise those who have language proficiencies that are different from the majority (Blackledge 2009). In the British case, 'English language dominance' is conflated with a racialised 'white' dominance' as an extended barrier to prevent the participation in society of linguistic minorities (Blackledge 2006). In the extract here, the discourse of English as the dominant language assumes the dominance of native Australian-English speakers and attempts to silence the 'other', that is, non-native English speakers, into accepting their marginalisation.

In a similar vein, Australia's 'Judeo-Christian heritage' is taken for granted as fact and not a governmental construction of the present day. The emphasis on this heritage has functioned as part of 'an ideological re-imagining of Australia' as a nation based on liberal democratic values with Judeo-Christian and Anglo-Saxon/Celtic heritage (Fozdar and Spittles 2009: 512). Rather than an Australian identity associated with diversity, the version of 'Australian' promoted by the Liberal Government is that of 'a European citizen, accidentally located in the Pacific, with little connection to the Indigenous population nor the array of ethno-cultural heritages of the country's vast migrant population' (Fozdar and Spittles 2009:512). MP Johnson certainly supports this narrowly constructed view of Australia and his framing of this so-called heritage renders this imagining into fact. He further emphasises that this is not up for discussion by arguing that there is nothing 'contentious' about Australia's British roots.

3.2 Inclusive Constructions

These constructions are markedly different from those above in that they seek to critique current descriptors of Australia and either dispute the policies proposed by the government, or argue in favour of including immigrants in understandings of 'Australia'.

3.2.1 Topos of history: Critiquing (past) narrow constructions of 'Australia'

In disputing the narrow constructions of Australia, the speakers spoke in negative terms of what the government had done wrong and the way in which they have been offensive to those who do not fit into their pre-defined constructions. Some speakers also actively critiqued the exclusive and narrow construction of Australian identity that they believed the government was promoting. They suggested that a promotion of this narrow construction was a revival of past policies and social norms in Australia. Several speakers made references to specific policies from Australia's past: the White Australia Policy (from the 1901 until its gradual demise starting from the post-World War II era) and assimilation policy in the 1960s. Here, the topos of history is used to depict Australia's past in a negative way and argue that new policies should not mimic obsolete policies.

In disputing the pre-defined Australian identity they believed the government was promoting, the speakers here attempted to contest the proposal to increase the citizenship requirement from two to four years. The politicians who contested the increase argued that it was a return to past policies. Technically speaking, a longer residential requirement is a past policy: from 1948 until 1973, there were different requirements for Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth citizens, with the former only requiring one year of residency and the latter needing five. From 1973 until 1984, the requirement was three years, and then two years from 1984 until July 2007. Thus, the speakers made a correlation between an increased residency requirement and an assimilationist approach that existed pre-1973 with privileges for Commonwealth citizens, since, it can be assumed, the government believed they were already naturally assimilated.

MP Lindsay Tanner from the Labor Party actively disputes the discourses the government had been creating about Australian identity and Australian values:

That is the subtext of what is happening with this legislation and a variety of things that the Howard government is pursuing. Of course, it is not a great secret as to why this is being pursued. **We are seeing the slow, gradual revival of a monocultural, assimilationist philosophy as the core explanation for what Australia is, how our society functions, what its norms are and what its values are, and we are seeing the mounting expectation that people should comply with these autocratically determined values or norms**--usually handed down by the Howard government or some members of its cheer squad in the media--and that those who do not are in some way guilty of being un-Australian, guilty of not fitting in and susceptible to exclusion and, sometimes, to the most extreme forms of exclusion, like deportation. (MP Lindsay Tanner, ALP, House Hansard, 01/11/06)

The reference to a ‘*revival* of a monocultural assimilation philosophy’ is likely a reference to either the White Australia Policy or assimilation policy in the 1960s. He refers to a past racist policy and thereby implies that the current policy is also racist.

Tanner deconstructs the idea of Australia being a pre-defined and immutable entity that either accepts or does not accept people. However, he does not go as far as to explain what Australia *should* be, only what it should *not* be. As is the nature of parliamentary debates from the opposition party, much of the argumentation revolved around critiquing the government and referring to the government’s wrongdoings. There is therefore not a strong sense what Australia should be or look like.

However, reversing the notion of *ex negativo* identity, that is, one is what one is not (Manz 2004: 481), Tanner suggests that an Australia is not necessarily someone who simply complies with these ‘autocratically determined values and norms’. By doing this, he is implying that one can be ‘Australian’ without subscribing to these values and norms.

3.2.2 Topos of contribution

Another way in which politicians challenge notions of an exclusive national identity is through the topos of contribution. By arguing that immigrants have

contributed to the nation, they not only present immigrants in positive light, but also equate *contributing* to *belonging*. Senator Kerry Nettle argues that multiculturalism is what has made Australia today:

The Greens believe that our political leaders should be speaking out about the great benefits that multiculturalism has brought to our shores. **This country has been made rich by the multicultural immigration that we have had, both economically and culturally.** In my electorate of New South Wales, Western Sydney is a living example of the globalised world that we are a part of and the way in which our society has been made rich by multiculturalism. I can walk down Haldon Street in Lakemba, the one I was talking about earlier, past the printing shop that is owned by my Palestinian friend. He is an Australian citizen and he has made a tremendous contribution to his local community and more broadly. There is a Greek nursing home on that street. There is an Italian hairdresser, there is a grocery store owned by a Pakistani, there is a Lebanese sweets shop and a Chinese bakery, there is a cocktail bar run by an Iraqi guy and there is a Moroccan coffee shop. All are within the space of a couple of hundred metres on Haldon Street. **The contribution that all of these people make to our community, the society that we live in, makes this country great.** I am proud to be able to walk down a street like that and say hello to all those Australian citizens who are contributing to our community. (Senator Kerry Nettle, Australian Greens, Senate Hansard, 07/02/07)

Unlike the exclusive and closed constructions of Australia, Senator Nettle depicts Australia as part of a 'globalised world' in which different cultures naturally mix. The long list of different types of shops operated by non-Anglo-Saxons in her Sydney electorate serves to prove this. The different services and goods that immigrants have provided also create the impression of a community that the immigrants contribute to. However, interestingly, Senator Nettle chooses to call this 'our' community, rather than simply *the* community. We see elements of the 'Australia as an already formed entity' here which immigrants need to slot themselves into, rather than the notion of immigrants creating that entity in the first place. The difference here between the exclusive constructions of Australia and Senator Nettle's construction is that there is room, and even appreciation, for what immigration has brought and how it has expanded 'our' community.

The overlap of 'Australian citizens' at the end of the extract with all the different nationalities is also of this same nature: while she declares with this overlap that these business-owners are Australian citizens, the emphasis is on their nationality of origin and their difference from the invisible norm. This difference is depicted as wholly positive, not only in her argument but also in the imagery of her descriptions: Italian hairstyles, Lebanese sweets, Chinese breads and Moroccan coffee sound enticing and attractive. The exoticism present contributes, however, to a sense of ambiguity: these immigrants fit in because they can offer us something different from the norm but this simultaneously means they are not part of the norm.

Economic contributions feature prominently in this depiction of multicultural Australia. While Senator Nettle argues that multicultural immigration has brought both cultural and economic benefits to Australia, her examples are all of 'multicultural' businesses. Economic contributions are also emphasised in positive representations of immigrants in a study on Austrian parliamentary

discourses (Sedlak 2000: 132). Legally residing foreigners are described in terms of their contribution to the Austrian state and Austrian prosperity: 'their (often hard and dirty) work, their payment of taxes and social insurance fees and their integration into the Austrian way of life'. It appears that economic, rather than cultural, contributions make a stronger case for what immigrants can contribute. A common ethnic stereotype or negative perception of immigrants is that they 'take our jobs' (see e.g. van Dijk 1987: 54), so Senator Nettle may be dispelling this notion by explicitly citing examples of self-employed immigrants.

4. Conclusion

Whilst the exclusive constructions were quite clear about where the borders of Australia lay, the inclusive constructions were somewhat ambiguous. In the exclusive constructions of 'Australia', 'Australia' is an English-speaking progressive country of Judeo-Christian heritage with superior values and customs. Without a hint of irony, Senator Fierravanti-Wells depicts Australia as a country that has been formed by different cultures. However, new immigrants who wish to come to Australia must adapt to this already formed society because cultural or social contributions are no longer desired. Fozdar and Spittles (2009: 506) point out the irony in describing Australian values as stemming partially from 'non-conformist attitudes' in attempting to homogenise the population's values in the original Australian Citizenship booklet⁵. It appears that while borders of 'Australia' were open to change in the past, they should now be solid and immutable, as if Australian values and culture have reached their pinnacle state.

Conversely, the inclusive constructions of 'Australia' created fluid and porous borders which immigrants were welcome to expand or contribute to, or were not expected to accept the pre-defined borders of the Howard government. However, depicting an 'Australia' that is open to input and interpretation also lent itself to ambiguity.

Although the speakers of the inclusive constructions argued that immigrants had enriched Australia and it would be wrong to implement more stringent citizenship laws, it was difficult to get a clear sense of the options available to immigrants. Do they need to be hard-working economic contributors to Australian society in order to be accepted? This highlights the difficulties in anti-racist talk, which often subscribes to racist talk in the process of challenging it. One possible reason is that disputing something often lends itself to negating it so that, for example, in response to accusations that immigrants are a burden on the welfare system, one might argue that they are not because they start their own businesses. The natural conclusion to draw from this is that immigrants can be accepted as long as they pay their dues, which subscribes to the original discriminatory argument.

However, investigating constructions of 'Australia' and the positioning of its borders can be a conducive to capturing instances of modern forms of racism based on cultural differences and discursive exclusion. Those engaging in forms of 'differentialist' racism can refer to the inferiority of 'Other' societies and cultures without having to explicitly mention inferiority. However, this

form of racism is revealed when investigating exclusive constructions of 'Australia' because not only are the borders exclusive to those who are like 'us' or are willing to become like 'us', but the constructed 'Australia' is also elevated *above* other dissimilar societies. In the same way that white European peoples were considered biologically superior to other 'races', Australia and its culture and values are considered more advanced and superior than others. This is revealed in the exclusive constructions of 'Australia'.

Equally, speakers with anti-racist agendas who wish to dispute disguised forms of racism can do so without making direct accusations of racism. Guerin (2003) argues that skills to deal with racist talk are important, especially in preventing anti-racist arguments from bringing an abrupt end to a conversation. Avoiding accusations of racism and creating space for immigrants in the imagined community of Australia can allow anti-racism to 'be heard' (Every and Augoustinos 2007: 430) rather than rejected. By positioning 'Australia' and 'Australian' on equal par with other cultures, arguing for fluid, ever-changing borders and definitions, or challenging the idea of pre-defined norms, the speakers can dispute arguments of those with an exclusive imagery of 'Australia'. Constructing 'Australia' in this way allows more debate and discussion about identity, belonging, and ultimately who or what is or can become Australian.

Notes

- ¹ The Cronulla riots were a series of violent incidents between white Anglo-Saxon men and men of Middle Eastern background in the beach suburb of Cronulla in Sydney in December 2005.
- ² 'Retroductable', derived from the German word *nachvollziehbar*, means that discourse analyses should be transparent so that any reader can trace and understand the detailed in-depth textual analysis (Kendall 2007).
- ³ In another speech on multiculturalism, she argues that despite the difficulties she and her parents faced when coming to Australia when there were no support services available they still managed to integrate successfully into Australian society.
- ⁴ The British claimed sovereignty and ownership in Australia under the myth of *terra nullius*, claiming that there was no human population living in Australia.
- ⁵ The original booklet was published in 2007 but was re-written in 2009 with less emphasis on 'values' after a committee review of the citizenship test.

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