

# Popular understandings of 'UnAustralian': an investigation of the un-national

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**Philip Smith**

*Sociology Programme, University of Queensland*

**Tim Phillips**

*School of Sociology and Social Work, University of Tasmania*

## **Abstract**

In social science the 'national' has been studied extensively, but comparatively little attention has been given to the 'un-national'. The article takes up this challenge in an Australian context. Drawing on the work of Raymond Williams, investigation is centred around the keyword 'UnAustralian'. Participants in focus groups were asked to nominate and account for what they thought of as 'UnAustralian' people, places, values, activities, groups and organizations. Analysis of the data revealed that two factors underpinned an attribution: incivility and foreign influence. Contemporary uses revolve around outcomes from globalization and can be contrasted with the centrality of class politics to deployments of the concept in the first part of the 20th century.

**Keywords:** Americanization, Australia, focus groups, foreign influence, globalization, incivility, national identity, popular culture, UnAustralian, un-national

## **Introduction**

In the study of nationalism and national identity the vast majority of effort has been expended on the exploration of positive carriers of national meanings. Researchers have looked at that which is considered sacred, or even just good or worthwhile. In the Australian context, for example, much attention has been given to decoding inspiring symbols such as Uluru, explaining heroic myths such as Gallipoli, and unpacking positive values such as egalitarianism. Yet work in the tradition that runs from structuralism to

poststructuralism and on to postcolonial theory suggests that any positive value constructs its own antithesis. Running in parallel with any concept of the national, then, we should expect to find a shadowing discourse of the un-national, non-national or anti-national. This article explores this somewhat neglected terrain.

In *Keywords* Raymond Williams (1976) suggests a potent tool for investigating culture. He argues that tracing the meanings of very specific concepts offers a fruitful way to unpack broader structures of meaning. Here we follow his methodological recommendation and centre our attention on the 'UnAustralian'. This word emerged into common Australian usage during the late 1990s, but has a history extending into the early decades of the 20th century. In the absence of previous systematic work on the 'UnAustralian', we would like to nominate two reasons why we believe it is important to conduct research and analysis on this keyword. First, our understanding of the content of popular culture in Australia will be enhanced. David Lowenthal (1978: 20) observed over 20 years ago that 'Australian tradition has been so largely heroic and anti-heroic ... that Australians almost automatically view historical events as good or evil, fit to praise or blame, to mourn or celebrate.' As we have pointed out, researchers have concentrated their attention overwhelmingly on analysing continuity and change in positive images of 'Australia' (Fiske et al., 1987; Turner, 1994; White, 1981; Whitlock and Carter, 1992). Any potential benefit to be found in the study of 'UnAustralian' images remains to be unlocked. Second, we can further our knowledge of how symbolic processes are involved in reproducing relations of inclusion and exclusion in Australian society. Attempts by moral arbiters to condemn 'the other' as 'UnAustralian' can be seen as part of a larger 'symbolic struggle over the production of common sense' (Bourdieu, 1985: 731). In such contests, what would tend to be at stake in the successful imposition of any particular classification of the 'UnAustralian' would be the continuation of pejorative discourses that reinforce social boundaries.

The closest overseas parallel to the 'UnAustralian' would seem to be the 'UnAmerican'.<sup>1</sup> Webster's dictionary (1986) defines this quality in the following terms: 'Not having characteristics of persons or things native to the United States; lacking in patriotism and national feeling toward the United States; not consistent with American ideals, objectives, spirit, etc.' This definition glosses the fact that the term entered the language with a distinctive political inflection. It will be remembered that the term 'UnAmerican' was introduced into the popular vocabulary during the 1950s by Senator Joseph McCarthy's Committee on UnAmerican Activities (Bell, 1979; Hanson, 1996). Its initial narrow, technical definition was to tag persons, groups and activities which were deemed to threaten national security (that is, the 'International Communist Conspiracy'). However, the meaning of the term has evolved somewhat from this early usage to stake out a particular

politico-ideological terrain. As Seymour Martin Lipset (1990: 19) pointed out more recently, 'Being an American ... is an ideological commitment. It is not a matter of birth. Those who reject American values are un-American'.

In comparison to the 'UnAmerican', there is almost no information available on the 'UnAustralian'. Despite the growing symbolic potency of the 'UnAustralian' in the vocabulary of public life in contemporary Australia, the meaning and usage of the label have yet to be clarified. Our initial efforts at enquiry revealed that the term is almost a proverbial 'black box'. 'UnAustralian' was not found to have a listing in either *The Oxford Companion to Australian History* (Davison et al., 1998) or *The Macquarie Dictionary* (1991). Nor did a systematic literature search turn up a single dedicated study of the 'UnAustralian'. So not only is the 'UnAustralian' not inscribed in the official lexicon in a formal sense, it is sorely neglected as a subject for research and analysis. However, a handful of Australian historical studies provide broad hints about the past meanings of the concept.

The limited evidence available in historical studies suggests that 'UnAustralian' was once part of a broader set of terms used to label non-whites and communists, such as aliens, fifth columnists, foreigners or the Yellow Peril. In particular, it seems to have been used in political discourse in such historical contexts as the institutionalization of the White Australia Policy, the First and Second World Wars, the 1930s Depression and the Menzies era. White (1981: 137–8) alludes to the term being used by conservatives when fears of subversion and anti-loyalist activity were at a heightened level in the aftermath of the First World War and the 1917 Russian Revolution. The heroic digger was portrayed as willing and ready to guard and defend Australia against such 'UnAustralian' elements as communists, radicals, the Irish, trade unions and pacifists. Cathcart (1988: 166–7) hints at the term 'UnAustralian' being central to the worldview and rhetoric of the 'White Army', a secret group of men from 'the ruling class, the bourgeoisie, ex-soldiers and farmers' (Cathcart, 1988: 76) which emerged during the 1920s and 1930s to defend Australia and maintain the social and moral order in the face of threats posed by Catholics, the unemployed and communists. Brett (1992) suggests the label was favoured by both Prime Minister Stanley Bruce and Federal Government Minister Tommy White. Upon being confronted by a violent seamen's strike in 1925, Bruce responded by consolidating the government's power to deport 'trouble-makers' and articulating his desire to rid the country of 'UnAustralian' agitators (Brett, 1992: 88). White, a Minister for Trades and Customs in Joseph Lyons's staunchly anti-communist government of the 1930s, endorsed a move to bolster the government's powers to restrict entry to the country. He expressed a desire to keep out such 'UnAustralian' groups as 'the non-British, the disloyal, the subversive and seditious (communists), and the criminal' (Brett, 1992: 91). While not referring explicitly to the term 'UnAustralian', its usage is strongly implied in studies of the Allies'

racist rhetoric during the Second World War (Saunders, 1993, 1994) and the anti-communist discourse of the Menzies era (Brett, 1992). These scattered examples suggest that early usage of the term 'UnAustralian' served primarily as a boundary-maintaining discursive player through which the right could allege sedition, subversion and disloyalty.<sup>2</sup>

The historical record appears to be silent on the 'UnAustralian' during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. However, more recently the concept has found a new lease of life. A search of newspaper databases revealed a word that had not only become increasingly used during the 1990s by those throughout the political spectrum, but also a concept subject to question.<sup>3</sup> So the rebirth of the 'UnAustralian' in the vocabularies of public life has not gone unnoticed among organic intellectuals. In newspapers of that decade we find feature articles, editorial comment and letters asking what the 'UnAustralian' meant. Many of these were highly ironic about the concept or else attacked it as a tool of censorship. During 1998, for example, a full-length article on the 'UnAustralian' was published in *The Melbourne Age*. Titled 'UnAustralian Activities' (McGregor, 1998), it considered the meaning of the term 'UnAustralian' and its use in Australian political life. A range of prominent Australians (e.g. Geoffrey Blainey, Malcolm Fraser, Pauline Hanson, Donald Horne, Cheryl Kernot and Lois O'Donoghue) were interviewed for their views on the meaning and application of the label 'UnAustralian'. The majority of those asked were uncomfortable with the term, suggesting that it operated as a cloak for racism and social exclusion. McGregor himself, for example, suggested that: 'the term is one to regard with deep suspicion because it resonates with UnAmerican and the McCarthy era in American history' (McGregor, 1998: 1). In a similar vein, Malcolm Fraser suggested the term had 'serious racist implications' (McGregor, 1998: 4), and Cheryl Kernot maintained that it was often 'tossed around ... in the hope of scoring a few political points' (McGregor, 1998: 4). In this context, it is perhaps significant that Pauline Hanson seemed to be the most comfortable with, and least reflexive about, the concept. She pointed to political correctness, corruption, crime, failure to appreciate the sacrifices of Australia's armed forces and not striving to remember our 'she'll be right, happy-go-lucky nature' (McGregor, 1998: 5).

Notwithstanding such important journalistic efforts, to date there has been little systematic attention paid to the 'UnAustralian'. We note in particular that we know nothing at all about vernacular understandings in the present day. Important questions need to be asked about this. Is the concept of the 'UnAustralian' one that resonates with ordinary Australians? If so, what does it mean to them? Are the understandings at play in contemporary settings the same as those in the historical record? This article sets out the results of an exploratory investigation of this issue.

Information on popular understandings of the UnAustralian was taken from a larger project concerned with the contemporary meaning people

ascribe to being an Australian. Data are the transcribed conversations from six focus group discussions involving 49 participants held throughout Queensland in late 1997. We use the label 'gallery of Australians' (with qualification) to describe the socially diverse groups comprising our sample: regional city, urban blue-collar, urban white-collar, rural blue-collar, urban elderly and NESB women. The study was conducted using a standardized approach across the groups. Participants in each group were asked to identify concrete exemplars of the 'UnAustralian' within a series of general domains held to be central to the process of constructing national meaning (people; clubs and organizations; activities and events; places; values, beliefs and lifestyles), and to then provide reasons for these choices. We used a combination of inventory and qualitative techniques for describing and analysing patterns in the information provided by the groups. For full details of the methodological aspects of the study (procedure, rationale, limitations, technical details) we refer the reader to our earlier companion piece to this article (Phillips and Smith, 2000).

Before reporting our findings, we emphasize that because so little is known about the 'UnAustralian', we see the primary duty of this article to be providing information. For this reason, in the exposition that follows we try to avoid what Umberto Eco has called the 'over-interpretation' of the data and instead wish to focus attention on the data per se. Tables 1–5 provide an at-a-glance summary of ordinary understandings of the 'UnAustralian'. The quotes following each table provide an indication of the flavour of the discussion, and the folk-reasoning that informed the identification of the 'UnAustralian'. We provide a more theoretical discussion towards the end of the article.

## Results

### 'UnAustralian' people

A discrete range of individuals were nominated as evincing 'UnAustralian' qualities (see Table 1). The individuals most consistently chosen as 'UnAustralian' were Pauline Hanson and Christopher Skase. Those selected were living (except for the [gay] entertainer Peter Allen) and had an objective affiliation with Australia in terms of birth and/or prior/current residence. In other words you have to be 'Australian' in order to be 'UnAustralian'. According to this logic it would not make sense to denounce Boris Yeltsin or Bill Clinton, for example, as 'UnAustralian'. Interestingly, each group only nominated people well known to others in the group, excluding individuals they might have known personally.

A typical character invoked by the participants was likely to be a well-off white man known for his activities in the field of business or entertainment. This is somewhat surprising. According to the Australian studies literature, the white male has typically played a heroic role in the national

**Table 1:** 'UnAustralian' people nominated by the six groups

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**Regional city**

Vic McInnis (opinionated talkback radio shock-jock), James Packer (media magnate), Paul Hogan (actor), Rupert Murdoch (media magnate), Brett Dallas (rugby league player), Pauline Hanson (politician), Debbie Geileskey (founder of Magnificat Meal Movement).

**Urban blue-collar**

Christopher Skase (fugitive tycoon).

**Urban white-collar**

Pauline Hanson (politician), Keith Williams (developer).

**Rural blue-collar**

Peter Allen (singer), Christopher Skase (fugitive tycoon).

**Urban elderly**

Christopher Skase (fugitive tycoon), Paul Hogan's wife.

**NESB women**

Pauline Hanson (politician), Geoffrey Blainey (historian).

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narrative and is depicted as enjoying a hegemonic status as the embodiment of the nation (as the digger, pioneer, sportsman, for example) (White, 1981). By contrast, we might have expected members of groups which have been written about as peripheral to or excluded from narratives about national identity (for example, Australian Aborigines, migrants, women, gays) to be identified as the 'UnAustralian' (Walter, 1989). The results thrown up by the focus groups probably reflect not so much a hatred of white males as a group, as the fact that they are overrepresented in the public sphere and hence in the public eye. In order to explain why specific individuals were nominated, however, we need to turn to the data. In each case we see a moral or behavioural flaw at work. Consider the following excerpts from the transcripts.

Keith Williams thinks he can run rough shod over everybody and I think that's UnAustralian. ... He's stuffed up Hamilton Island and now he's going in another direction and stuff this place. He thinks he's got a God-given right to do it. (Urban white-collar)

- Christopher Skase comes to mind.
- I was thinking of that.
- [Moderator]: What is it about him?
- A cheat.
- Cheater.
- Totally selfish.
- At the expense of others. (Urban elderly)
  
- [On Pauline Hanson and racism] It's all to do with that lady because she's the one waking up these ideas in people's heads.

- The red head freak.
- Fish and Chips.
- Instead of bringing people together ...
- Drawing apart. (NESB women)

Participants used behaviour to read people as 'UnAustralian': Keith Williams was domineering and arrogant, Skase was selfish, Hanson divisive. These qualities, or combinations thereof, were persistently evoked to account for labelling as 'UnAustralian'. Such characteristics seem to acquire their meaning through their opposition to such orthodox 'Australian' attributes as mateship, anti-authoritarianism, not thinking you're better than anyone else, cutting down 'tall poppies' and believing in the importance of everyone pulling together for the good of Australia (Kapferer, 1988; Thompson, 1994; Thomson, 1994).

### **'UnAustralian' clubs and organizations**

Browsing through Table 2, what is immediately apparent is the markedly diverse nature of the groups and organizations our gallery of Australians nominated as 'UnAustralian'. Exclusivist ethnic groups and organizations were most commonly labelled as 'UnAustralian'. Both groups of migrants

**Table 2:** 'UnAustralian' clubs and organizations nominated by the six groups

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#### **Regional city**

KKK, far right groups, religious fanatics and extremists, cults which exploit the vulnerable.

#### **Urban blue-collar**

Tax department, government and politicians, some unions, migrants who don't learn to speak English and live in own communities, companies which manufacture overseas, Asian students, social workers, professional students, the Caledonian Club, the Irish Club, Hitler clubs and gangs, the Masons.

#### **Urban white-collar**

One-sided sporting crowds, soccer hooligans, One Nation Party, groups of people from other countries, extreme right groups, Muslim groups, cults, exclusionist ethnic clubs, exclusive clubs for rich white males, the Masons.

#### **Rural blue-collar**

Banking corporations, politicians, extreme religious sects, fanatical groups.

#### **Urban elderly**

Iranians living in Australia who supported Iran against Australia in World Cup soccer, migrants who didn't learn English, Vietnamese and Chinese communities which stick together, rent-a-crowd at demonstrations, Dutch, Scandinavian and Italian Clubs, the government.

#### **NESB women**

The Italian Club, ethnic groups, migrants who whinge and then go home, KKK, religious sects.

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(e.g. Asian students, Chinese, Iranians, Vietnamese) and specific ethnic organizations (e.g. Caledonian, Dutch, Irish, Italian, Muslim and Scandinavian clubs) were seen as 'UnAustralian'. Outside the ethnic domain, 'UnAustralian' groups and organizations were named in various spheres of Australian life. A range of 'UnAustralian' groups and organizations were picked within the domains of politics (e.g. far right groups, Hitler gangs and clubs, Ku Klux Klan [KKK], One Nation Party, rent-a-crowd at demonstrations), sport (e.g. one-sided sporting crowds, soccer hooligans) and religion (e.g. religious fanatics, extremists and sects). Specific groups and organizations within core Australian institutions such as government (e.g. the government, politicians), bureaucracy (e.g. the tax department), business (e.g. companies which manufacture overseas, banks) and unions were labelled 'UnAustralian'. Also, some occupational groups were named as 'UnAustralian' (e.g. professional students, social workers), as were certain elite clubs (e.g. exclusive clubs for rich white males, the Masons). Besides the application of the 'UnAustralian' to these more specific groups and organizations, cults and fanatics in general were attributed the label. Aside from this extreme diversity, the most noteworthy feature of Table 2 is the very strong representation of migrant and ethnic groups.

Turning to the transcripts reveals more about what it takes to be deemed an 'UnAustralian' group or organization. There seem to be three potential routes to this outcome. First, you can be seen to behave in a way that is contrary to the spirit of the nation, with its traditions of equity and fair play (Kapferer, 1988). This qualification was identical to that needed to become an 'UnAustralian' person.

[On one-sided basketball crowds] ... no one recognized good play on the opposition or anything. That's gone. Sportsmanship has gone. That's Americanism, that's not Australianism. (Urban white-collar)

[On banking corporations] ... a lot of under-handedness. They close their branches in country areas. There seems to be a charge every time you turn your back and you look back and there's another one. (Rural blue-collar)

Second, you can appear to remain outside Australian civil society, taking the path of exit rather than loyalty. Refusing out-group solidarity and civic participation was seen as highly 'UnAustralian' (see Hirschmann, 1970).

- [On migrants] They live in their own communities.
- Their own ghettos.
- And that, I think, is very UnAustralian especially if they've become an Australian citizen. They don't need to learn our language because they have whole communities that speak their own. (Regional city)

Third, you can be read as a conduit for foreign influences, or as placing foreign loyalties above those to Australia (Melleuish, 1998).

- I was going to say the government ... politicians don't really stand for what we are.

- They're trying to copy overseas.
- They're UnAustralian and they're supposed to be our leaders and I just don't think they are.
- They want to sell the country out. (Regional city)

All the ethnic groups who get together and carry on and belly ache how much they miss their country. You like it so much, why don't you pack your bags and leave. More room for us. Less unemployment. Take your dollars and get ... (NESB women)

Once again, there is an implicit contrast between these 'UnAustralian' groups and those which are quintessentially 'Australian', such as surf life-saving clubs or the Returned Services League. These are understood to have a service ethic and are seen as contributing to the formation of a distinctively Australian culture (Phillips and Smith, 2000).

**'UnAustralian' activities and events**

Looking at Table 3, we see that 'UnAustralian' activities and events were identified by the groups in five thematic areas: Americanization (e.g. school formal, summer camp, schoolies week, celebrating Halloween, basketball, drugs); assertions of ethnicity (e.g. Chinese New Year, Oktoberfest, ethnic festivals, belly dancing); confrontational politics (e.g. KKK and extremist meetings, union rallies and pickets, riots, street marches); progressive gender/sexuality (e.g. women picking up men, Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras) and sport (e.g. junior football, winter sports).

There seemed to be little consensus across the groups as to which of the five fields was most likely to produce 'UnAustralian' activities and events. Moreover, the focus group participants had less to say on this topic than on the others. Nevertheless, the reasoning used by the various groups was

**Table 3:** 'UnAustralian' activities and events nominated by the six groups

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**Regional city**

KKK and extremist meetings, union rallies and pickets.

**Urban blue-collar**

School formals, summer camps, schoolies week, celebrating Halloween, basketball, women picking up men, taking drugs.

**Urban white-collar**

Junior football, riots, street marches.

**Rural blue-collar**

Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras.

**Urban elderly**

Chinese New Year, Oktoberfest.

**NESB women**

Chinese New Year, Oktoberfest, ethnic festivals, belly dancing, winter sports.

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consistent and familiar. Such activities violated civic norms and propagated foreign lifestyles and values which were threatening to Australian identity. These qualities are illustrated in the following quotations. In the first example, the high school formal is critiqued as an alien imposition. In the second, the Mardi Gras is attacked for its exhibitionism, a quality that confronts (masculine) 'Australian' ideals of taciturn reserve.

- [On high-school formals] They're very Americanized ...
- Summer camps and it's just very American ...
- People who try to celebrate Halloween.
- Yes definitely Halloween. That's not an Australian tradition. (Urban blue-collar)
- [On the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras] It's OK to live like that but to be so out on the street in front of ...
- [Interrupts] Gay people fair enough, keep it to themselves and do what they want to do. Don't flaunt it, everyday people don't do that. (Rural blue-collar)

### **'UnAustralian' places**

The places nominated as 'UnAustralian' were able to be classified under three general headings: tourist, ethnic and urban (see Table 4). Tourist and ethnic places were the most consistently designated 'UnAustralian' locales. The most 'UnAustralian' place identified by participants seemed to be the Gold Coast, and Surfers Paradise in particular. Hamilton Island Resort, Cairns, Dreamworld and casinos were also labelled as 'UnAustralian' places. Chinatown was nominated by a number of groups as being an 'UnAustralian' place. Well-known ethnic enclaves in Brisbane and Sydney were also mentioned (e.g. Darra, Cabramatta). A number of urban settings were also spoken of as 'UnAustralian' places (e.g. CBD in large cities,

**Table 4:** 'UnAustralian' places nominated by the six groups

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#### **Regional city**

CBD in large cities, Chinatown areas, Hamilton Island Resort, Gold Coast, Cairns, Dreamworld.

#### **Urban blue-collar**

Surfers Paradise, Chinatowns.

#### **Urban white-collar**

Gold Coast, Cabramatta (Sydney), Parliament House, Sydney, Fortitude Valley (Brisbane).

#### **Rural blue-collar**

Gold Coast, casinos.

#### **Urban elderly**

Gold Coast, Darra (a Vietnamese suburb of Brisbane), Chinatown.

#### **NESB women**

Surfers Paradise, Darra, Fortitude Valley, ethnic enclaves.

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Sydney, Fortitude Valley in Brisbane). There was a comparatively small range of 'UnAustralian' places nominated by the groups, and a relatively high level of consensus among the different groups in their application of the label. In total, the places mentioned might be seen as representing locales where key elements of myths about Australian identity are challenged. The alienation and misery of the city have traditionally been contrasted to the easy-going fraternity and freedom of the bush (Walter, 1989). The separatism of ethnic communities is seen as undermining the associational ethic of the core civic culture (J. Hirst, cited in Jupp, 1997). Tourist resorts are seen as artificial, Americanized and as having lost their 'Australian' innocence and naturalness, especially the beach (Fiske et al., 1987; Turner, 1994). Consistent with the Australian studies literature, it is noteworthy that in no case was a rural locale identified as 'UnAustralian'.

An exploration of the transcripts showed that participants tended to refer to visual cues in the built landscape and to a strong ethnic presence in identifying the 'UnAustralian' place. A place could become 'UnAustralian' when it could pass as part of another country. Melbourne's Crown Casino, for example, was likened to a busy part of London.

- I think maybe casinos. The Crown Casino that I had a look at in Melbourne. It looked exactly like Piccadilly Circus in London. The noise. Everything in latest video technology and the music.
- Australians have always been considered as gamblers.
- We like 2-ups and horse racing and if we play cards it's around at our mate's house on a rotation. It's more personal. Not the glitter and the hype. (Rural blue-collar)

Ethnic locations could be read as 'UnAustralian' not only for this reason, but also because evidence was detected that they were inward looking and snubbed a wider (Anglo) 'Australian' culture.

The street names. Chinatown. Fair enough, if they want to put the Chinese name or Vietnamese name up, put the English or Australian name first and then put it underneath. But they never do. (Urban elderly)

They're like ghettos and don't go in there because you get beaten up. There's not one sign in a language that we can read, it's all Vietnamese, the shops and everything. You have to avoid it now because if you're not one of them you've had it. (NESB women)

### **'UnAustralian' values, beliefs and lifestyles**

Much of the Australian studies literature is dedicated to identifying 'Australian' values, beliefs and lifestyles. These include mateship, egalitarianism, the fair-go, self-reliance and an easy-going tolerance. The focus groups identified a number of 'UnAustralian' things which confronted these values. These were often refracted through the lenses of incivility, wastefulness and Americanization (see Table 5).

**Table 5:** 'UnAustralian' values, beliefs and lifestyles nominated by the six groups

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**Regional city**

Extremism, flashiness, exploiting the weak, people falsely claiming disability benefits.

**Urban blue-collar**

Lack of respect, violence, suing people.

**Urban white-collar**

Intolerance, Americanization, suing other people, crime and violence.

**Rural blue-collar**

Not helping people, excessive support for single mothers, not being fair to Aborigines, inefficient use of money given to Aborigines.

**Urban elderly**

Fighting at soccer games, excessive spending on Canberra buildings, taking factories offshore, being big-headed.

**NESB women**

Racism, White Australia Policy, drunken, abusive men.

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The following quotations provide the flavour of opinion. A litigious legal system was seen as a victim of Americanization creating social tension rather than a solidaristic camaraderie. Taxes were being wasted on flashy buildings, rather than being spent in a more egalitarian way on helping those in need. People in need were ignored, violating the code of mateship that had helped build rural Australia. Women were insulted by drunks who lacked the 'Australian' ability to hold their liquor (Kapferer, 1988) and remain civil.

One of the things that is creeping in that I don't like is the tendency to become Americanized. Like the legal system. I feel it's, we're becoming pushed in that American way. Going to sue everybody that looks at you sideways. I really don't like that. I feel that that's coming. (Urban white-collar)

- Somebody said a while ago charity begins at home and there always seems to be a lot of money around to hand out to foreign bodies and not so much for our own.
- They can find millions and billions to send overseas but they forget about kids who are unemployed.
- Also all that money they could find to put a scenic balcony on the new Parliament House. All those millions and the good they could have done. (Urban elderly)
- I was thinking along the lines of someone not stopping to help someone in need. The more physical aspect. We are fairly used to it.
- We are in the bush.
- In the city if you're lying in the footpath, they'd walk around you.
- Exactly.
- That would be UnAustralian. (Rural blue-collar)

- I don't like when the men have had a bit to drink and what comes out.
- The swearing. Not just the man.
- They call you this and they call you that. That's very disgraceful.
- If you don't turn around and smile and say come on let's go then you're this and that.
- Yeah. (NESB women)

## Discussion

Painting with a broad brush, we see several key patterns in the data. First, there are no major differences between the groups in terms of the general themes deemed 'UnAustralian'. This suggests that there is a broadly shared conception of the 'UnAustralian' in Australian popular culture, rather than each group having sharply demarcated class, race or gender-specific interpretations. Of course, it is possible that more marginal groups, such as youth or Aborigines, have widely divergent understandings from those presented here. Nevertheless, our findings suggest that claims about a post-modern fragmentation of the national may be premature in the Australian context (Wark, 1997). Second, the contemporary, popular concepts of the 'UnAustralian' revealed in the data diverge from the older, more manifestly political and ideological understandings we reviewed at the start of this article. For the most part unions, strikes and communists were conspicuous by their absence. By contrast, powerful figures associated with capitalism (e.g. Kerry Packer, Keith Williams, Rupert Murdoch) and consequences of economic rationalism (e.g. bank closures, moving businesses overseas) were rather likely to be cited as prime exemplars of the 'UnAustralian'. If class politics have dropped out of the frame, ethnic themes, however, have persisted. Although they have been shorn of earlier ideas of conspiracy and invasion, these reflect a continuing suspicion of the ethnic other. Within this context, Pauline Hanson's rhetoric seems remarkably in touch with popular applications of the concept. We return to explain this shift in a few paragraphs.

Our third general finding is that although each of the tables demarcates a separate realm of symbols, and although the number of typifications provided by respondents was vast, this diversity is underpinned by a common generative logic. Put simply, things which are 'UnAustralian' represent either (1) a violation of norms of civility and natural justice and/or (2) are a 'foreign' influence on Australian culture. In terms of the first criterion, violence, intolerance, selfishness, waste, racism, divisiveness, separatism and immodesty seem to be the most significant variables. These all constitute a failure of civic responsibility. The relationships between each of these concepts and their indicators in the data are shown in Table 6.

In terms of the second, 'foreign' criterion, participants identified two major forces at work, Americanization and 'the ethnic'. The association

**Table 6:** Normative dimensions of the 'UnAustralian'

<i>Concept</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
Violence	Football hooligans, crime.
Intolerance	KKK, litigation society.
Racism	KKK, White Australia Policy, injustice to Aborigines.
Waste	Canberra buildings, single mother handouts, Aboriginal funding.
Divisiveness	Pauline Hanson, Geoffrey Blainey, street marches.
Extremism	KKK, religious sects and cults.
Selfishness	Keith Williams, Christopher Skase, taking factories offshore, falsely claiming benefits.
Separatism	Ethnic enclaves and clubs, Masons, failure to learn English, extremists.
Immodesty	Gay Mardi Gras, flashiness.

**Table 7:** 'Foreign' dimensions of the 'UnAustralian'

<i>Concept</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
Americanization	Basketball, one-sided sports crowds, litigation, violence, cults and sects, Halloween, high school formals, the KKK.
The ethnic	Not learning English, ethnic ghettos, Gold Coast street signs, Oktoberfest, supporting Iran not Australia at soccer.

between these two concepts and their indicators in the data is displayed in Table 7.

While analytically separate, these themes relating to cultural traditions and spaces are often interlinked. So, for example, American influences are credited with increasing levels of violence and intolerance. Ethnic separatism is seen as an attack on norms of civility. By allegedly remaining in ghettos, neglecting to learn English and failing to assimilate, certain minorities were perceived to be separatists, thumbing their noses at other Australians. The focus groups seemed to feel that migrants had a duty to participate in a wider civic culture and to value that culture as being at least the equal of their own. Participants, including the NESB women, considered that the ethnic was potentially valuable, but only as long as it did not take an inward looking form or come to dominate a broader 'Australian' society. As one participant in the urban elderly group put it: 'When you're in Rome, do as the Romans do.'

This brings us to the issue of multiculturalism and immigration. Our data suggest that ethnic groups, rather than the left wing, are now most likely to be stigmatized as the 'UnAustralian'. What is evident is that despite

a quarter of a century of official government policy, Australians are still operating within an assimilationist logic. To be sure, the participants in the study were hostile to what they perceived as racism. Yet, at the same time they were suspicious of ethnic groups which remained separate from a wider Australian society. In her maiden speech to parliament, Pauline Hanson spoke in negative terms of migrants who 'fail to learn English, live in ghettos and do not assimilate' (Australia, 1996). While our participants often spoke of Ms Hanson as 'UnAustralian' due to her divisive politics her opinions were often broadly consistent with their views. When asked to nominate 'UnAustralian' places, participants did not speak of poverty-ridden slums as an affront to national values. Their discursive consciousness focused instead on Chinatowns, the Gold Coast and strongly ethnic suburbs. They seemed relatively insensitive to real-world constraints and difficulties that often drive migrants into enclaves, or to the possibility that the public sphere in Australia was one that is 'raced' according to a particular Anglo-Celtic logic. To make this point is not so much to criticize the participants, but rather to highlight the inadequacy of existing policies with respect to civic education (McAllister, 1998). Put simply, the government is not doing a good job of explaining what multiculturalism means in contemporary Australia.

How might the broader conditions characterizing Australian society in the 1990s bear upon these new meanings and usages of the 'UnAustralian' revealed in this article? Paul Kelly's (1999: 17) recent comments about the state of Australia are suggestive:

Australia is beset by a paradox. In the late 1990s, our economy and standards of living have never been stronger or higher. Yet our mood, by and large, is that of apprehension and uncertainty amid growing wealth and opportunity. Often, Australia seems to be a confused, insecure nation, pessimistic about its future.

The rapid social change and feelings of insecurity highlighted by Kelly are both factors which Zygmunt Bauman (1990: 48) associates with the nationalist orientation towards boundary-maintaining behaviour. Labelling an object or event 'UnAustralian' is a core aspect of the boundary-maintaining process: blaming 'out-groups' for change and the decline of 'the old ways' (Bauman, 1990: 48). We might expect this more aggrieved usage of the 'UnAustralian' to be part of a larger vocabulary of motives found mainly to be concentrated in the life-world of a 'middle Australia' (Brett, 1997) reacting to the perceived threat to their symbolic-moral universe.

Thinking about the origins of this 'threat' allows us to account for the shifts in the deployment of the 'UnAustralian'. It can be read as the product of a transition to a global, multicultural society characterized by high levels of capital mobility (Waters, 1995). As domestic, class-driven politics (with its revolutionaries, communists and imagined conspirators)

has declined as a primary locus of struggle and uncertainty, risks have come to be perceived in new fields. Looking at the data again, it becomes clear that the forces of globalization lurk behind the majority of the things 'UnAustralian' identified by our participants. Individuals and policies associated with entrepreneurial multinational capitalism, cultural trends towards 'Americanization' and the growing ethnic presence can all be read as potential threats to the ontological security (Giddens, 1984) of the middle Australian that arise from this accelerating process. A historical shift in deployments of the 'UnAustralian', then, probably reflects the new fears and anxieties that have emerged from the reorganization of Australian social life over recent decades.

## Notes

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- 1 We note the absence of an elaborated concept of the 'Un-English' (Lipset, 1990).
- 2 Further, it would seem that the 'UnAustralian' once had a similar resonance to the 'UnAmerican'. Yet there is also a subordinate racial or ethnic component which has arguably been more pronounced than in the discourse of the 'UnAmerican'.
- 3 The newspaper database search covered *The Australian* (1991–8), *The Age* (1991–8), the *Bulletin* (1991–8), the *Sydney Morning Herald* (1992–8) and the *Herald Sun*, Victorian Edition (1991–8).

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