

## What is multiculturalism?

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### *Abstract*

*Integration and immigration are currently extremely contentious issues in both the Australian political arena and the media. In line with these hot topics that flood the daily news, it makes sense to throw more limelight on the term 'multiculturalism'. The focal point of the issue is the question of what has happened to the term. Once the buzzword of the political world of the 1990s, multiculturalism seems to have lost its influence in Australia over the last few years, due to changes in policy and by the increasing focus on 'integration' by governments. To find out what everyday Anglo-Australians think about multiculturalism and the current issues that surround it, seven interviews were conducted. The results revealed that the participants had many beliefs, perceptions, presuppositions, values and norms relating to multiculturalism. Although multiculturalism is overtly inclusive, what came through the views expressed were traces of implicit exclusionary discourse.*

### **1. Introduction**

Integration and immigration are currently extremely contentious issues in both the Australian political arena and the media. In line with these hot topics that flood the daily news, it makes sense to throw more limelight on the term 'multiculturalism'. The focal point of the issue is the question of what happened to the term. Once the buzz word of the political world of the 1990s, multiculturalism seems to have lost its influence in Australia over the last few years and has been replaced by the term 'integration'. Riddled with political agendas, multiculturalism has been killed off by having its policies modernised and by the change of government focus to integration. Their goal was to move away from celebrating difference and move towards a shared destiny and a cohesive society (Becoming an Australian Citizen, 2007).

'Multiculturalism' is a term that was introduced into the political bureaucratic language decades ago, and has since become synonymous with diversity and tolerance in Australia. It was introduced in 1973 by the Labor government under Gough Whitlam and later resumed as a policy under the Fraser government, where refugees were welcomed from Lebanon and South-East Asia. Also in 1973, the government officially ended the White Australia policy by dropping all references to race in its immigration policy; immigrants were now to be chosen on merit and eligibility for various categories rather than on the basis of race, colour or religion.

Over the next two decades, 'multiculturalism' was established as the 'buzz' term and Prime Minister Bob Hawke set up an Office of Multicultural Affairs

during the 1980s to devise multicultural policy. By this stage, Australia's population was made up of 20 per cent of people who had been born overseas. The last Multicultural policy to exist ran from 2003 to 2006 and was called *Multicultural Australia: United in Diversity* (Australian Immigration Fact Sheet 6: 2007).

The beginning of 2007 saw the end of multicultural policies, when the Howard government sacked Amanda Vandstone, the Minister of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs. Symbolically, Howard renamed the department The Department of Immigration and Citizenship, which implies that he did not feel the current multiculturalism policies led to citizenship in Australia. "The Howard government defended the change saying that Australia believed that immigration should lead to citizenship" (End of multiculturalism 2007). What can be seen as a more tangible move by the Howard government (and retained by the Rudd government so far) is the creation of a Citizenship test which forces newcomers to adopt Australian Citizenship while simultaneously prescribing a set of Australian values to immigrants.

## 2. Literature Review

Multiculturalism is a concept that has represented Australia's growing mix of different races over the past thirty to forty years, and this multiplicity of cultures has certainly played a large role in characterising Australia's identity. Since identity is a heavily theorised academic concept, treatments of identity have moved in recent years, going from conceptualising it as an essentialist pre-existing construct that drives social interaction, to postmodern accounts which treat it as more of a fluid and hybrid construct that is constituted through discourse (Benwell and Stokoe 2006). What is rather interesting is how the notion of multiculturalism fails to be represented in modern and postmodern theories of identity.

Although the notion of multiculturalism hasn't received a lot of attention through the lens of modern and postmodern views, some correlations can be made. Recent understandings of social and collective identity draw close to explaining the folk concept of multiculturalism in Australia as they emphasise "social/collective identity", or self-definition through "membership of, or identification with a particular group or groups" (Benwell and Stokoe 2006: 24). The modern view of identity can be described as static, essential and pre-given, often evoking the idea that a person identifies with a certain culture because they are like that. These views somewhat influence the way people identify with a particular group or groups.

Contrary to the modern view of identity, the postmodern approach, which also assists in explicating the view of multiculturalism in Australia, speaks of fluidity, hybridity and fragmentation. The lay view of multiculturalism is somewhat indefinable and contradictory, so this treatment of identity as

fragment and fluid is rather fitting. The postmodern view has challenged 'group' identity as it emphasises concepts such as 'fluidity', 'migration', 'diaspora', 'crossing' and 'decentring' (Benwell and Stokoe 2006). The term *diaspora*, once synonymous with ethnic or homeland identity, has come to refer to a dynamic and heterogeneous notion of community (Brooker 1999). "*Diaspora* represents the identities of those moving between cultures 'unsettling the assumptions of one culture from the perspective of the other'" (Hall 1995: 48). The term *hybridity* is used to describe a fusion of cultural identities (1995: 28) and attempts to "destabilise traditional binaries and myths of cultural homogeneity" (Benwell and Stokoe 2006: 28). *Crossing* is a sociolinguistic term that defines the "interethnic adoption of styles or codes of talk of an outgroup" (*ibid.*: 28).

Though the poststructuralist approach has challenged essentialist notions of identity, the membership of a specific, named collectivity may be a *marked* and politically motivated strategy to make oneself and one's interests 'visible' and 'included' (Spivak 1990). The most fitting approach for explaining the position of the Indigenous Australians is the poststructuralist view of identity politics, which "in its liberal, leftist form, is most associated with marginal, oppressed groups, whose historically marked and 'othered' status led to a concept of historical group subjectivity" (Benwell and Stokoe 2006: 28).

Even though the field of psychology and sociolinguistics has challenged the notion of internally located, group or collective identity (Benwell and Stokoe 2006), "there has been little in the way of the development of a clear 'postmodern research methodology', as such a development is fundamentally antithetical to a perspective that focuses on the breaking of distinctions" (Haugh 2008: 209).

### 3. Method: Participants and Procedure

Seven Anglo-Australians were interviewed in person and asked to respond to questions concerning their thoughts and attitudes towards multiculturalism. The interviews were semi-structured with some prepared questions; however these questions were not necessarily asked in a set order. The aim of the interviews was to focus on the beliefs, perceptions, presuppositions, values and normative understandings of the participants. The answers are treated in the analysis as joint, interactional products of the interviewer and the interviewees.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher/interviewer. The task was to identify key themes and trends that (re-)occurred in the data. Since there were only a small number of people interviewed, the results merely give insight into the way some Anglo-Australians perceive multiculturalism.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 *Multiculturalism – A popular topic of conversation for Anglo-Australians?*

After analysing the transcripts, there were seven major themes that could be identified from the data. During the first interview the participant was asked what kinds of things come to mind when hearing the term ‘multiculturalism’. The answer of ‘Well I don’t actually think about it’ made it evident that a better worded question would be ‘Do you ever think about the concept multiculturalism?’. The results represent Anglo-Australians’ views of multiculturalism and there were certainly some surprising views expressed in the interviews. The most dominant theme found was that Anglo-Australians do not think about the concept ‘multiculturalism’ on a daily basis unless prompted by the media.

Evidence of this can be seen by the following excerpts:

(1)

- 1 K: So Andrew (.) just wondering what your thoughts are on  
 2 multiculturalism and when you think about it what comes to mind  
 3 A: Right (.) umm well first off I don’t think about it really I mean not in the  
 4 course of doing what I do particularly (3.0) I suppose what comes to  
 5 mind with questions like that is umm (2.0) I don’t have any particular  
 6 (1.0) notion of what the multicultural would be except to say that maybe  
 7 it is useful to look at places where multiculturalism or multicultural gets  
 8 used as a descriptor as a term so it’s really maybe to do with how it gets  
 9 used and the jobs it does in different places and contexts yeah↓

In excerpt 1, the participant says in lines 3 to 6 that he does not think about multiculturalism in relation to what he does, and so does not have any particular notion of it. He then states that it might be useful to look at where the term is deployed.

(2)

- 1 K: I was just wondering if you ever think about multiculturalism?  
 2 B: Not↑ really not at all (.) until you mentioned it yourself (1.0) Yep it’s not  
 3 a thing you think↑ about unless you see something on TV↓ or hear it in  
 4 the media

In excerpt 2, in lines 2 to 4 it is revealed that the participant usually only thinks about multiculturalism when he hears someone else use the term on television, in the media or in private conversation.

#### 4.2 *Multiculturalism – What the?*

What emerged from the views expressed in the interviews relating to multiculturalism were contradictions and uncertainties. It appears that in Australia there is a sense of underlying racism but, at the same time, people are trying to gain an understanding and acceptance of other cultures. Multiculturalism in Australia remains an unresolved issue and it seems that many people in this country are fairly ambivalent and confused when it comes to explaining what this term means to them.

The following excerpt reveals some contradictions in relation to multiculturalism:

- (3)
- 1 K: So Terry I was just wondering, I just wanted to talk to you about  
 2 multiculturalism and the concept of it and I wanted to know if you  
 3 ever actually think<sup>↑</sup> about multiculturalism as a concept  
 4 T: No not very much<sup>↑</sup> (.). no.  
 5 K: Say if you're watching a media program or if you're listening to some  
 6 political news that might engage in multicultural affairs or issues, what  
 7 kind of things come into mind when you hear<sup>↑</sup> the term being bandied  
 8 around  
 9 T: (0.3) Well I think it's umm (3.0) concerned with racial issues? Umm I  
 10 can remember it being talked about a fair bit after the riots at Cronulla  
 11 (.). cause of the racial or what appeared to be racial problems there? (.).  
 12 umm  
 13 K: So do you think negatively about multiculturalism?  
 14 T: No? I think my idea of multiculturalism is that its' ahhh you know  
 15 different cultures living together tolerating each other.

In line 9 the participant expresses his view in saying that multiculturalism is concerned with racial issues. However, when queried about thinking negatively of multiculturalism, he answered 'no' immediately with uprising intonation. This answer gives the impression that he overtly denies the presupposition that the interviewer senses he thinks negatively about multiculturalism and may link this to racism. In line 14 and 15 the interviewee conveyed his idea that multiculturalism is different cultures living together and tolerating each other, which clearly contradicts his answer in line 9 when he associates multiculturalism with racial issues and the Cronulla riots.

Evidence revealed in the following excerpt points out ambivalent and contradictory views in relation to multiculturalism.

- (4)
- 5 K: So when you do see it on TV or hear about it what kinds of things do you  
 6 think about  
 7 B: umm that it's many different cultures<sup>↑</sup> that hopefully<sup>↑</sup> we can live in

- 8 harmony umm that people still get to look at their (.) and take into  
 9 consideration their own cultures, their language all that's important that  
 10 they still (.) have that and it's respected and that there is respect shown  
 11 to all these different cultures
- 12 K: Do you think that multiculturalism in Australia has actually been  
 13 successful?
- 14 B: Yes and no↑ I think (.) I don't think you could ever say that anything  
 15 could be perfect↓ umm and of course it's so different because you  
 16 know prior to that it was Australia white policy and then it all changed  
 17 after World War 2↑ when there were lots of changes with immigration  
 18 (.) and things like that, so I think in a way↑ it's successful that we have  
 19 got so many different cultures↑ as part of our society today↓ but then  
 20 when you look at race relations and how people disregard each other  
 21 and whatever but doesn't matter I suppose that still exists no matter if  
 22 you're white or black whatever↑ (.) people are not going to (.) there's not  
 23 going to be harmony

In line 6 and 7 the participant expresses hope that a diversity of races can coexist in harmony. However, the participant's responses in lines 21-23 contradict this, indicating that the respondent is unsure of her stance on the issue. Once again, the results suggest that some Anglo-Australians are undecided and uncertain of their own beliefs and perceptions of multiculturalism.

The following excerpt further illustrates the state of confusion people have when invited to express their thoughts on multiculturalism.

- (5)
- 1 A: I don't think people know what multiculturalism is↑ (.) we're confused  
 2 you need to give me you know (.) a definition of what  
 3 multiculturalism is
- 4 K: Well that's what I'm trying to find out by interviewing [people.
- 5 A: [That's why I  
 6 think it's so hard to define what it is because people don't know what it  
 7 is they can't give you a definitive answer to what multiculturalism is  
 8 because they just don't know themselves.

The following extract (6) comes from a chat room called ActNow where the subject was multiculturalism. This explanation reaffirms the complexities and ambiguities multiculturalism evokes.

(6) Jacquie on 06 Aug 2007 expresses her opinion:

"I have noticed sometimes multiculturalism's meanings get lost in translation or even political correctness. It's not a simple concept so it shouldn't be simplified".

### 5.3 Do Indigenous Australians fit the mould?

One extremely salient theme that became apparent when analysing the transcripts was that not all people actually think about indigenous Australians when they hear the term multiculturalism. When probed with questions resembling, 'Do you think people think of Indigenous Australians when they hear the term multiculturalism?' only two participants answered yes. The remaining participants instead made a correlation between multiculturalism and immigrants, rather than associating the term with the first inhabitants of this land.

Evidence of this view can be seen in the following extracts:

(7)

- 15 K: Do you ever consider indigenous Australians when you hear the term  
16 multiculturalism?  
17 D: Ah not specifically but definitely umm to me anyway I identify (.)  
18 multiculturalism with umm you know being a word or a term that's  
19 applied to people from other countries↑ as opposed to people from this  
20 country↑ But umm in terms of the actual term itself and how its applied  
21 I don't really put the two together?

(8)

- 29 K: When you hear the term multiculturalism what kinds of cultures actually  
30 do you think of.  
31 B: umm what kind of cultures? [oh]  
32 K: [the] most salient ones  
33 B: Africans there are a lot of Africans here now in this area?. You know you  
34 go around and see the tall Masai, I think they're here a lot now I think of  
35 (0.1) Indian a lot of Indians Asians, I think yeah it's ( ) Turkish there are  
36 lots of Turkish yeah I think more those (0.1) more so those than umm (.)  
37 English you know British there's still that but you think more of the other  
38 cultures yeah.  
39 K: Now do ever you think many people ever consider indigenous  
40 Australians when they think about multiculturalism  
41 B: no↑ no↓ I don't No? because I think they're such umm they're (.)  
42 Australians the original you know inhabitants of this land (0.2) It's  
43 just they've always been there. Aboriginals have always been in our  
44 society

Contrary to expectations, the results revealed the term multiculturalism does not extend to include Indigenous Australians. This is an extremely surprising revelation, as the culture of Indigenous Australians is far removed from and in no way similar to that of European settlers in Australia. Even though only a small number of people were interviewed, the results give some indication that Indigenous Australians are not represented by the term multiculturalism and

that they seem culturally displaced in Australian society. It seems the case that Aboriginals are more represented as a homogenous out-group and appear to have an ambivalent position within the existing framework of Australian society. These results also suggest that the modern-day term multiculturalism is more related to immigration that has taken place over the last three or four decades, rather than being associated with the Aboriginals.

#### **5.4 *The Government's role?***

Throughout the interviews it seemed quite clear that Anglo-Australians believe the government does not necessarily define how multiculturalism impacts upon society. The way we live is not determined by the use of the term 'multiculturalism', even though the government in the past has enforced Multicultural Policies. For instance:

- (9)  
 5 E: Umm (2.0) I'm not sure I don't think we're very open to multiculturalism  
 6 (. ) umm you know I think the government at the moment is really (1.0) I  
 7 don't think they're trying to nurture↑ multiculturalism

One idea expressed was that the way the federal government has used the term is fairly problematic (see line 19 below).

- (10)  
 18 A: I mean the ways in which it is used by the federal government↑ or has↑  
 19 been used by the federal government are fairly problematic as well I  
 20 suppose. So it's no I don't think there's anything intrinsically excellent  
 21 in it as a term (. ) it depends on how you use it and how it gets taken up  
 22 like anything else↓

Overall, what seemed to emerge from the topic of the government and its relationship with multiculturalism were rather negative thoughts and feelings.

#### **5.5 *Integration – New Buzz Term?***

Within Australia, 'integration' is a notion that is somewhat exhorted in Immigration policy and this vision for Australia can be easily spotted in the new Citizenship Booklet (2007). The introduction of the booklet states: "It also helps to foster a cohesive and integrated society with a sense of shared destiny and, should the need arise, a shared sacrifice for the common good".

To find out what the Australian people thought about integration and whether it is possible for migrants to assimilate straight away into Australian Society, the participants were queried on the topic of integration. When people think of integration they may think of the dominant culture that swamps the

emerging culture. However, some surprising results which emerged from the interviews were noticeably more positive. What seemed to surface from the interviews was the notion that migrants slowly integrate over time and that it is usually another generation before migrants fit properly into Australian society. It was also claimed that newcomers take time to adjust to new surroundings and that naturally people stick together in their own communities for some time. Besides this, it was thought that migrants bring unique elements of their culture to Australia, which in turn enriches the country. Even though we hear terms like separation and segregation alongside integration, the results suggest that Australians believe it is very important for immigrants to keep attachments to their forms of cultural identity.

The following excerpt reveals an optimistic view on integration in Australia.

(11)

44 R: If you look at where we are now and how we view the world and our  
45 food (.) and you know everything to do with our day to day lives is so  
46 fundamentally different than it was in the fifties and that's primarily the  
47 positive result of lots of immigration and lots of different people coming  
48 to Australia (0.5) integration is not a one way street if you like (.) we will  
49 change as a result and they will change as a result and harmony is  
50 maintained↑ hopefully.

Linking in well with the hot topic of Integration is the newly founded Citizenship test designed for migrants who wish to become Australian Citizens. As mentioned earlier, in this citizenship test, the Howard government has set out to force a set of Australian values on newcomers. Throughout the interviews, what came through from the views expressed was that this citizenship test wasn't going to prove much, if anything. People more or less thought this new test was a joke.

Views on the citizenship test are shown in the following extract:

(12)

44 K: They've just come up with this new immigration test [citizenship test↑  
45 A: [umm  
46 K: and there's all these social values being exemplified you know in this  
47 [test so they're trying to come up with one definition or identity for=  
48 A: [uh hmm  
49 K: =everyone.  
50 A: I think that's absolutely extraordinary it's an extraordinary measure I  
51 mean I remember one of the I think (.) I've not been following it closely  
52 but one of the justifications that some of them were sort of advancing  
53 was that it exists as a practise of policy↑ in other places (1.0) I mean that  
54 (.) alone is a fairly peculiar argument to run but yeah↑ extraordinary this  
55 notion that you could (2.0) distil hhh some sort of sense hhh of identity  
56 national identity and then manifest it in this instrument which would be

57 a way of I mean what those things are ultimately about is an instrument  
 58 of exclusion and inclusion its about filtering persons from the country  
 59 denying them access I think that's the way these things get used in  
 60 practices (.) tools yeah its just an extraordinary idea I think (.) personally  
 61 I think it's fairly ludicrous.

In lines 55 to 61 the participant attributes an underlying racist agenda to the government in arguing that the citizenship test is used as an instrument which is used to filter and deny people access to the country.

### **5.6 Please Explain Australian Values**

Australia is often recognised for its tradition of 'mateship' and giving everyone a 'fair go'. The recent Citizenship booklet (2007) gives the following explanation under the 'Australian Values' heading: "Australia has a strong tradition of 'mateship' – where people help and receive help from others voluntarily, especially in times of adversity. A mate can be a spouse, partner, brother, sister, daughter, son or a friend. A mate can also be a stranger". This term 'mateship' forms part of Australia's values but, according to some Anglo-Australians, they themselves are not particularly sure of what these values comprise. Although the Howard government has prescribed these traditional values to Australians and potential citizens, people remain uncertain what these values are. One participant retorted with a rhetoric question, "Who really determines or who is in the position to determine what constitutes these famous 'Australian values'". In the context of the interview this response reveals that there is animosity towards the Federal Government's attempts to prescribe definitions of 'Australian values'. The results suggest that there are basic premises for what an Australian is but no one really can say. Generally speaking, 'Australian values' is an indefinable term and very much lacking in a concrete definition for the Australian people.

Evidence of this is revealed in the following excerpt:

(13)

45 K: I guess the big question here is what do people actually integrate to (0.5)  
 46 recently a new citizenship test was created for new citizens of  
 47 Australia and in this test they (the government) really want these  
 48 newcomers to adapt and adjust to Australian ways and this mateship↑  
 49 concept (.) What do you think about that?  
 50 E: I think its crap↑ (0.3) I think as you said what is↑ this idea of mateship  
 51 what is↑ that what does it↑ mean (0.5) and there's no substantiated way  
 52 of life you know that a lot of countries umm (.) you know if you're  
 53 talking about mateship (1.0) like they've got great you know (.) they've  
 54 got great ways to teach us how to be in relationships with other people  
 55 and treat other people with respect and dignity.

In lines 45-49, the interviewer is trying to push the participant in a certain way to talk about their views on integration and what values constitute Australian values. In line 50, the participant says "...as you said what is this idea of mateship...", which in fact the interviewer never said. The interviewer simply said "...what do people integrate to...". Perhaps by using the phrase, "*this mateship concept*", containing the demonstrative 'this', the participant implied that the interviewer bandied the term 'mateship' about as though it was indefinable or perhaps even negative.

The following excerpt reveals further views on integration and what constitutes Australian values:

- (14)
- 13 A: See the interesting thing there↓ is should they adapt to our values↑ what  
14 is Australian values↑ (0.5) what are Australian values
- 15 K: Good question I'm not sure myself.
- 16 A: because if you look at the history of Australia↑ it's based on immigration  
17 (0.5) like Immigrants set up the countr:y founded the country the:re was  
18 indigenous people already here (.) did the immigrants (.) were  
19 they tolerant to the, you know (2.0) everybody is different you know and  
20 that's multiculturalism, everyone's different but can still get along with  
21 each other. It's not trying to force one set of ideals on to one person (1.0)  
22 it's not saying you can come but you can't come

### 5.7 *Australia's Social Identity – Does multiculturalism play a part?*

When asked if multiculturalism plays an important role in Australia's Social Identity, some interesting answers emerged. According to some of the participants, multiculturalism definitely forms part of Australian identity and also helps Australians describe who they are. Responses that contained the words 'different food' seemed to prop up occasionally in the interviews so it seems that the diverse ethnic foods available in Australia at present play a considerable part in representing multiculturalism in Australia. Apart from the continuous correlation with different foods and multiculturalism, diversity was a term bandied around positively. The consensus was that diversity makes Australia a more interesting and exciting place to live and that it has also aided and enriched Australia's growth.

Evidence for this can be seen in the following excerpts:

- (15)
- 62 K: Just one last question for you (.) ah do you think that multiculturalism  
63 plays a really big part in our identity in Australia our social identity (.)  
64 even though the term is not used very often anymore↑ (.) do you think it  
65 is still important in portraying what our social identity is all about↑
- 66 T: oh yeah I think it is yeah because it brings a lot of diversity↑ (3.0)

67            yeah different cultures bring (1.0) bring ah different things and make it a  
68            more exciting place to live and (1.0) make it a more interesting place↑  
69            and people with different ideas↑ I think it has helped Australia grow.

(16)

56 K:        Do you think that multiculturalism plays a big part in our social  
57            identity as Australians  
58 E:        (4.0) umm I'm not sure (1.0) I don't think we're very open↑ to  
59            multiculturalism umm (0.5) you know I think the government at the  
60            moment is really (0.5) I don't think they're trying to nurture  
61            multi (     ) I can't even say it hhh but umm yeah I don't think we're  
62            necessarily influenced by it I think we sort of might try and umm (1.0)  
63            although restaurants and all that sort of food and you know (.) definitely  
64            I think we're really open to different foods and umm and you know  
65            different people↑ and I think we're getting better as a country umm  
66            we're including people from different countries into ours.

In excerpt 16, lines 58 and 59 illustrate the ambivalence and uncertainties the participant has when asked if multiculturalism plays a big part in Australia's social identity. In lines 59-61, some negative views about the government are expressed where it could be implied the government has an underlying racist agenda because it are not trying to nurture multiculturalism.

## 6. Discussion

The study of Anglo-Australians' views of multiculturalism revealed several surprises after many insightful opinions, perceptions, presuppositions, beliefs and contradictions were expressed. Unexpectedly, a large number of participants never actually thought about multiculturalism unless the topic was invoked by the media. What became clear was that even though people did not think of multiculturalism as part of their everyday lives, many admitted to having some deep seeded views on the topic. Although there were only seven people interviewed, the results gave some insight into Anglo-Australians thoughts and beliefs on multiculturalism. Overall, the responses given seemed to suggest that this topic is a matter of opinion and perspective.

In particular, the concern of 'Australian values' brought many ardent opinions and standpoints to the surface. Even though the government has sought to ascribe particular values to both the Australian people and its potential citizens, an ambiguity continues to surround these relatively coerced values. The findings suggest that some people have only a basic idea of what these values comprise, but in the end, no one can really give a definitive answer.

A stand-out result was the fact that a large number of participants did not think of Indigenous Australians when the term multiculturalism arose. It is not always important to look just at what people do say: what they don't say can

mean a lot as well. When asked what cultures came to mind when thinking of multiculturalism, most participants pointed out many immigrant groups and failed to include Indigenous Australians, which partly implies that they may not really have a clear place within the Australian identity.

Since multiculturalism has not been a hugely focal topic or received a lot of attention from the perspective of modern or postmodern theories of identity, these theories fall short of definitively matching the findings and reflecting how people conceptualise multiculturalism in Australian society. However, to some extent, elements of both theories relate to the folk idea of multiculturalism, where modern views evoke a collectivist and static notion, and postmodern views speak of fluidity, fragmentation and hybridity.

In order to further our understanding of the role multiculturalism plays in Australian identity, supplementary research needs to be undertaken. A more in-depth exploration of Australian views on multiculturalism, focusing on a larger number of participants from a wider range of cultures other than Anglo-Australians, would help to give further insight into the topic of multiculturalism. More research on this topic would also provide an important extension to the theories of identity. Moreover, it could be interesting to conduct a comparison of New Zealand's concept of 'biculturalism', which comprises the Maori and Pakeha population, with Australia's notion of 'multiculturalism', whereby several immigrant groups and white Australians coexist.

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