

Gendered, classed national identities are foregrounded in Australian culture. This centralising of working-class masculinity has contributed to female social exclusion over time. The historical development of Australian society changed the definition of masculinity to centre productivity over morality, complimenting neoliberal values. In his book *Making the Australian Male*, Martin Crotty notes that the rejection of British values after colonisation between 1870 and 1920 led to a reevaluation of gender¹, and the adoption of “raw masculinity”² as the normalised, valued model of male identity. Ideal masculinity became that which made persons productive members of society in a time of changing material needs, due to the wartime environment. Neoliberal feminism³ similarly emphasises productivity, according to interviewee Debbie Brennan’s⁴ statement “neoliberal feminism... propagates the myth of the individual making its way to wealth and power.”⁵ The individualistic values of neoliberalism complimented, and became ingrained in, macro-level gendered identities. Extrapolating a classed identity across all classes and Australian culture makes systems of social exclusion invisible, promoting neoliberal ideologies⁶.

Australian masculinity is simultaneously classed and classless, connecting macro-level national identities to neoliberal ideology. Australian masculinity is intrinsically linked to the collective group identity of the working-class. This extension of working-class masculinity across class boundaries to form a national identity makes it a class-less notion. Kirsty Whitman supports working-class identity’s hegemonic status in Australian masculinities: “those that can engage with centralising working-class masculinity... can simultaneously align themselves with the mainstream ‘battler’, and shield their middle/upper class identity”⁷. Persons of all socioeconomic statuses identify with working-class masculinity in contemporary Australian society. This was consistent in the questionnaire⁸; there were few trends across socio-economic statuses in terms of views on personal responsibility. Figure 1⁹ exemplifies the chaotic views across classes when men were asked “how much emphasis do you place on personal responsibility to fix disadvantage?”; there are no clear class ideologies because all men ascribe to the national working-class masculinity. Female responses followed similarly few class-based trends, but were unified and shifted away from the neoliberal end (5), as shown in Figure 2¹⁰. Male respondents were consistently more individualistic than female respondents, demonstrating the neoliberal values implicit in Australian ‘manliness’. All groups identify with the working-class experience, erasing real class differences from Australian worldviews. If everyone is assumed to be of the same class, the

¹Crotty, M. (2001) *Making the Australian male: Middle class masculinity 1870-1920*. Melbourne University Press.

²“Raw masculinity” is Crotty’s term to describe physical, rowdy, ‘unfeminine’ behaviour and values.

³“Neoliberal feminism”, as defined for questionnaire respondents: “Neoliberal feminism argues that a free labour market will allow women more choice and agency in pursuing career and economic agency. Neoliberal feminists believe that taking away systemic regulations and working towards success, through resilience, will promote gender equality. The philosophy focuses on individual responsibility, and individual benefits.”

⁴An organiser of the self-described socialist-feminist, working-class group Radical Women Australia, which acts at the meso level.

⁵Appendix Item A: Interviews

⁶Whitman, K (2013) The Aussie battler and the hegemony of centralising working-class masculinity in Australia. *Australian Feminist Studies*. 28:75, 50-64. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/08164649.2012.758026>

⁷Whitman, K (2013) The Aussie battler and the hegemony of centralising working-class masculinity in Australia. *Australian Feminist Studies*. 28:75, 50-64. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/08164649.2012.758026>

⁸Appendix Item C: Questionnaire

⁹Appendix Item C: Questionnaire

¹⁰Appendix Item C: Questionnaire

only determinant of status and upward social mobility is personal choice, encouraging neoliberalism. This is supported by another of Whitman’s papers: “*centralising working-class masculinity legitimises tenets of neoliberalism such as individualism, personal responsibility, and ‘choice’... none of these approaches are helpful to the working class.*”¹¹ The ‘Aussie Battler’ identity articulated by persons in political power is extrapolated to all members of society, and both major political parties utilise neoliberal language and values to gain public approval¹². Bob Hawke’s working-class masculinity and “larrikinism” are more valued in public knowledge than his political achievements, according to a statement by Scott Morrison¹³. The ‘old Labor party’ emulated the working-class identity, making it the working-class party.

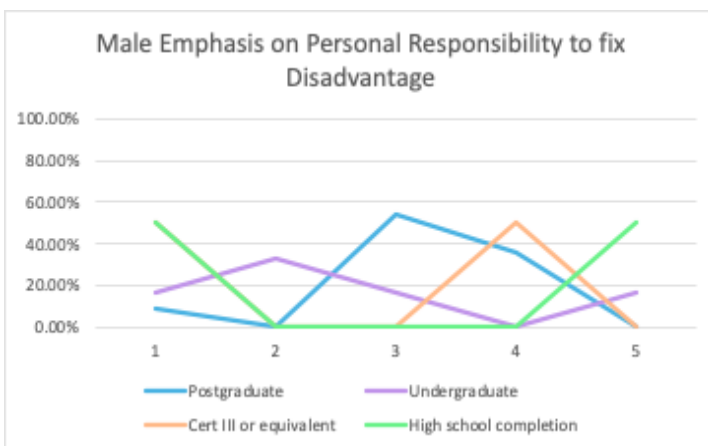


Figure SEQ Figure * ARABIC 1: Male emphasis on personal responsibility to change disadvantage by level of

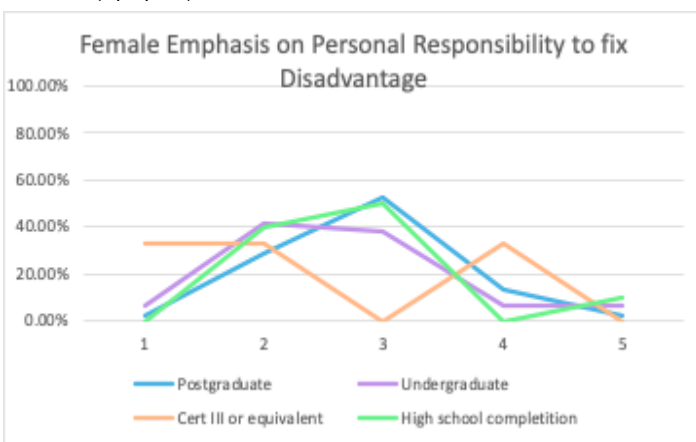


Figure SEQ Figure * ARABIC 2: Female emphasis on personal responsibility to change disadvantage by level of

¹¹Whitman, K (2013) Looking out for the ‘Aussie bloke’: Gender, class, and contextualising a hegemony of working-class masculinities in Australia. University of Adelaide. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/2440/98679>

¹²Appendix Item B: Statistical analysis - The Liberal party and ALP account for the vast majority of elected officials. Both of these parties have been identified as neoliberal by various sources. See Conway, B. (2021) How the myths of “progressive neoliberalism” hollowed out Australia’s left.

¹³Morrison reflects on Hawke's larrikin wit (2019) SBS News. Retrieved from <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/morrison-reflects-on-hawke-s-larrikin-wit>