

With women comprising 47.2% of the workforce,¹ and the election of the first female Prime Minister in 2010, women undoubtedly contribute to the development of Australian society and culture. Yet ‘Australianness’ is still associated with images of the rowdy larrikin figure, courageous ANZAC soldiers and having a drink with mates at the pub. Masculinity dominates the conception of what it means to be Australian in a nation which prides itself on equality and a fair go. The disastrous consequences of a national culture which privileges masculinity have become evident in the recent string of sexual assault accusations directed towards male politicians.²

Therefore I hypothesise that “*The Australian national identity is constructed in a way which glorifies masculinity, and in doing so excludes women from the narrative of what it means to be Australian*”. The aim of my Personal Interest Project (PIP) is to explore the gendered nature of Australian national identity, the power and authority structures which maintain gender bias within the national identity, as well as the impact that this bias has on women’s participation in Australian society.

I completed secondary research of a range of sources to provide me with an objective academic understanding and the wider social and cultural context of my topic. Jacqueline Hogan’s dissertation on *Gender and Ethnicised National Identities in Australia and Japan* was a major influence in shaping how I understood the construction of Australian national identity and the role discourses about national identity play in maintaining the subordination of social groups. Anna Worth et al. “*Playing the gender card*”: *Media representations of Julia Gillard’s sexism and misogyny speech* was also crucial in building my understanding of the consequences of women criticising the national culture, and in doing so guided my research of prejudice and gender bias.

Primary research was instrumental in helping me understand the practical implications of my theoretical knowledge. My questionnaire,³ which surveyed 74 respondents aged <18 - 84, provided insight into popular understanding of, and connection to, national identity . The sample size of the questionnaire was substantial enough to effectively draw conclusions, but presented problems when I separated respondents into generations to complete analysis for my cross-cultural component. This cross-generational analysis was essential to my PIP, providing insight into continuity and change of gender exclusion. I therefore conducted two interviews with feminist activists Jane Caro (Caro) and Eva Cox (Cox),⁴ who are members of the generational group lacking in my questionnaire. They provided me with knowledge of both personal experience and academic research about my topic. Finally, I completed a content analysis of 30 articles published⁵ in the last six years which mentioned one of three key characteristics of national identity found in the questionnaire (mateship, equality and fair go), to provide me with an understanding of the discourses surrounding national identity.⁶

¹ Workplace Gender Equality Agency. 2021. *Gender workplace statistics at a glance 2021*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.wgea.gov.au/publications/gender-workplace-statistics-at-a-glance-2021>>.

² Cave, D., 2021. “*The Most Unsafe Workplace*”? *Parliament, Australian Women Say*. [online] The New York Times. Available at: <<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/05/world/australia/parliament-women-rape-metoo.html>>.

³ See Appendix A.

⁴ See Appendix B.

⁵ Articles were collected from *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Australian* and *The Daily Telegraph*.

⁶ See Appendix C.

Gender exclusion in the Australian national identity is shaped and maintained by power and authority structures, both social and cultural. An understanding of change and continuity within gender exclusion is essential for determining how the national identity can include women in the future.