

***Anglo-Celtic Australians' Perspectives of
Multiculturalism***

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Anthropology - Honours Thesis**

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Preface

In Australia, the term multiculturalism has been used to denote government policy rather than the description of a country as multicultural. The aim of this paper is to examine some previously unexamined perceptions that Anglo-Australians of the baby-boomer and preceding generation have of multiculturalism and immigration policy. My objective is to discover how some people have responded to the politics of changing culture and society in an era of rapid global change.

I approach the study from three perspectives. In Chapter 1, I examine the literature to explore how academics have perceived and analysed nationalist discourse and multiculturalism in Australia. In that review, I include a discussion of the effect that rapid global change has had on how nation-states are understood. My second focus is on the historical discourses that have influenced the way people think about multiculturalism and immigration. Chapter 2 considers the impact of official discourses and Chapter 3 examines the popular discourses. My third and primary focus is on how a particular cohort of Anglo-Australians in Sydney experiences the presence of immigrants of perceived different cultural backgrounds. In Chapter 1, I discuss how this cohort has been mostly ignored in theoretical and empirical studies of multiculturalism. In Chapter 4, I discuss the data from my study of those Anglo-Australians that I interviewed.

By taking a three dimensional approach, I was able to examine if new data was to be found in the voices that were missing in the debates surrounding multiculturalism and immigration policy. The people I studied lived in areas isolated from cultural difference and were not publicly vocal in the debate. I conclude from my study that these people drew meaning from both local and national contexts. In the local context, their experience was often a folkloric one and they did not think much about multiculturalism and immigration. This was a view they had of multiculturalism that celebrated cultural diversity. This view contrasted with the one they had of other parts of Sydney. This view was mostly constructed from information that they encountered in the media. It resulted in what other writers identify as white Australian nationalist discourse. I argue that the anxiety they demonstrated when they called for greater assimilation of immigrants was derived from fears associated with different value systems.

In my conclusion, I also discuss how I situate my study as an example of *anthropology at home* as a valid means of anthropological scholarship.