



# Colonial and post-colonial aspects of Australian identity<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

Since the 1988 Bicentennial and the 2001 centenary of federation celebrations colonial images have flourished in Australia, highlighting the roles of convicts and free settlers during early colonization. Old sites, such as Port Arthur have been re-invigorated, and in 2004 Tasmanians celebrated the bicentenary of 'white' settlement. However, social scientists have given little attention to the role of colonial and post-colonial figures and myths as aspects of Australian national identity. We seek to address this issue by examining how convicts, free settlers, bushrangers and ANZACs are associated with contemporary identity in Australia.<sup>2</sup>

We examine evidence from the 2003 Australian Survey of Social Attitudes and find that historical figures such as the ANZACs and post-World War II immigrants comprise important aspects of national identity. A substantial majority of Australians judged ANZACs to be important, countering recent claims of the 'demise of the digger'. Sporting heroes are also at the core of Australian identity. Colonial figures appear to be far less important, although views on national identity vary according to social location. In particular, left-wing, university educated, younger, postmaterialist Australians view convicts and bushrangers as relatively important, indicating the salience of the *larrikin* in Australian identity.

**Keywords:** Australia; identity; convicts; ANZACs; sporting heroes

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## Introduction

Situated in the field of empirically based identity research, this is an exploration of the role played by colonial and post-colonial figures in the construction of contemporary Australian identity. How much influence do historical groups and figures have on the way Australians see themselves at the beginning of the twenty-first century? Do colonial figures such as convicts and bushrangers comprise an important aspect of Australian national identity, and if so, how

important are these figures? Often viewed as a successful sporting nation, to what extent is national identity in Australia constituted on the basis of popular sportspeople, and are ANZACs as important a characteristic of identity as politicians and members of the Returned Servicemen's League (RSL) claim?

Australian quantitative researchers working in the field of identity studies have typically considered conceptually abstract forms of identity and developed abstract identity typologies (e.g. Phillips 1996; Jones 1997; Pakulski and Tranter 2000). By adopting an approach more closely grounded in history and linked to actual individuals and groups than other identity researchers who use survey based data, we attempt to determine the impact of colonial Australians and other 'heroic' figures on contemporary Australian identity.

We extend earlier survey based identity research in this field by developing a set of attitudinal questions for the Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (AuSSA) administered in 2003. Our questions relate to significant historical groups and individuals in Australia; Aboriginal people, convicts, free settlers, and bushrangers, ANZACs, post-World War II immigrants and a more historically diverse but popular category in Australia – 'sporting heroes' (See footnote 1). We also show how certain historical figures are related to the 'civic' and 'nativist' forms of national identity discussed by earlier empirical researchers working in the field of identity studies.

### *Foundation myths*

The first 'golden age' (Smith 1996) in Australia recalls the time when convicts, free men and women, settlers and pioneers, developed the British colonies.<sup>3</sup> Such foundation myths connect us to the early colonists and gold rush miners. They form the basis of the national history and an Australian *mythscape* (Bell 2003).<sup>4</sup> In Australia, the 'emigrant-colonists' were the 'chosen people' (Smith 1999: 137) who emigrated mainly from England, Ireland and Scotland (Ward 1958: 47), 'subdued' the indigenous people and kept 'external enemies' such as the Chinese at bay (Phillips 1996: 116).

The ANZAC soldiers or 'diggers' who 'stormed the cliffs of Gallipoli' have entered into national myth, as these allegedly ill-disciplined bushmen were transformed through the sacrifices of war into pioneer-soldiers, 'loyal to the Empire and supportive of the state' (Day 1998: 75–6).<sup>5</sup> According to Day (1998: 76), the 'heroic myths of the pioneer and bushman-soldier imbued Australia with the self-confidence to imagine a great future for their nation and with the energy and inventiveness to try and achieve that vision'.

The 'Australian way of life' to an extent became a celebration of the bushman-digger ethos, with an emphasis on physical (sporting) rather than intellectual achievement. This is commemorated and celebrated in the annual ANZAC Day ceremonies, and embodied in the following quote from the ANZAC Day Commemoration Committee of Queensland website: 'the Spirit

of ANZAC is a cornerstone which underpins our Australian image, way of life and indeed is an integral part of our heritage'. Day claimed that 'to some extent, "the Australian way of life" was a celebration of the digger out of uniform', with an 'emphasis on physical skills, rather than intellectual attainments, and a casual connection to egalitarianism and mateship' (1998: 86). Such traditional identity myths provided cohesion and confidence in the first half of the twentieth century, although they glossed over the roles played by indigenous Australians, convicts, and tensions such as the sectarian conflict between the English and Irish (O'Farrell 1986).

We assess the extent to which convict, settler, bushranger and digger myths are constitutive of contemporary understandings of Australian national identity. Some claim – particularly following the mass migration to Australia in the wake of the Second World War – that such foundation myths have become less relevant for national identity. Day for example, writes of the digger's demise.

With the expansion of the Australian population, there is much less fear of an Asian invasion while the erosion of the British ascendancy in postwar Australia has made the digger a more problematic emblem for many Australians. There is now little consensus about our national identity (Day 1998: 94).

With the passing of the last ANZAC in 2005 we witnessed the demise of the digger in a literal sense, but is the ANZAC myth still a core component of what it means to be Australian? We examine whether Australian adults see colonial and post-colonial figures as important actors in the public mythology of what it means to be Australian. We explore whether these historical figures comprise core aspects of national identity by assessing empirical evidence from nationally representative survey data. In the following section we outline some of the concepts informing our empirical research.

### *National identity in Australia*

The five 'fundamental features' of national identity according to Smith (1991: 14) are contained in his definition of the nation 'as a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members'. Smith (1991: 14) explains that national identity is linked to other forms of collective identity, such as class, ethnic and religious identity, so that it is 'multi-dimensional' and 'can never be reduced to a single element'.

Of all the collective identities in which human beings share today, national identity is perhaps the most fundamental and inclusive . . . Other types of collective identity – class, gender, race, religion – may overlap or combine

with national identity but they rarely succeed in undermining its hold (Smith 1991:143)

However, Theophanous (1995: 292) maintains that Smith's definition of the nation-state is problematic as 'many nation-states have only some of these elements and not others'. He claims there are 'two strands' to Australian identity: 'one that emphasised our British heritage, and one that emphasised a limited form of egalitarianism and commitment to social justice' (Theophanous 1995: 281). We heed Bell's (2003: 73) warning that '[T]here is no singular, irreducible, national narrative, no essentialist "national identity"' and follow him in conceptualizing an Australian *mythscape* 'in which the myths of the nation are forged, transmitted, reconstructed and negotiated constantly' (Bell 2003: 75). In Australia, this narrative includes the 'discovery' of Australia, British colonization and 'white' settlement (Aboriginal myths tend to be largely ignored), convict transportation, bushmen and pioneers, bushrangers, ANZACs, immigration post-World War II, and of course, Australian sporting heroes (Wesley 2000; Day 1998; Holton 1998; Ward 1958). We consider these aspects of the Australian *mythscape* in the empirical analyses below.

Our research sits within an empirically based Australian literature where authors have attempted to conceptualize and empirically examine various aspects of national identity (e.g. Jones and Smith 2001; Pakulski and Tranter 2000; Phillips and Smith 2000; Jones 1997; Phillips 1996). Drawing upon Smith's (1991: 11–12) conceptual distinction between 'ethnic' and 'civic' forms of nationalism, Jones (1997), and Jones and Smith (2001) operationalized two distinct national identity types; 'nativism' and 'civic culture'. Jones (1997: 291) argued that the former identity type 'looks backward to a vision of Australia that is fading', while 'civic culture, a more abstract and open concept, looks forward to a future already in the making'. Using a related conceptual framework and building upon Jones' work, Pakulski and Tranter (2000: 218) claimed that their 'ethno-nationals' stressed, among other things, 'the importance of more "primordial ties" acquired by birth and long residence, the ties that bind us to the ethnically defined and culturally circumscribed nation', whereas 'civic' identity was characterized by 'the centrality of voluntary ties, interdependence and shared commitments to the core institutions of a society'.

Australian researchers working in this vein have tended to consider aspects of national identity that are identified with subjectively – concentrating upon the forms of attachment to Australia that members of different social groups prioritize. For example, 'ethno-national' identity involves strong social attachments to the Australian 'nation' seen as 'specific and shared culture, traditions and customs' (Pakulski and Tranter 2000: 209). In contrast, 'civic' identity is characterized by attachment to Australian 'society', conceptualized as 'a voluntary association of people sharing major social institutions and commitments' (Pakulski and Tranter 2000: 209). The social background of those

exhibiting attachment to these identity types also varies. Tertiary educated and non-religious 'baby-boom' Australians are most likely to embrace the 'civic' form of identity, while older, 'religious' Australians, particularly those of an Anglican persuasion with lower levels of education are associated with the 'ethno-national' type (Pakulski and Tranter 2000: 213–14).

This relatively recent empirical tradition is extended here with two main aims in mind. The first is to assess the relevance of colonial and post-colonial figures for national identity among the Australian public. To what extent do these historical characters comprise core elements of an Australian *national* identity? The second is to explore how attachments to the 'nativist' and 'civic' dimensions of national identity conceptualized by earlier Australian researchers, are associated with the historical aspects of national identity we operationalize.

In doing so we acknowledge that some identity theorists would disagree with our strategy of adopting survey methodology to measure something as fluid as identity (see Antaki and Widdicombe 1998). We recognize problems may arise when using a method as blunt as attitudinal questionnaire items to measure identities. National identity, like class identity (see Marshall 1988) is forged and reinforced in particular situations, for example, during wars, strikes or national sporting competitions like the World Cup. It also has a great deal to do with how people define themselves in relation to other nations and groups, and as pointed out above, involves temporal and spatial aspects. Such objections are important. However, surveys also offer some important advantages over other research strategies. Using a detailed questionnaire and a national sample we are able make inferential claims about national identity that are relevant to Australian adults as a whole. Adopting a multivariate approach, we are also able to consider how social and political background factors are associated with these historical national identity questions.

Our research differs from other Australian empirical research on national identity, in that earlier studies tended to be based upon analyses of survey questions designed to tap highly abstract elements of national identity. The survey questions used by Jones (1997), Pakulski and Tranter (2000) and Jones and Smith (2001), for example, measured forms of attachment to 'Australia'. The survey items they analysed asked respondents, among other things, how important it was to have been born in Australia; to have lived in Australia for most of one's life; to have Australian ancestry; or to be an Australian Citizen? They then employed a variety of statistical methods in order to show empirical support for the existence of, for example, 'civic' and 'nativist' forms of national identity (Jones 1997; Jones and Smith 2001).

In contrast, our survey questions relate to actual historical figures and the myths that surround them, and their importance to Australian national identity. Poole (1999: 140) outlines some of the reasons why it is necessary to consider such aspects of national identity, suggesting it 'involves, not just a

sense of place, but a sense of history. The history constitutes the national memory, and it provides a way of locating those who share that identity within a historical community'. Writing on the 'social and economic motivations' underlying Australian national myths, Wesley (2000) notes the salience of three historical categories we specify in our survey questions – bushrangers, ANZACs and sporting heroes.

The popularity of Ned Kelly lay in his rebellion against unequally distributed property and authority; the emotion summoned by the ANZAC landings at Gallipoli was prompted by undertones of sacrifice for the community and of solidarity with comrades; the lionization of Australian sporting champions was underpinned by pride in Australia's physical wealth, and Australia's sporting prowess is often spoken of by Australians in terms of the country's superiority in sports in *per capita terms*. (Wesley 2000: 178)<sup>6</sup>

We therefore conceptualize a more *historically* grounded form of national identity than previous quantitative researchers in this field. This is important, because as Phillips and Smith (2000: 219) found in their qualitative study of 'what it means to be Australian'; 'the people, places, values, events and activities, and groups that participants spoke of as "Australian" were consistent with old, traditional, or past-oriented experiences and understandings of Australia'.

Our questions also tap those aspects of national identity that Australians are exposed to on an ongoing basis. As Billig (1995: 69) maintains: 'national identity is more than an inner psychological state or an individual self-definition: it is a form of life, which is daily lived in the world of nation-states'. National identity is constructed through, and reinforced by everyday symbols and language, such as frequent media portrayals of the bushranger Ned Kelly in movies, books and newspaper articles. From ANAZC Day parades and memorials, colonial heritage sites such as convict gaols and media coverage of sporting events, to familiar and barely noticed symbols such as 'the flag hanging unnoticed on the public building' (Billig 1995: 8). All serve to remind us of and reinforce aspects of national identity in a 'taken for granted' manner (Garfinkel 1984).

Claims regarding the significance of historical figures contain both 'essentialist' and 'constructed' elements of national identity (Calhoun 1994: 113). If identities are linked to 'the various sets of lived relationships in which individuals are engaged' (Bradley 1996: 24), we expect to find that historical figures who constitute important aspects of national identity will be associated with certain social and attitudinal variation in the survey results. Some Australians are able to trace their bloodlines directly to early settlers, convicts, bushrangers, and certainly to the ANZACs. Although, as Tranter and Donoghue (2003) argue, to an extent claims of convict ancestry are socially constructed, with many Australians claiming to be descended from convicts when they are not, or are not in a position to know whether they are.

Anderson's (1991: 6) well-known assertion is particularly relevant here, when he points out that nations are '*imagined*', because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion'.

We assess the importance of colonial and post-colonial figures for Australian identity in the empirical analyses that follow. We also examine how certain historical figures are associated with forms of attachment to 'Australia' (i.e. the 'nativist' and 'civic' identity types) and examine the social location of those who see historical aspects of identity as salient. We pursue these aims following a short digression to describe our data and methods.

### **Data and method**

We developed a set of questions to measure Australian national identity for inclusion in the 2003 Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (AuSSA; see Gibson et al. 2004).<sup>7</sup> The AuSSA is a new cross-sectional national survey of Australians aged 18 and over, the first survey in a biennial series. The sample was drawn on a systematic basis from the 2002 Australian Electoral Roll, with mail out, mail back administration of questionnaires conducted between 3 August and 24 December 2003. The sample was stratified so as to be proportional to the population in each state, with two separate questionnaires administered to probability samples of the Australian electorate. The version of the survey containing the identity questions has a sample size of 2183.

The national identity variables analysed in this research are derived from the question: 'Many different groups throughout Australia's history have influenced the way Australians see themselves. How much influence have each of the following had?' The seven response categories listed in the questionnaire were Aboriginal people, convicts, free settlers, bushrangers, ANZACs, immigrants after World War II and sporting heroes. The first four were all present in colonial times, while post-colonial ANZACs and the more general categories of immigrants and sporting heroes are also potentially important aspects of contemporary Australian identity. We designed the questions in order to establish the extent to which these historical figures are constitutive of national identity, although the term 'identity' was avoided. This term was not used in the questionnaire because of the potential for ambiguity, and, as de Vaus (2002: 97–8) warns, because it is preferable to use simple language and 'avoid jargon and technical terms' when designing survey items.

As the response categories for the questions we use as our dependent variables are ordinal in structure, we model them using a series of ordered logistic regression or cumulative logit models (see Agresti and Finlay 1997: 599–606) using SAS software.<sup>8</sup> We present odds ratios to facilitate the

interpretation of the ordered logistic regression estimates. For example, the odds ratio of 1.3 for those with degrees in Table III for the ‘Aboriginals’ dependent variable, is interpretable as follows: the tertiary educated are approximately 1.3 times as likely as the non-tertiary educated (i.e. the reference category), to claim that Aboriginal people have an influence on the way Australians see themselves, as opposed to having no influence. Odds ratios less than unity indicate a negative association.<sup>9</sup>

We operationalize Jones’ (1997) ‘nativist’ and approximate Pakulski and Tranter’s (2000) ‘ethno-nationalist’ identity types with a ‘nativist’ scale (1 = non-nativist through to 10 = highly nativist)<sup>10</sup> and use a set of dummy variable to measure aspects of ‘civic’ identity. In a further attempt to assess how the historical figures are associated with subjective attachments to ‘Australia’, we also introduced a measure into the regression models that was derived from the question: ‘How close do you feel to Australia?’ With the exception of the nativist scale, postmaterial (1 = materialist, 2 = mixed; 3 = postmaterialist, see Inglehart 1977), and ideology scales (0 = left through to 10 = right)<sup>11</sup> all independent variables are dummy variables and are interpretable in comparison to their reference categories.<sup>12</sup> Missing cases on the independent variables were not replaced.

Analyses

Historic figures and Australian identity

Percentage responses are presented in Table I to gauge the relative importance of each of our historical figures as aspects of Australian identity. What do the results indicate? Firstly, ANZACs appear to be very important to contemporary Australians, contrary to Day’s claims of the demise of the digger. A clear majority (65.1 per cent) of the sample claim that ANZACs have *a lot of influence* on how Australians see themselves, while in total, about 90 per cent of respondents view ANZACs as having ‘a lot’ or ‘a little’ influence. Sporting

TABLE I: ‘Many different groups throughout Australia’s history have influenced the way Australians see themselves. How much influence have each of the following had?’ (%)

	Aboriginal people	Convicts	Free settlers	Bushrangers	ANZACS	Post-WWII immigrants	Sporting heroes
A lot	13.8	18.6	32.5	7.1	65.1	50.1	51.7
A little	35.2	33.6	35.2	29.9	25.2	31.8	30.1
Not much	30.2	24.0	16.5	34.0	5.2	9.4	10.3
None at all	17.2	19.5	10.0	23.7	2.0	5.2	5.7
Can’t choose	3.6	4.3	5.8	5.3	2.5	3.5	2.2
n	2111	2090	2088	2075	2105	2107	2110

Source: Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (2003)

TABLE II: *Factor analysis of colonial and post-colonial identity questions*

	Australian born		UK born		Born elsewhere	
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 1	Factor 2
Aboriginals	0.66			0.75		0.74
Convicts	0.83		0.41	0.66		0.77
Free settlers	0.72		0.84		0.64	0.37
Bushrangers	0.70			0.75	0.33	0.71
ANZACS		0.80	0.71	0.31	0.79	
Immigrants	0.46	0.44	0.82		0.82	
Sporting heroes		0.77	0.41	0.57	0.68	
Explained variance %	42.0	14.2	45.0	15.8	46.0	14.3

Source: Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (2003)

Notes: Principal components analysis with varimax rotation. Missing values and 'Can't choose' options for each variable were removed from the analyses.

heroes are also judged to be very important, with 82 per cent claiming they influence the way Australians see themselves, while the contribution of post-World War II immigrants to Australian identity is also notable in the responses (82 per cent).

However, in contrast to the 'heroic' or rebellious figures as they are often portrayed in fictional accounts, bushrangers were seen to contribute relatively little to Australian identity. Only 7.1 per cent believe bushrangers have a lot of influence, with an additional 30 per cent believing they have some influence on the way Australians see themselves. Aboriginal people and convicts fared little better, although surprisingly about 68 per cent of respondents suggested free settlers are influential. To an extent this may be explained by the fact that Australia is a 'settler society' with recent migrants themselves identifying as 'free settlers'. There is a notable divide between responses on colonial and post-colonial questions, with the latter seen to be considerably more important for Australian identity.

Theorists have emphasized nationalist ties of blood and territory (e.g. Ignatieff 1993; Smith 1991), to particular *myths* (Bell 2003), and the importance of language, symbols and ritual in daily life for the formation and reinforcement of national identity (Billig 1995). What constitutes national identity varies considerably according to one's country of birth. We therefore decided to factor analyse our historical identity questions, with the assumption that immigrants may prioritize these questions differently to the Australian born. If that is the case, their responses should be apparent in different dimensionality in the factor analyses (Holton and Phillips 2004). The aim in Table II is to examine the underlying or latent structure of responses to the seven identity questions. That is to say, are these Australian identity questions related to each other (i.e. correlated) in such a way that they reflect an underlying, non-observable latent factor or dimension? For the factor analyses then, we split the sample into respondents who were born in Australia, born in the UK and born elsewhere.<sup>13</sup>

The seven identity items load on two separate factors for each of the three sub samples.<sup>14</sup> However, there are some important differences in the pattern of responses between the samples. The first factor for the Australian born exhibits the colonial measures for aboriginals, convicts, free settlers, and bushrangers. The second factor consists primarily of the post-colonial ANZACs and sporting heroes, perhaps representing an 'heroic' component of Australian identity. Notably in Table I, the highest proportion of respondents claimed the latter two items were influential, reflecting the status of these figures for most Australians. Post-World War II immigrants loaded weakly across both factors.

The UK born sample shows a somewhat similar factor pattern, although differs from the Australian born in some important ways. For example, free settlers load along with ANZACs and immigrants on the first factor, with aboriginals, convicts and bushrangers loading on the second, again suggesting a colonial aspect of identity. Sporting heroes load relatively weakly across both factors, although more strongly on factor 2, indicating they are viewed as a relatively separate component of national identity for the UK born. Finally, those born in countries other than Australia or the UK exhibit the 'immigrant' pattern that is closer to the UK born than the Australian born sample. All items load clearly for the 'other' group however, with postwar immigrants loading with settlers, ANZACs and sporting heroes on factor 1, with aboriginals, convicts and bushrangers on the colonial factor 2.

What are the implications of these findings? The Australian born clearly do not consider postwar immigrants to have as much influence on Australian identity as the other two birth groups (also see Table III). Further, the free settlers item appears to be interpreted quite differently among the non-Australian born sub-samples, who associate postwar immigrants with free settlers. As we suspected, there appears to be some confusion among those born in other countries, who perhaps equate 'settlers' with more recent postwar immigrants (i.e. themselves). However, those born in 'other' countries also view free settlers and immigrants as aligned more closely with ANZACs and sporting heroes. Perhaps people born outside of Australia see settlers, immigrants and themselves as pioneering and even heroic figures.

### *Social location and Australian identity*

We now have an impression of the relative importance of historical figures for national identity from the percentage distributions in Table I, and of the way these variables constitute colonial and post-colonial dimensions of identity (Table II). In Table III multivariate analyses are conducted, where we regress several independent variables upon the historical measures. Firstly, we aim to assess how the 'civic' and 'nativist' forms of attachment to Australia are linked

TABLE III: Many different groups throughout Australia's history have influenced the way Australians see themselves. How much influence have each of the following had? (Ordered logistic regression odds ratios)

	Aboriginals	Convicts	Free settlers	Bushrangers	ANZACS	Post-WWII immigrants	Sporting heroes
Men	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Women	1.1	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.0
<i>Generations</i>							
Born 1970-85	1.7**	1.1	0.5**	1.9**	0.9	0.3**	1.0
Born 1960-69	1.8**	1.5**	0.7**	2.0**	0.8	0.6**	1.0
Born 1946-59	1.4*	1.3*	0.8*	1.5**	1.0	0.8*	1.0
Born < = 1945	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<i>Education level</i>							
Degree	1.3*	1.4**	1.4*	1.4**	0.8	1.1	1.4**
Diploma	1.2	1.4**	1.4*	1.4**	1.0	1.2	1.2
Non- or incomplete tertiary	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<i>Income groups</i>							
\$77,800+	0.6*	0.8	1.1	0.7*	0.8	1.3	0.9
\$52,000-77,799	0.9	1.3	1.2	0.9	1.2	1.5**	1.0
\$0-51,999 (reference)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Inner metropolitan	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	1.5**	1.0
Live elsewhere	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<i>Country of birth</i>							
Australia	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
UK	1.0	0.9	1.3	1.0	0.8	1.5*	1.2
'Other'	1.0	0.8*	1.0	1.1	0.6**	1.1	1.1
Value orientations (scale)	1.242**	1.174*	1.271**	1.129	1.242*	1.191*	1.038
Ideology left-right (scale)	0.942*	0.915**	1.017	0.883**	1.011	0.955	0.927**
<i>Self assessed class</i>							
Working	0.8	0.9	0.8*	1.1	1.1	0.7**	0.9
None	1.0	0.9	0.9	1.0	0.8	1.5*	1.0
Middle class	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<i>Important to...</i>							
Be a citizen	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.3	1.6**	1.4*
Respect laws	1.4*	1.5*	1.6**	1.5*	1.6**	1.5*	1.2
Feel Australian	1.7**	1.7**	1.3	1.4	1.1	1.2	1.5*
Nativist (scale)	0.974	0.989	0.992	0.995	1.079**	0.893**	1.014
Feel very close to Australia	0.9	1.2	1.5**	1.2	1.7**	1.2*	1.2*
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.06	0.06	0.07	0.07	0.08	0.13	0.03
N	1632	1623	1603	1598	1643	1629	1651

Source: Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (2003)

Note: \* p &lt; 0.05 \*\* p &lt; 0.01

to the historical variables. Secondly, we consider the manner in which responses on the historical variables vary according to social background.

The advantage of adopting a multivariate approach is that we can statistically adjust, or 'control' for associations (correlations) between our independent variables (for example, income and education tend to be correlated moderately, so that in the bivariate case, some income effects may be due to education level and vice versa). This allows us to produce estimates of the impact of our independent variables on the dependent variables net of other related effects.

Gender effects are not apparent for any of the dependent variables in the logistic regression analyses (Table III). Age has an important influence on all variables with the exception of the ANZACs question and sporting heroes where no statistically significant association are present (i.e.  $p > .05$ ). However, the direction of the age effects varies across the identity questions. Younger people are more likely to view colonial figures – aboriginals, convicts and bushrangers – as important, while the elderly are more likely to note the influence of free settlers and postwar immigrants. The age-based pattern of influence for the convicts question perhaps indicates the persistence of the 'convict stain' (Lambert 2002), or denial of Australia's convict heritage among the oldest generations.

Education is a consistent predictor, with Australian graduates more likely than non-graduates to view colonial figures as influencing the way Australians see themselves. There is evidence here that university education increases one's recognition of the importance of both colonial figures and sporting heroes for contemporary Australian identity. We expected that the self-identified working class may have seen 'rebellious' bushrangers and convicts as influential, although these effects were not apparent in the multivariate results. The working class were *less likely* than the middle class to view free settlers and postwar immigrants as important, perhaps reflecting perceptions of immigrants as a threat to employment in blue-collar occupations.<sup>15</sup> Those who do not identify with any class are 1.5 times as likely as the middle class to see postwar immigrants as important. These class location measures rely on respondent self-assessment. However, when developing our regression models we also used other indicators of class including occupation, and found that these did not contribute substantially to the explanatory value of the regression models. For almost all dependent variables the effects of occupation were not statistically significant ( $p > .05$ ). Our findings suggest class is not strongly associated with historical aspects of national identity, and reflects the relatively weak impact of class identification in Australia across a range of social and political phenomena (Pakulski and Waters 1996).

Even when we control for country of birth (and hence the large immigrant groups living in metropolitan areas), those living in the larger cities are more likely to see postwar immigrants as an important influence on how Australians see themselves. Spatial proximity to immigrants and the contributions they

make to Australian culture is more apparent for those living in large cities than elsewhere, reflecting the settlement patterns of new immigrants in larger cities.

In the case of the ANZACs there is little variation – in other words almost everyone seems to believe ANZACs are a substantial component of Australian identity – so that the social and demographic variables are of very minimal use for predicting responses. The sporting heroes measure exhibits a fairly similar pattern, with no demographic variable except for tertiary education showing a statistically significant influence ( $p > .05$ ). To an extent this is also the case for the other regression models. All of the models have low proportions of ‘explained’ variance, even for social data, although in several cases the results are very likely to hold in the population rather than just the sample.

Turning to the attitudinal measures, Inglehart (1977) claims that ‘post-materialists’ prioritize quality of life issues such as the environment and human rights, over ‘materialist’, economic and security issues. Postmaterialists also tend to adopt a progressive stance on a range of social and political issues. For example, we expected postwar immigrants to be more important for post-materialists than materialists as an element of Australian identity. Even controlling for social background, postmaterialists are more likely than materialists to view Aboriginals, convicts and settlers as important, while those on the left of the ideological spectrum are more likely than the right to acknowledge the influence aboriginals, convicts, bushrangers and sporting heroes. Postmaterialists are also more willing than materialists to recognize the influence of postwar immigrants on contemporary identity, perhaps in recognition of their contributions to the generally high quality of life most Australians now enjoy. Often aligned with postmaterialists on a range of social issues, the ‘left’ too are attracted by the myth of ‘oppressed’ convicts, but also by the ‘rebellious’ bushrangers, suggesting a rejection of authority among this ideological group.

### *Historical, ‘nativist’ and ‘civic’ identity*

Indicators of civic culture and nativism are associated significantly with the historical identity measures, although the nativist scale (Jones 1997), is only significantly related to the ANZAC and postwar immigrants questions. Those who score highly on the nativist scale tend to claim ANZACs are an influential aspect of Australian identity, although they are much *less likely* to view post-World War II immigrants as important. The latter result is consistent with Pakulski and Tranter’s (2000: 216) finding of negative attitudes toward immigrants among ethno-nationalists compared to civic identity types. Alternatively, the variables measuring civic nationalism show consistent positive associations with historical elements of national identity, particularly respect for Australian laws and institutions, which is related to all historical variables with the exception of sporting heroes. Ironically, respect for Australian laws

and institutions is associated with viewing ANZACs as influential, while, at least according to folklore, historically 'diggers' have not shown the greatest respect for authority (Egan 2003).

Finally, we assessed the relationship between the historical elements of national identity and attachment to Australia. Those who feel 'very close' to Australia – those Jones (1997: 299) claims are most likely to be 'dogmatic nativists' – see ANZACs as particularly influential for the way Australians see themselves. Closeness to Australia is significantly associated with most identity measures, or in the case of convicts and bushrangers, on the borderline of statistical significance at the .05 level. The fact that civic culture and ethno-nationalism are related to the historical variables in a fairly consistent manner, and that closeness to Australia is associated with most historical identity questions, lends weight to our claims. The historical concepts we have tapped are indeed important aspects of national identity for the Australian public.

### Discussion/conclusion

While previous researchers have concentrated on considering attachment to Australia using abstract concepts such as respect for political institutions and laws, or the importance of Australian citizenship for feeling 'truly Australian', we have tried to develop more historically grounded measures of national identity. Our approach is an attempt to assess the extent to which historically important figures contribute to the Australian *mythscape*. The associations we find between the historical aspects of national identity and the forms of attachment to Australia developed by Jones' (1997) and others (Jones and Smith 2001; Pakulski and Tranter 2000) are significant. Those stressing the *civic* aspects of identity such as the importance of 'respecting Australian laws and institutions' for feeling Australian also recognized almost all of the historical figures as important aspects of Australian identity. Alternatively, *essentialist* Australian identity claims are apparent in the ethno-national's rejection of the salience of post-World War II immigrants.

To an extent our findings echo the cultural divide between the educated, cosmopolitan 'Australian intelligentsia' and mainstream 'parochials' (Betts 1999: 3). Middle-class Australians are more willing to embrace postwar immigrants than are members of the working class, an indication of how middle-class identities are more closely aligned with 'civic' as opposed to 'ethno-nationalist' forms of identity (Pakulski and Tranter 2000). The importance of immigrants for Australian identity is a reflection of the politics of multiculturalism, an element of the second strand of Australian identity. Theophanous (1995: 285) claims is based around 'social justice and inequality'.

Theophanous (1995: 287) argues that '[I]n addition to shifting our identity from its British base to a more cosmopolitan one, multiculturalism is

transforming the meaning of the “fair go”. Multiculturalism is both broadening *and* deepening the concept of social justice in Australia’. Our research indicates that a large proportion of Australian adults recognize the important role played by immigrants in the second half of the twentieth century, and their contribution to the construction of an Australian mythology. Metropolitan living contributes to an appreciation of the contribution of migrants to Australian identity, and the rejection of nationalist based identity among cosmopolitan Australians.

While theorists such as Calhoun (1994:13) have pointed out the problematic nature of ‘essentialist’ claims ‘that individual persons can have singular, integral, altogether harmonious and unproblematic identities’, our findings provide some actual empirical support for social constructionism. The Australian Survey of Social Attitudes respondents emphasize the importance of post-colonial figures for Australian identity, while the social background effects we find suggest that national identity is also, to an extent, socially constructed. Educated, left-wing, younger, postmaterialist Australians in particular, acknowledge the importance of indigenous people, colonial convicts and bushrangers for Australian identity. However, in general terms, colonial characters are relatively less important aspects of national identity than post-colonial figures in contemporary Australian society.

Day (1998: 93) has argued that ‘[O]ver the past several decades, there has grown an increasing distance between the diverse national identities with which Australians now identify and the national identity that strode out of the bush to clamber up the blood-soaked cliffs of Gallipoli’. We agree with Day regarding the diversity of national identities in Australia, but are skeptical of his claims regarding the ‘demise of the digger’. Our findings suggest that ANZACs are indeed an important aspect of the Australian identity narrative, with almost 90 per cent of Australians viewing ANZACs as part of the national identity. This support also varies very little according to social background. Perhaps Day’s claim was based on the ‘desired’ demise of the old lie, ‘Dulce et decorum est Pro patria mori’<sup>16</sup> (Owen 1994: 24), rather than the actual demise of the digger myth.

The participation of younger Australians in ANZAC Day parades is an example of the way in which notions of national identity are reinforced, as well as ensuring that the sacrifices made by earlier generations of Australian men and women in war are remembered (Grey 1990). The media’s interest and pernicious focus on the last World War I veterans, is another example of the ‘banal nationalism’ described by Billig (1995). ANZACs and sporting heroes are strongly associated with a masculine, competitive and traditional form of national identity that to our knowledge has not been examined in earlier Australian survey-based identity research. We are not suggesting that ‘diggers’ are definitive of Australian identity, although based upon the survey evidence ANZACs comprise a core element of the Australian mythology around identity, and a foundation myth associated with the birth of the Australian ‘nation’.

ANZACs are clearly important, although lacking *individual* military or political 'heroes', Australians appear to have turned to their sportspeople for inspiration. Most Australians agree that sporting heroes comprise an important aspect of Australian identity. ANZACs and sporting heroes may constitute the 'glue that binds' Australians together. These figures override the remnants of Australia's colonial past and provide the day to day reinforcement crucial for maintaining national identity. However, the concept 'sporting heroes' likely embodies (verbally and physically) aggressive contests such as cricket and football codes which are seen, in a sense, to further the national interest. We also suspect that the term tends to signify the *male* sporting heroes who dominate television and other media coverage and thereby enter the mythology of identity in a 'taken for granted' manner (Garfinkel 1984). As a result, the masculine values portrayed by sporting heroes such as Sir Donald Bradman are an important aspect of the national identity narrative. Whether contemporary sporting stars such as Cathy Freeman or Shane Warne will enter into Australian mythology is a moot point, although the intense media scrutiny contemporary sportspeople receive may attenuate such tendencies.

The powerful influence of Australian military and sporting 'heroes' echoes the clamour of classical Greeks and Romans for glory and games. The heroic deeds of national heroes such as ANZAC soldiers, and sporting heroes like Sir Donald Bradman, are enhanced and embellished over time until they take on a mythical quality. The power of such myths to excite and inspire future generations has been used to mobilize support for both civic and nationalistic purposes, on the field of war, the sporting field, and by political leaders to mobilize their constituencies. Yet perhaps we need to look beyond the brief history of 'white' Australian settlement to the traditions and values of western imperialism, in order to explain why these 'heroes' have such an influence on contemporary national identity.

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## Notes

1. This research was funded in part by a University of Queensland Startup grant awarded to the first author. We thank the three anonymous *BJS* reviewers for their helpful suggestions and comments.

2. 'ANZAC' is an acronym for the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps soldiers who served in World War I. Australian 'men and women who have fought and died in all wars' are commemorated each

year on ANZAC Day (April 25th), a national holiday where Australians participate in 'solemn ceremonies of remembrance, gratitude and national pride' (ANZAC Day website).

3. Smith (1996: 585–6) notes that 'successive generations of the community may differ as to which epoch is to be regarded as a golden age, depending on the criteria in fashion at the time'.

4. Bell (2003: 66) is critical of the conflation of the concepts of 'myth' and 'collective memory' in theoretical accounts of nationalism and instead prefers the term 'mythscape' – 'the temporally and spatially extended discursive realm wherein the struggle for control of peoples memories and the formation of nationalist myths is debated, contested and subverted incessantly'.

5. 'The nickname "Digger" is attributed to the number of ex-gold diggers in the early army units and to the trench digging activities of the Australian soldiers during World War I. The actual origin of the name has been lost in time but the Australian soldier is known affectionately around the world as the Digger' (Australian Army website).

6. Ned Kelly remains Australia's most famous bushranger and has been the subject of a several books and movies, including Peter Carey's (2001) recent novel *The True History of the Kelly Gang*.

7. The AuSSA data were obtained from the Australian Social Sciences Data Archive, Australian National University, Canberra.

8. In the ordered logistic regression models our dependent variables contained the response categories 'A lot'; 'A little'; 'Not much' and 'None at all'. The models predict the cumulative odds of each independent variable having an influence on a given historical category.

9. OR less than 1 for dummy variables indicate an estimate that is smaller than the reference category. For example, in Table III the highest income group (i.e. \$77,800+) is approximately 1.7 times *less likely* (i.e.  $1 \div 0.6 = 1.666$ ) than the reference group (i.e. \$0–51,999) to agree that Aboriginal people have an influence as opposed to having no influence on the way Australians see themselves.

10. Variables were constructed from the question: 'Some people say that the following things are important for being truly Australian. Others say that they are not important. How important do you think each of the following is...' *to have been born in Australia; to have lived in Australia for most of one's life; to have Australian*

*ancestry; to have Australian Citizenship; to respect Australian political institutions and laws; to feel Australian.* Responses very important + fairly important versus not very important + not at all important. The italicized questions formed the reliable 'nativist' scale (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.85). The remaining three questions did not form a reliable scale and were entered into the regression models as dummy variables.

11. 'In politics, people sometimes talk about the "left" and the "right". Where would you place yourself on a scale ranging from 0 to 10, where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?'

12. We also model self-assessed class categories. We contrast the self-assessed upper + middle class with the working class and with those who do not choose any class position.

13. It was not possible to conduct finer grained analysis of the 'other' countries separately, as even large national surveys capture too few respondents from other countries to allow meaningful statistical comparisons.

14. Factor analysis of the Australian born data presented in Table II, as with the analysis of the full sample (not shown here) resulted in a single factor using the default extraction criteria in SPSS (i.e. an eigenvalue greater than 1). However, analysis of the UK and the 'other' sub samples both resulted in two factor solutions. As the eigenvalue for the Australian sub sample was very close to 1 (i.e. 0.992), a two factor solution was 'forced' resulting in the rotated factor loadings presented in Table II exhibiting a clear colonial, and post-colonial factor solution.

15. In separate analyses not shown here, we also considered the impact of living in different Australian states, religious affiliations and political party identification. Only very weak effects were apparent for these variables on the identity questions, and almost all results were not statistically significant ( $p > .05$ ).

16. Translated 'It is sweet and right to die for your country'.

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