

Chapter 4: Identity, the media and the world

Contents

- 4.1 Identity in the media
- 4.2 Demonstrating identity and values
- 4.3 Globalisation — being a global citizen
- 4.4 Effects of globalisation on Australia
- SkillBuilder: Debating an issue
- Review and reflect

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Chapter 4: Identity, the media and the world

Overview

Sometimes we can be defined by what we are not rather than what we are. Such is the case with being labelled 'unAustralian', a phrase that has become popular over the past few decades. Public figures are quick to describe someone as being unAustralian when they do something that goes against typical Australian culture and values. Politicians in particular use the term quite often. Controversial former politician Pauline Hanson was frequently referred to as unAustralian because her extreme views of immigration differed from popular thoughts and ideals. But what does being unAustralian actually mean?

Follow the **Being unAustralian** weblink in your Resources section for a humorous view of what it means to be

Australian.



To answer this question, we can pose more questions — is anything truly unAustralian? In a land characterised by its diversity, surely such a term is incorrect and inappropriate? With Australian values being broad and inclusive of so many aspects of other cultures, surely it is impossible for anything to be unAustralian? With so many different groups and organisations active in Australian society, surely none of these groups can be labelled as unAustralian? In this chapter, we further investigate what it means to be Australian, especially in the context of living in a global society. We see how ideas of social groups are constructed and what impact stereotypes can have on social cohesion.



eLesson

Australia's role in a global community

Watch this video to learn more about how modern technology affects our national identity.

Searchlight ID: ELES-2365



FIGURE 1 Australia is characterised by its cultural diversity.

STARTER QUESTIONS

1. Look at the images above. Do these things represent Australia for you? How? If not, what things do represent Australia for you?
2. Describe at least two Australian stereotypes you have seen in the media. Do you think these are accurate representations of Australians? Explain.
3. How do you think people in other countries view Australia? How do they form their views of Australia and Australians?
4. In what ways has Australian culture been enhanced by people migrating here from other countries?

4.1 Identity in the media

Our knowledge and opinions are shaped by what we see, what we are told and what we read. You know about Australia Day because you have seen it being celebrated, you have heard about it at

school or on television, and you have read about the day's significance in newspapers and textbooks. You have used these sources to form an opinion regarding the meaning of Australia Day. As we process information, we form opinions on events, ideas and even on groups of people. In an ideal situation, these opinions are based on factual information. When this does not occur, our opinions can differ significantly from the truth and a **stereotype** may develop. In this section, we see how social groups in Australian society are represented in different media and the impacts these representations can have on society itself.

Typical or stereotypical?

Close your eyes and imagine a typical Australian. Think about what the person looks like, whether it is a man or woman, what clothes he or she is wearing. What did you imagine — a young man droving sheep? A farmer on a quad bike? A surfer with board in arm?

Such images are not typical. Instead, they are *stereotypical*. The difference between these two words is significant. In this context, the word 'typical' is a synonym for 'average'. Look at table 1: did you picture the average Australian as a 37-year-old female sales assistant? The three stereotypes just described are not average Australians at all, and most of us are probably unlikely to see someone fitting this description walking in our neighbourhoods. Yet we automatically picture such stereotypes because they are images which we associate with being Australian. This is despite the fact that we probably know very few people who actually fit this stereotype.

So why then do our minds automatically think of a stereotype? The answer to this question can be found by looking at the way social groups are portrayed in the Australian media.

Table 1 Characteristics of the 'average' Australian (1911–2011)

Characteristic	1911	1961	2011
Sex	Male	Male	Female
Age	24	29	37
Country of birth	Australia	Australia	Australia
Job	Farmer	Clerk	Sales assistant

Source: ABS 4102.0 *Australian social trends* (April 2013).

Media and stereotypes

Stereotypes exist due to the way social groups are represented in the media. Our perceptions of these groups is heavily influenced by what we watch on television and read in newspapers and on social media. So influential are these sources of information that they can often override our existing knowledge of social groups.

Consider your grandparents as an example. If you are lucky enough to know your grandparents, then you probably see them as kind and generous people. Now consider the way elderly people are represented in Australian media. They are often shown as being forgetful, grumpy, resistant to change — and bad drivers. Though some elderly people may fit some of these descriptions, they remain largely untrue.

The reason these stereotypes are so strong is because they are **perpetuated** by various forms of media. Unfortunately, many social and ethnic groups are also inaccurately represented by Australian media. This misrepresentation can have serious social implications.



FIGURE 1 Stereotypes are prevalent in the media.

Impact of stereotypes

Stereotypes can have significant impacts on societies regardless of the way they are created and perpetuated. Most stereotypes have negative connotations and are based on only a small part of a social group's true identity. By accepting a stereotype, we stop ourselves from developing a true understanding of different cultures. We exaggerate cultural and religious differences and forget the similarities that we may share.

In this way, stereotypes can inhibit **cohesion** in Australian society. They can also make members of social groups feel uneasy about demonstrating their identity. Frequently, stereotyped people may not want to publically exhibit aspects of their culture for fear of ridicule or outright persecution. While this may be an extreme example, it further demonstrates the effects of stereotypes on Australian society.



FIGURE 2 Stereotypes often have negative connotations.

ACTIVITIES

REMEMBER

1. Who creates and reinforces stereotypes?
2. What negative impacts can stereotypes have on Australian society?

EXPLAIN

3. What is the difference between the meaning of the words 'typical' and 'stereotypical'?
4. Use the data in table 1 to answer the following questions.
 - a. How does the average Australian in 2011 differ from that in 1911?
 - b. How can you explain the changes in occupation for the average Australian from 1911 to 2011?
 - c. What did you find most interesting about the changes shown in this table?

PREDICT

5. Do you believe that stereotypes exist at your school? If so, give examples of their occurrence.
6. How do you think the use of stereotypes at your school could be reduced?

4.2 Demonstrating identity and values

There are currently more social groups, associations and organisations in Australia than ever before. Some of these groups, such as religious organisations, have been in existence for generations. Others, such as **non-government organisations (NGOs)** and charities, are more recent. Whether informal or highly structured, these groups make significant contributions to Australian communities. NGOs and community and religious groups do not simply work to serve their own interests. They frequently lead calls for change on a range of issues, and by doing so they contribute to the development of Australian culture, values and identity.

Serving the common good

Imagine that your friends are mucking around in class by throwing pieces of paper into the bin. One piece accidentally hits your teacher, who threatens to keep the whole class back at lunchtime unless the culprit comes forward. With none of your friends willing to take the blame, you decide to accept responsibility and thus save your class from detention. By sacrificing yourself, you have protected the freedom of others. This is an example of acting for the **common good**.

Individuals and organisations around the world frequently put their needs second in order to serve the wider community. Examples include people who volunteer their time to help NGOs and other community organisations. While the causes behind these groups may vary, their goals remain the same: to help the wider community and to serve the common good.



FIGURE 1

Volunteering to pick up litter in your local park is one way of serving the common good.

Calling for change

Social groups may develop for a number of reasons. People may be united by common cultural backgrounds or religious affiliations. Other groups can form around particular values, issues and causes. These social groups differ in their background and origin, yet they are connected by the goals of the people and causes they represent. Be it small or significant, each group is calling for people to change their understanding of some issue.

Religious groups such as the Jewish Christian Muslim Association of Australia (JCMA) call for multi-faith understanding and harmony; environmental groups such as the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) call for the protection of Australian flora and fauna; and human rights groups such as Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby (GLRL) **advocate** for marriage equality for all Australians. By pushing for change and challenging existing ideas, community groups have a considerable effect on the composition of Australian society and identity.



FIGURE 2 Protesters at a gay and lesbian rights march in Melbourne

Community groups can also provide people with a greater opportunity to be heard by governments. Australia is a democratic country but it can often be difficult for a single voice to stand out. Social groups bring people with shared values and goals together. They provide them with the ability to amplify their message and increase the likelihood of being heard and causing meaningful social change. When this occurs, social groups are the ultimate example of Australia's cultural diversity in action.

ACTIVITIES

REMEMBER

1. What does NGO stand for?

EXPLAIN

2. Explain the concept of the common good.
3. Describe one way in which community groups can benefit Australian society.

DISCOVER

4. Follow the **Community groups** weblink in your Resources section to find a community group that interests you. Answering the following questions using the information on your chosen group. 

- a. What is your community group and how did it form?
- b. What is the main goal of your group?
- c. Describe the methods your group uses in order to meet its goals.
- d. Explain how your group contributes to Australian society.

4.3 Globalisation — being a global citizen

As Australian citizens, there are many duties we must undertake in order to fulfil our civic responsibilities. These duties include our legal roles and also our obligation to follow shared Australian values. As our country is part of the larger global community, we can see ourselves not simply as Australian citizens but as global citizens too. Membership of the global community brings with it further civic responsibilities. In this section we examine the concept of global connectedness and what it means to be a citizen of the global community.

The incredible shrinking world!

Metaphorically speaking, the world continues to become a smaller place (see figure 1). Modern technology enables us to communicate, collaborate and celebrate with people thousands of kilometres away. In 1814, it would have taken approximately 100 days to travel between Sydney and London. Two hundred years later the travel time is only 23 hours! In 1814 it would have taken over six months to have a two-way conversation (via an exchange of letters) with an overseas friend. Two hundred years later we can do this instantaneously.

Technological developments such as these have dramatically changed the world in which we live and led to increased **globalisation**. The ease of travel and accessibility of information can connect us to places and issues that have historically been far removed from our lives. In this way, technological developments have drawn us together in a global community. As global citizens we must understand and protect the rights of all members of the global community and not just those people who share our specific nationality.



FIGURE 1 Travel time map. In developed countries like Australia, only 15 per cent of people are more than one hour from a major city.

The global citizen

It is an unfortunate truth that sometimes life can be challenging. You may have three assignments and two tests in a week, or perhaps you have just broken up with your boyfriend or girlfriend. While these challenges are indeed difficult, it is important to consider the hardships faced by people around the world. Being aware of global issues is one of the key responsibilities of a global citizen. Further responsibilities are listed in figure 2.

According to Oxfam International, a global citizen is someone who:

- is aware of the wider world and has a sense of their own role as a world citizen
- respects and values diversity
- has an understanding of how the world works economically, politically, socially, culturally, technologically and environmentally
- is outraged by social injustice
- participates in and contributes to the community at a range of levels from local to global
- is willing to act to make the world a more sustainable place
- takes responsibility for their actions.

FIGURE 2 What is a global citizen?

As you can see from the list in figure 2, being an active global citizen is not an easy task. There are millions of people who need the help of the global community and this number grows daily. Instead of being overwhelmed by this task, you can make a start on one of these expectations and start your journey to becoming a participant in the global community. Follow the **What is a global citizen?** weblink in your Resources section to learn more about what is expected of a global citizen.

 eBook plus

CASE STUDY

Kony 2012

The fascinating case of Kony 2012 can be used to examine many aspects of our global citizenship topic. In March 2012, a video detailing the exploits of African war criminal Joseph Kony burst onto the public arena. The video asked global citizens to consider the hardships endured by the victims of Kony's militant group, Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Among other human rights violations, the LRA was (and unfortunately still is) involved in the recruitment of child soldiers. The makers of the video wanted to raise awareness of the LRA activities and hoped they could bring about an end to their brutal regime. They appealed to the global community and waited for the citizens of this community to respond.

Both the appeal and response broke social media records. The original YouTube video (which you can watch by following the **Kony 2012** weblink in your Resources section) reached almost 100 million views in only six days. This equates to over 11 500 views per minute. In each of the three days after the video was released, over 1.3 million Twitter statements referenced 'Kony 2012'. These extraordinary numbers show the power of social media and highlight the speed at which ideas can now travel across the world. This

example also demonstrates how easy it is to become aware of issues in the global community.



Yet awareness is not always enough. Participation in local and global projects and campaigns can help to alleviate many global problems. For example, the Live Below the Line campaign raises awareness of global poverty by challenging people to eat on \$2 a day for a week. Not only does this campaign raise awareness of the hardships faced by people in the global community, it also raises money through donations.

ACTIVITIES

REMEMBER

1. How many days did it take to sail from Sydney to London in 1814?
2. What is a global citizen?
3. How many views did the Kony 2012 YouTube video receive per minute in its first six days?

EXPLAIN

4. Give two more examples of how the world is becoming a smaller place.

THINK

Consider the list of responsibilities in figure 2 for the following questions.

5. You must remove one of the responsibilities from the list. Which one would you choose and why?
6. Which responsibility do you consider to be the most important on this list and why?

4.4 Effects of globalisation on Australia

Which do you think is more significant — the impact of Australia on the world or the impact of the world on Australia? Due to the increasing trend towards globalisation, both these relationships have become important issues. The way we answer this question depends on our perspective of Australia's role in the global community. We can use the experience of Australians living overseas to gauge our global impact. Closer to home, we can examine the ways in which other cultures continue to influence our own.

Impact of Australia on the world

As international travel has become faster and more affordable, the number of Australians choosing to live overseas has increased steadily. Lured by professional opportunities, many Australian **expatriates (expats)** have moved permanently to places such as the United States of America, Europe and more recently Dubai. Along with their luggage, these expats take aspects of Australian culture and identity with them on their travels. These aspects can be physical objects like a jar of Vegemite or less tangible ones like Australian values.

Such cultural elements can eventually be adopted by an expat's new home. The development of the European Australian Football League demonstrates this point. Established in the late 1980s by Australians living in England, AFL Europe is now active in 20 European nations. Though it is only a small aspect of Australian culture, the success of AFL Europe — and its counterpart in Japan (see figure 1) — shows us that it is possible for elements of one culture to be adopted by another.



FIGURE 1 Members of the Japanese Australian Rules football team

Impact of the world on Australia

Throughout its history, Australian culture has been heavily influenced by the outside world. Historically, the nature of these influences has reflected the foreign policy of the time. During the nineteenth century, for example, Australia's culture closely mirrored that of its colonial controller — Great Britain. This close relationship began to fade after World War II. After this event, Australia drifted away from Britain and began to develop its partnership with the United States of America. As it did so, American culture began to seep into Australian life.

More recently, Australia's foreign policy has shifted again — this time towards our neighbours in the Asian region. Australia has signed free-trade agreements with South Korea and Japan. Such agreements enable the parties involved to exchange goods without the imposition of taxes and tariffs.

All three of these examples show that global interactions can influence Australian culture and identity. Whether it is something **superficial** like popular culture or something more meaningful, other nations are responsible for many aspects of what we now call Australian life.



FIGURE 2 Much of Australia's overseas trade is now conducted with countries in South-East Asia.

Global identity

We end our discussion of globalisation by looking at the concept of a global identity. As the phenomenon of the global community continues to rise, aspects of a nation's culture and identity have begun to cross borders. The fact that it is harder to define national identity in the modern world is evidence of this point. In an increasingly globalised world, it is likely that national identities will evolve to represent global communities.

We do not have to look any further than our own country to see what this kind of national identity looks like. For generations, Australia's national identity has been shaped by the multicultural composition of its citizens. As new ethnic groups make Australia their home, they add elements of their own identities to the melting pot that is Australian culture. In this way, an Australian identity is also a global identity.

ACTIVITIES

REMEMBER

1. What technological development has led to an increase in the number of Australians living overseas?

EXPLAIN

2. Explain how Australian expats can influence the country in which they now live.
3. Give an example of aspects of Australian culture being adopted by another country.

THINK

4. In recent years, Australia's foreign policy has shifted focus away from its traditional Western partners in favour of closer relationships with its Asian neighbours.
 - a. Why do you believe this change has been made?
 - b. Develop a list of positives and negatives of this foreign policy direction.
 - c. Which region do you believe should be the focus of Australian foreign policy?

PREDICT

5. How do you believe Australia's national identity will change in the next 50 years? Consider current immigration trends in your answer.

SkillBuilder: Debating an issue

Tell me

What is a debate?

Debating turns arguing into a sport, complete with set positions, rules and points system. In a regular debate, two teams of three debaters argue opposing sides of an issue. This issue is presented as a statement that can be researched, analysed and then debated. For example: 'Stereotypes decrease social cohesion'. After hearing all six speakers, judges decide which side spoke the best and presented the most convincing arguments.

Why is debating useful?

Formal debating is not like a discussion you may have with your family or friends. A debate requires you to have properly investigated an issue and to have considered both sides of the statement. Not only does debating develop your communication skills, it also teaches you the importance of research and preparation. Many politicians, lawyers and business people often remark that their involvement in school debating competitions helped develop skills and confidence that they use today.

Show me

How to prepare for a debate

A formal debate follows a set of rules. In a debating contest (for example, in school) there are two teams of three speakers, each of whom plays a defined role. One team argues in favour of the topic (the affirmative team) and the other team argues against the topic (the negative team). You can prepare for a debate by following the steps below.

STEP 1

Form a team of three people. Find out whether your team is to debate in favour of or against the topic. As a team, examine the topic carefully and discuss what you think it is about. You may need to use a dictionary to find a definition of key words contained in the topic statement.

STEP 2

Work out what arguments support your team's case. List them in order of importance.

STEP 3

Work out what arguments do not support your team's case. This will help you to anticipate what your opponents will say.

STEP 4

Carry out research to help fully develop your arguments. As part of your research, consider interviewing other students and the adults you know to learn their attitudes to the issue.

STEP 5

- a. Divide the arguments you have collected among the members of the team.
- b. Decide which team members will be the first, second and third speakers. Agree on what each member will say.

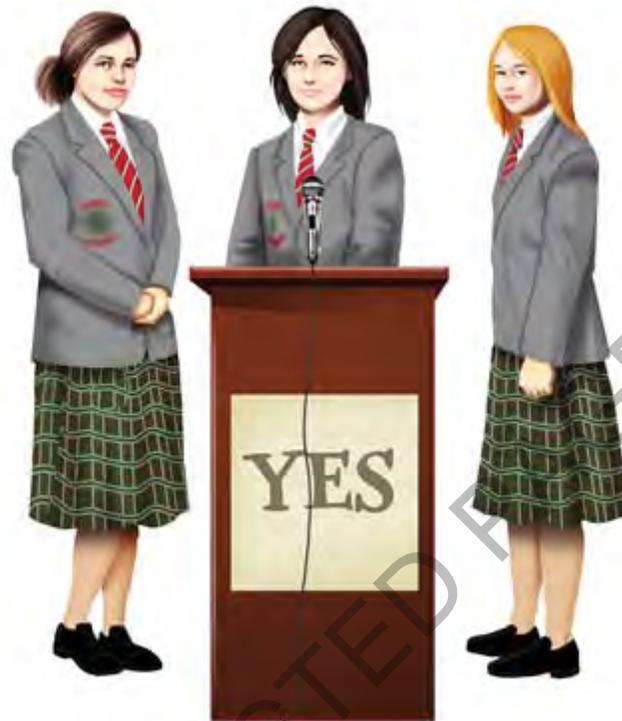
Conduct of the debate

The members of each team take it in turn to present their arguments in three to four minutes. The affirmative team's first speaker starts the debate. The following case study illustrates how a formal debate is conducted.

CASE STUDY

Conduct of a debate

Affirmative team



The first speaker should:

- greet the audience
- state which team he or she is representing and the issue
- introduce the other team members, their role and the team's view
- argue the team's case and state how the second speaker will build on this case.

The second speaker should:

- explain how his or her speech will build on the affirmative team's view
- argue against (rebut) the first speaker from the negative team
- add new examples to support the affirmative team's view.

The third speaker should:

- a. argue against (rebut) the negative team's case
- b. summarise the main arguments of the debate
- c. restate the affirmative view, explaining why it is the stronger case
- d. avoid introducing new arguments.

Negative team



The first speaker should:

- a. introduce the team members, describe their role and the team's view
- b. state whether the negative team accepts the affirmative team's view of the topic
- c. argue against (rebut) the points made by the first speaker of the affirmative team
- d. state how the second negative speaker will build on the team's case.

The second speaker should:

- a. explain how his or her speech will build on the negative team's view
- b. argue against (rebut) the two previous speakers from the affirmative team

- c. add new examples to support the negative team's view.

The third speaker should:

- a. argue against (rebut) the affirmative team's case
- b. summarise the main arguments of the debate
- c. restate the negative view, explaining why it is the stronger case
- d. avoid introducing any new material.

Elements of a good debate

A good debate:

- has members from each team taking turns to present their cases
- starts with the first speakers from each team introducing their teams and their team's view
- continues with the second speakers rebutting the previous speakers and adding new examples to support their team's view
- finishes with both third speakers rebutting the other team's case, summarising the main arguments and restating their team's view
- has arguments that only take three to four minutes.

Let me do it

With the assistance of your teacher, your class will participate in a series of debates. The debates will involve topics from this chapter.

Class debates

1. Divide your class into teams each containing three debaters. Ensure that there is an even number of teams.
2. Competing teams will then choose a topic from the list below:
 - a. There is no difference between a typical Australian and a stereotypical Australian.
 - b. There are no positive effects of stereotypes on society.
 - c. Media should be more responsible for the ways it portrays social groups.
 - d. Community and religious groups serve no purpose in society.
 - e. The world was a better place before globalisation.
 - f. As a global identity develops, national identities become less important.

3. Prepare for your debate, ensuring that each speaker's role is clearly defined as explained in this SkillBuilder.
4. Over a series of classes, conduct your debates in class with your fellow classmates filling the role of adjudicators.

Review and reflect

Review

A shared national identity can play many important roles in a society. Most importantly, it can unify people behind a set of common values, beliefs and traditions. These shared ideas can motivate people to act for the good of society. The media can have a significant influence on how national identities are constructed and maintained. Often, stereotypes of national identities are more prevalent in popular culture than among the community. The way in which national identities are perceived can have consequences in the global community. For this reason, it is crucial that proper understandings of national identity are developed and maintained.

- Shared national identities can unify societies and lead to positive social change.
- The media has a significant influence on how national identities are perceived.
- The perception of national identities has impacts in the global community.



Interactivity

Multiple choice

Searchlight ID: INT-5442



Interactivity

True/false

Searchlight ID: INT-5443



Interactivity

Crossword

Searchlight ID: INT-5444

Reflect

1. Follow the **Free-trade agreements** weblink in your Resources section to find the map and other information that will help you answer the following questions. 
 - a. In your own words, explain how a free-trade agreement works.
 - b. Describe the general patterns shown on the map. For example, with which regions does Australia share the majority of its free-trade agreements?
 - c. Are there any exceptions to the pattern you identified in question 1? If so, suggest a reason why this exception may exist.
 - d. Which country shown on the map has accepted the most Australian imports?
 - e. Which country shown on the map has provided Australia with the most goods?

- f. Which country do you believe is Australia's most important trade partner and why?
 - g. Besides the exchange of goods, what other benefits can a free-trade agreement have? Included references to the social consequences of these agreements.
2. Use the **What's your decision?** worksheet in your Resources section to complete a table ranking your attitudes towards certain statements about stereotypes and identity.



UNCORRECTED PAGE PROOFS