

Reclaiming Australia?

The digital formations of the Australian anti-Islamic nationalist movement

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This thesis is submitted to Macquarie University for the degree of Master of Research in
Cultural Studies

October 2016

Acknowledgements

I firstly acknowledge and pay respects to the traditional owners of the land on which this research was carried out, the Ku-ring-gai people of the Eora nation.

Dr Anthony Lambert, whose advice, encouragement, support, and critique were invaluable. My sincerest thanks and appreciation.

Dr Eve Vincent and Dr Catharine Lumby, for inspiration.

Toni and Greg, for your unwavering belief.

My parents, for providing every educational opportunity, and the best education of all – to travel.

To Avril. Without your patience, support, encouragement, help, humour, reassurance, and love, this work would have been impossible. Thank you, and I love you.

Date of submission: 10 October 2016

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ABSTRACT

With the re-emergence of Pauline Hanson and One Nation at the 2016 federal election, the politics of race in Australia have entered another critical phase. This thesis examines the emergence of four prominent anti-Islamic, Australian nationalist organisations – *Reclaim Australia*, the *United Patriots Front*, *Halal Choices* and the *Q Society*, which are united in their view that Muslims are incompatible with the contemporary Australian nation. Relying on digital, networked social media technologies as a means of organisation, communication and interaction, these organisations form a collective, produce discourse and transition from the digital realm into public space. The digital formation and rapid development of this anti-Islamic nationalist movement highlights the new dynamics restructuring the contemporary Australian racial hierarchy and the rules of national belonging. This project applies a critical discourse analysis methodology to demonstrate how a network of everyday actors use new media as a technology of power. Working through the new media ecology, these organisations create multiple identity regimes, (re)attaching meaning to the contested language of race, nation, and multiculturalism. The project concludes that in promoting a return to an Australia of a past imaginary, a Christian, masculine, White-normative nationalism is reasserted by Whites and non-Whites alike. This (re)renders colonial-era cultural formations as a defensive, affective response to threats, both real and perceived. This project opens a window onto the everyday exercise of diffuse social power as a means of racialised oppression, and the everyday reconstitution of macro-discourses which are formed by a complex amalgam of political, social, economic and historical forces.

1. PROJECT INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In September 2016, an Essential Report poll found that as many as 49% of all Australians would favour a ban on Muslim immigration (Markus, 2016). This comes less than three months after the political re-emergence of Pauline Hanson who, in her second maiden address to parliament, contended that Australia was “in danger of being overrun by Muslims” (Norman, 2016). In Australia, as in much of the Western world, anti-Islamic sentiment is becoming more visible. Since 2001 in particular, Muslims have been subjected to racism, discrimination, vilification and violence, and news media are increasingly preoccupied with the ‘Islamic problem’ – a debate over the meaning, content, and practice of Islam in which Muslims only tangentially participate (Noble & Poynting, 2007).

Such anti-Islamic rhetoric increasingly occupies the mainstream political agenda, lending its weight to forms of race-based nationalism that explicitly and specifically exclude Muslims. This ‘Othering’ marginalises Islam, excludes Muslims from public and democratic life, and intensifies ‘Islamophobia’ – the suspicion, fear, and hatred of Muslims and Islam. In 2015, a series of coordinated anti-Islamic rallies were held in towns and cities across Australia under the ‘Reclaim Australia’ banner. This relatively unknown organisation coordinated a movement attracting thousands of protestors. Some events descended into violence; moments of racialised conflict the like of which hadn’t been seen in Australia since the ‘Cronulla Riots’ in 2005, a seminal moment for the politics of race and nation in contemporary Australia. These kinds of events continue to shape the lived realities of Muslims both within and outside of the Australian nation.

This project analyses the formation and rise of the contemporary anti-Islamic Australian nationalist movement, seeking to identify the roots of this emergent ethno-exclusionary discourse and the actors that develop it. This is a grassroots collective that has relied substantially on networked digital media, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, as a means of developing collective identity, generating ideology and organising activism. This new form of media practice bypasses conventional strictures of power, influence and norms, reshaping definitions of the Australian nation, the performance of nationalism, and the exclusion of the ‘Islamic Other’ in ways that continue to unfold. However, this is also a movement that operates in physical, public space and, as this project argues, is shaped by broader public discourse on Islam, Muslims, and Australian national identity. This project sheds light on this under-researched area, and therefore ultimately seeks to develop an understanding of the ways new media is deployed in the everyday as a technology of social power.

The project is first located within an extended body of scholarly literature on the origins of nationalism, the formations of the Australian nation, and the politics and practice of cultural and national identities. Approaching this problem from within a Cultural Studies paradigm, the first section also locates these unfolding phenomena in terms of the critical history of the discipline and the theoretical and methodological traditions that have emerged from it. The project specifically considers the theoretical construction of discourse and representation and its relationship with power, analysing how Australia's postcolonial milieu creates the social and cultural hierarchies that organise and govern it in the present.

The second chapter of the thesis develops a case study of the Australian anti-Islamic movement, focusing on the progressive formation and ideological development of four of its most prominent actor organisations. Focusing on *Reclaim Australia*, the *United Patriots Front*, *Halal Choices*, and the *Australian Liberty Alliance/Q Society*, this section considers how ideological deliberation and negotiation occurs in the tension between each actor. Despite a broad nationalistic unity, the interconnections, hyperlinks, disjunctions, and ruptures within and across the movement become clear through this close, critical analysis. While operating as a site of oppressive social power, the new media ecology is also productive, creating complex and contradictory national and cultural identity phenomena.

In the third chapter, the thesis undertakes a qualitative, critical discourse analysis of the movement, working to uncover the specific power relations that underpin the movement's various nationalist and anti-Islamic discourses, and the rhetorical and semiotic strategies used by each organisation to activate them. It analyses the narrative and semiotic frames through which both national and Islamic identities are formulated, as well as the movement's own collective identity as a virtual 'White' community and its own self-perception and construction as national 'guardian'.

The final section of the thesis interrogates how specific historical, economic, and political forces produce subject positions and macro-discourses that enable and legitimise the formation of the movement. Specifically, this section considers how these discourses are reproduced and reworked in the everyday, and how official discourses of power are utilised by quotidian actors in order to oppress Others. In the context of the 'relentless cycle' (Markus, 2001) of Australian ethno-exclusionary nationalism, this section also reviews the critical-democratic function of the new media ecology. It highlights how, through the digital formation of nationalism and activism, public discourse on race and nationalism – and cultural identity – is co-created through a process of negotiation and tension between the micro and macro levels.

1.2 Disciplinary identity

Much recent scholarship in race, ethnicity and nationalism studies in Australia has focused specifically on the relationship between 'the West' and Islam (Noble & Poynting, 2004, Samiei, 2010; Ekman, 2015). This body of work has placed particular focus on the role played by traditional mass media in variously developing, enabling and legitimising a public discourse of Islamic and Muslim 'Otherness' within the Australian nation (Poynting et al., 2004), a macro-focus which reflects broader, global approaches in race, ethnicity and cultural scholarship that have prevailed throughout the 20th century. However, changes in the media landscape have refigured the content and conduct of public discourse, as have the de-territorialising forces of globalisation and the resulting mobile, diasporic groups and nations.

Fundamentally, this project analyses how both nationalism and new media are constructed and utilised as technologies of power; as a means of constructing the Australian nation as a territory that oppresses, and excludes, Muslims. Central to this question is Foucault's notion of biopolitics (1978): of how a person's representation, and therefore their lived reality, is governed by power and constituted through discourse. In seeking to understand how Australian hierarchies of social power flow through the everyday use of digital, networked social media, this project considers how regimes of representation both reflect and function as regimes of power.

Cultural Studies' polyglot nature produces a lens through which these complex phenomena of power and representation can be filtered and better understood, uniting fields such as political economy, anthropology, sociology, theology and security and anti-terrorism studies. A core focus on two critical sub-disciplines positions this thesis at the nexus of both race and nationalism studies, and media studies. These are interdependent, and a strong tradition of interdisciplinary critical inquiry exists between them. This project owes not only a conceptual debt to this tradition, it speaks to this intersection and body of literature by analysing how technological change reforms the exercise of power and representation, as well as the formation of nations and nationalisms.

In order to challenge an architecture of Australian social power that oppresses Muslims, the project deploys approaches from critical theory that, in the words of Frankfurt School scholar Max Horkheimer (1974, p3), seek to achieve "human emancipation" from forms of dominative practices like racism, violence and exclusion. In accounting for the historical, economic, social, and cultural dimensions of such problems, this project similarly explores the reproduction of structural inferiority and inequality in and through discourse. So too does it aim to identify agents of change, and to establish practical goals of social transformation. In terms of applying

this critical approach specifically to new forms of media practice, theorists such as Antonio Gramsci (1971), Roland Barthes (1957, in Leak, 1994), and later, Stuart Hall (1980, 1992) have proven influential and instructive. Collectively, their work analyses how diffuse power hierarchies influence the ways in which texts are encoded and decoded, with experiences of power and powerlessness thus brought into the processes of media creation and consumption and, ultimately, to the formation, embodiment and performance of cultural and national identities.

From this basis, the thesis applies and extends an area of Cultural Studies scholarship known as Critical Race Theory (CRT), which principally analyses how nationalism, racism, and social exclusion are social and discursive constructions, constrained and shaped by these networks of power. CRT is an empirical approach that reveals, among other things, the social nature of racial ideas; of why systems of racial categorisation have had historical utility and how they have evolved into modes through which contemporary social realities are ordered and interpreted. This project considers how Australian nationalism functions as a postcolonial White hegemony, following on from the work of scholars including W.E.B. DuBois, Ruth Frankenberg and in Australia Ghassan Hage and Joseph Pugliese. Together, this academic movement illuminates how colonial-era White superiority established a powerful, if largely invisible, 'culture of Whiteness'. This mode of social organisation, normativity and cultural representation continues to define Western nations such as Australia, even as the West is increasingly characterised as being in a 'postracial' evolutionary phase in which the notion of race is rendered "irrelevant socially" (Goldberg, 2009, p360), seemingly emptied of any meaning or significance.

With a similarly expository focus, this project applies CRT in the context of postcolonialism and media theory to contemporary Australian race, identity, and nationalism phenomena. This study highlights how, in an increasingly globalised, networked society, formal and informal cultural hegemony is challenged in a number of different ways, problematising the notion of nation and complicating the discursive and representative power of media. As accelerating globalisation illuminates the parallel degradation both of the state and mass media as products and apparatuses of power, this project traces everyday individuals negotiating the complexity and contradiction of the modern nation in which politics and culture are mediated online. The rise of neoliberalism, the disconnection of state from society, the emergence of networked digital media and the conduct of discourse outside channels of traditional power, provides an opportunity to revisit Habermas' (in Calhoun, 1993) theory of the democratic public sphere in a contemporary setting and using real world phenomena. One of the guiding research questions of this project derives from this theoretical setting: whether the much-theorised

democratised digital public sphere is in fact possible, if this new media ecology also opens spaces of oppression, denigration and exclusion from the nation.

The ubiquity of the Internet, and the socially networked forms of communication technology it produces, complicates understandings of how meaning in, and about, a society is produced (Flew, 2014). While much classical scholarship has analysed how more linear discourses – like those expressed in mass media – impact upon identity formation, social media discourses follow more complex and contradictory logics (Rosen, in Mandiberg 2012). The sheer number of participants, their (pseudo)anonymity, and the incredible complexity of globalised, de-territorialised interconnectedness makes the tracking of formal power structures extremely difficult (if not impossible), which challenges the unilateral flow of power from institutions through mass media (Coleman, in Mandiberg 2012). Social media studies as an academic discipline continues to develop, and while recent scholarship has focused on understanding the history, potential and operative dynamics of well-established technologies such as Facebook and Twitter, the specific relation between social media practice in the formation of ‘nation’ is not well understood, and little attention has been paid specifically to the Australian context thus far (Flew, 2014).

Scholarship in the realm of new media and nationalism is growing, though remains developmental. There is an increasing focus on the expression of national identity and anti-Islamic sentiment elsewhere internationally, such as in emergent online organisations in Sweden, Norway and Germany (Ekman, 2015). While analyses of extreme, anti-Islamic nationalist organisations have been progressively building in mainstream media and non-academic literature (McKenzie-Murray, 2015, 2016; Sparrow, 2015), little scholarly work has thus far been undertaken on groups such as these. This project is therefore unique and significant, and its findings have real-world implications for disenfranchised, disempowered members of Australian society – in keeping with the tradition of critical theory.

Despite its focus on this range of underexplored social and cultural dynamics, this is a project that explores both change *and* continuity in the Australian and broader global performances of race and national identity. Ultimately, this thesis analyses another phase in the development of Australian national identity and its fractious relationship with cultural and corporeal difference. This is a process in which media and communication technology, and actors, have always been considered central (Hall, 1980, 1992; Said, 1978; Anderson 1991), and within the context of this project (perhaps more than at any other time in recent memory), this discursive performance in the Australian context has been fundamentally reformed by technological change.

1.3 Methodology

Responding to the interconnectedness of theory and methodology, this thesis extends cultural-critical imperatives into a methodological approach drawn from ‘critical discourse analysis’ (CDA). Emerging out of critical theory itself, CDA is a practical tool that allows the ways in which social power is variously produced, enacted, confirmed, legitimised, and resisted through language and text to be studied. In this sense, an attempt to uncover objective or absolute reality through discourse is a false aim (van Dijk, 2003). Instead, the production and reception of texts should be understood as being fundamentally defined by broader hierarchies of social power, the sites and performances of which CDA uncovers.

Scholarship on discourse analysis as a research methodology has steadily grown in the last few decades (see van Dijk, 1993, 2002; Fairclough, 1995). It refers to the study of diverse bodies of knowledge; an approach to deconstructing language attached to forms of social practice. Discourse analysis does not necessarily prescribe a defined, unitary methodological approach (Fairclough, 1995). Like Cultural Studies, it is inherently interdisciplinary, serving a project-specific set of research questions and directions. As an interdisciplinary project that unites disparate fields of inquiry including race and nationalism studies, media studies and political theory, CDA’s “constellation” (van Dijk, 1993) of different methodological approaches offers productive openings for this thesis. As a form of analysis that captures ‘people’s utterances when they take part in different domains of social life’ (van Dijk, 1993), CDA enables the critical-linguistic function of discourse to be situated within a Foucauldian paradigm of power/knowledge. This allows specific rhetorical-political strategies to be identified and analysed in terms of their being produced and constrained by broader hierarchies of power.

The application of CDA to everyday digital media discourse is a natural extension of the mass media focus that has thus far prevailed in the scholarship. However, applying discourse analysis to social media is not without its challenges. Social media discourse analysis remains an emerging methodology (El-Nawawy & Khamis, 2009). Very few projects have thus far applied discourse analysis to the expression of nationalism and racism on social media; this project appears to be the first to do so in the (very) recent Australian context. As such, the project explores emerging theoretical, as well as methodological, territory. Regardless of media form, there exists no clear consensus on a specific approach to textual analysis – merely broad suggestions about the aims, objectives and possible outcomes (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1993). This requires the reuse, adaptation and combination of methodological approaches from a range of sources within the context of particular research directions and aims.

1.4 Literature review

An extended body of scholarly literature emerged throughout the 20th and early 21st centuries that sought to explain how nationalism as a social, economic and political principle came to define varying social and cultural performances of identity, to define the 'rules' of inclusion and exclusion within the territory of the nation, and to the explain forces that challenge these boundaries over time. This literature review responds to a research problem about how, as a settler society, Whiteness as a condition of nationhood has shaped contemporary definitions of Australianness in culture and performance. It examines how these pervasive, unacknowledged patterns of privilege, superiority and power are interpreted and reproduced in the everyday, and used to draw the boundaries of cultural inclusion and exclusion and attach meaning to 'Australia'. It is therefore a study of how new media enables the formation of the anti-Islamic movement, and how its participants become agents in the construction of both national and other discourses of identity.

Given that socially exclusive anti-Islamic discrimination has become a common, defining feature of social discourse throughout the West (Poynting & Noble, 2004), this thesis analyses the interplay of global/local and macro/micro dynamics manifest in and through this particular form of contemporary Australian nationalism. The literature reviewed here narrows progressively in focus from the global postcolonial to Australian contexts, explaining how specific local histories, forces, and actors have shaped the formation of 'Australia' in ways that are distinct and unique from the discourses of anti-Islamic nation that have been constructed elsewhere in the West.

This review moves through a series of distinct, though interrelated, schools of inquiry. Beginning with an overview of some of the key postcolonial texts and thinkers, the review firstly considers how colonialism established hierarchies of social power that continue to define Australia, and Australia's unique postcolonial order, in which 'coloniser' and 'colonised' share territory (Moreton-Robinson, 2004). This creates both parallels and divergences in the texture and performance of Australian nationalism. This postcolonial literature also engages the historical, discursive constructions of the Western and Islamic worlds, which leads into Australian scholarship with a particular focus on contemporary constructions of race and the fractious state of Islam within the national imaginary.

The chapter closes with literature related to the operation of discourse and representation, where post-structuralist orientated postcolonial literature interacts with the 'real'. Language is shown to be constitutive of deeply embedded patterns of social power and cultural hierarchies to produce regimes of truth. Online discursive spaces, in which White hegemony is deployed

as an everyday, common sense mode of practice, are foregrounded as creating national and Islamic cultural identities and (re)drawing the boundaries of national cultural sovereignty.

1.4.1 Postcolonialism and the origins of exclusionary nationalism

Postcolonial literature has been extremely influential in the broader literature on nationalism, establishing ways of thinking about the interactions of people, cultures and societies in a globalising world, in which the remnants of colonial-era power remain in subtle, obscure forms (Varisco, 2007). It is a “commitment to the conquest of minds and cultures” (Fanon, 1986, p223) that has established enduring hierarchies of subjects and knowledges. The persistent elevation of a White, Christian-normative national culture that resists the assertion of competing cultural identities and forms of practice is an Australian national construction that has remained largely unchanged since the time of British colonisation (Markus, 1990, 2001; Hage, 1998; Moreton-Robinson and Nicoll, 2006). This results in the representation of Whiteness as the “invisible norm against which Other races are judged” (Moreton-Robinson, 2006, p388), but which is unmarked, unnamed and unacknowledged.

Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) has proven both ground-breaking and contested in equal measure. It has had a transformative influence upon scholarship in the humanities (Varisco, 2007), developing important frames through which the postcolonial world and the cultural relations within it can be interpreted, particularly those between Anglo-Celtic and Islamic diasporas. In a critical deconstruction of ‘Orientalism’ as a model of academic and cultural inquiry, Said contends the very notion of the ‘East’ – the Arab-Islamic world – is a discursively and thereby socially constructed entity. It is constituted of narratives that enable Western political dominance by painting subaltern ‘colonials’ as “violent, irrational, and backward” (Amin-Khan, 2012, p1595). This “ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority” (Said, 1978, p85) therefore originates in Enlightenment-era European scholarship, and imposed “as truth” (ibid, p99) to justify imperialism in its material and cultural forms – the remnants of which defined postcolonial social and cultural organisation and which continue to shape global cultural relations in the present.

Said argues that postcolonial imaginaries therefore characterise complex social worlds in terms of oversimplified, static, monist in- and out-groups. This foregrounds the formation of ‘self-national’ and ‘other-global’ identities that permeate and define postcolonial cultural categorisations; an essential dualism that serves as a rationale for domination and exploitation by the coloniser over the colonised. Despite its fallacy, this approach nonetheless prevails in many discursive constructions and is particularly prevalent in everyday interpretations of modern national identities and race regimes (Hall, 1992). It is a mode that imposes upon both sides a non-existent unity that in fact exaggerates difference and stimulates conflict. When

applied to the Australian context, *Orientalism* produces two readings: the first of the elevation of a White-normative 'mainstream' Australian nation as an enduring product of colonisation and a second of the basic narrative characterisations of Islam that persist in Western (and by extension, Australian) ethno-nationalisms today.

Orientalism is not, however, without its critics. Alongside general criticisms of reductivism and historical inaccuracy (Pati, 1999, Varisco 2007), many scholars (Samiei, 2010; Tuastad, 2003; Amin-Khan, 2012) have returned to update and augment Said's formative work in order to better explain the specific, contemporary relations between Islam and the West as global society has become increasingly connected and interdependent. In *Neo-Orientalism? The Relationship between Islam and the West in a Globalised World* (2010), Samiei critically analyses the ways in which orientalist narratives have perpetuated despite the various "waves of globalisation" (ibid, p1146) that have challenged Western political power and changed its imperatives, as well as the political position of Islam itself, since *Orientalism*'s publication in 1978. In particular, Samiei examines how Said's sharply contrasted, territorial categories 'Orient' and 'Occident' have been challenged by globalisation, which increasingly draws relations between Others and the national self into shared geographic and temporal space. Samiei also notes the reformation of the 'essentialised violence' thesis, identifying a narrative of 'new barbarism' in contemporary constructions of Islam in the post-9/11 environment. This discourse extracts political and historical motivations from explanations of terrorism, for example, leaving only socio-religious interpretations – one of the key ideological tenets of the movement on which this project focuses.

It is on the same basis of assumed and unspoken European, liberal superiority that Benedict Anderson's influential *Imagined Communities* (1991) was developed. This text propounds the very purpose of the 'nation' as a political construct is to define the normative and ethical patterns of acceptability, and therefore inclusion/exclusion, to support state enterprises within a geographic territory. This "inherently exclusionary" (ibid, p79) cultural project is projected onto citizen subjects through the power apparatus of the state. In an approach similar to Said's, Anderson's nation is a discursive construction; developed through institutions such as mass media, as a way of conscripting individuals to a collective political cause. Taken together, both *Orientalism* and *Imagined Communities* can be read as an application of Foucault's notions of governmentality and 'biopower' to the in- and out-group identities which define the boundaries of national belonging (1978). Where Anderson builds a practical framework that aids in understanding the otherwise abstract 'notion of nation', de-constructivist scholars have extended this thesis in order to explain the paradoxes and entanglements of contemporary nationhood, and exclusion from it, as they are lived.

Homi Bhaba's *The Location of Culture* (1994) engages Derrida to analyse a number of mechanisms that challenge a coloniser's cultural power, in the process developing a more complex thesis of 'cultural hybridity' when contrasted to Said's dualism. Bhaba argues that oppressed, colonised populations are also constituted by power. Identity as representation and discourse, therefore, is shaped by the exertion of power from the top-down as well as the bottom-up. Discourse is not merely the product of hegemonic, imposed constructions (even if that is intended), but is instead negotiated and produced in a "third space" (ibid, p191) between coloniser and colonised. In *Black Skin White Masks* (1952), Fanon argues from this same perspective that the relationship between the body and its cultural space is constructed in a discursive schema of meaning; through stories and anecdotes about 'what it means' to be embodied as an Other. In doing so, this discursive race regime in fact shapes both its object and its subject; European Whiteness itself is defined against a 'negrified' subject. Both authors highlight the oppressive and productive potential of power in representation, and that social realities are produced not through coercion but by the tension between power and resistance.

With a specific focus on the negotiated process of meaning-making within mediated discourse, Stuart Hall's 'Encoding/Decoding' model (1980) developed alongside Said's *Orientalism* and in response to the same phenomena of social inequality. Hall argues that the meaning of a communicative event can neither be fixed by its sender, nor that its consumer is passive in receipt. Media and audiences are therefore connected through the same cultural system that defines the boundaries of understanding; an application of Foucault's socially constituted 'genealogy of knowledge'. Like the de-constructivist scholars, Hall contends that power is exerted and identity constituted within discourse, not outside of it, and audiences as a result have agency in any communicative exchange. In this way, Hall demonstrates that identity cannot be ascribed to mere media invention and hegemonic power. Instead, it should be interpreted as the product of a system of interdependent political-cultural processes which are negotiated and reconstituted through representations.

Hall's later work *Modernity and its Futures* (1992) shifts in focus toward the specific question of increasingly 'trans-national' identity and its impact on constructions of racial regimes. This text represents Hall's developing focus on hybridisation, recognising – like the growing body of neo-orientalist scholarship – that remarked national territories profoundly impact upon the formation of social identities. In describing race as a 'floating signifier', Hall suggests discursively-constituted racial ideas shift in meaning over time and in response to changing power dynamics, even if the racialised Other remains in an ultimately subordinate position (Hall, 1992). For example, the reworking of the label 'Black', and its complex intersections with questions of class, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity, operates in a system of meaning that "is never finished" (ibid, p32). This engages, rather than suppresses, difference and facilitates

the cultural construction of new 'ethnicised' identities. This challenges Said's notion of static identity subject to immovable power imbalances. Instead, identity continuously negotiates with the power realities in which it finds itself (Hall, 1992). In this view, identity is constrained and influenced by history, but not permanently defined by it. Here Hall overlaps with Bhaba's (1994) identification of the productive effects of colonial power on its subjects, whereby the postcolonial is a site in which "cultural differences contingently and conflictually touch" (p207).

1.4.2 Australian nationalism and difference

A field of scholarship increasingly utilised to explain contemporary cultural phenomena is critical whiteness studies (Perera, 2002, 2009; Moreton-Robinson, 2004; Poynting & Noble, 2004). This explores and critiques the nature of White privilege, the historical processes that created White identity, and the power that is socially produced as a result. Whilst the broader field of critical Whiteness studies is indebted to the pioneering work of W.E.B. DuBois (1963), Theodore Allen (1994) and Ruth Frankenberg (1993), it is impossible to review the critical contexts of contemporary White privilege and power in Australia without addressing the contributions of Ghassan Hage. *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society* (1998) is arguably Hage's most important work, augmented by *Against Paranoid Nationalism: Searching for Hope in a Shrinking Society* (2003). The application of Pierre Bourdieu's (2001) notion of *habitus* to the Australian context identifies the cyclical nature of "minority discrimination and harassment" (p22) in Australia, a pattern of targeted ethno-exclusion that presents repetitively as patriotic nationalism. Hage argues that Australia's history of colonisation and indigenous dispossession converges with its geography to constitute a "white island" (p90) – a European society incongruent with the cultural worlds that surround it. This generates specific local anxieties and fears, such as a predisposition in Australian nationalism toward 'numerological racism' – an anxiety related to the loss of cultural sovereignty were Whites to be 'outnumbered' through immigration *en masse*. This observation is one of Hage's most enduring – by identifying this continuity, *White Nation* can as comfortably explain popular anxieties related to Islam as it can the discourse that prevailed about Asian immigration of the late 1990s. In *A Line in the Sea* (2002), Perera examines this continuity through the periodic reassertion of White, Christian normativity-as-nationalism in the specific politics of asylum seeking. Perera argues that globalisation has challenged Whiteness' taken-for-granted status and thereby, its power. This has led to continuing official reassertions of 'control' through the symbolic apparatus of the maritime border. Following a similar argument, Dunn (2005) in *Repetitive Discourses of Nationalism in the Politics of Mosque Development*, contends that globalisation has worked paradoxically to 'sediment' White nationalism through such repetitive, defensive performance.

Hage's identification of the persistent class dimensions of Australian exclusionary nationalism and racism echo Anderson's (1991) construction of racism as inherently classed. Hage (1998) argues that multiculturalism finds its most ardent support in "inner-city elites" (p133), locating the problematic discourse of 'tolerance' that constructs multiculturalism as an object of consumption but not negotiation. This results in a 'paradox of tolerance', enabling nationalist discourses like the 'benevolent host' that empower White Australians to exercise intolerance and exclusion in response to unwelcome cultural demands and performances, such as those associated with pluralism. Hage poses a question, left unanswered, about how White 'spatial managers' feel entitled, or indeed compelled, to nationalist and racist performance. This project re-engages this question, examining how acts of culturalist 'critique-as-punishment' function to assert White authority over the national space.

Localising Hage's approach, Noble (2009) and Poynting (2008; 2010) specifically address the constructions and performances of Islamic and national identities in local Australian spaces. *Lines in the Sand: The Cronulla Riots, Multiculturalism and National Belonging* focuses specifically on how local Islamic identities have been (re)constructed in response to a spectacular moment of racial nationalism in the 2005 Cronulla Riots. Through an analysis of the political-media constructions of cultural identities and the performance itself, the authors deconstruct the persistent neo-orientalism that prevailed in many analyses (such as the 'clash of civilisations' theory). *Lines in the Sand* can be read as an empirical application of Hage's work, drawing on Bordieusian (2001) theory to chart the contemporary, ongoing transition in discourse from an ethnic 'Arab Other' to a racialised 'Muslim Other' in Australia (Poynting, et al., 2004). This merging of the physical, territorial and cultural dimensions of 'race' with the religious is a feature unique to this phase of ethno-exclusionary nationalism; an example of how 'neo-racism' (Balibar, 1988) constructs racial categories using a range of non-biological modes of identity. It is also an examination of the persistent "spatial factor" (Noble 2010, p33); the relation between territory and culture in national imaginary raised by Hage, Anderson and Said. In a contemporary Australian national territory that is "ever-more culturally diverse" (Wise, in Noble 2009), Noble contends that belonging in space is a material practice of containment and enablement that is experienced by Others inconsistently and unevenly. In Poynting and Noble's view, the Cronulla Riots were a moment in which both tolerance (from Hage, 1998) and enablement were revoked: the White 'mainstream' exercised its dormant cultural power, endowed through its assumed superiority, to exclude Muslims from public space in Cronulla when its benevolence was challenged.

Moreton-Robinson and Nicoll (2006) expand on this by analysing how this public expression of White superiority is particularly gendered. They present the concept of 'patriarchal White sovereignty' as the underlying regime of power that ensures that White, particularly male,

members of the Australian nation retain more rights to enter, exist and act within public spaces than their non-White counterparts. This sovereignty is the key to ownership of the national space – and the definition of its rightful members and owners.

In one such study of spatial management, Amanda Wise's '*Sensuous Multiculturalism: Emotional Landscapes of Interethnic Living in Australian Suburbia*' (2010) extends Bhaba's hybridity approach to engage with the complex lived reality of intercultural difference as opposed to the abstract and hypothetical ideas about multiculturalism that often dominate public debate, policy making and academic discourse (Jakubowicz & Ho, 2013). Wise's ethnographic methodology focuses on specific moments and spaces of intercultural *habitus*, an approach uniquely accessing the myriad lived realities that are created by "cohesion-focused" (Jupp & Nieuwenhuysen, 2007, p57) Australian multicultural policy. This referential shift focuses specifically on those charged with negotiating the realities of difference, demonstrating that productive intergroup relations are the product of a network of "transversal enablers" (Wise, 2010, p88) who work to identify and resolve tension and conflict within and across communities. In the mostly 'peaceful' and 'productive' multicultural reality she studies, Wise challenges a common refrain in anti-Islamic (and anti-immigration) discourse that any type of intergroup tension or conflict equates to a universal 'failure of multiculturalism' (Perera, 2015).

Such 'crises' are addressed in further detail by Lentin & Titley (2012) in *The Crises of Multiculturalism: Racism in a Neoliberal Age*. The authors locate the pervasive 'culturalist' discourses that seek to render 'race' as an historical irrelevance, despite its clear and continued impact on contemporary intergroup relations. Of particular importance to this project is a cultural racism known as "coercive liberalism" (ibid, p101), a racial model of Judith Butler's gendered performativity (1990). The authors identify a form of 'virtuous' nationalist performance that co-opts hard-fought freedoms, like women's and LGTBI rights, as a way of paradoxically subjugating supposedly illiberal and undemocratic cultures such as Islam. Performed through acts such as the forced removal of headscarves, this form of performance is one of the primary discourses of incompatibility and inferiority deployed by the Australian anti-Islamic nationalist movement examined in this thesis.

Through the relationship between liberalism and racial nationalism, the right to define the national space is not strictly spatial – its power also has a formal, institutional dimension. Goldberg examines how this accords with a global 'neoliberal' construction of racial inferiority and exclusion. Various ethno-exclusionary nationalisms are articulated in terms of migrants creating an unacceptable public financial burden, highlighting how the 'politics of race' become particularly accessible in times of economic downturn and increasing inequality (Gale, 2004).

This creates a form of Otherness underpinned by a rationalising discourse of ethnic 'cost' that is, outwardly, neither racial nor cultural (Goldberg, 2009). The anti-Islamic movement's engagement with a basic political dichotomy works within the context of Goldberg's argument. However, in a contemporary environment, where both major Australian political parties have treated issues of immigration and asylum seeking in similar ways, the philosophical poverty of this Left/Right divide (Goldberg, 2009) as it relates to Islam and the demarcation of nation is exposed. Markus (2001) analyses a local rendering of this effect in *Race: John Howard and the Remaking of Australia*, tracking the Howard government's reign through the 1990s. Markus argues that the true import of extreme politics is not specifically the exclusion of Others, but to "nudge mainstream discourse to the right" (ibid, p39), making acceptable and legitimate those opinions previously thought 'extreme'. Markus argues that during this period of Australian history, anti-global, anti-immigration ideology, and ultimately a race-based nationalism, became legitimised and interwoven with neoliberalism and thus the domain of the political Right as a means of accommodating an extreme political force in One Nation, despite no inherent ideological claim to it. Markus gives examples of how late 20th century resistance to Aboriginal land rights and Asian immigration were articulated as disadvantageous to 'mainstream' Australians. Whitman (2013) extends upon this idea, identifying a specifically working-class, White, masculine mythology in this nationalism; the symbolic "Aussie Battler" (p50). Together, these authors examine the surreptitious, coded racial referencing used to promote a particular national ideal of White hegemony which defines the Australian "post-racial" hierarchy (Markus, 2001, p71). This hierarchy 'recolonises' Others through a culturalist paradigm, preventing the discrimination, racism and exclusion that underpins it from being named, interpreted, and overcome.

1.4.3 A new discursive order: Race and new media

Many major texts that analyse the relationship between nationalism and public discourse have attempted to deal with the social, political, and ultimately cultural consequences of mass mediated representations of Islamic Others (see Hall, 1980, 1992; Anderson, 1991; Hage, 1998; Poynting & Noble, 2004; Moreton-Robinson, 2004). Central to the definition and performance of nationalism have been the interrelated processes of agenda setting, mass media effects, and analyses of the relationships between media and other sites of institutional power, particularly state projects and interests. However, fundamental changes in the media landscape, represented in the emergence of networked, digital, converged media, have problematised the conduct and content of discourse. The ubiquity of the Internet and the "vast tracts of territory" (Mandiberg, 2012, p33) claimed by social media have remade previously stable relationships between media organisations and audiences (Mandiberg, 2012, p19) and thereby, representations and identities.

Scholarship focusing specifically on new media and race is evolving, with most attention having thus far been paid to 'Web 1.0' technologies such as websites, discussion forums, blogs, and online news channels. Scholars in the realm of digital rhetorics of race have examined the discourse of specific organisations, community groups, or locales online, such as Black-Planet, White supremacist groups, or local newspapers (Brock, 2012; Chambers, 2013). However, networked social media – in which ordinary, person-to-person communication is mediated through online digital channels such as Facebook and Twitter, commonly known as 'Web 2.0' (Mandiberg, 2012) – has thus far commanded limited attention in terms of the impact of interrelated constructions of racial identity and nationalism.

Mattias Ekman's *Online Islamophobia and the politics of fear: manufacturing the green scare* (2015) is a concentrated effort to analyse the use of social media as an everyday, cultural technology of power in the performance of racial nationalism. While Ekman focuses on a network of anti-Islamic nationalist actors in Scandinavia, his findings on the discursive strategies of these actors and their interaction with broader public discourse have implications for this project. Ekman contends that social media is a new discursive space with a unique capacity to cultivate undemocratic communication forms, such as intolerance and hate speech. These technologies allow participants to not only bypass the formal-institutional 'gates' that prevent this discourse in traditional mass media, but also the normative ones that moderate ordinary conversation. Paired with Durrheim, Greener and Whitehead's (2015) study into the psychology of online racism, in which anonymity and deindividuation lay the foundations for extreme hate speech and denial of racism simultaneously, the oppressive possibilities of this comparatively unregulated realm become apparent.

Despite largely predating Web 2.0, in *Nationalism and the Internet* (2007), Eriksen argues against the 'de-nationalist' orthodoxy in Internet studies contending that borderless media technologies will result in communities' detachment from national constructions of identity. Through an analysis of several online communities of interest, he demonstrates that the digital realm is used as a space in which the 'nation' is, in fact, reasserted. As globalisation challenges the territorial aspect of the nation, digital communication technologies are deployed to reconstruct "virtual national communities" (p2) which are bound by similar patterns of inclusion and exclusion as in the real world.

Having stepped progressively through a cumulative body of critical literature narrowing in focus from the postcolonial, to the national, to the virtual, this literature review highlights how, as history has unfolded, each stage of critical inquiry extends upon its predecessors to respond to new phenomena of inequality and the power hierarchies that create, act upon and resist them. Emerging from this scholarly location, the project's next chapter proceeds to

develop a detailed case study of the contemporary Australian anti-Islamic nationalist movement. Focusing on four of its most prominent actor organisations, it analyses how interrelationships, tensions, and conflicts between each individual actor work to produce the movement's collectivised ideology and discourse before ultimately becoming politically active.

2. 'THE MOVEMENT': A CASE STUDY

2.1 Introduction

A digitally-mediated form of collective activism, the Australian anti-Islamic nationalist movement is comprised of a diverse patchwork of organised collectives of varying size and influence. The four organisations profiled in this chapter – *Reclaim Australia*, the *United Patriots Front*, *Halal Choices*, and the *Q Society/Australian Liberty Alliance* – are interconnected and interdependent and united by one central idea: that Muslims and Islam are inherently dangerous, deviant and therefore culturally incompatible with the Australian nation. So too have they each transitioned from the digital realm into physical, public space and, ultimately, have succeeded in bringing the 'Islamic Problem' into the centre of public debate.

This case study charts the development of a range of disparate, though ideologically similar, actors into a powerful, organised collective through the new media ecology. Interrogating how the movement's ideology becomes collectivised and politically activated, this section of the thesis focuses on how processes of ideological deliberation and negotiation, essential to activism, unfold in the digital terrains and tensions between each of the organisations.

These profiles analyse the shared attitudes, experiences and ideologies through which each actor became connected in order to form a collective. Together, their reliance on digital media technology challenges some of the traditional orthodoxies on the formation of nationalism, such as those related to physical territory and the collectivising role of traditional, mass media. This analysis highlights how the new media ecology has not, as many predicted (Eriksen, 2007; Brock, 2009; Flew, 2014), impossibly fragmented nations and the very notion of collective, national identity based on shared mythology, symbols and representations (Anderson, 1991, Hall 2000). The very existence of this anti-Islamic, collectivised movement highlights that the digital realm is a key site in which individuals seek to reassert the abstract, 'imagined' community of the nation. Reflecting Soja's argument that "there is no unspatialised reality" (2000, p46), the movement can be interpreted as the virtual formation of a White nation; a collective that, having had its physical and territorial hegemony challenged, seeks to reconstruct it online as a precursor to re-staking its claim for public space.

It is important to note that this section defers judgement as to theology, religious practice, or jurisprudence in favour of developing a greater understanding of how discourses of specifically anti-Islamic, ethno-exclusionary nationalism are constructed; how and why collectives become empowered to discriminate and exclude, how this ideology is made politically active, and the consequences on the lives of Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

2.2 Reclaim Australia

Australia's largest and highest profile anti-Islamic organisation, *Reclaim Australia* shot to public prominence in early 2015 through a series of coordinated, sometimes violent, public rallies in major towns and cities across Australia. This network of nationalistic, anti-Islamic public demonstrations is without peer in Australia since the 2005 Cronulla Riots, a moment of spectacular racial aggression that garnered extensive domestic and international mass media attention and prompted an ever-growing corpus of academic literature. The re-emergence of this type of targeted Islamic oppression presents an opportunity to review the place of Muslims in contemporary Australia, and the actors seeking to selectively redefine the terms of national belonging.

Reclaim began in early 2015 as a joint project of three previously unconnected "Australian mums and dads" (Cullen, 2015). Motivated against Islam following the Lindt Café siege in Sydney in December 2014, the organisation's leaders connected to one another in an event of mass-digital-social media convergence – a *Daily Telegraph* article's online comments section facilitated not by name or pseudonym, but by Facebook profile. In this unique forum, the three connected through their shared view that the Sydney siege was a tipping point – an event caused by, and itself symbolising, the loss of "Australian culture" (Reclaim Australia, 2015) to a culturally and politically hostile Islam.

Reclaim's more rapid growth than its peers, attracting more than 3,000 'likes' in its first day and more than 50,000 within three months (Cullen, 2015), reflects the digital savvy of its leaders, who established a visual identity that made the group appear "more professional than the two-bit operation we really were" (ibid). Aware of the de-territorialised, converged nature of digital media practice, they developed links with well-established global anti-Islamic actors, driving the movement's discourse forward through regular posts from major media organisations, both in Australia and overseas, that supported and rationalised its ideological position.

Reclaim's brand of anti-Islamic Australian nationalism is underpinned by a "broad and fluid ideology" (Whitford, 2015), promising to protect the "values", "morals", and "freedoms" (Reclaim Australia, 2015) that align loosely with the precepts of representative, constitutional democracy. While *Reclaim's* attitude toward immigration in general oscillates between support and opposition, it definitively constructs Muslims as a specific threat. In an ideological thread common to many groups in the anti-Islamic movement, *Reclaim* views the contemporary 'reality' of multiculturalism through an assimilationist logic. Symbols of Islamic cultural pluralism, such as mosques, merely confirm the narrative of cultural 'invasion'. While terrorism

activates the group's ideological position, it also confirms Muslim intent to impose foreign norms and forms of cultural practice onto an 'innocent' and benevolent host nation.

While the effectiveness and impact of Internet activism is contested (Awan, 2016), *Reclaim's* development into a 'lightning rod' for anti-Islamic sentiment is interesting. Its rapid growth and confluence with other organisations across the far-right highlights that the increasing digital mediation and performance of nation. Though social media technologies were critical to its inception and development, *Reclaim* stakes its claim for the nation in physical, public space in a move that demonstrates the ongoing interplay between 'old' and 'new' forms of macro-discourse creation (Erikson, 2007; Sheehi, 2011). In this shift from the digital to the real, paralleling the Cronulla Riots a decade prior, *Reclaim* was able to attract widespread media and political attention. In doing so, it came to actively participate in a mass-mediated discussion about the state of multiculturalism and the place of Muslims in Australia.

This movement into, and occupation of, public space has been necessarily controversial. The coordinated rallies, in 28 towns and cities across Australia, drew extensive – and mostly critical – mass media and political attention. Many of the rallies descended into violence, as opposing anti-racist and anti-fascist groups sought to directly counter the group's activities. In spite of criticism, the protest/counter-protest conflict dynamic has been identified by *Reclaim's* leaders as central to the growth of the organisation's profile and support base (Cullen, 2015). This reinforces the ever-critical nature of the contest for public space within the politics of race and nation.

Alongside those concerned about Islamist terrorism, *Reclaim* has attracted a diverse assemblage of support from across the 'far right', including fundamental and evangelical Christians, White supremacists and neo-Nazis, and 'radical' patriots and nationalists (McKenzie-Murray, 2015). Those with political intentions also found a keen audience, with various rallies being addressed by (now Senator) Pauline Hanson, Liberal MP George Christensen, and *Halal Choices* founder Kirralie Smith (a prolific anti-Islamic campaigner who is profiled in Section 2.4). Also seemingly ever-present evangelical Christian pastor Danny Nalliah, leader of the *Catch the Fire Ministry* and the associated *Rise Up! Australia* party (Safran, 2015). The Sri-Lankan born Nalliah is non-White, and repeatedly reassures the audience that his and other non-Whites' presence at the rallies allows claims of racism and bigotry to be refuted, instead explaining the movement as a legitimate form of cultural critique. "Islam is not a race" and "criticism is not racism" (Reclaim Australia, 2015) are two favoured refrains.

Whilst it is difficult to comprehensively map *Reclaim's* leadership, membership, and its broad network of supporters, in its comparatively short lifespan it has been the subject of discernible

internal ideological struggle and instability (McKenzie-Murray, 2015). The ‘everyday Australians’ that founded the organisation saw their legitimacy and authority threatened by the involvement of Shermon Burgess and Blair Cottrell, well-established ‘radical patriots’ who sought to utilise *Reclaim* as a vehicle for their arguably more extreme causes (Safran, 2015). Both men are proudly anti-Semitic, anti-feminist White supremacists, intent on developing a “militant” (Cullen, 2015) *Reclaim* that would become armed and, where necessary, violent. Both have since been expelled as *Reclaim* battles to construct and maintain an image of legitimacy and broad-based appeal – demonstrating an advanced model of image management akin to a formal political organisation. This act of expulsion led to the splinter organisation the *United Patriots Front*, which itself has emerged as a prominent actor within the movement (and is profiled in Section 2.3).

Internet activism sets a low ‘participation bar’, where a mere ‘like’ confers membership and infers support (Castells, 2012). This type of ephemeral engagement likens *Reclaim* to the prominent American conservative ‘Tea Party’ movement, whose supporters are connected only through ideology and no formal obligation to the collective is required. The formation of the movement in the new media ecology demonstrates how the previously “murky depths” (Cisneros & Nakayama, 2015, p111) of racism and extreme nationalism become highly visible, public, and accessible – its membership list, for example, is publicly searchable, and every comment posted is both public and permanently archived. While *Reclaim* appears to be a concrete example of “trickle-down racism” (Hughey et al., 2015, p1521), *Reclaim*’s digital discourse facilitates an opposing ‘trickle-up’ effect. This suggests that previously inactive, unmotivated actors become exposed to extreme discourse through digital social networks in ways impossible in a traditional media paradigm.

With more than 150,000 followers on its various state-centric Facebook pages (Reclaim Australia, 2015), one of *Reclaim*’s ideological pillars is an opposition to a “culture of political correctness” (ibid) seen to pervade politics, mass media, and indeed everyday social interaction and which is responsible for ‘mainstream’ cultural loss. In keeping with Manne’s (2003) ‘whitewashing’ thesis, *Reclaim* also valorises Australian military history in its vision of nation, minimising Australia’s colonial, dispossessing, and ethno-exclusionary pasts. In its ultimate extension, *Reclaim* contends to “stand alongside our Indigenous brothers and sisters” (Reclaim Australia, 2015) as joint proponents in the anti-Islamic project, and flies the Australian Aboriginal flag at its rallies.

Apart from organising rallies, *Reclaim*’s leadership makes little direct commentary of its own via their Facebook page (Reclaim Australia, 2015). Most published content is ‘reposted’ – linking to content produced by other social media sites that share aspects of their ideology or,

more commonly, 'sharing' content originally published by mass media organisations – most often, clips of television news or opinion-editorial. In this way, the *Reclaim* Facebook page operates more as an open forum in which leaders set a general agenda, but discussion is driven by its participants with any individual post attracting commentary across a disparate range of topics. A recent 'share' of a clip of conservative *Sky News* commentator Paul Murray discussing Pauline Hanson (Reclaim Australia, 2015), for example, attracted more than 160 individual comments on topics ranging from the anti-Islamic to homelessness, unemployment, and the state of the political establishment. In fact, as the 2016 federal election loomed, *Reclaim's* discourse became increasingly politicised. The general opposition to Islam transitioned into discourse about politics, policy measures, and the direction of *Reclaim's* formal political support. One party for which it demonstrated particular enthusiasm was the *Australian Liberty Alliance* (ibid) – and, as the profile on that organisation explains in Section 2.5, actors from across the 'extreme right', through digital media, become inextricably interlinked and interdependent.

2.3 United Patriots Front

The *United Patriots Front* (UPF) rose from within the larger and more amorphous *Reclaim* as a joint project of Blair Cottrell and Shermon Burgess, two prominent actors from within the established, online patriot sub-movement (McKenzie-Murray, 2015). Having been expelled from *Reclaim* for their attempts to shift it into more extreme ideological territory, the *UPF* is radical nationalist *and* patriotic, broadly opposed to Islam, immigration, and multiculturalism in general. The initial involvement with, and subsequent splintering away from *Reclaim* (Robertson & Hurst, 2015), demonstrates some of the fluidities and conflicts – ideological, strategic, and personal – arising within the movement. This consolidation of individual actors into larger organisations is a common feature of the anti-Islamic groups profiled here, and is a phenomenon that while not unique to the digital realm, is more readily facilitated by it.

Before combining forces within the UPF, both Cottrell and Burgess had long histories of involvement in the online patriot scene (McKenzie-Murray, 2015). Where *Reclaim* is defined by a specific opposition to Islam, the *UPF* has a broader remit of White supremacy, pro-Christianity, anti-immigration, anti-feminism, anti-LGTBI and is anti-elite and intellectual (United Patriots Front, 2015). This diverse worldview is stitched together by a nostalgic patriotism as well as an overarching belief in an 'elite' conspiracy theory, in which various political and public institutions are colluding to unfairly advantage minority groups and deconstruct Australia's cultural and ethnic status quo. This, in the *UPF's* view, is fundamentally White and Christian, and must actively resist any form of social and/or cultural change that is not.

Contrasting the *UPF*'s identification of themselves at the extreme fringe of Australian politics and society, the *Reclaim* group from which they have split has actively resisted this same categorisation. Cottrell's and Burgess' attempts to use the 'moderate' *Reclaim*, as well as other causes nationwide, as vehicles for their more extreme ideology (including aspects unrelated to Islam) offers productive moments for analysis of the movement more broadly. Despite having officially severed its ties with the higher-profile *Reclaim* movement, the *UPF* can point to a similarly rapid growth in its membership and support. As *Reclaim*'s activity increased and its profile grew throughout 2015, so too did media and political commentary on the nature and 'validity' of its cause(s). Forced to define itself, *Reclaim*'s ideology focused on promoting a nationalism founded in a legitimate, defensible 'culturalist' critique of Islam. This led to the *UPF*'s more extreme and militant brand of white supremacy being characterised as an unacceptable political risk. It is also impossible to revisit mass media coverage of *Reclaim* without encountering representations of the *UPF* and the support base it drew to anti-Islamic movement's public demonstrations (see Bachelard, 2015; Oldham, 2015). While there was a concerted effort to expel this extremism, it has nonetheless consolidated *Reclaim*'s public identity. While both Cottrell and Burgess were heavily involved in the organisation and facilitation of the early *Reclaim* rallies in 2015, including addressing several of the rallies directly, their eventual expulsion stemmed from their perceived associations with the anti-Semitic, White supremacist, and neo-Nazi elements that had begun to define the media coverage of the rallies and the overall image of *Reclaim* (McMahon, 2015). For example, a prominent figure drawn to *Reclaim* through Cottrell's and Burgess' was Ross 'The Skull' May, a leader in the neo-Nazi, Australian National Socialist movement with a profile of White supremacy, including racist and (hetero)sexist violence developed over the course of more than three decades (Safran, 2015).

Where the other online nationalist organisations profiled here largely rely on media technologies that stimulate and facilitate peer-to-peer discussions, the *UPF* uses a more unilateral methodology that has been preferred by its leaders for nearly a decade of online activity. Burgess, Cottrell, and other senior figures, Neil Erikson and Chris Shortis, have a long history of using YouTube to deliver lecture-style presentations about a range of topics including Australian political culture, immigration, multiculturalism, Christianity, gender, sexuality, and Islam. While each poster's style and focus differs, the common threads include extreme social conservatism, a fervent belief in the superiority of a White, Christian national culture, a general opposition to globalism (in different forms) and a belief that the "political and media elites" (Cottrell, 2015) of 'The Left' are conspirators in the ongoing deconstruction of the "White Race" (Cottrell, 2016a). As it has for *Reclaim*, the 'martyrdom' derived from public conflict seems edifying – the *UPF* court opposition, and in this tension construct themselves

as victims of an establishment in service to minority groups and therefore seeking to deny their 'legitimate' freedoms of expression.

Where *Reclaim* is a space of collaboration, in which participants and administrators co-create meaning, the *UPF*'s online discourse is largely unilateral. Nonetheless, they have amassed a support base of more than 50,000 and can justifiably be described as one of the fastest-growing grassroots organisations in the anti-Islamic movement. Initially jointly led, Burgess "stepped down" (United Patriots Front, 2015) from the executive of the *UPF* in early 2016 in response to an internal campaign to ridicule and discredit him as "too weak" (Cottrell, 2015). This saw the more vocal and more 'belligerent' Cottrell assume leadership and control of the *UPF*, prefacing concerted attempts to attach the organisation to a range of other causes, some of which are otherwise entirely unrelated to Islam. In the months since his ascension, Cottrell has addressed rallies in support of the Australian dairy, trucking, and manufacturing industries (Bachelard, 2015) – demonstrating a willingness to shift outside of the specific ideological boundaries of ethnic management as a way of tacitly connecting an anti-global, economically protectionist nationalism to one that specifically seeks to denigrate and exclude Muslims.

The *UPF* has become best known for its attachment to the 'Stop the Bendigo Mosque' campaign (Robertson & Hurst, 2015). In connecting micro and macro levels of anti-Islamic politics, the *UPF* sought to turn the Bendigo mosque issue into a general touchstone for national, anti-Islamic sentiment. Here, nationalism and localism converge through new media activism: at the *UPF*'s urging, the Bendigo mosque rallies attracted anti-Islamic speakers from across the country – "warriors moving onto the battleground" (Cottrell, 2015).

With Cottrell as its mouthpiece, the *UPF* uses a booming rhetoric of violence, physical intimidation, and imagery of war and invasion, in its communication. Theirs is a 'crusader symbolism' in which the two ideological combatants are a near-puritanical, White Australia that has been unwittingly pitted against a monolithic, 'terrorising' Islam for cultural survival. Its strong political awareness, and sense of disenfranchisement has seen it celebrate the rise of One Nation, with hopes that it will promote a "cleansing" (ibid) of Muslims from Australia in but one example of the *UPF* invoking the rhetoric of fascist organisations from throughout 20th century history (see Werbman, 2013).

The *UPF* can be seen as not only creating anti-Islamic discourses, but also as working to moderate the ideologies and discourses position of other actors in the broader movement. Other groups' outward aversion to the rhetoric and symbolism deployed by the *UPF* highlights the ongoing ideological development and negotiation in pursuit of an anti-Islamic 'political centre'. Nonetheless, the blatant racism, fascism and White supremacy that openly underpins the *UPF*'s rhetoric remains only at arms' length from the other more 'moderate' organisations

profiled here. While its vision of the Australian nation is no doubt less equivocal than *Reclaim's*, the *UPF* is nonetheless founded in similar understandings of Muslim difference and inferiority diametrically opposed to a White, Christian Australia. It also speaks to a desire to disconnect Australia from the economic, social and cultural dimensions of globalisation to guard against threats, both perceived and real.

2.4 Halal Choices

Halal Choices is a web-based organisation founded in 2010 by Kirralie Smith, a theologian from rural New South Wales. As an older organisation than both *Reclaim* and the *UPF*, its primary aim is to deconstruct Australia's halal food certification system and industry, purporting outwardly to be otherwise unconcerned with Islam and terrorism. Claiming more than one million visits through its various online media channels, *Halal Choices* has come to feature in print and broadcast mainstream media since its launch, and sustains public presences and visibility through its website, Facebook page and YouTube channel (Halal Choices, 2013). Through a moderate and considered rhetorical style, Smith has become a regular spokesperson on many issues related to Islam and the Middle East, having featured regularly on television news, talk shows, and quoted in (predominantly tabloid) print media (Chalmers, 2014).

Best translated from Arabic as 'permissible', the halal certification and labelling system provides a way for Muslim consumers to be assured that food (or any product that contacts the body, such as clothing and cosmetics) is safe to consume under Islamic law, or Sharia. While most products are naturally halal by virtue of their contents or production method and do not necessarily require certification in order to be consumed by Muslims, the formal certification scheme nonetheless provides convenience and assurance to Muslim consumers (Ma, 2014). In Australia, the certification scheme is largely decentralised and regulated at a distance (Senate Economics Reference Committee, 2015), conducted by a variety of for-profit and not-for-profit organisations throughout the Islamic community. For some, halal certification is highly profitable, and also provides a revenue stream for the broader Islamic community, supporting schools, employment programs, and places of worship.

Halal Choices' primary opposition to the scheme is that it represents an unwelcome encroachment of Sharia into Australia, requiring that Australian consumers pay an illegitimate "religious tax" (Halal Choices, 2013). Strongly refuting claims of racism, the organisation purports to connect the Australian secular democracy with consumers' rights, allowing individuals to withdraw from purchases that "support a religion that they do not want to support" (ibid). *Halal Choices'* main function, therefore, is to maintain an extensive – and ever-growing – database of Australian businesses that secure halal certification for their products. While

promoting freedom of choice, it also implores its audience to boycott organisations and products that secure halal certification in a form of direct, anti-Islamic consumer action (ibid).

Halal Choices forms part of the anti-Islamic movement through its use of rhetorical and semiotic techniques that promotes a deracialised, though still anti-Islamic, ideology. Unlike other constructions of Islam's essential inferiority and incompatibility within the movement, *Halal Choices* deploys a theory and language of microeconomics to rationalise this position. However, as the organisation's profile has grown and its relationships with other actors across the anti-Islamic nationalist movement have deepened, the symbolic nature of *Halal Choices'* unique model of 'consumer advocacy' reveals a veiled approach to its agenda of Islamic racialisation and marginalisation.

By ostensibly avoiding a universally anti-Islamic platform, *Halal Choices* has been able to deploy a number of stylistic conventions that it has adapted directly from the consumer advocacy sector. In both name and image, *Halal Choices'* website mimics other independent consumer websites, such as choice.com.au, which aim to protect consumers' rights by providing impartial advice and aiding purchase and investment decisions across a diverse range of industries from insurance to household groceries. *Halal Choices* positions itself as serving this same benign function – as allowing consumers to “simply make an informed choice” (Halal Choices, 2013) but restricted wholly to the “unfair, dangerous and divisive” (Chalmers, 2014) practice of Halal certification

Halal Choices also foregrounds the relationships individual activist groups have developed as the larger collective has formed. Smith becoming one of the *Australian Liberty Alliance's* senate candidates in the 2016 federal election, highlights the pathway from fringe online figure to political actor in larger, public contexts. To this end, *Halal Choices'* and Smith's personal images are closely intertwined. Careful to present herself as “an ordinary suburban mum” (Smith, 2014) to build mainstream audience credibility, she is circumspect about her background as an evangelical Christian pastor and missionary, as well as her associations with other organisations in the anti-Islamic movement. For example, Smith's 'backyard' *Halal Choices* operation draws on funding from the *Q Society* – an intellectual anti-Islamic movement with links throughout the Australian political right (Piotrowski, 2014).

A range of oppressive anti-Islamic discourses operate within *Halal Choices* despite its markedly different appearance from the other organisations profiled here. The construction of the halal certification scheme as underhanded – “a money-making scam” (Mann, 2014) – implies Muslim aberrance and criminality projected onto an innocent host nation. *Halal Choices* also alleges the scheme supports and funds Islamist terrorism, despite evidence to the contrary (AUSTRAC, 2015). Connecting these discourses is the essentialising of Islam as

a monolithic, hostile political system that intends to claim the Australian territory – as elsewhere in the West – as its own. Halal certification is but one example of the insurgency of Sharia and the rise of an Islamic enemy from within. This argument intersects with the extreme views of the *UPF*, despite *Halal Choices* articulating seemingly benign concerns about the cost of supermarket goods.

As a result of prolonged, targeted lobbying efforts, *Halal Choices* has secured a high-profile, mainstream advocate in Liberal senator Cory Bernardi, who secured an independent Senate Inquiry into halal certification in 2015. These proceedings were telling – while *Halal Choices* had withheld from making the claim directly, its publicly available submission alleged that halal-certifying organisations were using the scheme to culturally “Islamify” (Senate Economics Reference Committee, 2015) Australia and to fund Islamist terrorism both in Australia and elsewhere.

Reports have also progressively emerged of *Halal Choices*’ direct social media activism (Thompson, 2015), activity it has not sought to promote. Prominent Australian producers including *Capilano*, *Madura Tea*, the *Fleurieu Milk & Yoghurt Company* and the *Byron Bay Cookie Company* have each reported that *Halal Choices* bombards halal-certified producers with bullying and abuse, including direct threats of violence against their staff members and property (ibid). For the comparatively small *Fleurieu*, this has resulted in the surrender of its certification and the subsequent loss of a major contract to supply Dubai-based *Emirates Airlines* (Ma, 2014). *Halal Choices* has also had the effect of co-opting the online presence of these organisations to creating new extra-political spaces into which anti-Islamic sentiment is directed.

Despite its ongoing activism, from early 2016 Smith’s public appearances were no longer under the banner of *Halal Choices* but as a Senate candidate for far-right political party the *Australian Liberty Alliance* (ALA). Strongly affiliated with the ‘Australian new right’ fundamental Christian lobby (Alberici, 2012), the broadly anti-Islamic platform on which Smith and the *ALA* campaigned in 2016 told much about the perceived cultural and security threats to Australia beyond the mere certification of food and makeup. Its platform is best described as deeply conservative, economically protectionist and anti-global – espousing throughout its online material a “return” (ALA, 2016) to a vision of Australia defined in Christian mores. It thus promotes a range of ethno-regulatory policies specifically targeting Muslims, including banning immigration from member states of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, outlawing full-face coverings (including the hijab, niqab and burqa), outlawing Muslim-identified employment schemes and a blanket rejection of the construction of mosques (ibid). This transition from *Halal Choices* to the *ALA* brought with it a significant rhetorical turn from Smith, away from a

specific opposition to halal certification toward the generally anti-Islamic and anti-global. In mid-2015, associated with the burgeoning *Reclaim* movement, Smith began to connect the specific opposition to halal with *Reclaim*'s 'Islamification' thesis. It is another example of the rapid consolidation of various anti-Islamic causes and the deepening of inter-organisational ties, facilitated largely through digital media.

Smith has been able to successfully parlay her online discourse into a public profile, becoming one of the more vocal participants in the anti-Islamic movement. While the platform and rhetoric of the *ALA* is canvassed in more detail in Section 2.5, it is clear that Smith and *Halal Choices* have succeeded in bringing suspicion and inferiorisation of Islam into contemporary public debate through the particular mechanism of halal certification, despite its more than fifty-year history in Australia.

2.5 The Q Society and Australian Liberty Alliance

The secretive *Q Society* has emerged as one of the most significant organisations in the Australian anti-Islamic movement. Named after the well-heeled Melbourne suburb of Kew in which it was first incorporated (Alberici, 2012), the *Q Society* describes itself as "Australia's leading, secular Islam-critical movement" (*Q Society*, 2016). The *Q Society* is the most salient local example of a burgeoning 'anti-Islamic intellectualism' throughout the West (Every & Augustinous, 2008), which connects a range of local nationalisms to form a Western anti-Islamic movement. Though not as ostensibly nationalist or patriotic, a subtle form of Australian nationalism is nonetheless the foundation of the *Q Society*'s ideology, rhetoric, and strategy.

The membership of the *Q Society* has been described as White, predominantly middle-aged and upper-middle class (Piotrowski, 2014), a stark contrast between the "working class patriots" of the *UPF* or 'mums and dads' of *Reclaim*. Its husband and wife leadership team, Debbie and Anthony Robinson, are professionals – a nurse and a surgeon – and are confident, articulate and measured public speakers. Few specifics are known about the organisation's membership and support base (ibid) – the *Q Society* steadfastly defends the privacy of its members and supporters, which includes keeping silent its associations with other political organisations and interest groups that comprise the conservative, Christian lobby and far-right dimensions of Australian domestic politics. In keeping with this, the few journalists that have reported on the *Q Society* have been permitted to do so only under strict conditions. Despite claiming thousands of paid members (Alberici, 2012), journalists have been required to protect the identities of all but the organisation's four known public leaders, and to sign non-disclosure agreements in exchange for access. In late 2015, it launched its own political arm in the *Australian Liberty Alliance* (*ALA*) which would go on to contest both houses at the 2016 federal election. This political move has not only illuminated the interplay across the various chapters

of the movement, it has also shifted key details about the group's ideology, leadership and membership into the public domain. The emergence of the *ALA* into public has dragged with it the *Q Society*, making it more visible now than it ever has been in the past.

The *Q Society* is well-resourced. Its online presence is orderly, professional and follows the conventions of mainstream political organisations (Flew, 2014). Though actively publishing online, it maintains only a scant social media presence and does not promote a continuous, multilateral dialogue among its members and supporters. Theirs is instead a more traditional, unilateral approach, favouring mechanisms such as organised, closed meetings. Despite this, it has become imbricated within the digital anti-Islamic movement, having developed formal associations both with *Halal Choices* and *Reclaim Australia*. This study tracks the reproduction of ideas and rhetoric promoted by the “high-brow” (Fleming, 2014) *Q Society* throughout the digital anti-Islamic movement, demonstrating a convergence not only of media but of activism itself. The channel into public discourse, and real political change, may be created only when online and traditional forms converge.

While *Reclaim* readily admits its own political inexperience, disconnectedness and naivety (Cullen, 2015), the *Q Society* has progressively developed an extensive network of relationships across the Australian political right. One such prominent partnership is with high-profile conservative think-tank, *The Institute for Public Affairs* (IPA) (Secombe, 2014). The IPA lends policy support to the Liberal-National coalition and is known to have substantially informed the editorial position of News Limited media in Australia (Crook, 2013). The IPA is considered one of the most influential of the far-right leaning think-tanks in the Australian political landscape (Secombe, 2015), and in one of the more public examples of its lobbying, was the driving force for recent attempts to have the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cwth) amended, removing protections against ethnic and religious hate speech under Section 18C. Since the ascension of the Liberal-National coalition at the 2013 federal election, there have been a number of attempts (some successful, others not) to reform many aspects of federal public policy in line with the *Q Society*'s ideological position. While the exact nature of the relationship is unclear, the *Q Society* has publicly acknowledged close coordination between the two organisations during this time (ibid).

Mohamad Tabbaa, Chairman of the *Islamic Council of Victoria*, argues that the *Q Society* is intent on presenting “Islamophobia as a rational and sensible position” (Fleming, 2014), purposefully avoiding the “populist rhetoric and crude nationalism” (ibid) more typical of *Reclaim* or the *UPF* despite being their ideological alignment. It is sufficiently resourced that it has developed an extensive digital library of anti-Islamic academic literature, distilling longer treatises into compact, readable formats suitable for a general audience, such as media

releases, newsletters and fact sheets. Where *Reclaim* and the *UPF* depend upon a collection of reliable stereotypes and impressions of Islam, the *Q Society* professes an expertise and close engagement with the substance of Islamic theology and the complex historical-political forces of the Arab-Islamic world (Q Society, 2016). This enables a more sophisticated response to charges that Islam and Islamist terrorism are separate – the *Q Society* appears to have reached a credible, defensible conclusion based on its detailed interpretation of the Qu’ran. This approach places the *Q Society* firmly in step with other organisations that comprise the Pan-Western *Stop the Islamisation of Nations* (SION) movement (Ekman, 2015). These include France’s Front National and the American Freedom Defence Initiative, both of which dissociate themselves from the vociferous public demonstrations that have come to define recent performances of anti-Islamic nationalism in Australia. Like the other *SION* member organisations, prolonged instability in the Middle East dating back to the mid-20th century is its ideological driver. Jihadist groups like Al-Qaeda and Islamic State (commonly known and herein referred to as IS), are seen not as extremist political organisations, but as specific examples of Islamic and Arabic deficiency when compared to an enlightened, peaceful and democratic West that owes its superiority to its Christian foundations (ibid). Islamist terror, and the recent waves of Islamic immigration and asylum-seeking that have driven popular backlash against Islam in Australia for most of this century (Noble & Poynting, 2004, Dunn, 2005), are symptoms of this inferiority.

The *Q Society* has been inspired by, and is subsequently formally affiliated with, *SION*. Debbie Robinson, president both of the *Q Society* and the *ALA*, now also serves as a member of the *SION* steering committee (Q Society, 2016). This organisation has organised and promoted the international speaking tours of anti-Islamic Dutch politician Geert Wilders, which have been described by Islamic leaders throughout the West as spreading “disturbing, baseless Islamophobia” (Fleming, 2014). Wilders’ comparatively sedate rhetorical style parallels the *Q Society* and the *ALA*, offering insight into how the intellectual dimension of the movement legitimises and adapts the more abrasive rhetoric of *Reclaim* and *UPF* into a format more suitable for mainstream consumption and political action. *SION* worked closely with the *Q Society* to bring Wilders to Australia in 2012 and 2013. In the process, it directed the agenda of several mass media outlets toward the ‘Islamic debate’ outside of incidents of terrorism, including family-orientated breakfast television programs *Sunrise* (2016) and the *Today Show* (2014). If for nothing else, the *Q Society* succeeded in stimulating this now-common media convention which becomes reactivated after any event of Islamist terror (Kabir, 2015) and which is engaged in almost exclusively by non-Muslims.

While many of the other groups in the anti-Islamic nationalist movement actively develop a public profile and court media and political attention, the *Q Society* operates in a purposefully

oblique way. However, with its transition into the *ALA*, it has developed associations with many of the more demonstrative, 'low brow' anti-Islamic actors in pursuit of its political aims, amassing several high-profile candidates from within this populist element. Alongside *Halal Choices*' Kirralie Smith and *Reclaim*'s Wanda Marsh, it also secured Gary 'Angry' Anderson, former lead singer of garage rock band Rose Tattoo and participant in SBS' asylum-seeker reality program *Go Back to Where You Came From* (2012) to stand as Senate candidates.

Despite this 'star' candidature, the *ALA* was not directly successful in its bids for either house at the 2016 federal election. However, there are distinct similarities between the *ALA*'s anti-Islamic campaign platform and those same elements of Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party (which secured the election of its namesake as well as three other senators). Having addressed *Reclaim* and the Bendigo mosque rallies, One Nation then leant particularly heavily on the type of symbolic anti-halal campaigning that originated with *Halal Choices* and the conflation of Islam with terror used by *Reclaim* (Sales, 2016). It has been theorised that Hanson's deeply conservative, nationalist and anti-global political character, cultivated over the course of more than twenty years in public life, provided a way of connecting this anti-Islamic sentiment with a broader narrative of economic protectionism and anti-elitism of which the *ALA* was incapable as a comparatively new, stand-alone entity.

The project's next chapter, using a CDA methodology, proceeds to critically analyse the specific discourses and rhetorical strategies that each of the organisations have developed and which formulates the movement's collective ideology. It seeks to uncover how the digital media ecology that has facilitated their formation is utilised as a technology of power: of how their constructions of nation are constituted in discourse and how these relate to subject positions created by an ever-developing macro-regime of Islamic aberrance, fear and Otherness.

3. SKETCHING ISLAM: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

3.1 Introduction

With the advent and ubiquity of new media and the resulting fall of the traditional ‘gates’ preventing participation in public discourse, the power to construct identity through language is increasingly held by the everyday citizen. In the pre-digital media era, “privileged access to discourse” was limited to institutions such as government, education, and traditional mass media (van Dijk, 1993, p39). However, fundamental shifts in media practice, represented in the growth of individualised networked social media such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter (known collectively as Web 2.0), enable the individual to transition from media consumer to creator. The acts of publication and dissemination made possible through these technologies – developing a website, posting a comment or video – transforms everyday utterances into texts, producing a record of the interpretation of meaning and exercise of social power in the everyday.

In response, this chapter examines the roles that four prominent anti-Islamic, Australian nationalist organisations profiled in the previous chapter play in the discursive construction and performance of ethno-exclusionary Australian nationalism. This section sheds light on a “genealogy of knowledge production” (Foucault, 1972, p59) which creates regimes of Muslim/Islamic and national truth. Foucault’s power/knowledge is applied here (1977), holding that both ‘nation’ and ‘race’ are socially constructed and discursively constituted, reflecting the patterns of diffuse social power that act through the movement’s participants. This section therefore also examines how the movement, through the new media ecology, repetitively performs a series of oppressive, anti-Islamic and nationalist discourses that themselves emerge from a “much larger storehouse of images, narratives and representations” (Perera, 2002, p14). In doing so, the movement is in fact constructing multiple, interdependent regimes of identity: an Islamic Other, a virtual White national collective, and the ‘real’ Australian nation, of which the movement imagines itself as guardian.

This is fundamentally a qualitative study, and does not contend that the texts and discourses under analysis are generalisable or representative of all public discourse related to Muslims, Islam and Australian national identity. By using combined purposive sampling and critical discourse analysis (CDA) methodologies, this study maps the foundations of a specific, emergent type of oppressive nationalistic discourse in Australia. The well-known criticisms of purposive sampling and CDA as methodology are acknowledged in terms of both researcher subjectivity and the analysis of groups and texts that may seem to accord with the hypothesis and the associated, preferable ideological position. The groups and social actors have therefore been explicitly and precisely selected for examination because of four key shared

characteristics: i) an opposition to Muslims and Islam, ii) the expression of that opposition in terms of Australian nationalism, iii) the use of digital, networked social media to open a space for this discourse and iv) the use of the new media ecology to facilitate a transition into physical, public space and the political real. Despite their broad ideological similarities, each organisation's specific aims and the discursive strategies that support them differ substantially. CDA provides a way of interrogating and interpreting each organisation's expressive forms as they interact and form a collective movement in ways that were impossible in a pre-digital media environment. A study of this kind allows the relationship between official and diffuse forms of power that dominate the literature on race and nationalism to be reassessed in this media environment-in-flux.

The CDA methodology used here applies a series of functional-linguistic questions to the socio-political and power contexts within which discourse is situated and from which it emerges. This seeks to uncover the specific 'utterances' used to constitute representations within a broader regime of cultural knowledge (van Dijk, 1993; Fairclough, 1995). They include:

- **Actors, events, and traffic patterns:** Who is speaking, and what social practices have prompted a response in discourse? Who is collaborating to create content and meaning?
- **Word groups, collocations and concordances:** What are the common, contextual relationships between words?
- **Grammar features:** What are the subjects and objects in the text? Who are the protagonists and antagonists, signifier and signified?
- **Rhetorical and literary figures:** How are allegories, metaphors, similes, idioms and proverbs deployed in support of the overall argument?
- **Modality:** What could, should or will be in the view of the text?
- **Evidentiality:** What 'is'; presented as self-evident and common sense?

3.2 The anti-Islamic nationalists: Actors and media

Reclaim Australia

Technology in focus: Facebook

With 76,205 users and approximately 303,000 individual texts (in the form of administrator and user posts, links and comments) as at July 2016 (Reclaim Australia, 2015), *Reclaim Australia* is the most active anti-Islamic digital media platform with a specifically Australian focus (McKenzie-Murray, 2015). Though CDA is a useful methodology to interpret this complex discursive site, it is inherently constrained when working with such a mass of data. Using a customised open-source web crawler, *Reclaim's* Facebook page is used here to develop an initial, scoping quantitative model that shapes the chapter's qualitative analysis. This produces a picture of the organisation's, and broader movement's, ideological direction, its topics of concern, and the shifting salience of issues over time.

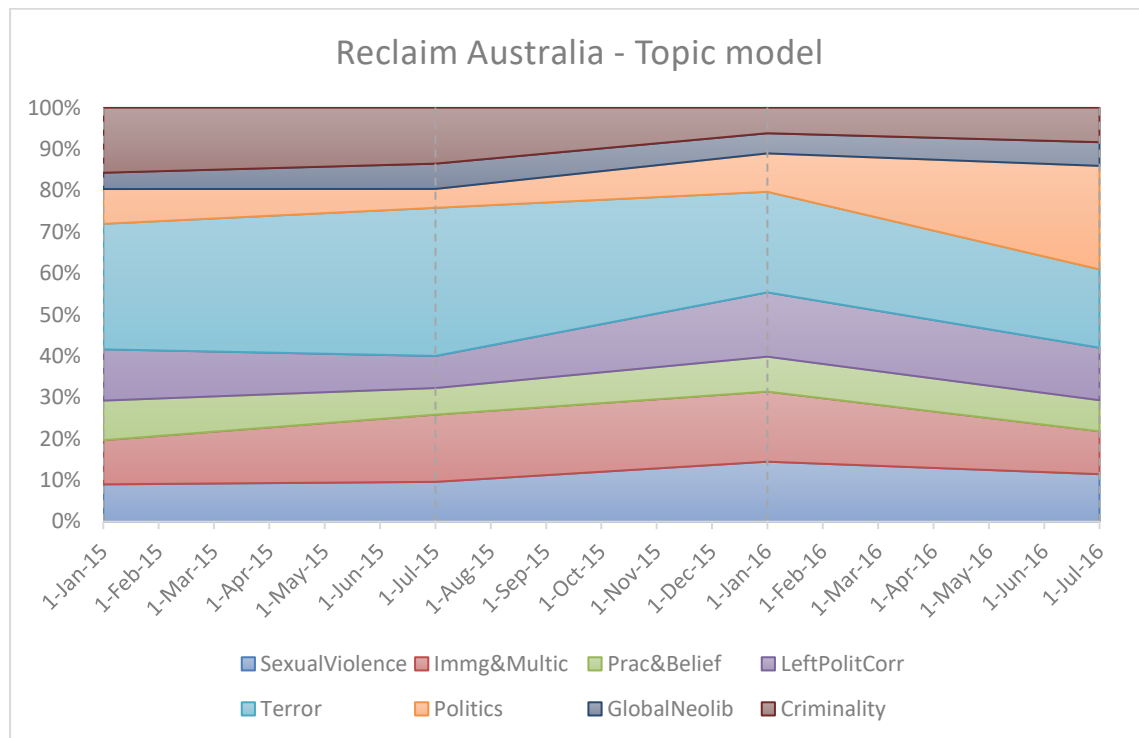


FIGURE 1: Reclaim Australia Facebook topic model

One of the striking characteristics is the voice operation and intertextuality that presents on the *Reclaim* Facebook page. In contrast to the direct address model utilised in the other modes, *Reclaim's* Facebook page is characterised by a lack of direct editorial by its administrators. While it is clearly a space into which anti-Islamic sentiment is directed from a diverse, disparate range of actors, the page's administrators are mostly inactive in moderating this discussion or presenting their own voice directly. For example, 89% of administrator posts include some form of embedded media – online news articles, online television news stories,

or a range of multimedia from other organisations across the global anti-Islamic movement. The page essentially operates as an anti-Islamic digital newswire, collating, organising and reposting a range of de-territorialised media content along a narrow topical focus. *Reclaim's* discourse is shaped by these editorial decisions (which are evaluated by users through 'likes/dislikes'). Facebook's unique, proprietary user interface architecture also influences the operation of voices within the text, allowing elucidation, collaboration, and voice multiplication. Though comparatively rare, any user can post to the main newsfeed and thus move immediately to a position of prominence in the text. However, most discussions take place at a peer-to-peer level; by allowing a user to select the direction of their contribution to the group as a whole, to a particular administrator post, or to another individual user, the discourse is erratic, and complex in its polysemic production and interpretive possibilities.

Halal Choices

Technology in focus: Website

Halal Choices' website is perhaps the best example in the movement of an 'intercreative' online text type – not only as a site of user-generated online content, but also for its adaptation of the visual and textual semiosis of the consumer advocate (Meikle & Young, 2012). This digital media form blurs the distinction between consumer and producer, and uniquely facilitates the adaptation and repurposing of media genres in pursuit of its social agenda. Unlike other, related anti-Islamic groups, which principally rely on heavily templated, free domain social media, *Halal Choices'* website is professionally designed, well-organised and has secured a '.com.au' domain name – important for both audience recall and an impression of legitimacy (McCosker & Johns, 2014). Its web presence is augmented by a range of sophisticated multimedia, including interactive plugins, searchable databases, and professional-quality videos as is the case with many corporate organisations' websites (Flew, 2014).



FIGURE 2: *Halal Choices* website front page

However, unlike *Reclaim*'s Facebook page, *Halal Choices*' users cannot be considered co-creators or even as participants in the discussion. This 'Web 1.0' form creates a markedly different record: where *Reclaim*'s discourse regenerates with each new administrator post, casting old material into archive, *Halal Choices*' front page has remained substantially the same since its initial publication in 2010. Conventional websites continue to operate as sites of discursive repository, creating the base knowledge from which everyday digital utterances are drawn (Cisneros & Nakayama, 2015).

United Patriots Front

Technology in focus: YouTube channel

While the *United Patriots Front* (UPF) have a strong presence across a range of online media, direct-address videos are the organisation's favoured method of communication. Usually featuring leaders Blair Cottrell or Shermion Burgess, the *UPF* has published more than 100 videos on its YouTube channel since the organisation's inception in early 2015. The *UPF*'s YouTube posts uniquely capture the interface between digital and real. A common post topic is an address made at a public rally or other function; an example of a type of circular nationalistic performativity that is as much intended for an online audience as its physical one. So too is the rhetorical style typical of the *UPF* and the "patriot" sub-movement as a whole uniquely accessible in this media form – depicting its aggressive, histrionic address style drawn from the fascist tradition (Werbner, 2013; Safran, 2015).

Australian Liberty Alliance and the Q Society

Technology in focus: Website

The *Australian Liberty Alliance*'s (ALA) website hosts a range of multimedia types in a single, centralised online space. Alongside content pages including the organisation's policy platform and candidates, it regularly publishes press releases on a range of topical issues – mostly regarding incidents of terrorism and crime it relates to Muslims. As the political arm of the *Q Society*, the two organisations' pages are deeply interwoven. The *ALA*'s page, for example, makes extensive use of hyperlinks to incorporate *Q Society* literature – while the *Q Society*'s page directs users to the *ALA* in order to "take action". Both also host a series of links to converged mainstream media organisations, including the US-based, conservative Fox News and Russia's RT News. Despite its lack of success at the 2016 federal election, both the *ALA* and the *Q Society* continue to publish posts at a similar rate to the pre-election period, with both organisations functioning as information repositories in a similar way to *Halal Choices*.

3.3 Islam in discourse

3.3.1 Terrorism, insecurity, and deviance

The discursive construction of terrorism and insecurity is the dominant anti-Islamic theme produced through the practices of each organisation, despite each developing this construction differently. Here Said's (1978) seminal *Orientalism* offers a way of interpreting the vast, diffuse reserve of representations from which these multiple discourses of essentialised Islamic violence, aggression and hostility are drawn:

The deliberately created associations between Islam and fundamentalism ensure that the average reader comes to see Islam and fundamentalism as essentially the same thing. Given the tendency to reduce Islam to a handful of rules, stereotypes, and generalizations about the faith, its founder, and all of its people, then the reinforcement of every negative fact associated with Islam – its violence.

Condemnation of Islamist terrorism, particularly unpredictable acts of insurgent terrorism occurring within and targeting Western societies, is the movement's most prevalent collective discourse. *Reclaim* initially formed in response to a terrorist event within the nation – the Lindt Café siege in Sydney in late 2014. This imbues *Reclaim*'s discourse with a particular focus on interpreting and explaining 'home-grown' Islamist terror – a 'pragmatic defence' to a real, if nonetheless exaggerated, risk (Sageman, 2008). Terrorism is constructed as the product of an ongoing program of cultural change; the direct result of immigration and multiculturalism. This is a repetitive discourse with an extended Australian history, predating both this type of terrorism as well as the current, specific anxiety about Islam (Jayasuriya, 2002, Dunn, 2005). *Reclaim* users assert that without this deviant Muslim community within the nation, such a threat would not exist:

Reclaim Australia user post, 25 July 2015

- Multiculturalism has failed, resulting in extreme Islamic practices taking place in our country.

Reclaim Australia user post, 13 August 2015

- It would be a monstrous crime against a sovereign people if their government permitted an enemy to take up residence in their midst, and forced those people to work to support them.

A parallel discourse associates Muslims with a predisposition to crime. Of particular note is a focus on deviant, sexualised crime, including generalised assertions of rape, paedophilia, and bestiality, that are constructed as inherent or at least permissible in the practice of Islam – and therefore a cultural imperative for Muslims (Poynting, Noble, Collins & Tabar, 2004). In response to a hyperlinked German newspaper article reporting a rape committed by a refugee, more than 100 comments were posted (Reclaim Australia, 15 June 2015). Three examples are presented below:

Reclaim Australia user posts, 15 June 2015

- Remember, raping nonbelievers is allowed in the so-called 'peaceful' religion.
- These poor women are raped and treated absolutely appalling by the mongrel men in these countries regardless of whether they wear a head scarf or not! Men in these countries don't have any regard for women they just see them as sex objects and expect women to obey them! Scum bags!
- No women or girl is safe to walk anywhere in Europe with this filth on the lose [sic]. And if they are expect to be sexually assaulted or even rapped by these low life dogs [sic].

These dual discourses of terror and criminality are supported by a dehumanising and inferiorising lexicon – two of the most common collocates of 'Muslim/Islam' in the *Reclaim* corpus, for example, are 'scum' (appearing 1388 times) and 'pig/dog' (together appearing 1209 times). The *UPF* also leans heavily on this rhetoric, extending it to other targets in the "left-wing establishment" (United Patriots Front, 2015). The *ALA* and *Halal Choices* diverge from their counterparts in the use of this inflammatory rhetoric, however, with neither 'scum' nor 'pig/dog' used on their respective websites.

Reflecting the anxiety about Islamist terrorism that dominates (and for some organisations, motivates) online discourse, the movement collectivises Islam as fundamentalist and extremist in a re-working of the politicised monolith of oriental discourses (Said, 1978, Hall 2000). Unlike the other organisations, however, the *ALA* creates this construction through a professed expertise with Islamic theology and jurisprudence. Characterising Islam as a particularly deficient religion, the *ALA* reproduces the national Christian norm (Dunn, 2005). To do so it references *Q Society's* 'Islam-critical' literature, as seen in the extract below.

Why We Oppose Islam – The Q Society (January 2013 – extracts)

- Is it fair to paint all Islamic schools of thought as violent?
- Islamic apologists often point out that Islam is not a monolith and that there are differences of opinion among the different Islamic schools of thought. That is true, but, while there are differences, there are also common elements. Just as Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant Christians differ on many aspects of Christianity, still they accept important common elements. So it is with Islam.
- One of the common elements to all Islamic schools of thought is jihad, understood as the obligation of the Ummah to conquer and subdue the world in the name of Allah and rule it under Sharia law. The four Sunni Madhabs (schools of fiqh [Islamic religious jurisprudence]) — Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali — all agree that there is a collective obligation on Muslims to make war on the rest of the world.

A counter-narrative of the 'moderate' Muslim operates, albeit inconsistently. Some *Reclaim* users identify a peaceful model of Islamic observance despite there being some disagreement over whether it is either typical or aberrant. This exchange between two *Reclaim* commenters highlights users' discord over Islamic practice:

Reclaim Australia Facebook user comment (10 June 2016)

- I know many muslims are peaceful moderates but we just cant [sic] take the risk, stop muslim immigration now
 - o Get ur head out of the sand there is no such thing as a moderate muslim [sic]

The *UPF* engages a similar theme, describing moderate forms of Islamic practice instead as “subversive” (Cottrell, 2015). Modalities of future cultural and political overthrow support this narrative, connecting to the dual discourses of numerological racism (Hage, 1998) and Islam’s essential hostility (Said, 1978).

United Patriots Front administrator video (20 July 2016 - extracts)

- Let’s keep bringing our brothers in – let’s call them refugees or asylum seekers – whatever term we can come up with to keep bringing them in by the millions.
- Let’s just be patient – keep breeding – and within a few generations, there’ll be no white Europeans left anyway.
- Subversive or ‘peaceful’ Muslims – if you want to use that term – both want the same thing: domination of the West.

Two interrelated, binary logics operate in this discourse. The first is between antagonist and protagonist – a hostile, totalitarian, violent Islam and an innocent, object Australian nation of collective virtue (Anderson, 1991). This notion motivates the movement’s activism; collectivising and galvanising the ‘nation’ in preparedness for a cultural war. The second binary is within Islam itself – of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Muslims. Not merely conflating Islam and terrorism, the movement constructs terrorism as arising solely from within Islam theologically, divesting terrorism of its myriad historical, political and economic causes.

In its layered rhetorical style, *Halal Choices* also reiterates the orientalist narrative of homogenous, violent Islam. *Halal Choices* reappropriates the business-consumer power imbalance as between ‘everyday’ Australians and Islam, positioning itself as a mechanism to correct it. Users are met with an introductory video address which explains the “Halal certification scam” (Halal Choices, 12 April 2011) and seeks to justify the organisation’s anti-Islamic activism:

The Halal Certification Scam, Halal Choices (12 April 2011 - extracts)

- Islamic charities are the main conduits for extremist funding throughout the world. Halal certification funds terrorism, supports mosques and Islamic schools – and it is our right as consumers not to be funding them.
- Some might think halal certification is rather benign and no real threat, after all it is just food. Perhaps, but the fact is it is an aspect of Sharia, and we do not want Sharia Law in Australia.

Through the symbolic pluralism of halal certification, *Halal Choices* positions Islam as a powerful institutional force and uses the antagonist/protagonist binary of the *UPF*. It also proffers a vision of Muslims as deceitful, underhanded and deserving of suspicion (in the

tradition of anti-Semitism, see Werbman, 2013) – the same strategy used by the *UPF* in its discourse of “subversive Islam” (Cottrell, 2016a). Relying heavily on future-focused modalities, *Halal Choices* uses rhetorical questions to challenge a perceived orthodoxy of cultural tolerance, interpreting the nature and purpose of Sharia within the context of cultural pluralism as a whole. This also presents on *Reclaim*, in this post explicitly identifying and elevating the Christian foundations of the Australian legal system:

Reclaim Australia Facebook user post (7 November 2014)

- They're using the freedom of religion ticket I suppose? If you realise it or not, Christianity has been implemented in our morals & laws which is a good thing. But they want to implement their laws and morals which is Islam & evil [sic].

The *ALA* also engage strongly with this discourse, characterising the essential fundamentalism of Islam. This construction is explained through a video titled ‘Quran and Hadiths – Textbooks for terrorism’ (Australian Liberty Alliance, 2016), viewed more than 179,000 times within a month of its publication.

Australian Liberty Alliance administrator video (15 July 2016 – extracts)

- This is a word for you wannabe jihadists and Islamists out there: I am not afraid of you, I am not intimidated by you. I will not submit to Islam and I will not back down. Australian Western culture and values is [sic] far superior to the hate, violence and oppression of Islam. Western democratic law is far superior to Sharia law. We see what is happening in Europe and we grieve with the victims of jihadists.
- It will use military-style means to achieve its goal of world domination. Other world religions limit themselves to acts of service, and acts of worship – but acts of worship do not include blowing people up, terrorising people, dominating others.

In the following extract from the same video, jihadist fundamentalism is differentiated from everyday Islamic observance. However, this ‘moderate’ Islam is constructed as outright religious insubordination. In keeping with the *ALA*’s tradition of intellectual Islamophobia, terrorism and violence is a ‘pure’ interpretation (Ekman, 2015):

Australian Liberty Alliance administrator video (15 July 2016 – extracts)

- I am so glad there are multitudes of Muslims in Australia who defy Allah’s vile and backwards commands to terrorise, slay, slaughter, rape, enslave and execute unbelievers...I will continue to expose the hate speech and incitement to violence of Islam, because it is dangerous and incompatible with our values and laws.
- We don’t buy the lie that Islam is a religion of peace. Islam is a totalitarian ideology that covers all areas of life, including politics, law, socioeconomic standards and it will use military-style means to achieve its goal of world domination.
- Weak and cowardly followers of Islam obey these commands and take them literally. This simply doesn’t happen with any other religion.

The video proceeds to substantiate the position by quoting lengthy passages of Qur'anic text. This contradictory discourse constructs Muslims as both subjects and objects in their religious observance; as both subservient and resistant, but always inferior.

3.3.2 National identity, belonging, and aberrance

The expression of its ideological opposition to Islam as a matter of national identity and belonging is the defining characteristic of the contemporary Australian anti-Islamic movement. This follows on from Benedict Anderson's conception of the nation as an instrument of formal power (1991), an apparatus through which projects of racialisation and exclusion can be pursued and enacted. Though engaging in this narrative collectively, each organisation mobilises the rhetorical and visual discourse of nation in different ways.



FIGURE 3: *Reclaim Australia* Facebook page banner

An ideology of “assimilation” as a passage to Australian nationhood is a common discourse. This has two primary characters – overt, in which an expectation of assimilation is named, and subtle, expressed in terms of integration or ‘fitting in’. This latter form of ‘prosthetic whiteness’ (Preston, 2010) enables the White hegemony of nation become detached from the body, allowing suitable non-Whites to assume status, and thereby power in relation to the Islamic Other. This is the mode through which non-Whites perform anti-Islamic nationalism, as *Reclaim* has demonstrated both online and in the real. For example, instances of immigrants (and their descendants) denouncing Islam are met enthusiastically, as in the below exchange on *Reclaim*:

Reclaim Australia Facebook user post and user response (19 September 2015)

- I'm a "wog" I work, pay taxes and have lived in Australia for 41 of my 45 years of age. I hold my culture, language and beliefs true to my heart. I give thanks to my parents for bringing me as a young boy to this wonderful country, but I thank this wonderful and beautiful country for all it had given me. The opportunities, the friendships and the generosity has allowed my family and I to enjoy a great life.
 - o You're a perfect example of Australian multiculturalism which we have no problem with. Italians, Greeks, English, Indians, Asians, etc have been integrating beautifully for years!!! Simply

because they have similar values to Australians and are intelligent enough to realise that they have come here for new possibilities or a peaceful life. The problem is quite simply ISLAM! [sic].

Reproducing a logic of assimilation holds that Australian national and Islamic identities are oppositional and mutually exclusive – it is only possible to be ‘Australian’, and to participate in national life, if one’s Islamic identity is abandoned. The *ALA*’s website refers visitors to the organisation’s policy manifesto to explain this rule of belonging:

Values and Core Policies, Australian Liberty Alliance (2016 – extracts)

- Our Australia has no place for big government, racism, moral relativism, divisive multiculturalism or tolerance for the intolerant.
- Migrants do not dream of a new life in Australia because we are a Socialist, Islamic or tribal society. Migrants come for the freedom, justice and prosperity only Western civilisation creates.

The pronouns ‘we’, ‘us’ and ‘our’ underpin the operation of this discourse, laying claim to the national voice in a performance typical of race-based populism (Markus, 2001). Represented as ‘common sense’, it is held to unquestionably represent a collective national interest and majority opinion. It is particularly effective because it is rhetorically self-sufficient; rejecting competing opinions *prima facie* and reproducing the oppressive, marginalising macro-discourses upon which lived, structural inequalities are founded.

As an open forum requiring no more than a ‘like’ to participate, *Reclaim* allows the entry of dissenting voices into the discussion. User responses to instances of dissenting pro-Islamic ‘trolling’ demonstrates users’ collective negotiations of the rules and expectations of the space (Marcea, 2012), shaping its collective capacity to accommodate competing ideas. In this exchange, participants revert to vitriolic swearing and insults in response to a competing opinion.

Reclaim Australia Facebook user post (16 April 2015)

- Halal slaughter is not cruel. It’s no more & no less cruel than normal slaughter.

Reclaim Australia Facebook user responses (16 April 2015)

- o You my boy are a fkn [sic] fool.
- o You shouldn’t have been born dickhead!!
- o Hey dickhead would you like to be dead and have your throat cut or alive and conscious when it happens so you scream and yell yet no words come out all while chocking on your own blood knowing you cant do a thing about it while in excruciating pain. Your a halfwit twatwaffle go back to packing shelves moron [sic].

Complicating this shared voice/perspective is an awareness that not all nationals share its ideology. This suggests that while the movement claims the national voice, it recognises its own ‘counterpublic’ status, producing non-dominant forms of knowledge (Habermas, in

Calhoun 1993). Calls to action are thus used to politicise the discourse and agitate the status quo. One prominent example, occurring 377 times in the *Reclaim* corpus and featuring in *Halal Choices* and *Q Society* literature, implores the broader nation to ‘wake up’. This symbolic metaphor constructs the movement as working to bridge a public knowledge gap: evangelists of a self-evident regime of Islamic truth.

Reclaim Australia user posts (14 June 2016)

- Islam is the problem. This will not stop and sooner or later Australia will have massive casualties and blood running in the streets due to no other reason but islam [sic]. WAKE UP PEOPLE!
- IF THE ARMY IS TRAINING FOR SHARIA LAW THEY MUST BE EXPECTING IT. WAKE UP AUSTRALIA...[sic]

What is Halal? Halal Choices (2013)

- Wake up Australia - the strategies are deliberate and the money involved is phenomenal!
- Keep spreading the word Australia – let’s wake this nation up!

Q Society website administrator post (16 January 2013)

- Please attend Geert Wilders’ speaking tour of Australia – It’s time to wake up, Australia.

3.3.3 The politics of identity

A feature common to each organisation is the mobilisation against a diverse range of actors collectivised as ‘The Left’. Including politicians, media professionals and academics, this is the network of actors that the movement characterises as developing a ‘cultural architecture’ that empowers Muslims and Islam. Railing against this ‘political correctness’ is a common feature of all four organisations, another established discourse of Australian right-wing activism reproduced by the movement (Hogan & Haltinner, 2015).

If ‘political correctness’ is taken broadly to mean “avoiding forms of expression that insult, exclude or marginalise socially disadvantaged people or groups” (Soutphommasane, 2015, p21), two themes in this discourse emerge. The first is informal – a hostile response to a perceived orthodoxy of ‘leftist’ identity politics which afford power to minorities. The second is formal – the instruments, such as multicultural policy and anti-discrimination legislation, which codify this cultural loss. Together, these discourses reflect the loss of ‘freedom of speech’; a ‘right’ around which the entire movement has mobilised. In an example of discursive intertextuality, this administrator post from *Reclaim* focuses on “18c” [sic] – a section of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cwth) that the Abbott government proposed to abolish in 2014 prohibiting expression likely to “offend or humiliate” (ibid, p77) on the basis of race. Modalities, such as hypotheses about future cultural loss and crisis, are vital to the operation of this discourse, as are metaphors and emotional appeals to innocent subjects in ‘children’ and

'future generations'. In the below posts, this legislation is constructed as being in particular service to a culturally militant Islam:

Reclaim Australia Facebook user post (10 March 2015)

- "18c" legislation was added to our legal system to appease this [Islamic] minority, simply because they choose to take offence at so many things in and about Australia. This needs to be amended and deleted, we have and always have had freedom of speech, the freedom to fly our flag, wear our flag, celebrate Christmas- Easter-Anzac Day- Labor day- Queens birthday, etc, all these things "offend" Islam [sic].

Reclaim Australia Facebook user post (11 February 2016)

- I believe in freedom of speech and I need to criticise Islam. We're becoming more and more Islamised and before we know it they'll take over and Australia will be unrecognisable.

Reclaim Australia Facebook user post (7 March 2015)

- I'm concerned about what kind of Australia my grandchildren will inherit, its [sic] not the Australia I grew up with.

A *UPF* video post titled "Far-left treason: A message to Sam Dastyari" (Cottrell, 2016c) follows a similar theme, amassing more than 78,000 views and 400 comments. This post was in response to Senator Dastyari's appearance on the ABC panel programme *Q&A* in which he clashed with far-right senator Pauline Hanson. *UPF* leader Cottrell opens the video with an address – "I have a message for you, Mr Dastyari" (United Patriots Front, 22 July 2016) – a type of direct speech that signals the video is not merely about a topic, it is to a specific actor outside of the movement in a complication of the relationship between creator and audience typical of this form of media practice. In the extracts from the video below, Cottrell constructs a narrative of political collusion and corruption in service of minority interests:

United Patriots Front administrator video (22 July 2016 – extracts)

- What you'll notice in the media, in leftist political factions, parliament, the current government – is that they make everything seem really complex. They make politics seem many-faced, many-sided, lots of different parties with lots of different ideologies, it's a very complex situation. But this is a lie. They tell you this on purpose so you turn your back on politics altogether, so you don't take an interest in your country, so they can keep running this country into the ground for their own profit.
- But the truth is – it's all really simple. There isn't [sic] many different groups and factions, there's only two – there's only Australian, and the enemy of Australia. You're either someone who loves your country and your community, or you're somebody that likes to destroy your country. Your nationality is the strongest and most unifying concept you have.
- Our nationality as Australians is what binds us all together – what makes us one. Liberal, or Labor, or Greens – these are all artificial, petty little political divisions and you must not surrender to them. It doesn't matter where you come from or your parents come from – you either love this country and want to fight for it, or you are assisting the enemy that wants to destroy it. (United Patriots Front, 11 January 2016)

The *UPF* locates its ideology both outside of and above mainstream political orthodoxy, and engages a dualist logic of national and enemy Other (Said, 1978). Similarly, a favoured target of both *Reclaim* and *Halal Choices* is Muslim academic and popular media personality Waleed Aly, who is characterised as a “smiling terrorist sympathiser” (Reclaim Australia, 2015) and “the public face of ‘acceptable’ Islam” (Halal Choices, 2013). In Aly and Dastyari, the movement apply several discourses onto two symbolic figures: undeserving, Muslim beneficiaries of Australian identity politics.

The advancement of ‘common sense’ and ‘the people’, and an opposition to intellectualism is part of an established populist strategy (Markus, 2001). In the below video (viewed more than 112,000 times), *UPF* leader Cottrell is shown addressing the well-publicised rally against the Bendigo mosque.

United Patriots Front administrator video (12 October 2015 – extract)

- I am not some academic. I am not some intellectual. I am not some university graduate who thinks he’s better than you. I am one of you. By just standing up, in a public place, speaking your mind, speaking the truth, your people connect to you more than they will ever connect to a parliamentarian. And in truth, these suit-wearing jackals, they would never dream of descending from the ivory tower of Parliament House to actually be amongst their own people. (United Patriots Front, 12 October 2015).



FIGURE 4 – *UPF* administrator video still (12 October 2015)

The same anti-intellectualism is utilised by both *Halal Choices* and the *ALA*, though framed somewhat differently. *Halal Choices*’ Kirralie Smith identifies her organisation as a benign collective of “mums and dads” (Halal Choices, 2015), while the *ALA* uses ex-military officer (and Senate candidate) Bernard Gaynor to explain Middle Eastern conflict as a product of Islamic inferiority, in a strategic claim to credibility:

Australian Liberty Alliance administrator video (16 September 2014 – extract)

- If you want to know these wars [in Iraq and Afghanistan] failed, don't read long, intellectual articles that talk about complicated nuances – these pieces only hide the inability of their authors to grasp simple truths.

Reclaim Australia Facebook user post (30 May 2016)

- I don't trust any of these university-educated "experts". How bout [sic] you go out into the real world and get a real job before you tell us what to do!

The anti-intellectualism and anti-elitism of the movement activates a discourse of class oppression that has presented in phases of Australian exclusionary nationalism in the past (Markus, 2001, Hage, 2003). Neoliberal globalisation and multiculturalism is constructed as a project of a university-educated upper class disconnected from the lives, issues and concerns of a normalised and valorised "working class culture" (United Patriots Front, 25 April 2015).

3.3.4 Negotiating 'race'

A key dimension of the movement's anti-Islamic discourse is a negotiation of the language of race, nation and ethnicity. Inasmuch as critical and media attention has focused on whether its discourse can be classified as 'racist', this same discussion has played out reflexively within the movement. Regardless, the denial of racism is central to the strategies of *Reclaim*, *Halal Choices*, and the *ALA*. In one of the rare administrator posts on *Reclaim* responding to hostile mass media coverage in *The Australian* (Baxendale, 2015), the group seeks to deflect accusations of racism.

Reclaim Australia administrator post (9 August 2015)

We are going to keep saying this in the face of this ongoing media onslaught. Reclaim are NOT affiliated to ANY political party nor under the control of any other group. We also know that we are not the only patriots in Australia—there are thousands of us—from the left to far right—with Reclaim somewhere in the middle. Reclaim represents the everyday Australian that is concerned about Islam—concerned about Aussies being made to feel wrong about loving their country, their heritage and flag. We are called "racists" for believing in equality, freedom and democracy—That is rich! We recognise that we are in a media war against political correctness but we will not be silenced—nor have our rights trampled—nor accept this bullying from counter rallies and the media. Is one truthful article about Reclaim too much to ask? [sic]

In the administrators' view, *Reclaim's* nationalism automatically rejects claims that its discourse constitutes racism. The affective symbolism of liberal-democratic ideals such as equality, freedom and democracy – the 'good' of the movement – are diametrically opposed to, and mutually exclusive of, racism and hate speech. This perspective is also reflected through user commentary, as seen below.

Reclaim Australia Facebook user posts (9 August 2015)

- How can we be racist when Islam is not a race its [sic] a religion!!!!

- The proof is gathering now and yet we the questioners are shunned with ridiculous accusations of racism and bigotry all because we want to protect freedom and equality for all.
 - Fuck this racism bullshit this is all just about preserving Australia for Australians [sic]
 - Mainstream Australia needs to hear what's going on...But the swearing has to stop...Not going to win using foul language. Turns mainstream people off. As soon as we scream, swear or become abusive we have lost our argument [sic].

The rejection of racism requires the 'common sense' argument used above – that such claims are “ridiculous” outright, but with little or no explanation as to how or why nationalistic ethno-exclusion is distinct from racism. The simultaneous moderation of language in users' collective moderation of the dialogue protects its evidential nature; swearing, for example, is seen as symbolic of the extremism the group outwardly denies.

Reclaim Australia Facebook user posts (6 June 2016)

- Racist and nazi for standing with our aboriginal brothers? Doesn't quite add up....
- Being pro-Australian does not make us racist!
- I don't see myself as a racist, I've got multicultural friends. I just don't like the idea of this religion in my country.

Evidential strategy also seeks to deny Muslims' categorisation as a 'race', and thereby as victims of racism. The movement's specific focus on Islam, even where admittedly prejudiced, is nonetheless defensible – a legitimate form of 'cultural critique'. *Reclaim* is a site in which the complexity of racism is negotiated between participants, and the interaction between old and new racisms plays out. Meanwhile, the more extreme *UPF* follows a different logic in regard to the language of race, mostly unconcerned with presenting its discourse as a legitimate and rational form of critique, readily admitting the 'old' racism and white supremacist aspects of its ideology. Through the language and symbolism of war, the *UPF*'s concept of national belonging is reduced to a simple binary – White nationals and Others – in which Islam and Muslims are the latest enemy to be vanquished in pursuit of a return to White Australia. It is in fact this explicit ideology of White supremacy that initiated the *UPF*'s splintering away from the more amorphous *Reclaim* organisation.

Recognising that the movement's collective discursive work reproduces several established discourses from the tradition of Australian ethno-exclusionary nationalism, the project's next chapter seeks to identify and explain the various social, historical, political, and economic sites of power that flow through the movement's participants. It specifically focuses on how macro-discourses variously enable and challenge anti-Islamic nationalism, and how power is both oppressive and productive in the Australian context, demonstrating new dynamics through which the nation is defined and performed.

4. INTERPRETING ANTI-ISLAMIC NATIONALISM: DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

As a form of grassroots social activism, the Australian anti-Islamic nationalist movement is a complex discursive formation. It is a movement comprised of a broad range of actor organisations, each concurrently utilising several media channels in which hundreds of thousands of individual users participate. It is nonetheless a movement seeking to effect real social, cultural and political change – to, in the nomenclature of one of its most prominent actors, ‘reclaim’ Australia.

This section of the thesis argues that the Australian anti-Islamic movement and the discursive strategies it employs emerge from a series of broader social, cultural, economic and political milieus. It is a social and discursive construction; a micro-level interpretation and reconstruction of a hierarchical ‘race regime’ that defines the social and cultural formation of the Australian nation. This combination of knowledge, practices, and law, accumulated over the course of the nation’s history, empowers Anglo-Australia to ‘govern’ those it classifies as aberrant, incompatible, Others.

The movement can thus be seen as working to construct multiple regimes of identity through discourse: of Muslims and Islam, of ‘Australia’, and of the movement itself as a collective. In this collaborative process of meaning-making, the participants call upon and rework a vast reservoir of historical representations and interpretations that are derived from a system of Australian social knowledge founded upon patterns of White, hegemonic domination and racialised oppression and subordination (Hage, 1998; Moreton-Robinson, 2004). These experiences of power and powerlessness feed into and reinforce the perceptions, stereotypes and beliefs that constitute the contemporary anti-Islamic, nationalist ideology and underpin the rationale through which it seeks to exclude the Islamic Other.

A collective such as this cannot exist without common experience, symbols, and mythology; a digital nationalism (Eriksen, 2007). In the context of Australian social and technological change, this nationalism is enabled by a genealogy of power/knowledge that has an extended history of state-centric ethno-exclusion. This is a study not only about how everyday meaning becomes embedded in an Islamic racial category through the use of new media as a technology of power, but also how, through its expression as nationalism, it becomes legitimised, normalised, and politically active. As this section of the project demonstrates, the new media ecology allows everyday actors to rework and reconstitute macro-regimes of race; to co-create meaning about the Islamic Other that is disseminated into broader public debate

and discourse in ways that continue to unfold. Ultimately, the interdependence and convergence of traditional and new media forms in the democratic public sphere produces complex and contradictory forces of identity construction. Though attempting to exercise the diffuse social power ascribed to its participants through a regime of White nationalism, the movement can be seen as itself subject to other productive forces of power that together formulate knowledge about the meaning and practice of Islam in the contemporary Australian nation.

4.2 Racial nationalism: Is it racist to love Australia?

Anti-Islamic sentiment is among the most prevalent forms of intercultural hostility that currently exist in the West (Poynting & Noble, 2010). Alongside its collective opposition to Islam, the other unifying characteristic of movement is its expression of this sentiment as a particular form of Australian nationalism. While racism and nationalism have long been theorised as being interdependent and symbiotic (Bhaba, 1994; Markus, 2001), it is important to consider how the movement's anti-Islamic project is seen as the particular preserve of national identity as distinct from mere ideology: that Muslims are not, or cannot become, legitimate members of the Australian nation.

For Anderson racism and nationalism are oppositional concepts; racism manifests "not across borders, but within them" (1991, p183). The "relentless cycle" (Markus, 2010) of ethno-exclusionary nationalism in the Australian context, and the pronounced old and new racisms that have historically underpinned it, challenges this dichotomy. The discursive construction of 'Australia' works to identify, racialize, and ultimately exclude incompatible Others in coded ways. Through discursive technologies, the movement itself constructs an Islamic racial category; a system of knowledge and meanings that becomes attached to the Muslim body. It is an essentialised, collectivised and monolithic 'Islam', expressed as a 'culture' that is incompatible with the proscribed, Australian 'way of life'. This is an Australian nationalism that creates an object of exclusion in the Muslim body; a regime of social power that operates as overt, biological racism, despite its expressions of politeness and civility.

Indeed, the everyday assumption that race is connoted only by the body, and racism is spectacularly violent, is what allows this form of culturalist neo-racism to persist (Balibar, 1988). The rejection of 'race' as a notion of any significance, and thereby the ready denial of racism, is reflected in the movement's mobilisation around a virtuous model of nationalism defined through 'democracy', 'freedom of speech', and 'equality' (Reclaim Australia, 2015) which creates an equivalence between civic-patriotic and ethno-exclusionary nationalisms (Soutphommasane, 2015). The 'colour-blind' racial hegemony promotes an absolute liberalism and equality, thereby denying the history and lived realities of difference. So too

does it reject pluralism as a means of redressing it, while also reifying Whiteness as Australian society's expected mode of cultural practice. Any capacity for the movement's nationalism to accommodate racial difference can therefore only be broadly synonymous with past state projects of monoculturalism and assimilationism.

This expectation that 'good' migrants 'assimilate', and assertions that Muslims cannot, prevail in the movement's discourse despite assimilation having been abandoned for more than two decades at a policy level (Jakubowicz & Ho, 2013). It is an example of the complex and contradictory expectations placed upon migrants, in which the social-democratic, egalitarian vision of multiculturalism gives way to an oppressive discourse of assimilation in the everyday. This is the manifestation of a hegemonic White culture into which non-white bodies may be granted entry, but only after accumulating sufficient cultural capital and discharging any other identity affiliations (Hage, 2003). This nationalism is functionally the same as the historical 'Whites-only' Australia, ascribing the benefits of Whiteness to certain categories of minorities while continuing to assert cultural superiority through primacy and control, selectively granting entry into the nation and continuing to proscribe acceptable forms of cultural practice.

The movement's anti-Islamic polemic is transformed into a political project (Anderson, 1991), for which its goal of excluding the aberrant Muslim Other requires the "state's powers of exclusion" (p39). This possibility is a tacit recognition of the biopower (Foucault, 1978) historically enacted by the Australian state in the management of its population, connecting it with the past projects of institutionalised racism and exclusion. This nation is not a 'new' or 'different' Australia but a 'reclaimed' or 'restored' one; an inward-looking, nostalgic Australia of a past imaginary. This promise of national reformation advances these historical practices in preference to an unknowable future. Though this vision can be "deceptive and fraudulent", based on an invented past (Hobsbawm & Kertzer, 1992, p4), its attraction can be read as an affective response to the dislocations caused by globalisation and neoliberalism – both imagined and real – a process which has challenged the meaning and purpose of national boundaries and detached cultural identity both from physical territory and the bodies of its inhabitants.

The growing visibility and influence of minority cultures as a result of these forces has seen a lamentation of the ongoing "dis-Anglification" of the nation (Knopfelmacher, 1984 in Dunn, 2005). That the movement cites this logic of cultural loss implies a sort of tragedy; a very real troubling of the White norm itself over time (Dunn, 2005). In this logic, the movement reinforces Australia's colonial formation for which monocultural identity and racial homogeneity were seen as practically necessary, and desirable (Markus, 1994). Whiteness as a condition of nationhood has been made manifest historically through a series of policies and programs

known collectively as the 'White Australia Policy'. Though officially disbanded since 1975, this has indelibly shaped the operation of common sense 'borderphobia' (Perera, 2002) and racial privilege which informs the contemporary anti-Islamic movement.

A long-standing, bipartisan commitment to neoliberalism has been identified at the core of this periodically defensive nationalism, which is inscribed with narratives of political disenfranchisement and powerlessness. Moffitt (2015) and Markus (2001) argue that the main adherents to past iterations of such populism are those most impacted by this structural shift – “the losers of globalisation” (Markus, 2001, p77). In seeking to co-opt the national voice – speaking as ‘mainstream Australians’ – the anti-Islamic nationalist movement borrows rhetorically from this tradition. It too champions a return to economic protectionism and a ‘blue-collar’ vision of the nation, promoting an anti-elitism in concert with its nationalism. This suggests cultural loss on two fronts – both from Muslims and immigrants themselves, and the ‘elite’ neoliberal class that dominates politics, media and education. The class-based domination suggested through this discourse accords with a left-wing critique of multiculturalism (Jakubowicz & Ho, 2013). Where multiculturalism and cultural diversity have been articulated as self-evidently good, governments have failed to explain the ethical, ideological and practical foundations of immigration and multiculturalism. This critique also suggests that the state has failed to provide frameworks through which to negotiate the lived realities of intercultural habitus (Wise, 2010), including the tensions and conflict that can on occasion result, and which are often ascribed to a complete ‘failure of multiculturalism’. Together, this ‘incomplete multicultural project’ stimulates defensive nationalism.

The destructive and dislocating tendencies of neoliberalism, as much a domestic program as a global one, become attached to notions of global and thereby, to the Others that become visible alongside it (Goldberg, 2009, 2010). This neoliberal discourse allows human lives, particularly aberrant Others, to be constructed in terms of an undue economic cost to legitimate members of the nation. This nationalism is capable of targeting and selectively suspending its prejudices, however; incorporating suitably productive non-White immigrants and minorities (Markus, 2001; Hage, 2003) alongside White, ‘birthright’ members of the nation.

4.3 Counter-jihad: Islamist terrorism and the nation

Analysis of the Australian anti-Islamic movement must consider its relationship to Islamic terrorism, its *cause celebre*. This specific focus on responding to recent incarnations of terrorism distinguishes which this defensive nationalism from other cycles of both prejudice and terrorism that predate it; illuminating both continuity and change.

A fundamentally 21st century model of terrorism is ‘leaderless jihad’ (Sageman, 2008, Aly, 2014), characterised by individualised, insurgent attacks such as those commonly associated

with militant terrorist organisation IS. This is a model of terrorism unique to its time: highly networked, de-territorialised, and almost completely disconnected from formal leadership and administrative structures. This unpredictable, “self-starting” (Sageman, 2008, p8) form of terror – occurring within and targeting populations and symbols of the West – has fundamentally challenged social understandings of the purpose and performance of this once geopolitical phenomenon. Radicalisation and terrorism is itself increasingly internet-mediated and disconnected from disputes over specific territories, challenging both its proponents and targets to conceive of identities in terms of a global, cultural ecosystem (ibid). A growing body of literature identifies formations such as the Australian anti-Islamic nationalist movement as part of a globalised, Western ‘counter-jihad’ online network (Ekman, 2015). These two opposing dynamics of digital jihad/counter-jihad are motivated by parallel senses of “systematic exclusion or injustice” (Dahlberg, 2011, p860), prompting individuals to collective action outside of formal institutional power – increasingly, on both sides, through digital media.

The movement collectively argues that this type of terrorism emerges from *within* Islam – despite acknowledging, to varying degrees, that it is neither necessarily supported nor perpetrated by all Muslims. This allows Islam itself to become a hermeneutic; a mechanism through which to interpret and ultimately contain terror networks that are more “fluid, independent and unpredictable” (Sageman, 2011, p3) than at any other time in the past. While the rhetorical strategies that create this Islamic ‘folk devil’ (Poynting, 2006) differ throughout the movement, the overall construction of Islam is as a monolithic, and inherently violent, terrorising ‘culture’ – requiring exclusion from the nation. Where *Reclaim* and the *UPF* rely on broad, orientalist stereotypes, *Halal Choices* and the *ALA/Q Society* seek to actively rationalise this exclusion through a professed, ‘credible’ expertise in Islamic theology. This “intellectual Islamophobia” (Fleming, 2014) uniquely constructs terrorism not only as a product of Islam but as a ‘pure’ form of religious observance, derived plainly and directly from scripture. Coupled with IS’ own claim to the “authentic voice” of Islam and its avowed opposition to Western culture, a general narrative of Islamic aberrance and threat is advanced. However, this reading of IS fails to accommodate the tensions within the “vast world of Islam” (Aly, 2015, p32) including in observance, methodology, and jurisprudence.

Though its origins are opaque and contested, IS is an organisation that, at the very least, should be interpreted as a political-paramilitary actor that claims religious authority but has not been granted it by most Muslims. Kilcullen (2015) defines IS as a ‘state-building enterprise’, seeking to capture a defined, geographic territory and advance its Salafi-Islamic caliphate within it. The violence and barbarity of IS, which has killed more Muslims than any other ethno-religious group (ibid) is a complex amalgam of politics and religion that is irreducible to ‘Islam’ alone. IS’ particular mode of Islamic interpretation and observance is frequently denounced

within the Islamic world, elevating scripture and literal applications of Qur'anic text at the expense of a more subjectivist approach which accounts for a set of "interpretations and methodologies accumulated over millennia" (Aly, 2014). The movement's suggestion that literalist Salafism, IS' mode of observance, evidences the evil and barbarism of the Islamic faith belies the "selectivity and contradiction" inherent in this literalism (ibid). An ever-growing body of literature on radicalisation demonstrates that many conscript to jihadi ideology with only a "shallow religious experience" (Sageman, 2008, p69).

The recent "third wave" (Perera, 2002) of predominantly Muslim asylum seekers fleeing the same conflict zones in which IS has proliferated has prompted a defensive reassertion of the nation's maritime border by the state. This narrative of Islamic violence is formulated uniquely in the Australian context, and becoming potently associated with immigration (particularly that by boat) (Poynting, Noble, Tabar & Collins, 2004). The conjoining of immigration and terrorism has manifested into a political force in societies throughout the West, and has been an issue on which three successive Australian federal elections (in 2010, 2013, and 2016) have been contested, as well as the seminal '*Tampa* election' of 2001 that embedded this specific politic. In Australia, a Western history of violent and fanatical orientalist representations (Said, 1978, 1980) meshes with specifically Anglo-Australian phobias of incursion by sea (Hage, 1998, 2003), creating a new enemy Other to be excluded and contained away from the nation through the apparatus of the border.

The politicisation of asylum seeking and immigration in the 2010 and 2013 election campaigns as the Rudd-Gillard Labor government loosened its grip on power effectively re-activated the border politics of the 2001 election (McAllister, 2003). The current regime of militarised immigration, represented through state projects such as "Operation Sovereign Borders" (DIBP, 2016) coupled with dehumanising, inferiorising official discourses of "illegal" (Hall, 2013), "illiterate and innumerate", and "economic" migrants (Bourke, 2016) enables and legitimises this correlation. The movement's reproduction of this official discourse suggests that incidences of terrorism, such as the 2014 Lindt Café siege, do not necessarily generate new, independent meanings about Islam and Muslims (Perera & Pugliese, 2012). Rather, these events conform to pre-existing, state-sanctioned interpretations and prejudices, adding to an ever-growing genealogy of social knowledge in which Islam is synonymous with a generalised primitivism, barbarism, and criminality. A propensity to terrorism is symbolic of a deficient, immoral and ultimately evil 'culture', whose 'natural' position is outside of the nation. This representation creates a discursive double bind; Muslims are constructed as simultaneously the "objects and agents of criminality" (Perera, 2002, p17). It is a logic contending that the very people displaced by conflict and terrorism are also its proponents.

Aside from terrorism, in its transition from the digital realm to the real, the contemporary anti-Islamic movement mobilises other politics of Islamic oppression in Australia such as antagonism towards mosque development and Islamic dress (the 'Ban the Burqa' discourse) (Poynting et al., 2004; Dunn, 2005, Noble, 2009) which depict the visible and invisible Christian normativity of the nation in ways that other phases of ethno-exclusionary nationalism, such as the anti-Asian nationalism of the 1990s, did not. The mosque, and Islamic forms of dress such as the hijab and burqa, become symbols of a "nefarious form of cultural separatism" (Dunn, 2005, p37); a type of cultural sovereignty enacted by Muslims but which, in the view of the movement, has not been earned. Femininity within Islam in particular illuminates the patriarchy within this White nationalism, and the paradoxical, 'coercive liberalism' at its core. In seeking to liberate Muslim women from these "symbols of oppression" (Reclaim Australia, 2015), the movement seeks to paternalistically define the meaning of religious observance and directly restrict the freedom to the same. It is unimportant that there is a "startling diversity" (Aly, 2014) of reasons for Muslim women's wearing of the hijab or niqab unrelated to the enslavement of women or the facilitation of terrorism. Human rights and liberal freedoms, in the view of the movement, are not universal – they are to be granted (and withdrawn) at the behest of the nation's legitimate members.

Ironically, the targeting, marginalising and excluding Muslims from Australian society does little to counter the threat of Islamist terror within Western societies, and may in fact contribute to it (Sageman, 2008; Aly, 2014; Kilcullen 2015). With over-simplified and under-conceptualised definitions of the problem, proposed solutions derived from these definitions are also incomplete, weakening the very rights and freedoms the anti-Islamic movement purports to uphold.

4.4. Race and activism in the new media ecology

Within the context of scholarly, political, and popular attention to the mediation of Islam, the exponential growth of digital media technologies has problematised the discursive formation of individual and group identities. In particular, individualised, networked social media (collectively known as Web 2.0) have emerged as an important site for social interaction, identity construction and community formation. It is perhaps unsurprising that the ubiquity of these media forms has led to their becoming a key source of news production and consumption (Flew, 2014), which has stimulated a corresponding decline in traditional mass media. This decline, however, has been complex and uneven. Traditional mass media forms are increasingly converging with the digital. This has resulted in entirely new types of media forms and practices – a digital media ecology – in which representations, and thereby regimes of truth, are co-created at the micro- and macro-levels.

These shifts in media practice and consumption also challenge Anderson's (1991) thesis that the foundations of nationalism exist in the highly centralised, one-to-many informational flow model typical of mass media. Despite location in an ever-globalising and networked world, the Australian anti-Islamic nationalist movements nonetheless subscribe to a national consciousness. Through its organisation and discourse through new media, the movement can be conceived of as a virtual ethnic community (Wark, 2012): a White Australia that, having had its hegemony challenged in the real territory of nation, is using the productive capacities of these media to organise and reconstruct its national community and imaginary online.

However, as with other digital grassroots movements, the capacity to influence political action – the purpose of nation – through online activity alone is limited (Shirky, 2011). The mass of data and 'ephemeral engagement' typical of the new media ecology, even when organised into collectives, means that any one communicative or publication action has limited impact. Most online activism continues to rely on traditional modes of 'performance' as a means of entering into the national conversation. While this is true of this movement, it has secured the "scarce and highly contested currency" of visibility (McCosker & Johns, 2014, p1) in ways that highlight the emerging dynamics of discursive co-creation in the contemporary Australian nation.

It has been argued that the constitutive principle of the digital media is 'networked individualism' (Castells, 2012). Through the individuation and (pseudo)anonymity of digital, networked social media, collective action is transformed into an activism perhaps better understood as 'connective action' (Bakardjieva, 2015). This still draws individuals together in pursuit of a common goal, however it emerges not from painstaking negotiations and lived common experience, but from the drawing of hyperlinks. The implications of this model for digital democracy and the public sphere are obvious. Social media activism of this sort readily enables collectives to reduce complex social and cultural phenomena into stereotypes and atavisms (Durrheim et al., 2015). This resets the 'compass of social appropriateness', enabling views that were once 'too extreme' to be freely expressed to be widely disseminated to an audience known, through its collectivisation, as receptive. So too does it bring these vociferous communities and the discursive constructions of Muslims and Islam into immediate contact with broader, digitally-mediated social networks, improving their visibility and facilitating access.

This raises the possibility that discourses once present only at extreme fringes of society are increasingly seen as legitimate (Castells, 2012; Bakardjieva, 2015). In fact, the anti-Islamic movement's defence of its ideology under the guise of 'freedom of speech' belies the philosophical tension within this freedom (Aly, 2014). In Australia, as in most democracies, the

freedom to speak has never been absolute, tempered against discrimination, racism and oppression. In averting this examination, 'freedom of speech' becomes a strategy of reversal (Moreton-Robinson, 2004); institutional protections from oppression are constructed as unfair restrictions on White nationals' right to absolute freedom, thus creating new victims.

If parties can be defined as any collective seeking to acquire social power by "influencing social action" (Weber 1978, in During, 1999, p377), the boundaries between digital collectives and formal political actors are porous. The re-emergence of Pauline Hanson and One Nation in the 2016 Australian federal election campaign on a predominantly anti-Islamic platform therefore demonstrates a different dynamic of influence – a "political cannibalism" (McKenzie-Murray, 2015, p3). One Nation's active courting of the anti-Islamic movement as the 2016 federal election approached resulted in the eventual co-option of its ideology and discourse. One Nation borrowed heavily from the movement's proposed policy measures, including a 'royal commission into Islam', the installation of surveillance in mosques, a "moratorium" on Muslim immigration, and a ban on halal certification (One Nation, 2016; Australian Liberty Alliance, 2016). Securing four Senate seats, One Nation became the largest voting bloc outside of the three major parties. Though One Nation is still a comparatively minor political force, its first entry into federal politics resulted in the Howard government adjusting and accommodating its discourse and ideology in ways that continue to be felt in the discursive, cultural fabric of the nation (Markus, 2001). In this way, the movement has effected contemporary political change, and the potential 'mainstreaming' of their extremism remains. As Liberal Senator Cory Bernardi argued, "One Nation is saying a lot of things that I believe the Liberal Party should be saying" (Hunter, 2016).

While the 'dark sides' of the Internet that promote hostility and xenophobia are neither new nor unique to social media, the transition from a Web 1.0 to a Web 2.0 paradigm creates a problematic situation. Though coordination and organisation of activism may be made easier, the deliberation and negotiation essential to democratic discourse is not (McCosker, 2015). The movement identifies a contradictory situation that reflects this problem. Despite conducting performances of 'worthiness', such as protests in public space which have successfully gained media attention (Tilly & Tarrow, 2007), *Reclaim*'s administrators describe themselves as being in a "media war" (Reclaim Australia, 2015). This process of mass-social co-creation has stripped some degree of agency from the movement; a loss of control over the collective's identity and representation to an active, hostile mass media. By embracing traditional forms of activism in concert with the new media ecology, the movement has also exposed itself to the critical eye of the larger public sphere. The public visibility and dissemination of its rhetoric has been, and continues to be, contested from both inside and outside of the movement. While this thesis has considered specifically how social media are

used by this movement as technologies of repressive power, the productive potential of these media forms – and of power itself – must also be acknowledged (Bhaba, 1994). The movement's parallel resistance against multiculturalism and identity politics has illuminated the complex ways in which power has acted *upon* it. As various publics have worked to decode its transition into public space, its identity has been subject to a hybridised co-creation, variously categorised as 'patriotic', 'democratic', 'racist', and 'Nazi' (Reclaim Australia, 2016) in the shadow of an intense program of police surveillance (McKenzie-Murray, 2016).

Nevertheless, the movement collectively has little tolerance for competing voices and perspectives within its online walls, and Habermas' (1963, in During, 1999) conditions for the rational-critical democratic function of speech are arguably not met. However, it is important also to look beyond the collective itself to assess the democratic import of this new type of public discourse. Inasmuch as it opens a new discursive space for exclusion, the creative and civic possibilities of social media also enable the operation of contrasting collectives, such as those with anti-racist and anti-Islamophobic ideologies that similarly formed, organised and met it in public space.

Ultimately, Hall's (2000) theory of subjective identity and Butler's (1990) of discursive performativity are instructive here. Micro-discourses of racial nationalism and national identity operate within the contexts of existing macro-constructions of identity, reiterating and troubling sedimented norms. As the individuals within the contemporary Australian anti-Islamic movement identify with (and present themselves as part of) a collective, they select a subject position that is offered to them, and produced by, these macro-discourses. In this exchange, historical, social, political and cultural contexts continue to play a significant role, as does the existing democratic function of mass media. As a result, it is impossible to derive a new logic of political action from the structure of the digital medium alone.

5. CONCLUSION

With the re-emergence of Pauline Hanson and One Nation at the 2016 federal election on a predominantly anti-Islamic platform, the politics of race in Australia entered another critical phase, coming at a time of public support for the national exclusion of Muslims, and increased visibility of anti-Islamic sentiment in politics and mass media. This project has analysed the role that the Australian anti-Islamic movement plays in developing this politic, with a particular focus on how its use of digital, networked social media functioned as technologies of power. It also analysed how the collective's participants define and perform a White hegemonic nationalism, and how the new media ecology transforms the development of public discourse on race, nation and ethnicity in continuously unfolding ways.

Following a detailed review of literature and the critical location of this thesis within the Cultural Studies discipline, the project's second chapter detailed case studies of the movement, focusing on the ideological development of four of the movement's most prominent actor organisations. Despite a broad nationalistic unity, the interconnections, hyperlinks, disjunctions, and ideological ruptures within and across the movement become clear through this close, critical analysis. In the third chapter, a qualitative, critical discourse analysis of the movement sought to uncover the specific power relations that underpin the movement's various nationalist and anti-Islamic discourses, and the rhetorical and semiotic strategies used by each organisation to activate them. It analyses the narrative and semiotic frames through which both national and Islamic identities are formulated, as well as the movement's own, collective identity as a virtual White community and national guardian.

The final section of the thesis has interrogated a range of specific historical, economic, and political forces that produce subject positions and macro-discourses enabling and legitimising the formation of the movement. Specifically, this section considers how these discourses are reproduced and reworked in the everyday, and how official discourses of power are reconstructed and reconstituted in the everyday as a means of Islamic oppression. In the context of the 'relentless cycle' of Australian ethno-exclusionary nationalism, the critical-democratic function of the new media ecology is foregrounded. Through the digital formation of nationalism and activism, public discourse on race and nationalism is increasingly co-created at the micro and macro levels, producing complex and contradictory constructions of identity. Power can be seen both as subject and object, flowing through the movement's participants as well as shaping individual and collective identities.

At a time where public opposition to immigration and the 'Islamic Other' is increasingly characterised as 'populism' (Mondon, 2013), further research could analyse the contemporary

nature of a public sphere undergoing transformational change, and the impact this change has on Western democracy and political participation; including how construction of Islamic identities and how Islamophobia is exploited in different nations as a populist electoral strategy. Further work could develop understandings about specific, targeted Islamic exclusion, the ways White, masculine, Christian norms are aggregated into various nationalisms, and how formerly marginal, 'extreme' ideological positions come to occupy the political mainstream. While there is a growing body of literature (Goldberg, 2009; Ekman, 2015; Mondon, 2013) that analyses the concurrent emergence of hard-right populist movements in contemporary Western democracies, academic work that specifically focuses on the relation between micro-level social media discourse and the broader political and social change it foregrounds is only developing (Ekman, 2012). Where this thesis has focused on a range of Australian groups and their local impact, further research could seek to understand the similarities and differences in quotidian nationalist actors across larger historical periods throughout societies in the West, and the broader social, political and economic changes that create them.

This research highlights that, in the digital age more than at any stage before it, the 'public sphere' itself is not and cannot be contained by a defined national territory (Lentin & Titley, 2012, Awan, 2016). An analysis of global, anti-Islamic digital nationalism would theorise the development of a globalised public sphere that facilitates the formation of a collective, virtual White, Christian, Western 'nation' that becomes capable of enacting new racism to exclude Islam from its geographically disparate territory. Ethno-exclusionary taboos, created by the 20th century deconstruction of institutionalised racism (Balibar, 1992), are broken online and then influence the discursive behaviour of political actors as has been the case in Australia, the United Kingdom, Germany and the United States in a bottom-up exercise of power (Ekman, 2015). Virtual nationalism of the kind profiled through this project creates a channel into broader public discourse and has real policy, political and therefore lived implications – both for its proponents in the Australian and Western cultural mainstream, and its Muslim and Islamic subjects.

6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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