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COMMUNITIES AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

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COMMUNITIES AND SOCIAL CAPITAL*

In this article, I am concerned with how social capital circulates within and across communities. Social capital entails an accumulation of social and moral resources within groups or social collectivities which include norms of reciprocity, social trust, co-operation, and networks of civic engagement. Ethnic communities in Australia are frequently accused of indulging in identity politics that leads to a form of ethnic closure. In order to address this issue more clearly, two main questions are posed: first, does identity formation contribute to a form of separation and ethnic closure or can communities, based on identity formations and identity politics, enhance their levels of civic virtue and collective action; secondly, are ethnic communities in Australia rallying together through various forms of collective action to achieve social justice goals within their own ethnic groups and across the broader community?

Keywords: social capital, immigrant communities, Australia, identity politics, ethnic closure

1. Introduction

Over the past ten years there has been much discussion in Australia about the demise of the old labour movements and the new social movements, the fall in membership of political parties and the decline of mass political mobilisation. As a result of this type of emerging change in many western democracies, it appears that the level of solidarity and collective action in liberal democracies is at one of its lowest ebbs. This is particularly important as we enter a phase where there seems to be a stagnation of the Left in liberal democracies in terms of how to deal with issues of citizenship, of inclusion and exclusion and of how to understand the contradictions of universalism and difference.

* This is an earlier version of a chapter in E. Vasta (ed), 2000, *Citizenship, Community and Democracy*, London: Macmillan.

One main fear is that with the demise of the old labour movement and left politics, there is a rise of movements and politics based on identity issues centred around culture and ethnicity. This is often referred to as identity politics or the politics of difference. My overall objective in this paper is to explore the politics of community as it is constructed through the relationship between the politics of difference and collective action. The notions of community, networking and collective action become especially important as class consciousness, as we know it in the traditional sense, recedes. Therefore, we might ask ourselves whether there are other types of collectivities in which people develop new social and cultural identities in the process of arranging for their basic social needs and combating various forms of discrimination. The major sociological focus of the project is on what constitutes political mobilisation and collective action in an urban area of high migrant density.

After establishing some workable definitions for the notion of community, the first aim is to establish whether there is a sense of community among a number of ethnic groups in a working class area of high migrant density in Sydney, Australia. Community can be a source of social identity, shared meanings and mutual co-operation. If we do establish that there exists a sense of community, then it is useful to know whether it is based simply on a sense of belonging, on a set of loose networks, or whether these are well structured and organised. Such information can throw light on how issues to do with identity and collective action operate.

The second related aim is concerned with outlining the characteristics of these communities with regard to what Putnam (1993) calls 'social capital'. Social capital entails an accumulation of social and moral resources within groups or social collectivities which include norms of reciprocity, social trust, co-operation, and networks of civic engagement. Here the question is whether communities, based on identity formations and identity politics, can enhance their levels of civic virtue and collective action, or does identity formation contribute to a form of separation and ethnic closure? We might then ask ourselves whether ethnic communities are rallying together through various forms of collective action to achieve social justice goals firstly, within their own ethnic groups and secondly across the broader community? Before presenting some of the empirical data, it is useful to take a look at some of the definitions and theories of community in order to facilitate the analysis.

2. Definitions and theories of community

Although there are many and varied definitions of community, they can basically be reduced to three. Firstly, community can be defined as a 'geographical expression' with a 'fixed and bounded' *locality* where human settlement is loca-

ted in a particular local territory can be referred as a community. Secondly, community can be understood as a *local social system* which refers to a set of social relationships which take place within a given locality. Here, a 'network of interrelationships is established between people living in the same locality'. These might be called neighbourhoods where there are informal social networks based on family and neighbours who share a sense of history.

Thirdly, community also exists as a *type of relationship* or as a *sense of identity*. "This third definition corresponds most closely with the colloquial usage of 'community' - the idea of a 'spirit of community' a sense of commonality among a group of people" (Lee and Newby 1983: 57). This kind of communal identification need not arise from any personal contact but simply provides characteristics of commonality such as language, the migration experience, ethnicity, class experience etc.

The notion of community is stretched further through communitarianism and social capital theory. The central tenet of communitarianism is that the community is/should be the central, organising feature rather than the nation or the individual and that it forms the basis for the value system of any group. Communitarianism conceives of 'values as rooted in communal practices' which emphasise the communal and public good. Communitarianism emphasises "the embedded and embodied status of the individual" by contrast to the individual in liberal theory which is "an abstract and disembodied individual" (Frazer and Lacey 1993: 2), a universal individual without gender or ethnic identities. While communitarians were originally against the state, some (e.g. Frazer and Lacey 1993) argue for the inclusion of the state in their framework with an anti-racist, anti-sexist and socialist analysis which works towards a democratisation of power.

Social capital theory is in some ways closely aligned to communitarianism. Whereas communitarianism provides prescriptive ideas for the good, and about the best way in which the society is to operate, social capital theory provides us with ideas about the resources and characteristics we need to have in order to live the good life. As Putnam (1993: 167-171) suggests, trust, cooperation and reciprocity are moral or social resources whose supply increases with use. Mutual aid practices are based on trust which is an essential feature of social capital. The greater the level of trust in a community, the greater the likelihood for cooperation between people in the community. Conversely, the more cooperation between people, the better the conditions on which to base trust. Characteristics embodied in social capital such as co-operation, reciprocal norms of help, social trust and, more broadly, civic engagement can also form a basis of collective action.

3. Community and collective action

Five ethnic groups - Anglo-Australians, Chilean-Australians, Iranian-Australians, Italian-Australians, Vietnamese-Australians — were interviewed in Fairfield Sydney. The results reported in this paper are based on a larger study. The city of Fairfield, in metropolitan Sydney Australia, was selected for this purpose. Fairfield has approximately 182,000 people in its 27 suburbs and is a predominantly working class area with light to medium industry. Approximately 52 per cent of the population is born overseas from 133 different countries. This is an area with a high unemployment rate. Whereas the national unemployment rate at the 1996 census was 8.7 per cent, the total unemployment rate in Fairfield was 16.3 per cent. The rate increases to 21.3 per cent for people born in a non-English speaking country. Of the five groups interviewed for this project, the unemployment rate for Italians is 6.1 per cent, a rate lower than that of the national average. This is due to the age structure of this particular population as the Italian-born are an aging population. The rate for the Chileans is 13.6 per cent; for the Iranians 25.8 per cent and for the Vietnamese 31.2 per cent (ABS 1996).

The tensions between people, place and identity are often constructed through the contested terrain of community political involvement. In Australia, at the local level, the central sites of power, such as the bureaucracies and institutions, for example legal, are still overwhelmingly Anglo dominated. Since Australian national identity is officially constructed through Anglo-Australian culture and institutions, it is this group which is perceived to have the power to articulate itself as the dominant ethnic group in Fairfield. Nevertheless, the boundaries between different sites of power are becoming more flexible as migrants increasingly enter the public arena. The notion of community was examined through a number of indicators embodied in ideas to do with identity; locality and social networks; community; participation and civic engagement. These results will provide some insight into the collective spirit which may exist within and between five ethnic groups interviewed. Thirty respondents (15 men and 15 women) were interviewed from each ethnic group. Also the samples were varied — in that second generation Italian-Australians were selected as a point of comparison with more recently arrived groups as well as with non-immigrant Anglo-Australians.

Identity

Identity "represents an interaction between objective group structures and subjective consciousness" (Schierup and Ålund 1987: 19-20). In other words, identity is formed through the relationship of the social group(s) of which we are members and through the economic and political structures of our society.

Identity provides a sense of belonging between people and is the basis for commonalities and can also be formed through a process of differentiation. Both these processes operate in our construction of ethnic identity in a multicultural society. Thus, awareness of these processes is essential to developing an understanding of the relationship between identity politics and collective action. The identity of Australians of Anglo-Saxon and Celtic origin have been formed over the past 200 years as part of the dominant Australian identity. In other words, Anglo-Australian identity is structured in dominance. Therefore, it is not surprising that 22 of the 30 Anglo-Australian respondents defined their identity as 'Australian'. The remaining 8 defined their identity as 'Anglo-Australian'.

For those who define themselves as 'Anglo-Australians' there may be an awareness and acceptance that in multicultural Australia, Anglo-Australians can have a dual ethnic identity, as do members of any other ethnic group. Of course, depending on the context, the idea of being 'Australian' is saturated with unequal power relations. For people of migrant background, particularly the first generation, an 'Australian' usually means an Anglo-Australian which forms the dominant construction of Australian national identity. In other words, *the* Australian is an Anglo-Australian, and 'Australia' encodes a dominant Anglo representation of the nation, despite our multicultural rhetoric (Vasta 1993, 1996). The structural power of this language certainly has the effect of creating a hegemonic national identity and of marginalising or regulating other 'Austrian' identities.

For the respondents of non-English speaking background, only 6 of 120 define themselves as 'Australian' only. 80 of the 120 respondents of non-English speaking background maintain a dual identity. This leaning towards a bi-cultural identity not only illustrates a greater acceptance of the multicultural nature of Australian society but it also opens up past inflexible boundaries of Australian identity. In fact, bi-cultural identity forms part of a destabilising process which will be discussed more fully below.

The Vietnamese and the Iranians claimed the highest levels of a single identity. This could be due to the fact that these two communities experience inordinate levels of racism which in turn has the tendency of strengthening, partially as a form of resistance, the discriminated-against identity. The Iranians also provide an interesting case study of how identity is a political construct. They referred to about ten ethnic identities some of which included religious identities. Some religious minorities, such as the Assyrians, have politically defined themselves against the dominant Iranian identity.

Locality and social networks

Within specific and bounded localities, identity and community are often con-

structed through shared meanings and mutual co-operation. As was to be expected, the vast majority of Anglo-Australians and Italian-Australians interviewed had either been born or had grown up in Fairfield. Many of the Chileans and Iranians had arrived in the 1970s and while the Vietnamese began arriving in the late seventies, many had been there between two to five years. Certainly, the Anglos and the Italians have a certain sense of stability of place. Yet Anglo-Australians reported rather poor levels of 'friendship' with their neighbours.

One characteristic which identifies the notion of social trust is the friendships one makes outside one's ethnic group. Through the development of cross-cultural friendship networks, there is likely to be a shift away from ethnic closure (Breton et al. 1990), but this also provides the basis for the possibility of co-operation and reciprocity across ethnic groups. Social and moral resources may accumulate under such circumstances. For all the groups, most friendships occur within one's own ethnic group.

Further, almost a third of Anglos, Iranians and Vietnamese have no close friends outside their own ethnic group. On the other hand, over two-thirds of Chileans and Italians claim to have close friends from other ethnic groups. One explanation for the Italians is that they have been there longer than the other groups, but more to the point, because they are mostly second generation, it is likely that they have *grown up with* a group of multi-ethnic friends. But it is worth noting that at least 5 Italians and 5 Chileans have close friendships with people of Asian and Middle Eastern background, while the other groups recorded one or no such friendships.

In summary, the Italian second generation appear to be more multiculturally involved with neighbours and friends, followed by the Chileans and Anglos. Again, for the communities which experience high levels of racism, there is likely to be a tendency towards ethnic closure as a way of dealing with racism. This is more likely to be the case amongst the first generation. Zappala suggests that community bonds and networks are more likely to be strengthened in some ethnic communities through ethnic organisations, clubs and extended family than is the case for the Anglo-Australian population (Zappala 1997: 86).

New communities

An ethnic community can be defined on the basis of shared migration experiences, language and traditions even though the latter can be fragmented by such issues as class, regional, political and religious differences. Furthermore, ethnic communities can emerge as 'local social systems' based on informal social networks. But ethnic communities also emerge due to a process not often referred to by traditional definitions of community. As noted above, marginalised groups, usually defined as 'other' by a dominant group, are likely to form their

own social groups and communities, partly as a form of resistance. As Stuart Hall reminds us, identity politics based on ethnicity has to do with people being "refused an identity and identification within the majority nation, having to find some other roots on which to stand" (Hall 1991: 52). Being blocked from the dominant national identity, people will form collective ethnic identities and communities.

For a sizable majority of migrants in each group, with the exception of the Iranians, there is a strong sense of community in Fairfield (Vietnamese 28; Italians 24; Chileans 22; Iranians 17) and this is mostly based on a sense of belonging. The common refrain from those who believe there is no sense of community was that the 'Iranians' are too fragmented and they "have no centre, no place, no people to work for us, no responsible person". For them, the reason for lack of community is to be found amongst themselves.

Clearly, there is a *sense* of community for the majority of the four non-English speaking background groups as outlined by all three definitions of community discussed earlier in the paper. Within the bounded geographical locality, neighbourhood networks reveal levels of social reciprocity where a sense of identity is based on a spirit of commonality among groups of people based on ethnicity, language, the migration experience. However, several questions remain which reflect our two main themes. Even though groups might possess a sense of community, we would still need to know whether social trust and reciprocity exist. Secondly, does the sense of community exist across ethnic groups? Further, we need to consider whether this sense of community translates into action, and collective action in particular.

Social trust, reciprocity and collective action were ascertained through questions about participation which can be divided into three categories. The first relates to attendance where people simply attend an event or a function. The process of participation (helping by sponsoring a function, planting trees, participating in marches and helping in meetings) and organisation (organising meetings, groups etc.) are more relevant to our analysis in terms of collective action. Although each group claimed that the most important needs for their communities are welfare services and employment, 26 Italian and 26 Chilean respondents were inactive while the Vietnamese were the mostly highly engaged. Almost half the Vietnamese (14) and a third of the Iranians (9) were involved in helping out their communities. These might be considered the more needy of the communities, having the highest rates of unemployment and experience higher levels of racism.

One relevant question which can reveal levels of accumulated social capital in the various communities, is related to how each community helped its unemployed. About a third of the Italians, Chileans and Iranians did not know

what their community does to help out its unemployed. Further, 17 Iranians claimed that their community does nothing. This could be based on lack of information or it could be the case that the community has few resources with which to help, given the fractionalism within that community as well as the racism experienced. A majority of Chileans believe that their community helps by providing information.

However, just over a third of the Vietnamese and of the Italians claimed that their communities provide their unemployed with work experience. They have higher levels of small business ownership. Many respondents in these two communities stated that self-employed members can help family and friends with jobs as well as with job training and information. One Vietnamese respondent claimed that one important way in which the unemployed are helped is through the formation of worker co-operative within the Vietnamese community which operates in the clothing manufacturing industry. In this particular example, income is shared equally within the co-operative, which includes anyone who might be unemployed.

Finally, the involvement of people across ethnic groups and organisations would give us some measure of social capital at the broader neighbourhood or community level. Over half of the Vietnamese (18) and just under half of the Iranians (13) are involved in some type of civic engagement (most participate and organise) outside of their own ethnic group. Only 7 Italians and 6 Chileans were involved in any way. Less than half of those involved in the Vietnamese, Iranian and Italian groups are women whereas 5 of the 6 Chileans were women. These trends were confirmed by workers in the community sector who claim the Vietnamese and the Chileans are more likely to be socially and politically active outside of their own ethnic groups.

To summarise, for Australians of migrant background, the migration experience reveals a search for 'home'. Migrants put a great deal of effort into constructing communities in their new localities due to loss of family, of locale, of social networks and communities brought about by the migration process. Clearly, the construction of community and the search for home is not an activity which operates independently of other social processes.

With the exception of the Iranians, there is a strong sense of community among the non-English speaking background groups. Also there appears to be more inter-ethnic friendships amongst the Italians and Chileans. It is the Vietnamese and the Iranians, however, who display the highest levels of social capital through the reciprocal and co-operative help which circulates in their communities. Some elements of social capital appear in all the groups though, in terms of characteristics such as help and co-operation, they appear to be strongest among the Vietnamese and Iranians.

It is clear, however, that there is a tendency for each ethnic group to organise and operate, particularly for social justice issues, on the basis of ethnic identity. As the above results illustrate, this has positive consequences for ethnic communities, particularly where minorities might have a problematic relationship with the state (see also Solomos and Back 1995).

Loss of community

Questions about ethnic identity and community are as important to Anglo-Australians as to any other group. It is over the issue of community, however, that one notable difference has emerged. A growing number of Anglo-Australians report a loss of community in Fairfield. A large proportion, 22 of the 30 respondents claim to feel no sense of community. Unlike the communities of migrant background who sought explanations for lack of community within their own ranks, a large percentage of Anglo-Australians blame the presence of migrants and of multiculturalism for their lack of community. Almost half of the Anglo-Australians who feel no sense of community believe this is due to a high incidence of migrants. The following are typical responses:

It is a certain amount of being shell-shocked. I remember maybe 20 years ago this area was predominantly Australian or Australianised Europeans. Now it is rapidly changing.

One respondent suggested the reason is "[b]ecause everything is geared toward the migrant community, making the Anglo-Australian feel discriminated against. We tend to isolate ourselves". This type of response came repeatedly from Anglo-Australians (including many outside the sample), some of whom are married to people of non-English speaking background. One common concern is that there are no organisations which target Anglo-Australians. The overriding sense coming from Anglo-Australians is that the state should be organising a sense of identity and community for them, as it is perceived to be doing for migrant Australians.

This sense of loss of community among Anglo-Australians and their sense of feeling 'swamped' is coupled with a lack of adequate information about multiculturalism as well as a lack of empathy with the migration experience.

There are, however, numerous neighbourhood centres, community centres etc which are organised and run by Anglo-Australians, yet many of the respondents were not involved with their 'community' in any way. Just over a third of the Anglo-Australian group report some involvement in community organisation, with 6 of these participating, which includes volunteer work, and only one organiser among them. This lack of participation is reflected in research carried

out among Australian community service clubs. Passey states that "community service clubs synonymous with the Australian idea of a fair go for all - Lions, Apex and Rotary - are in the grip of a severe membership drought" (Passey 1998: 6). Apex, the only 'truly' Australian club had membership drop from 18,000 in 1988 to 6,000 ten years later. In this report, explanations for these trends vary from a changing value system, greed and selfishness, through to high unemployment and job insecurity, tight finances and faster and busier lives.

Like the other groups, Anglo-Australians consider the most important needs of their communities to be welfare services and employment. While a third believed that these needs would be satisfied through mainstream services, nine others did not know and only three state that they help to meet their community's needs in any way. Clearly, levels of social capital are low amongst this group. With regard to what Anglo-Australians do to help their unemployed, this group seemed far better informed about available services for the unemployed. Over one third of the sample mentioned that the unemployed can be helped by the Department of Social Security (DSS) and the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES). A further six suggested they could do training programmes. Not only is this group better informed than the other groups but it is significant to note that there is a strong expectation for state support which may explain why they rely less on their own community resources. Many migrants, on the other hand, appear to rely more on their own communities and organisations for such social needs.

There are four main reasons for this sense loss of community. First, Anglo-Australians suffer from a nostalgia for the past, just as migrants in the early years of migration suffer from a nostalgia for their lost home, their lost country. The nostalgia that Anglo-Australians endure is based partly on myth and partly on the reality of social change. Urban Australia in the 1950s and 1960s was predominantly based on a culture which had been constructed by several generations of Anglo-Australians. Indigenous Australians had been effectively disintegrated and silenced while migrants up until the 1970s remained fairly invisible as assimilation policy attempted to make everyone 'as Australian as possible'. The inference of the respondent quoted above was that the neighbourhood was comfortable with the Australianised Europeans. This is also mythologised for inter-ethnic relations, in the early post-war years, also went through its phases of contestation (Castles et al. 1988, Collins 1988).

Secondly, in the early post-war decades Australians benefitted from the post-war economic boom years. As Australian industry grew, migrants did much of the dirty work in the factories. Current changes in migration are closely linked to the effects of restructuring and globalisation. These changes are most keenly

felt at the local level where the 'face' of the neighbourhood has changed. For many, the front line of change is the influx of migrants. This is the most immediate and tangible shift which people perceive and will use to explain the many changes in their communities. Unemployment, for example, is seen to be caused by the influx of migrants, not by restructuring and globalisation.

Many of the comments which I have outlined reveal some of the concerns raised by the sociologist Tönnies (1963) in his analysis of the transition from rural to urban life which included a sense of loss of intimate and enduring community relationships. Simmel's (1950) analysis of the "Metropolis and Mental Life" also exposes a sense of loss in that individuals become isolated from each other and estranged from other social groups in the society. There is also a loss of security, a problem mentioned only by Anglo-Australians. Security has been a strong element in the post-war reconstruction ideologies of many western societies (Offe 1987: 67). Here many were alluding not only to the growing reputation of Fairfield City (particularly Cabramatta) as a drug haven, but also to difference and change which were seen as 'deviant'. Whereas the earlier loss of community related to the change to industrial capitalism, current technological changes can produce similar devastating effects.

There is a third factor, not immediately evident, which also helps to explain the demise of sense of community among Anglo-Australians. In research conducted in areas of high immigrant concentrations in Sydney in the late seventies and early eighties, Burnley (1985) found that 44 per cent of Italians, 30 per cent of Greeks, 26 per cent of (former) Yugoslavs and only 9 per cent of the Australian-born had close relatives in the same suburb. Social interaction revolves around kinship ties to a much greater degree in ethnic communities than in the Anglo-Australian population. Burnley also found that 76 per cent of the Italians, 91 per cent of the Lebanese, 75 per cent of the Greeks and 62 per cent of (former) Yugoslavs visited their closest relatives on a weekly basis, compared to 57 per cent of the Australian born (Burnley 1985: 169-176). In addition, during the 1970s and 1980s, most Southern Europeans in Australia owned their own homes and their rate of owner-occupation was higher than for the Australian-born population (ABS 1989).

It appears that there has been a flight of Anglo-Australians from Fairfield. One explanation is that many Anglo-Australians have become upwardly mobile, moving to areas which have better job prospects. This has the effect of breaking up kinship networks and sense of community. Another reason (though difficult to measure) is that many Anglo-Australians have left the area due to the rise in migrant numbers. The Anglo-Australian community has experienced rapid changes over the past 30-40 years. For many the changes have been positive, providing an opportunity to move on. Those who have remained experience

the sense of loss more acutely. On the other hand, kinship ties are an important aspect of stability for ethnic communities. Building up a sense of place and space through locale and community compensates for the losses experienced through migration.

Finally, the critiques of the rise of industrial society revealed that there was often dissatisfaction with bewildering social change and a decline in the quality of life. The longing for community symbolises a desire for identity and authenticity where it is perceived that security and certainty is fast disappearing. Attempts to redress the disadvantages experienced by migrants through multicultural policies have been fundamentally misunderstood by many Anglo-Australians and often viewed as reverse discrimination. As a result, at the everyday level and in local communities, these problems became 'ethnicised' so that migrants have suffered an increase in personal abuse and attacks particularly since the election of the conservative Liberal-National Coalition government in March 1996. Often, their fear and lack of empathy for the migration process and for cultural difference is expressed through racist discourses.

4. Conclusion

Although there is a certain level of fluidity to the construction of community, in this study we have established that a relatively strong sense of community exists among the Australians of migrant background. The migrant groups, who form a 'constitutive other' to the dominant Anglo-Australian community and identity, have also accumulated a certain amount of social capital. In these communities there was a solid sense of reciprocal help and co-operation which has built up during the years of the settlement process.

Furthermore, there was ample evidence of inter-ethnic participation in addressing broader community needs and cooperation, particularly among the two groups (Iranian and Vietnamese) which experience higher levels of unemployment, racism and other social problems. Indeed, as mentioned earlier in the paper, ethnic closure which is often a predicted outcome of such problems, and of identity politics, has not occurred in these communities.

By comparison, within the Anglo-Australian community there is a tendency towards a sense of loss of community. The results presented in this paper indicate that this leads to lower levels of social capital among the Anglo-Australian group who have become more reliant on the state particularly for the satisfaction of welfare needs in the community. That this should be the case is not necessarily a problem because in many instances the state is better positioned and is indeed expected to provide service needs. It is possible that Anglo-Australians are better informed and have better access to necessary services and therefore do not need to rely on each other for these needs. Nevertheless, this has the ad-

ded effect that for Anglo-Australians inter-ethnic co-operation is also likely to be limited. Moreover, Anglo-Australians repeatedly complained that they were discriminated against, that migrants received more and better services than themselves and that this has somehow led to the demise of the Anglo-Australian community. What has emerged, in fact, is a politics of grievance (Brett 1997).

The politics of grievance has clearly led to a rise in racism, a phenomenon which has been slowly augmenting at an international level over the past ten to fifteen years. This opens up the social space for the growth of racism. There is a sense in which people can no longer see broader, universal solutions which were earlier based on a collective class politics (Brett 1997: 18). Without the broader, universal understanding of the changes which are occurring, it is all too easy for the dominant Anglo-Australian community (and some in the older migrant communities) who feel under threat to degenerate into 'populist whingeing' based on individualism and the blaming of minorities. As mentioned earlier, unemployment is often blamed on migrants and not on the vagaries of restructuring and globalisation. This reveals that collective identity and a sense of consciousness about the public good, is weak.

The impact of migrants has led to a genuine sense of loss and confusion among Anglo-Australians for whom the nation represented the language of family and home. This sense of a national ethnicity, language and community can no longer hold (Brett 1997: 23-24). The pluralist model of society, on which an inclusivist multiculturalism is based, requires the state to act as a mediating agent "between groups of people who share certain formal rights *vis a vis* each other and the state, but who may not share much else in terms of common experience" (Brett 1997: 24). This runs counter to the shared common national identity of the pre-war years which gradually slipped away with the post-war migration program. Indigenous Australians and migrants have unsettled and challenged that shared identity of yesteryear.

Thus, the Fairfield Anglo-Australian community has experienced a dislocation of local identity which has unleashed racist sentiments and practices, usually class and gender blind. Racism, then, operates as a strategy which will help them defend their space against change. It has also blocked their ability to participate collectively around issues of significance which cut across ethnicity. While identity does have a sense of endurance and historicity, identity is not completely fixed. In Australia, Anglo-Australian identity has been structured in dominance and it is this loss of status which has contributed to a sense of loss of home, of loss of community. What is happening in places of high migrant density, both in Australia and in Europe I might add, is that the migrant presence continues to contest and destabilise hegemonic national identities.

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Ellie Vasta was Guest Professor in memory of Willy Brandt at IMER in Autumn term 2001.

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