New visions and vintage values: Shifting discourses of Australian national identity in 21st century prime ministerial rhetoric

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Abstract

This article examines the relationship between prime ministerial rhetoric and the framing of national identity in contemporary election campaign speeches. Through a hybrid quantitative and qualitative textual analysis, it finds the dominant narrative of Australian national identity in the 2001 prime minister's campaign launch speech was defined by themes of endurance and stoicism. In 2007, and then in 2013, the narrative conveyed a more optimistic image of the nation, despite increasing global complexities. As such, the analysis reveals distinctive elements in the three speech acts which account for shifting ways of speaking of the nation and invoking nationhood in 21st century.

Keywords: election campaign launch speech, rhetoric, national identity, Australian national elections.

Introduction

Seeking an electoral mandate to lead the nation—aside from winning the electoral race—is arguably the primary objective of campaigning prime ministers and opposition leaders alike. To achieve this end, national leaders are compelled to drive a campaign that convinces voters that they are worthy of being granted the authority to represent the needs of the public, while also being capable of negotiating the nation's position on the international stage. Persuasive campaign discourse, found in slogans (Young 2006), advertisements (Fourie, 2013), televised debates (Younane-Brookes, 2011) and set piece speeches (Bartlett & Rayner, 2014; Bull & Miskinis, 2015), forms part of a larger campaign strategy of 'selling' the nation to itself in the hope of achieving electoral success. Persuasion, argue John Kane and Haig Patapan (2010), is vital to the practice of democratic leadership, making speech and communication of fundamental importance. Democratic politics is indeed all about rhetoric.

   In a global, 21st century context, it is the view of Stephen Stockwell (2005, p. ix) that the first vital step in "re-thinking democracy" is to establish the election campaign as the

"predominant form of politics". Further, in situating rhetoric within the practice and study of politics, political communication and citizenship, James Martin (2015, p. 33) notes that "persuasion is sought through multiple strategies to shape the idea of the community itself and the place of the citizen in it". It follows then, that campaign language and strategic forms of political communication contribute to the wider language of political discourse, social construction and transformation and, either explicitly or inexplicitly, impact on the development of a new set of relationships among and between citizens and their political leaders.

"Campaign talk" (Hart, 2009) also has the scope to move beyond persuasion and into the realm of what American scholars of political rhetoric, which Roderick P. Hart and Mark Johnson (1999) describe as "constructing the electorate". That is, how the electorate—the United States electorate in Hart and Johnson's study—has been described by political campaigners in order to identify themselves with, and hence further appeal to, potential voters. A key component of campaigning party leaders' endeavour to seize popular support and maintain a reputable ethos involves drawing on common perceptions of belonging to the nation and a shared civic character; a concept also known as national identity. Appealing to a collective sense of identity is one of the many persuasive tools that political leaders utilise to connect and communicate with the public (see, for example, Huddy & Khatib, 2007; Krebs & Jackson, 2007). On the campaign trail, national identity and rhetoric often fuse in a complementary relationship defined by pragmatism and power (Curran, 2004, pp. 2-5). Commonplaces and quintessential values unique to the nation's identity, therefore, are frequently emphasised during significant moments of political oratory to persuade and please the national audience.

A key variable that further shapes the relationship between national identity and rhetoric in campaign speechmaking is the electoral system, specifically the voting practices of the democracy in question. One of the distinctive features of the Australian electoral system, for example, is compulsory voting. The Australian Electoral Commission (2011) notes that compulsory enrolment for federal elections was introduced in 1912, and in 1924 compulsory voting in federal elections was introduced. From a representative perspective, compulsory voting seeks to ensure that Parliament reflects more accurately the general public, or 'will of the electorate' (Evans, 2006, p. 11). Indeed, from a political perspective, compulsory voting compels governments to consider the broader electorate in policy formulation and administration. Compulsory voting also encourages candidates to focus their campaigning energies on specific issues, rather than managing a balancing act between issues and

motivating voters to attend the poll (Evans, 2006). What this essentially means in the Australian campaign context is the electoral system enables campaigning leaders to use rhetoric with the foremost intention of appealing to and aligning the national community with their vision. Very little effort needs to be expended on pleading for people to vote, as is the case in the United States (see, for example, Conway III et al., 2012; Azari & Vaughn, 2014).

The central question of this article concerns the mechanisms of persuasive language and appeals to national identity that have been employed in Australian prime ministers' campaign launch speeches, and the extent to which the framing of national identity in the speeches accounts for shifting ways of speaking of the nation and invoking nationhood in 21st century. To address this question, the paper begins by providing a theoretical insight into rhetoric and national identity, and their symbiotic place in contemporary election campaign speechmaking. Next, the 2001 and 2007 election campaign speeches of Coalition[1] Prime Minister John Howard (in office from 1996 to 2007), and Labo[2]r Prime Minister Kevin Rudd (during his second period in office from June to September 2013) are explored using a hybrid qualitative and quantitative textual analysis of speech transcripts. The analysis[3] identifies and discusses key messages, allusions to national identity, and rhetorical techniques, and also explains how the speeches frame their key themes. Finally, the broader findings of the speech analyses are considered in terms of the shifting discourses of Australian national identity in 21st century prime ministerial rhetoric.

Rhetoric and national identity in campaign speechmaking

Strategic communication lies at the heart of an orator's ability to effectively persuade an audience, and a political leader's ability to persuade voters. One form of strategic communication, the political speech, is the original and most powerful transmitter of persuasive language in the political sphere, and has endured as an object of use and enquiry for over 2000 years (Halliday, 2003). Similarly, rhetoric, understood as the "art of persuasion" (Aristotle, 2007, p. 1355b), is arguably the oldest and most powerful form of political discourse. Most famously associated with the Sophists of ancient Greece in the 5th century BCE and given systematic analysis by Aristotle in the 4th century BCE, classical rhetoric maintains its applicability to contemporary studies of political communication because of its relevance for analysing persuasive language in key political speeches. This is due to two primary factors: first, rhetoric facilitates speakers who attempt to inform, persuade or motivate particular audiences in certain situations. Second, political speeches remain a

fundamental tool utilised by leaders in election campaigns to persuade voters, and, argue Hart and Daughton (2005), rhetoric is manifested in the persuasive language techniques of these texts (see also Kuypers, 2009).

The campaign launch is perhaps the most important speech of an election campaign as it is the vehicle utilised by a leader to expound their vision for the nation, plans for the future and reasons for seeking election or re-election (Younane, 2008, p. 66).

In the contemporary Australian context the formal election campaign generally lasts for between four and six weeks and the campaign policy launch speech provides candidates with an opportune moment to project a national image, project or narrative (Lukin, 2015) as part of their 'pitch' to garner the support needed to contest the position of national leader (see also Dyrenfurth, 2010).

Election campaign language also provides an opportunity for observing the shaping of what Benedict Anderson (2006) refers to as "imagined communities". Anderson believes that a nation is a socially constructed community, imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of that group. While members of the community may never know one another through face-to-face contact, identifying as part of the same nation creates a sense of bonding and belonging. Like that of mainstream media, campaign language generally targets a mass audience or generalises and addresses all citizens as 'the public' (Walter, 2008). Campaign strategies, therefore, have the capacity to contribute to pre-existing imagined communities through the use of images and ideas that feed into a wider campaign theme and 'national project' of the campaigning party. As party leaders express their vision of the nation's future under their leadership, reminisce about events of national significance and offer allegories of what it means to be Australian, Anderson (2006) argues that audiences will choose which image they relate to the most, furthering the relationship to that imagined community. Paul James (1996, p. 34) makes a similar claim that the nation is indeed an "abstract community"; "one usually connected by a state, and a subjectively embodied community whose members experience themselves as an integrated group of compatriots". James (1996) recognises, albeit in passing, that forms of communication by the state are central to ensuring 'nation-forming' and collective political belief systems (pp. 151-70).

Both Anderson's imagined communities and James' abstract community bear theoretical similarities to a key term used for the discussion of rhetoric in rhetorical theorist Kenneth Burke's "A rhetoric of motives" (1969): identification. Identification holds that one party must identify with the other during a rhetorical situation in order for persuasion to occur. That is, the one who becomes persuaded does so when they identify with the message, character or

outlook of the rhetor (Burke, 1969, p. 47). The concept of identification, argues Burke, gives us an additional way of looking at rhetoric's role in human relations, specifically ways in which people enact social cohesion. In Burkean rhetoric then, social cohesion, for both Anderson and James, could be understood as a product of identification in the context of a speech act. Identification as a means and end of persuasion has long been conceptualised in multifarious forms, in both classical and modern rhetorical theory (see, for example, Kennedy, 2009; Murphy, 2013; Jasinski, 2001; Vatz, 2013). Perhaps the most well-known is Aristotle's three means of persuasion: ethos (ethical credibility), logos (logical argument) and pathos (emotive appeals). By drawing on any one, or several, of these persuasive appeals, a speaker, argues Aristotle (2007), will be more likely to motivate an audience to identify or associate with, and be convinced by their argument. The ways in which leaders speak about the nation and arouse nationhood in election campaign speechmaking indeed illustrates the salience of identification and rhetorical language, both in practice and as areas of scholarly enquiry, in contemporary political milieus.

National leaders, past and present, apply the national identity and rhetoric recipe in times of crisis, both at home and abroad, and during symbolic days of memorialisation and celebration. In representative democracies like Australia, the recipe is also applied every three years when the democratic process presents the question of federal leadership to the Australian public. In such times, leaders have the double-edged task of proving *and* persuading (see Finlayson 2014): projecting authenticity and conviction. Projecting a leadership style of authenticity and conviction simultaneously, however, is no small feat. In her comparative rhetorical analysis of former Labor prime ministers Paul Keating (from 1991 to 1996) and Julia Gillard (from 2010 to 2013), Jennifer Rayner (2014, pp. 76-8) concludes that poor rhetorical choices, a lack of strategic foresight, and not adhering to the formula of conviction leadership in set piece speeches that is seemingly necessary in order to gauge populist approval, can result in actual regressive outcomes for a prime minister. Given the primacy of political rhetoric insofar as being "part of the foundation upon which political legitimacy is built" (Rayner, 2014, p. 78), and providing the devices to "frame communication about policy issues in order to lead public opinion" (Engbers & Fucilla, 2012, p. 1129; see also Lakoff, 2004), it makes sense for campaigning prime ministers to draw on rhetorical language and persuasive audience appeals to facilitate strategic communications on the campaign trail.

The special relationship between rhetoric and national identity in political speeches is, of course, not unique to Australia, nor is the study of this phenomenon. This paper has made

reference to a sample of the vast number of international studies which fall into research areas including political communication, campaign studies and political psychology. However, what these studies and the broader literature share that is central to this paper's argument is the contention that campaign speeches, and the diverse rhetorical tools within these speeches, are important components of the language of political discourse. Research, undertaken by Australian historians, political scientists and sociologists including James Curran (2004), John Uhr (2002, 2014 with Walter) and Carol Johnson (2002), indicates that the analysis of political discourse—be it in the form of political speeches or debates—offers a unique insight into the political history, culture and social framework of a nation. Indeed, the research undertaken in this paper seeks to contribute to the niche, yet growing literature on the function and power of political rhetoric in Australian public speechmaking.

Aims and research method

The theoretical foundations of classical and Burkean rhetoric and the core assumptions underlying Anderson's and James' socially constructed national communities inform the following speech analysis. Drawing on these theoretical foundations, a detailed language analysis of political rhetoric in the campaign launch speeches of Prime Minister John Howard in 2001 and 2007, and of Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in 2013 is particularly useful in understanding how national identity is framed in 21st century prime ministerial campaign rhetoric. This approach remains rare in the Australian political communication field, despite the fact that many researchers have called for more interest in political language as the primary focus of scholarly enquiry (see, for example, Grube, 2011; Uhr & Walter, 2014). Accordingly, the case argued by Stephanie Younane (2008, p. 66), endures: "the absence of a prominent local tradition of empirical linguistic, rhetorical or discursive analysis of election campaign language is particularly noticeable compared to the vast North American and European literature". The 2004 and 2010 election campaigns and speeches have been omitted largely for the functional purpose of not exceeding word limitations. This is not to say, however, that the 2004 and 2010 campaigns do not contribute to the central argument of this paper. Rather, the 2001, 2007 and 2013 election speeches, especially given their six year interludes, more effectively facilitate a longitudinal examination of the research aims.

The following analysis employs a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods. Content analysis using the software Leximancer provides a starting point to identify the prominence of core themes and key words in the transcripts. This data then develops a

closer textual analysis which builds on four central features of Alan Finlayson's Rhetorical Political Analysis (2007, pp. 554-9), being the rhetorical situation (see also Bitzer, 1999), narratives, commonplaces, and framing. It follows in Finlayson's Rhetorical Political Analysis (RPA), that the rhetorical situation is the context of relations that took place to lead to rhetorical discourse being called into existence. The rhetorical situation in this paper relates to the circumstances leading up to, and including, the formal election campaign. Second, narrative is an effective technique to assist in understanding events and the meaning behind human actions and their effects. For Finlayson (2007, p. 557), political events produce specific stories, but there are also "broader and subtler narratives by which leaders explain how they, or their party, or the country, came to face a certain situation, demanding certain sorts of change or transformation". This feature of RPA, therefore, assists in explaining the dynamics of the narratives of national identity explored throughout the speech analysis. Next, commonplaces involve the articulation of generally agreed of principles and commonly accepted ways of speaking and behaving. The ancient Greeks referred to these as *topos* or 'topics': lines of argument founded in common situations. In this sense, commonplaces are synonymous with cultural eccentricities, traits and qualities that are unique to a nation's identity. Like framing, commonplaces feed directly into the central concern of rhetorical strategy: the appeal. As previously noted, for classical rhetoricians there were three primary modes of persuasive appeal: to ethos, logos and pathos. While the analysis undertaken in this paper makes some mention of Aristotle's three persuasive audience appeals when assessing the use of various rhetorical tools, an Aristotelian methodology informs rather than directs the primary RPA. In summary, the purpose of RPA is not to *criticise* the anatomy of political speeches, rather, says Finlayson (2007, p. 559), it aims to contribute to their better understanding and more positive valuation.

Any study that analyses speech texts in order to assert claims regarding how political leaders mediate and articulate expressions of national meaning, as this study does, must acknowledge the contribution of speech writers and advisors in the collective process of speechmaking. Indeed, as Finlayson and Martin (2008, p. 449) emphasise, it is through a speech that we gain access "not merely to the thoughts of an individual but to the more general ideological assemblages at work across a party or governmental organisation" (see also Myers, 2000). That said, while this paper concedes that speeches are the product of a shared conceptual resource, it holds the speaker as the ultimate author. This echoes Ruth Wodak's (2009, p .71) claim that "the person that delivers the speech is always solely responsible for its content".

Results and discussion

2001: 'Keeping Australians in Safe Hands'

A series of events towards the end of 2001 provoked and defined the narratives, slogans and policy themes in the subsequent federal election campaign, largely to the benefit of the Coalition that was trailing the Australian Labor Party (ALP) in opinion polls throughout the first half of the year (Newspoll, 2001). The first of these events—what came to be known as the 'Tampa Affair'[4]— occurred in late August and fuelled a frenzy of debate over refugee policy. Following shortly after, the events of September 11 (9/11) in the United States and the 'Children Overboard' event in Australia in October centralised and sealed public and political debate around the issues of border protection and national security. In a time of global panic and uncertainty the Australian public and international community looked to strong leadership and resolute action to neutralise increasing fear of future attacks against the West. It is therefore unsurprising that polls swung strongly toward the Coalition after the Tampa controversy and 9/11 attacks (Kelly, 2001; McAllister, 2003).

On October 5, 2001 Prime Minister John Howard called a federal election, announcing a five-week long campaign with an election to be held on November 10. The centrepiece of the Coalition's campaign was an emphasis on Howard's leadership record and his somewhat infamous assertion that 'we will decide who comes to this country and under what circumstances' (Howard 2001). In terms of campaign style, David Denemark, Clive Bean and Ian Ward (2007) have suggested that the 2001 campaign was the first in Australia to adopt an American presidential style; with a strong mediatised focus on the personal leadership characteristics of the candidates rather than their respective parties. The central narrative, rhetorical appeals, commonplaces and framing of national identity in the prime minister's campaign launch speech further demonstrate this point.

The strength and resilience narrative

> National security is therefore about a proper response to terrorism. It's also about having a far sighted, strong, well thought out defence policy. It is also about having an uncompromising view about the fundamental right of this country to protect its borders…we will decide who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come (Howard, 2001).

On October 28, 2001 Prime Minister Howard officially launched the Coalition's campaign in Sydney. As indicated by the above excerpt, the campaign launch speech itself embodied an overarching narrative of the strength and resilience of the Australian nation and its people. The narrative was logically articulated via the Coalition's economically-mindful policy

platform— rather than idealistic vision—for Australia's future. It also featured flourishes of emotive rhetoric that highlighted the prime minister's spirited fervour to achieve the Coalition's national objectives. As Nick Dyrenfurth (2005) recognises, this language in turn sought to increase Howard's ethos and 'likeability' with the audience and wider community. In effect, the three-way rhetorical appeal created a tangible crisis and solution response and was cemented together by drawing on one of Howard's habitual speechmaking commonplaces: the stoic nature of the Australian people in times of hardship: "I am comforted by the fact that we have achieved an internal economic and social strength that enables us to face the future with conviction and strength".

Further, the audience is reminded of the extent to which the context of possible threats to national security required decisive *and* reassuring leadership; conviction *and* authenticity. Howard emphasised classical liberal rights of freedom and sovereign defence to advance his personal mission for "a military response and wise diplomacy" against the perceived threats. Yet the speech is careful not to convey a rhetoric of dependency, but rather a rhetoric of empowerment and national collectivism; a common mission against a common foe. Typical of the classical liberal credo of individual rights being propelled rather than regulated by the state, the semi-militant style of rhetoric used by Howard in the speech echoes language used by Australia's longest-serving prime minister, Robert Menzies, (in office from 1949 to 1966) in his 'Forgotten People' broadcasts (see Brett, 1992). In his 2001 campaign launch Howard adopted the Churchillian-style of rhetoric Menzies adopted in his broadcasts and spoke directly to the Australian temperament of struggle and perseverance, a derivative of Howard's beloved ANZAC[5] legend (Dyrenfurth, 2007).In any case, both prime ministers used their set pieces to appeal to a legacy of national belonging, to offer a story of 'Australianness' and to garner public support accordingly.

A keyword search of the 2001 campaign launch speech finds the five most used words in the 7000-word speech are: 'Australian' (used 46 times), 'years' (used 41 times), 'government' (used 38 times), 'Labor' (used 26 times) and 'Coalition' (used 15 times). The content analysis also ascertains three core themes: the nation, the economy, and security. Quantitatively two points are revealed. One point is that Howard's nationalistic rhetoric was epitomised as 'government' and 'Australian', particularly within the broader themes of nation and security that served to emphasise the potential of the centralised power of government against domestic security threats. And the other quantitative point revealed is the continuous references to the past and future, with 'years' used to seek to build hope and encourage trust

in the record of the Coalition, therefore justifying its mandate for another term in government.

Policy initiatives appeared in the Howard 2001 speech in the following order: defence, science, technology and innovation, welfare, education, and health. Similar to the themes highlighted above, the placement of first two policy initiatives further espoused the national identity narrative of strength and resilience amid civic disquiet. Interestingly, a colloquialism is used to validate the second listed policy area: "(our plan) is going to continue to allow this nation to do something it has always done and that is *punch above its weight* in the area of science and research" (emphasis added).

This rhetorical technique is both an example of what the 1930s New South Wales Premier Jack Lang referred to as "cutting the heads off tall poppies", and what Elaine Thompson (1994) labels as "the spirit of egalitarianism that underpins Australian political culture".

Appealing to the Australian spirit

The opening and closing paragraphs of Howard's 2001 campaign launch speech balance a positive assertion of the continuation of stable, predictable and strong leadership against the threat posed to the nation by international crime and terrorism. The speech employs rhetoric of hopeful stoicism to imbue the audience with a simple, affective message: "we'll see it through because of our *spirit*" (emphasis added). The prime minister identified this spirit as his leadership muse, "the thing that drives me the most in public life is the spirit of the Australian people". By humanising Howard's leadership style, this rhetorical strategy assisted in portraying the prime minister's leadership ambitions as stemming from the desire to represent the sentiments and needs of the national community. In this instance, election campaign rhetoric is being used effectively as a means to its own end in the democratic process.

Use of emotive synonyms including 'dedication', 'energetic', 'enthusiasm', and consistently repeating poignant phrases such as, "I am comforted by two great things", "we have a wonderful story to tell", and "the framework of decency for which Australians have always been renowned" indicate the extent to which the prime minister sought to appeal to the hearts, minds and historical character of the Australian people. In doing so, the internal structures of the speech satisfy elements of both Aristotelian and Burkean rhetorical appeals, and can, according to the rhetorical political analysis methodology, be understood as further examples of commonplaces and framing at work. After periods of outlining the "dangerously

difficult strategic and economic circumstances" the nation faced, Howard premised each facet of the Coalition's *positive* plan and policy path for the future with "the good news is…". Not only did this juxtaposition illustrate Howard's candid acknowledgement of the true state of affairs regarding national security, it also conveyed to the audience that the prime minister's credibility as a leader *and* as a policy initiator were qualities accountable to one another. Once again, the use of persuasive language techniques to build the prime minister's character as a national leader is apparent in the speech text.

Rhetorical strategies such as metaphor and personification were primarily employed when attacking the economic performance of the Opposition. The product of the past policy shortcomings of the ALP were framed as, "we have revived from its *death throes* private health insurance" (emphasis added), and "private health insurance was allowed to *bleed to death* under Labor" (emphasis added). Such visceral rhetoric attempted to erode the leadership of the ALP by painting the party as synonymous with slaughterers; albeit of policy rather than people. In fact, the use of this rhetoric had multiple possible effects as an antithetical strategy; first, in associating the ALP with deadly connotations, the Coalition asserted itself as the viable and safer leadership option. The use of antithesis—attacking the opponent while painting the speaker in a positive light—was a rhetorical strategy which sought to fulfil the strategic ends of the idiom that 'mud sticks'. Thus the strength and resilience narrative of national identity prevailed throughout the campaign launch speech and was illustrated by various rhetorical devices.

2007: 'The right leadership'

The 2007 Australian federal election campaign represented a significant shift in policy and political debate as well as a historic shift in leadership. Economic management, industrial relations and climate change were among the prominent issues propelled into the political spotlight rather than the preoccupation with national security and immigration of the 2001 and 2004 federal election campaigns. According to a Newspoll poll released in June 2006 the leading concerns for voters were, in descending order: health, education and the economy. The poll also showed that voters considered Labor better-placed to manage health and education, and gave the Coalition government strong backing on the economy and national security (Newspoll, 2006). As a strategy to turn the polls around and put some pressure on the less experienced Labor team, Prime Minister John Howard opted for a long campaign of six weeks, ordinarily the longest possible duration.

Because Howard had become Australia's second longest-serving prime minister, occupying the position for 11-and-a-half years, experience and leadership were particularly important features of the 2007 federal election campaign and his campaign speech framework. Howard used his long tenure against the Opposition to argue that the Coalition's core objectives, specifically the drive for full employment, would be less achievable under Labor. Aside from full employment, the Coalition's campaign also emphasised Howard's vision of a new Australia as an 'opportunity society'. The 'opportunity society' featured throughout the prime minister's set piece speeches, especially towards the end of the campaign, and as Younane notes (2008, p. 75), embodied an image of Australian identity that "removed explicit markers of class, ethnicity, gender and religion". This image of a diverse and connected national identity was highly comparable to the Coalition's 1996 federal election mantra of "For all of us". However, in the lead up to the 2007 election Howard's ethical and leadership credibility reached damningly low levels, due to two factors: WorkChoices[6] and plans for his own retirement. These issues became the ALP's fundamental ammunition against Howard during the 2007 election campaign. The prime minister's attempts to counter these attacks are evident in his campaign launch speech. Ultimately, however, Howard's rhetorical attempts to frame a vision of the nation in the form of an 'opportunity society' lacked the conviction and authority previously exhibited in his set piece campaign speeches.

The opportunity society narrative

> I want to be Prime Minister again so that we can build an even stronger and greater Australia. We in the Coalition believe that the best years of this nation lie ahead. I want to complete the transition of this nation from a welfare state to an opportunity society (Howard 2007).

On November 12, 2007 Prime Minister Howard launched the Coalition's election campaign in Brisbane. The 4400-word address primarily focused on Howard's accomplished tenure and instrumental future vision, and the enduring strength of the Coalition. Central to the argument was the rhetorical device of antithesis, bolstering the claim for future Coalition leadership by referring to Labor's inexperience, past economic mismanagement and the obscurity of the opposition leader's core beliefs. The strength and solidarity of the Coalition and the correlation between Howard's future plans for Australia if re-elected—the 'opportunity society' narrative—and traditional Liberal Party ideals were the secondary elements of the overall strategy used in the campaign launch. Appealing to the national community through

the narrative was emphasised further by means of emotive language and allusions to inherent aspects, or commonplaces, of Australian identity and community sentiment. Specifically these included the Australian bush, the Indigenous population and the service of Australian Defence Force personnel.

There was a discernible swing from the previous narrative of national identity to include the Government's new policy approach to small business, families and the individual: what Howard termed the 'opportunity society'. The 'opportunity society' referred to the transition of Australia from a welfare state to a nation in which power was in the hands of individuals and families rather than governments and bureaucracies. The inherent role of families in society, the desire for a good job and home ownership were therefore encapsulated in the prime minister's vision. This agenda evoked key elements of the Australian Liberal creed, namely those voiced by Prime Minister Robert Menzies'[7] in his memorable Forgotten People speech of 1942, when Howard said: "Menzies' memorable evocation of homes material, homes human and homes spiritual and what unites our creed of optimism is the belief that the Australian people do not need governments instructing them about virtue".

The Menzies allusion was echoed in rhetoric which illustrated the principled characteristics of the 'opportunity society' to highlight the plan's personification of quintessential values at the heart of the 'Australian experience'. Further, by building the values of the 'opportunity society' onto traditional Liberal ideology, the Government's ethos was communicated and encapsulated both ends of Australia's generational spectrum, particularly young Australians who were the primary beneficiaries of Howard's vision. These rhetorical techniques are also detectable in the five most used words in the speech: 'want' (used 36 times), 'home' (used 23 times), 'Australians' (used 22 times), 'years' (used 21 times), and 'families' (used 19 times).

Liberal values as Australian values

Persuasive language, embodying the authenticity and conviction of both the Coalition and the prime minister, was manifested through rhetoric of strength, endurance and liberal value—all features of the narrative of national identity conveyed in Howard's 2001 and 2004 campaign launch speeches. The introduction of the 2007 speech portrayed the Coalition team and its tenure through language connoting stability and solidarity to distinguish relative elements of the Coalition's character. A brief metaphorical allusion to war, the 'fighting spirit', depicted the tenacity of the Coalition's embodiment of conscientious and dutiful leadership and making significant contributions to the Australian community. The parameters of the speech

are framed through a logical and antithetical argument which operated on multiple levels to authenticate the essential claim that the Coalition should be re-elected. First, the case outlined the Howard government's major economic accomplishments over its 11-year tenure in conjunction with the prime minister's promise to continue maintaining these successes. The strength of Australia's foreign alliances, the unemployment rate reaching a 33-year low, and the halving of housing interest rates compared to those reached under the previous Labor government, were among several compelling achievements of the government. The argument underscored Howard's drive for his continuing leadership by expressing the need for the *right* leadership to manage the nation's rising economic challenges. This led the case to its second facet, i.e. the subliminal notion that a change of government would compromise both the national prosperity achieved by the Coalition and Australia's path to a bright future. The purpose of this element of the logical argument was to crystallise the important choice faced by the electorate and the consequences of leadership contention: "There are storm clouds gathering on the horizon when it comes to economic management, and if we get it wrong, the prosperity we've enjoyed over the last 11 and a half years will be severely compromised".

In the 2007 speech's a final attempt to arouse a sense of national identity and elements of the Australian spirit, Howard adopted emotive rhetorical language that faintly echoed similar, more powerful flourishes in previous set piece speeches. Rural Australia, 'our beloved bush' was asserted as an enduring part of the fabric of the nation to evoke the inherent connection between the Australian community and the land, reminiscent of Dorothy Mackellar's iconic poem 'My Country'[8]. The Coalition approach to Indigenous policy also evidenced the use of emotive language to cast a wider net for the speech's narrative of national identity by highlighting the importance of acknowledging the status of the 'first Australians' and their integration into the Australian community. Rhetoric around national pride and sacrifice in regard to the service of Australian Defence Force personnel domestically and abroad further demonstrated the sentiment-based audience appeal through subtle allusions to the ANZAC spirit.

In all, the 2007 campaign launch speech demonstrated a tonal shift in framing a new narrative of national identity. This narrative encompassed a more positive vision of the nation while retaining some relics of the Australian values commonplaces, specifically the 'battler'[9] mentality (see also Brett, 2007; Johnson, 2007), for which Howard's language was renowned. It was, however, the Opposition Leader of the time, Kevin Rudd, who captured the optimistic sentiment behind the shift in invoking nationhood, and effectively conveyed new vision and new leadership alongside the new narrative.

2013: 'A new way'

The three years leading up to the 2013 election campaign was largely defined by a series of unprecedented changes in federal leadership. On 24 June 2010, the Labor Prime Minister Kevin Rudd was challenged by Julia Gillard, the Deputy Prime Minister, for the leadership of the Australian Labor Party. Gillard won the leadership ballot unopposed became Australia's first female prime minister. Three months later, the ALP, led by Prime Minister Julia Gillard, won a second term against the opposition Coalition led Tony Abbott. Given that the 2010 federal election initially resulted in a hung parliament[10], the ALP eventually succeeded in forming a minority government[11] with the support of three independent members of parliament (MPs) and one Australian Greens MP. As Derek McDougall notes (2014, p. 290), the Gillard government worked tirelessly throughout early 2013 to address the negative framing of a minority government in populist discourse, which lingered in the wake of the 2010 Greens and Independent alliance. On 26 June 2013, following persistent leadership tensions, Gillard called a ballot for Leader and Deputy Leader of the Labor Party. Backbencher and former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd announced that he would challenge Gillard. Shortly after, at the ALP caucus meeting, Rudd was elected Leader of the Labor Party, with the caucus voting 57–45 in his favour. Thus Rudd was sworn in as prime minister the following day and began his second period in office.

Against this backdrop, the 2013 federal election campaign was essentially a long-overdue personal battle between leaders. The leader of the Coalition, Tony Abbott, now in opposition, reminded voters of Labor's demonstrated internal schisms that resulted in the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd leadership changes, and embarked on a relentless rhetorical warpath which emphasised the Coalition's strong and united leadership during the same period. As such, the key campaign strategy the ALP took in the crucial months prior—particularly after Gillard's defeat in the June leadership ballot—was to reshape public perceptions regarding the party's inherent stability and apparent lack of internal checks on factional power (Johnson, 2015, pp. 35-7).

Despite Labor's persistent disunity and dysfunction continuing to be a determining factor in the 2013 election campaign, something that worked to the Labor government's advantage after Rudd was reinstalled was Tony Abbott's very low personal standing with the electorate (Rayner & Wanna, 2015, p. 24). On the ALP side of politics, the party launched its 2013 campaign by focusing on national leadership in an effort to connect with their successful 'New Leadership' campaign of 2007. In leading the new image and advertising campaign, Rudd promised "a better way, a smarter way, a new way to secure Australia's future"

(Australian Labor Party, 2013). However, the 'new way' slogan was quickly dropped when commentators drew attention to Rudd's central role in the ALP turmoil of the previous three years (Ergas, 2013; Snow, 2013). What replaced the campaign narrative was an unsympathetic attack on the Coalition, with a particular emphasis on Abbott as a leader and person, all summed up in five words: "If Abbott wins, you lose". The adversarial backdrop of the campaign predictably leaked into the narratives, core themes and messages of the prime minister's campaign launch speech.

The fighting narrative

> The truth is there is so much worth fighting for... So we will fight this election until the last vote is cast next Saturday night. I believe we can prevail and I believe in the end we will prevail (Rudd 2013).

Prime Minister Rudd officially launched the ALP campaign on September 1, 2013 in Brisbane. The 3000-word, punchy and largely repetitive speech comprised a predominant narrative: the fight to protect Australia's future. Within this narrative, commonplaces which positioned core ALP beliefs as synonymous with the core value system of Australian families, and the rhetorical framing of nation-building were highlighted. The fighting narrative also performed a secondary purpose as an antithetical strategic ploy to persuade the audience that a vote against Labor was both illogical and dangerous.

The opening statement of Rudd's prime ministerial campaign opening speech employed a combination of antithesis, metaphor and fear-based rhetoric to frame the election campaign and the choice between Labor and the Coalition as a battle of life and death, good versus evil; the ultimate fight to protect Australia's future: "In this election we are now engaged in the fight of our lives. It is a fight about the values which underpin Australia's future".

By aligning the prime minister with the battle metaphor and stressing his personal vendetta to see the fight through—"and for those who say that the fight is up, I say they haven't seen anything yet"— the speech attempted to build a positive image of Rudd's capacity and tenacity to provide strong national leadership. Early in the speech, Rudd's combative rhetorical style alluded to the fighting spirit of the 'Australian legend', often drawing parallels to what Rodney Smith (2001) and Boris Frankel (1992) refer to as the enduring sense of optimism in the face of hardship, a distinctively Australian quality. Here, Rudd's language personified the binary rhetoric of fortitude and hope to further associate himself with his message and the audience, paving his path towards leadership authenticity and conviction.

The war rhetoric continued throughout the speech, peaking towards the end when the prime minister attacked the Coalition's plan for Australia's future. Here, the speech used the rhetorical device, antithesis to construct a negative image of the secrecy surrounding the Coalition's plans. The technique then attempted to capitalise on the seed of doubt to juxtapose the Coalition's plans against Labor's policy transparency and Rudd's clear version of his national project as national leader: "Our plan for building Australia's future is clear. Mr Abbott's plan for cutting the future to ribbons remains hidden. Never, ever, ever, underestimate my fighting spirit as your Prime Minister".

The fighting narrative is also evident in phrases such as, "I believe we can prevail", "we will fight for our vision", and "we will fight for our project". The outward expression of this language was steeped in positive connotations of collectivist progression and endurance against the rival Abbott Opposition and its vision for the nation. Like Howard's 2001 campaign speech, the ANZAC tradition and egalitarian sentiment is alluded to as a means to further identify Prime Minister Rudd with the audience and vice versa: Burke's identification appeal at work.

Family values as the building blocks

Running parallel to this fighting narrative in the 2013 prime ministerial campaign opening speech was rhetorical language that intended to build a logical connection between ALP values and the commonplaces of families and family values as the most important site and unit for nation-building. Further, the persuasive techniques sought to link core Labor values of collective responsibility and social equality to two definitively Australian cultural idiosyncrasies: egalitarianism and the 'fair go'. Included in this associative tactic was an emphasis on the importance of small business. This particular audience appeal sought to capture Labor-left voters who were drifting to the Greens—a minor but increasingly disruptive force for the main parties—and more conservative Labor voters who might have been contemplating a switch to the Coalition (McDougall, 2014). The commonplace of Australian values is indeed so predominant that the term 'values' (used 23 times) is one of the five most commonly used in the speech; the others including, 'Australia' (used 45 times), 'future' (used 32 times), 'Abbott' (used 26 times), and 'jobs' (used 19 times). 'Freedom, values of compassion and values of a fair go' are all universal yet are alluded to as uniquely Australian values in order to solidify the image of the ALP as the party best able to ensure a fairer and better life for Australians, historically and into the future.

The theme of nation-building is featured throughout the 2013 speech in the form of a house metaphor. Through the use of this metaphor and emotive language, the speech seeks to identify the ALP as being the proven champion of a more prosperous vision for building Australia's future and to also frame the prime minister as a progressive protector of the Australian dream. These rhetorical devices also effectively and simultaneously framed Labor beliefs, ensuring jobs for all Australians, and putting families as the centrepiece of the national community. The house metaphor is a micro-metaphor for the nation but also satisfies the true meaning of the word, and as such appealed to the audience on two levels" "Because we are in the business of *building the house up*. The conservatives have always been in the business of *tearing the house down*" (emphasis added).

The subtle messages underpinning the house metaphor told two stories: first, Labor built the foundations of the house (the nation) and endeavoured to continue the nation-building project. Second, it framed the ALP as possessing attributes as a builder, nurturer, even a saviour. The metaphor is used again to connect the Prime Minister's national project and vision for the nation with proposed education reforms: "We have been building this vision *brick-by-brick* over the last five year we must nurture the best educated, best trained, best skilled workforce of anywhere in the world" (emphasis added).

In essence, the arrangement and elocution of the 2013 speech primarily served to situate the prime minister's leadership ethos and Labor's founding ideologies within quintessential features of Australian national identity. The fighting narrative, framing of values and rhetorical appeals articulate a broader narrative of national identity; one of confident, steadfast progression. As such, the narrative in 2013 extended the optimistic language and forward-looking rhetoric that was exhibited in the 2007 election campaign, despite the differences in orator and party.

Conclusion

As this paper has shown, Prime Minister Howard's 2001 campaign launch set piece articulated a narrative which expressed themes of strength and stoicism. The speech emphasised a vision for the nation which was founded in conservative values of family, patriotism and unfettered entrepreneurialism. Six years later, the 2007 federal election campaign saw a shift in Howard's vision and the rhetorical framing of nationhood. The Australian public had seemingly moved on from years clouded by macro-issues, such as international terrorism and unrest in the Middle East, and the narrative of strength and protection that had endured alongside Howard's prime ministership was seeking a fresh and

positive vision for the future. Howard attempted to capture this in the 'opportunity society' narrative. Thematically, the 'opportunity society' had its roots firmly planted in Liberal Party ideology, namely family values and the individual aspiration of home ownership, the 'great Australian dream'.

However, it was Prime Minister Rudd's rhetorical techniques in the 2013 federal election campaign that effectively embodied a distinctively new vision and 21st century national project. Prime Minister Rudd linked the Labor ideology of collective responsibility and social equality with the broader theme of egalitarianism and the family unit to articulate his nation-building mission. In doing so, Rudd appealed to the optimistic, collectivist essence of Australianness and paved his path towards leadership authenticity and conviction with the binary rhetoric of hope and the fighting spirit.

The combined findings of the speech analysis demonstrate that Australia's political leaders frame broader narratives of national identity in their major campaign communications. Further, the rhetorical language and audience appeals used to articulate and invoke nationhood within these narratives signal both shifts and continuities in the discourses of Australian national identity in 21st century prime ministerial speechmaking. The thirteen-year period covered here witnessed a rhetorical shift from strength to optimism, manifest in the efforts of Prime Minister Howard and Prime Minister Rudd to persuade the national audience towards their new vision for the nation. However, as the prime ministers each invited voters to see themselves reflected in their party's version of 'Australianness' through various persuasive appeals, continuities in commonplaces are also evident. These commonplaces were embedded in what could be considered as quintessential Australian values.

Despite a commonly held perception of rhetoric being merely 'empty words', the findings of this paper suggest that rhetoric in political speechmaking upholds a particularly important function in campaign discourse. Rhetorical language provides the tools that leaders use to more effectively connect with their publics, in this instance, through common references to aspects of Australian identity. These narratives of national identity tell an evolving story of how national leaders draw on commonplaces, frame aspects of Australia's political and social culture, and use certain rhetorical devices to please and persuade the national audience. It is true that election campaign speeches are primarily about electoral pragmatism. It may, however, also be true that techniques of rhetoric and an understanding of how they orient us towards common situations in political speeches provide a deeper insight into the national character.

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Endnotes

[1] Coalition refers to the conservative Liberal-National party coalition at the Federal level. The National party works in formal Coalition or separately, but generally in cooperation with the Liberal Party.

[2] In 1908 the Australian Labor Party (ALP) adopted the formal name 'Australian Labour Party', but in 1912 changed the spelling to 'Labor'. While it is standard practice in Australian English, both today and at the time, to spell the word 'labour' with a 'u', the party was influenced by the United States labor movement in making the change.

[3] The analysis is situated within the broader context of the Australian political system. Put simply, it is a two party parliamentary democracy based on the Westminster system, loosely along the lines of left and right, with a growing Greens bloc and some minor players.

[4] In August 2001, the Coalition's Howard government refused permission for the Norwegian freighter MV *Tampa*, carrying over 400 rescued refugees, to enter Australian waters. Shortly after, the government introduced the *Border Protection Bill* to the House of Representatives, saying it would confirm Australian sovereignty to "determine who will enter and reside in Australia".

[5] ANZAC stands for Australian and New Zealand Army Corps. Anzac Day, 25 April, is one of Australia's most important national occasions. It marks the anniversary of the first major military action fought by Australian and New Zealand forces during the First World War on the Gallipoli Peninsula. The 'Anzac legend' has become a formative part of the identity of both nations, particularly in shaping the ways in which they view their past.

[6] The Howard Government's WorkChoices legislation, which came into effect in March 2006, made substantial changes to the regulation of employment conditions and industrial relations. The new laws were strongly opposed by the left side of politics, particularly the trade union movement.

[7] Sir Robert Gordon Menzies was Australia's longest-serving prime minister to date, serving over eighteen years in office. In 1945 he founded the Liberal Party of Australia as the effective opposition to the Australian Labor Party.

[8] A paean to Australia's rural foundations that evokes memories of their school days in older Australians.

[9] A term used in Australia for people struggling to make a good life for themselves and their children. Perhaps a replacement for the less political and emotive, and widely considered outdated, 'working class' or proletariat.

[10] A colloquial expression used to describe a parliament when no single political party (or coalition of parties) has an absolute majority of seats in the parliament.

[11] Labor and the Coalition each won 72 seats in the 150-seat House of Representatives (lower house), four short of the requirement to form majority government. Crossbenchers, therefore, held the balance of power. Greens MP Adam Bandt and independent MPs Andrew Wilkie, Rob Oakeshott and Tony Windsor declared their support for Labor. While Independent MP Bob Katter and National Party of Western Australia MP Tony Crook declared their support for the Coalition. The resulting 76–74 gave a margin of two that enabled Labor to form a minority government.