Conceptualising Otherness: An Exploration of the Cosmopolitan Schema

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The Australian cosmopolitan is an important symbolic figure in popular discourse and the political landscape. Regardless of the actual scope and scale of 'cosmopolitanness' in Australia, the spectre of cosmopolitanism, and its close relatives such as tolerance of diversity or openness to difference, is a powerful figure in contemporary culture. The cosmopolitan willingness to accommodate otherness is perceived as a betrayal of Australian culture, yet continuing high levels of immigration from diverse sources demand cosmopolitan tolerance. Sociologists know that cosmopolitan people can accommodate diversity, but how this is achieved is the subject of much theoretical debate. It is reasonable to assume that cosmopolitans conceptualise otherness in ways that reduce or eliminate a sense of threat, but how can we reliably access individual conceptualisations? Informed by a cultural sociology approach, this project utilised the concept of cognitive schema from psychology, and formal semantics from linguistics, to access cosmopolitan conceptualisations. Analysis of focus group data concluded that cosmopolitan schemas are constructed using a repertoire of strategies which compartmentalise categories of otherness into manageable portions. It is argued that from the cosmopolitan perspective Australian cultural integrity remains the intact and dominant host of smaller, harmless or manageable cultural fragments.

Keywords: cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, national identity, populism, globalisation.

Introduction

The idea of cosmopolitanism has enjoyed a surge in popularity among sociological theorists in recent times. Despite a large and growing body of literature on the topic there is little agreement on exactly what cosmopolitanism is, or how to make the concept suitable for the purposes of empirical studies. Following an extensive review of the literature, Skrbis et al (2004: 116) describe cosmopolitanism 'as a progressive humanistic ideal' which captures core elements in a diverse body of literatures, focussing mostly on a relationship between globalisation and cosmopolitanism as a form of global openness. Yet such understanding of cosmopolitanism remains at the level of abstraction and bereft of linkages with observable practices. Skrbis et al conclude that cosmopolitanism as characterised in sociological discourses 'is an idealist sentiment that indulges in excessive self-reflexivity and consequently has left unspecified the empirical sociological dimensions of the concept [which] needs to be pinned down empirically' (Skrbis et al, 2004: 131, 132).

An essential part of the pinning down process is accounting for actually existing cosmopolitanisms (Calhoun, 2002; Malcolmson, 1998). Stokes (2005) observes that sociological conceptualisation of cosmopolitanism is markedly different from cosmopolitanism on the ground, as people he identified as cosmopolitan did not recognise themselves as such until sociologically defined cosmopolitanism was described to them. As one of the more vigorous proponents of cosmopolitanism, Beck writes of 'a post-national cosmopolitan world order' (1998: 2), in which the 'enemies' of cosmopolitanism (ie. nationalism, globalism and democratic authoritarianism) undermine its humanist, civilising progress (Beck, 2002: 38). Variations on this level of enthusiasm are common in theories with a Kantian influence which propose normative models, as opposed to actual ones. Inherent to this position are Kantian assumptions about cosmopolitanism as a largely normative ideal.

This paper seeks to address this idealism by locating the cosmopolitan ideal in popular discourses, where its meaning is constructed in relation to alternative culturally available ideals such as nationalism and parochialism. Such an approach is necessarily limited to culture- or nation-specific understandings as popular discourses revolve around issues of proximately immediate concern. Locally-oriented value divisions reflect endogenous values which have arguably come to prominence as globalising processes have encroached on culturally-loaded nation spaces (Hage, 1998; Sardar and Davies, 2003). These contextual differences need to be taken into account, particularly as they may contribute to the shape or experiential aspects of cosmopolitan attitudes. Further, we need to understand how cosmopolitanism is understood in popular, everyday terms.

The study then took advantage of actual polarisations which occurred spontaneously between participants in focus group discussions of various aspects of globalisation. As Munday (2006) has recently pointed out, focus groups allow researchers to identify the negotiation, production and articulation of collective decision-making processes *in situ*. Two contemporary theoretical developments are important for contextualising this study. First, the concept of schema from cognitive psychology offered a flexible but reliable tool for the purposes of analysis which describes the perceptions of cosmopolitans themselves. Cognitive schema is one among a variety of concepts being utilised by cultural sociologists (DiMaggio, 1997; Cerulo, 2002) in a growing

field referred to as 'cognitive sociology' (Zerubavel, 1997; DiMaggio, 2002). Sociology and cognitive psychology both study 'monolithic' (DiMaggio, 2002: 279) or universal scales as well as more finely detailed specifics and differences. At this detailed end of the spectrum the two disciplines have been working 'in parallel' (DiMaggio, 2002: 279) on similar problems. In addition, discursive psychology and cognitive linguistics have understood the need to accommodate cultural considerations (Harre and Stearns, 1995; Lakoff, 1996; Koenig, 1998). Van Dijk's (1977; 2005) work draws together the cognitive, the cultural (as part of context) and the linguistic, as communicative practices cluster the objective and subjective in semantic networks associated with a given topic. As clusters of ideas for thinking with, cognitive schemas can facilitate our understanding of how social categories are conceptualised, in this case, how cosmopolitans initially conceptualise others in a way that allows them to accommodate otherness without feeling threatened.

Discourses of cosmopolitanism

There are two types of sociological discourses on cosmopolitanism that emerge out of discussions on globalisation. A general outline of the literature is presented here, but for more comprehensive reviews of the literature see Beck and Snzaider (2006), Fine (2006) and Skbris, et al (2004). The first approach combines elements of Kantian universalism, reflexive modernity and risk, and the second approach draws on cultural consumption frameworks.

Turner (2002) draws on Kant to argue for an active cosmopolitan virtue involving commitments to protect cultural diversity and consensus against tolerance of human suffering. More recently this includes an ethics of critical recognition as a precondition of cosmopolitanism (Turner, 2006). Similarly aligned are emphases on concepts like tolerance and open attitudes (Roudometof, 2005) and hospitality (Rundell, 2004). These attempt to describe moral positions with degrees of active support and commitment, but with a core of universalism. Beck describes 'contextual universalism' (2000: 86), allowing that universalism takes locally specific cultural forms which share an underlying belief in human rights.

The notion that local nationalisms undermine universalism and tolerance of cultural diversity to the detriment of all is also a common theme in the literature. Mazlish (2005), Yeatman (2003) and Rundell (2004) all argue that the 'Westphalian interstate order' (Yeatman, 2003: 15) necessarily entails constructing strangers, outsiders, aliens, foreigners and so on, in order to differentiate selves and others on national scales. A cosmopolitanism which recognises other people as fellow humans prior to acknowledging cultural differences is not necessarily incompatible with national sovereignty, but the rise of a populist politics (Furedi, 2005; Hunter, 1991; Betts, 1999) that plays on fears of invasion and homogenisation has posed challenges for human rights organisations attempting to promote the universal values characteristic of this approach to cosmopolitanism.

Beck (1998; 2000; 2002) argues that the rapid, uneven global exchanges of capitalism, as well as climate change and the transnational spread of disease are all universal concerns, while societies and nation states remain concerned with the local. He argues that the universal values base of cosmopolitanism is therefore the next logical phase of civilisational development, as people 'catch up' (Calhoun, 2002: 108)

with other globalising outcomes. There is a tension between these cosmopolitan ideals and the populist outcomes of democratic processes (Furedi, 2005) which seem to suggest that actual cosmopolitans thus understood are too few in number to have any evolutionary civilising effect.

In the second strand of the literature, Hannerz (1990) provides the exemplar of the cross-cultural consumption approach, viewing the local/cosmopolitan dichotomy from a perspective which begins with cross-cultural immersion. Hannerz' cosmopolitans actively pursue engagement, particularly through travel in search of authentic experience of unfamiliar cultures. The link between tourism and cosmopolitanism sketches a relationship between cosmopolitan space and the attitudes of cosmopolitan people. They are characterised by a 'willingness to engage with the other' (Hannerz 1990: 239) in the quest for 'cultural competence...a built up skill in manoeuvring more or less expertly within a particular system of meaning' (ibid.: 248). True cosmopolitans are those who can successfully accumulate a variety of types of 'cultural competence' (ibid.). This section of Hannerz' argument is often quoted by other contributors to the debate, but he also begins to explore the way cultural otherness is conceptualised by cosmopolitans when home is 'where one's [cultural] competence is undisputed' (1990: 248) whereas, 'competence with regard to alien cultures...entails a sense of mastery...one's understandings have expanded, a little more of the world is somehow under control' (ibid.: 240). This sense of control over 'a little more' suggests a relationship between cosmopolitanism and an ability to compartmentalise a diverse world into recognisable, manageable, and consequently more easily accommodated portions which is generally neglected in the literature.

To summarise, cosmopolitanism includes Kantian universalism, cross-cultural competence, and either a willingness to tolerate or engage with otherness. In the multicultural context of Australian society parts of these characteristics have all been described by research into multiculturalism and popular discourses. In accordance with Hannerz' (1990) description, Hage describes Australian cosmopolitans as 'capable of appreciating and consuming "high quality" commodities and cultures, including "ethnic" culture' (Hage, 1998: 201). Hage argues that cosmopolitans deploy symbols of their ability to access the semiotics of other cultures to achieve and maintain social status in a newly globalised world. Such an observation builds upon the empirical work of Richard Peterson and colleagues (Peterson, 1992; Peterson and Kern, 1996) into the existence of cultural 'omnivores' in contemporary culture. Betts (1999) and Hage (1998) argue that individuals capable of accommodating these changes have used this ability to accumulate a new form of cultural capital, undermining parochial culture which revolves around white, male, blue-collar workers with rural or semi-rural associations (Gibbs, 2002).

Much of the academic literature brackets cosmopolitanism out of this situatedness within the wider social and political context. Empirical studies have generated concepts such as 'cosmopolitanisms' (Lamont and Aksartova, 2002: 2), 'mundane cosmopolitanism' (Urry, 2000: 11), 'working-class cosmopolitans' (Werbner, 1999), 'global-looking localists' (Phillips, 2002: 607) and ambivalent or strategic cosmopolitans (Skrbis and Woodward, 2007; Woodward et al, 2008) which all suggest that cosmopolitanisms are constructed from, and owe to, local contexts. In the context of Australian multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism can be understood as a willingness to accommodate other cultural groups in the larger population. Allowing

that cosmopolitanism is unevenly distributed geographically (Gibson, Murphy and Freestone, 2002) it has been associated with white collar, upwardly mobile, urban, tertiary educated elites with Left-leaning political views (Dahl, 1999; Burchell, 2005), well beyond a simple tolerance of difference. While this is the highly-politicised Australian context, a simple willingness to accommodate otherness was used as a working definition of cosmopolitanism for this research.

Methodology

Sociologists, particularly cultural sociologists, have recently begun drawing on concepts from cognitive psychology, particularly the notion of cognitive schema (DiMaggio, 1997; Zerubavel, 1997; Cerulo, 2002). Schemas are cognitive classificatory systems which cluster associated phenomena into meaningful categories, including culturally accessible symbols and value judgements (Di Maggio, 1997; Weiten, 2000; Spencer, 2004). Environmental stimuli are recognised as meaningful clusters which generate associated behavioural responses deemed appropriate in differing contexts. Although the development of cognitive schema through experience is universal, the meaning and salience of schematic clusters are culturally constructed and, as such, a useful resource for cultural sociology (Di Maggio, 1997; Cerulo, 2002).

Schematic structures are reflected in the semantic connections made topically in speech and are revealed as associations are made between various elements. Van Dijk explains that 'formal semantics is not strictly about meaning, but rather about reference' in the form of 'referents, denotata or extensions' (Van Dijk, 1977: 32-33). These referents can be conceptual rather than actual as, for example, one schema of the Middle East might include referents associated with terrorism while another might include referents associated with the rise of Christianity, reflecting two different schematic 'possible worlds' (Van Dijk, 1977: 29). Where sociologists taking a structuralist approach have relied heavily on interpretative analysis, the clustered concepts in cognitive schema can be taken at face value and are less dependent on the analytic objectivity of observers (DiMaggio, 1997). Referents accumulate meaning as clusters, rather than as isolated inferences requiring special interrogation.

In November 2004, nine focus groups were conducted in Brisbane which discussed various aspects of globalisation. An independent social and market research agency was engaged to recruit participants from a range of social backgrounds. Table 1 shows the composition of these nine groups. The focus group transcripts were made available for this project which was conducted independently of the original research, the results of which have since been published by Skrbis and Woodward (2007). As the aim of this smaller project was to explore how otherness is conceptualised by people whose 'Australian-ness' is usually unquestioned, we chose to exclude five groups which had been formed on the basis of ethnicity and difference broadly defined. The remaining four transcripts represent thirty two people in groups comprised of eight, five, nine and nine members intended to represent young (18-30 years) blue collar, older (50 and over) blue collar, and young and older white collar categories. Given the nature of the sample, no reliable comparisons could be made between the groups. The goal here is to use the richness of the data to investigate reasoning and communicative practices for dealing with otherness and cultural difference.

Where the unnatural nature of conversations deliberately initiated by a moderator is considered to be a disadvantage of focus group research (Morgan, 1988) in this instance it combines advantageously with the other, usually problematic group effect of polarisation (Morgan, 1988: 15). Introduction of the topics of immigration and multiculturalism resulted in polarisation which offered an opportunity to analyse the reasoning participants use to justify their views, and were effective in revealing their positions in high contrast (Munday, 2006). Roudometof argues that '[f]or analytical purposes (and for those purposes alone), it is necessary to conceptualise the cosmopolitan-local continuum *as if* locals and cosmopolitans were groups of people with opposite, conflicting visions' (Roudometof, 2005: 124, italics and parenthesis in original). Accordingly the initial analysis began with a simple coding method (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas and Robson, 2001) using (P) to denote parochial expressions and (C) to denote cosmopolitan ones. Samples of statements indicating parochial values (P) include:

Brian: Now with the globalisation with the cultures coming in from everywhere else, you get good and bad, you've got to watch what you're doing when you're out and about.

Kate: I think with everyone spreading out and travelling all over the place if there is a world tragedy it could affect someone you know. Like in Bali where people had family.

Carol: There's so much information in the world because of globalisation getting thrown at you, that local gives you something that directly relates to you.

These three share the perception that manifestations of globalisation in the forms of otherness present in the immediate environment, otherness in the global environment and otherness in the form of global media have unwelcome impacts on the local. They express defensiveness toward global otherness manifested within their national territory. Statements coded cosmopolitan (C) included:

Jan: Some things [about globalisation] must be good. We have so many different cultures here now.

John: I was just thinking that ultimately we're all living on the same planet so ultimately globalisation is about key issues that affect us as a world, not just a nation or a country, but as a planet.

Martin: The biggest thing is the internet. It has just opened up boundaries, basically dissolved boundaries. It doesn't allow for governments to use their own media to basically blanket an idea because society can pick up ideas from outside.

These three examples illustrate the openness of cosmopolitanism on the same issues as the parochial samples above, a positive response to otherness within Australia, global humanity and a positive view of global information flows. At this stage of the project cosmopolitanism was interpreted as expressions approximating the wide range

of values described in the literature and many statements could not be coded with certainty.

Based on this simple coding procedure cosmopolitanism and parochialism were fairly evenly distributed across both of the younger groups. Distributions in the two older groups were markedly different, with cosmopolitanism more prevalent in the white collar group. However there were only five participants in the blue collar group but nine in the white collar one, so cosmopolitanism could not reasonably be correlated with occupation and age effects. Occupation is arguably a less reliable correlate in younger groups as we could reasonably expect that neither group had achieved a high level of financial security. Consequently these approaches were abandoned and a different approach was needed.

Issues of high salience to participants were easily identifiable as the number of uncoded statements decreased and clearly categorisable, strongly articulated positions resulted in more coded statements, with Ps and Cs following one another in rapid succession. This pattern emerged across all four groups and became the subject of analysis for the project. The topics of disagreement included aspects of media such as the relevance of local news and the reliability of popular media, however the most highly contested issues were immigration, multiculturalism and to a lesser extent the mandatory detention of refugees. On these issues participants clearly conceptualised otherness in markedly different ways.

Cultural schema: thinking about difference in Australian culture

The samples and descriptions offered here were selected as illustrations from rich discursive data and because they offer clear instances of formal semantics in cognitive schema plainly articulated in shorter statements, rather than observations scattered through conversation. The exchanges which appear below were drawn from different groups and different stages of group discussions.

Otherness elsewhere in the world

The first series of extracts we present shows different conceptual clusters being utilised on the topic of whether there are nations Australia should avoid:

Mitch: I firmly believe that ninety nine percent of the population are decent people, in Iraq or North Korea, the parents and kids in the house. There's that one percent rat bag, in every country. Let's not kid ourselves, it's here too. In all different cultures and different colours. From the jungles of Brazil to Manhattan they're all decent people. Obviously governments have to get re-elected and companies have to make profits so they do things on that basis, but the truth is that most people are pretty genuine.

Debra: I'm a bit worried about Indonesia.

Phillip: I think radical groups within Indonesia itself, rather than Indonesia itself.

Debra: Because they're so big their one percent is a lot more than our one percent, so I just have to worry about that one.

Claire: I try not to sit in fear because that's just listening to what you hear and read about.

Debra inflates the perceived problem of Indonesia, worrying about the magnitude of the 'one percent rat bag,' while Phillip reduces the size of the problem statistically, and Clair diffuses the problem by relegating it to the realms of (presumably media) gossip. In Phillip's cosmopolitan schema the threat is present but considerably reduced, whereas Debra's parochial schema inflates the problem by viewing the worrying 'one percent' as central to the notion of Indonesia.

Mitch's conception is a reverse of this inflation as he clusters referents of several globally distant places, adds racial and cultural diversity, politics and profit, but this complex mixture is shot through with the thread of universal human decency, the central notion of multiple schema. His referents begin with Iraq and North Korea, which he conceives as populated with families of human beings as opposed to abstract enemy nations. In Mitch's schema of the globe the familiarity of humanity is considered prior to the otherness of nations.

Debra's conception is an example of catastrophic thinking, 'which involves unrealistically negative appraisals of stress that exaggerate the magnitude of one's problems' (Weiten, 2001: 561). Whether or not Indonesia actually represents a threat to Australia is open to question and Debra's thinking on the subject may or may not be realistic, however her schema of Indonesia is clearly more threatening than Phillip's, while her concern is as focused as Mitch's relaxed attitude towards the complexities of global humanity.

Perceiving diversity

The second series of extracts shows the cultural-cognitive resources used to understand and frame the issue of tolerance and cultural diversity in Australia:

Dana: I don't mind them living next to me, but it's when they have a community of too many people in one area. I think that they should be mixing and not have all the Asians all coming to one area and staying in one area...It's the same with the Asians and the Greeks and whatever, if they spread out. They can still be in the same area, but not in big groups.

Paul: Why they do that is that it's their comfort zone. They feel comfortable in their communities and what happens then is that as children grow up and move out, the kids go to university and then they move out. We can't really expect them to move that first generation. That's how we've seen the Italians and the Greeks after World War II.

Dana's schema of cultural diversity is constituted of a series of problems with semantic associations between 'a community of too many,' Asians, Greeks and 'big groups' in a schema which clusters otherness, concentration and magnitude. Paul's response offers an insight into the techniques of cosmopolitan reasoning with access

to universal comfort in familiarity (comfort zones) and a schema in which problems associated with clustering resolve themselves. Paul's references to children distinguish between first and second generation migrants, and also illustrates a familiar pattern of universal parent/child relationships. As the problem of 'Italians and Greeks after World War II' dissipated Paul is unconcerned as he expects that similar problems will solve themselves the same way. The problem of spatially immediate, concentrated otherness is reduced with temporal distance.

Hage (1998) notes the importance of the concept of ethnic communities, because they represent autonomous formations within the broader culture. While Dana conceptualises such communities as relatively permanently grounded in place and problematic, Paul sees them as transient. Martin and Paul's responses below similarly credit otherness with universally experienced human frailties and Paul again responds by referring to a safely distant, managed past.

Sharon: Religion to me is what has screwed us all I feel, because religion and politics are so intertwined, what I object to is that you have Muslims and Serbians who come here and fight each other here.

Drew: They can come here but they can leave the troubles over there.

Scott: Well said, I feel exactly the same way.

Martin: We do the same thing if you go to London, just talk to all the Australians and Kiwis. The Kiwis and Australians also bring their fight there. We do the same thing.

Paul: I think when a lot of migrants came out after World War II they decided to leave a lot of that behind and come out and make a fresh start, it wasn't really the Australians imposing that on them, I think a lot of them they decided to leave a lot of that behind or they kept it under the surface.

Again, the two strategies of drawing on universal experiences and consigning a problem to the past are utilised. Sharon, Drew and Scott all refer to localised experiences, Martin's referents include geographically distant London drawing on a global view and Paul places the problem at a temporal distance. Conversely, Sharon refers to a problem experienced in the distant past as associated with a current concern. We see here the communicative logic by which the cosmopolitan value of openness is articulated through the schema of universal experience, which 'erases' the figure of parochialism.

Fragmenting threat

Parochial schemas tend to draw associations with larger, more threatening extensions or to bracket out the familiar and focus on more uncertain elements. For example, in an earlier discussion Debra expressed a sense of threat over the 'one percent ratbag' population in Indonesia when Mitch argued that 'ninety nine percent of the [world] population are decent people'. Cosmopolitan schemas categorise others on the basis of shared humanity and make semantic associations based on that logic, but also

deflate, diffuse or solve larger problems by considering components separately or otherwise constructing them as managed or manageable using a range of strategies. This tendency provides an explanation to account for the cosmopolitan willingness to accommodate otherness which is viewed as smaller fragments within a securely intact whole.

In another instance, participant Tom described a Vietnamese population in his neighbourhood which he associated with a multiplying range of referents including specific suburbs in different states, the police, the nation, Australian culture, freedom of speech, the Australian psyche, cultural erosion, crime and autonomous cultural enclaves. Cosmopolitan members of the group were less concerned and bracketed Tom's concerns out of their response:

Tina: ...we expect people to assimilate with us and it's this whole us and them thing...there's this global community going on and yet when it suits us we want to preserve our own culture and make everyone conform to our beliefs...

Lisa: ...you'd congregate with other people who are similar to you. I know that I would, if I found people who were similar to me I'd stay with them.

These are only a few of many examples of conceptualisations which consistently illustrate the same series of differences in the two versions of Australian society and culture. Interestingly, as Betts (1999) observed the sympathy or empathy cosmopolitans extend to other cultural groups is not extended to Australian 'white worriers' (Hage, 2003: 2) who appear to be experiencing anxiety and distress. However, not all cosmopolitan sentiment was expressed in reassuring terms drawing on threat-minimising strategies. The topic of asylum seekers produced one example offered here to offset the impression that cosmopolitanism is a consistently relaxed attitude.

Selective tolerance

Participant Simon observed that 'there are too many people sneaking in [and that] if they go by the books then fair enough, but they're just letting anyone who rocks up stay here', which elicited a heated response.

Karen: I disagree. I think it's absolutely disgusting how people are treated here. The concentration camps that they put them in.

John: Yeah that's pretty sickening.

Karen: It's disgusting and so gross. Not to toot my horn from being in Canada for a long time, but they have a really successful immigration policy there. And after I came to Brisbane and everyone was saying, Oh Brisbane's so multicultural, and we let all these people in. That's just bullshit, it's not multicultural. Even if they're let in they're still treated like crap.

While Karen has the cosmopolitan willingness to accommodate otherness, the semantic associations she makes on mandatory detention and racism illustrate the catastrophising logic of parochialism. We use this example to demonstrate that both cosmopolitans and parochials can engage in catastrophic thinking, possibly depending on the way a given issue is approached, but more likely because it is experienced as highly emotive.

Discussion

The conceptualisation of cognitive schema utilised here is far less complex than the understandings of cognitive psychologists (Koenig, 1998; Moskowitz 2005; Kamppinen, 1993). While it offers a model compatible with both linguistics (Van Dijk, 1977) and semiotics (Saussure, 1974) familiar to cultural sociologists, cognitive psychology offers sociologists an array of concepts (Cerulo, 2002) which could provide finer and more detailed analyses. Also, the high contrast between parochials and cosmopolitans in exchanges on emotive topics brought the two positions into high relief which served the purposes of revealing their logics, but obscures the possibility that in another setting, perhaps one where they were not called on to defend their positions, these cosmopolitans may have expressed a lesser degree of cosmopolitanism. The more volatile interactions may have elicited associations not normally present in daily cognitive processing. On the other hand, the immediacy of the conversational context called for readily accessible referents and thinking strategies.

Schematic structures that we identified were clear, but there was no opportunity to explore what causes or contributes to cosmopolitan conceptions. As all participants were drawn broadly from the same social environment they were probably all exposed to a similar social mix, so we cannot conclude that cosmopolitanism results simply from exposure. Some who expressed a preference for local media articulated cosmopolitan attitudes toward otherness in their immediate environment, suggesting that the discourse described earlier has little or inconsistent influence. Gender does not appear to be a determinant but occupation and financial security may be. Unfortunately the disparity in group size in the older groups prevents firm conclusions, but we can speculate on the possibility that the more generally secure an individual feels - and perhaps also the people he or she knows in her social circle - the more he or she can afford cosmopolitan attitudes.

This work is a modest contribution to the growing body of sociological work borrowing the concept of cognitive schema as a useful tool for empirical studies. Tomlinson writes that 'the business of culture is surely *primarily* the constitution of meaning' and that 'cultural practices provide resources of meaning through collective symbolisation' (Tomlinson, 1999: 252, italics in original). Culture and cognition interact on both individual and collective levels as symbolic navigational resources. This analysis has shown that, like culture, cognitions are shared and further, that the cultural images they depict are readily accessible to researchers.

Cognitive schemas can roughly be described as knowledge categories we think with rather than about; pre-existing navigation instruments we refer to as required in varying environmental contexts. To individuals they amount to common sense, the intuitive, the plainly obvious or what DiMaggio describes as 'default assumptions' (1997: 269). When we access schemas we are effectively accessing the equivalent of cultural street directories which offer guidance, choices of destinations and strategies for arriving. The strategy which most closely resembles elements in the literature is universalism theorised generally as a single entity, a notion which has already been challenged by Lamont and Aksartova (2002).

This analysis identified two distinguishable forms of universalism, both abstract. One represents a truly global view of all people as 'basically decent,' the same as us, and with all of the human foibles and vulnerabilities that implies. This conception allows for a higher level of familiarity as differences are only circumstantial, but it does not necessarily involve an emotional response. The second strategy imagines the other in a way which can generate sympathy or empathy. Further, this second form is divided between reflecting on common experiences, and by imagining oneself in the shoes of the other. In the case of reflection on common experiences, cosmopolitans recognise patterns of concrete circumstantial similarity with which they can sympathise. Imagining the experience of the other is more complex as there are often no experientially shared cognitive landmarks, rather it relies on a leap of imagination. In all cases of universalism the common humanity of the other is considered prior to categories of difference, yet other strategies conceptualise in ways that recognise difference but create distance.

One such strategy is temporal distancing which is complex as problems can be perceived as either past or temporary. The distance of the past is a relatively simple concept but the temporal distancing involved in conceptualising a current problem as temporally distant is more difficult. Rather than enduring a current problem because it is expected to be temporary, the cosmopolitan views it as already solved *because* it is only temporary. In other words, the challenge lies in the solving rather than the temporal proximity. Once a solution is found the problem itself is conceived of as past and therefore no longer a threat.

Another strategy involves the perception of troublesome populations or groups of others as numerically small, for example Mitch's 'one percent rat bag' in comparison with, and within the context of, a much greater whole. This strategy was applied to both global and national contexts with important implications; smaller problems are more manageable or solvable than larger ones. This strategy was also applied to otherness in the form of problem events which were similarly perceived as being isolated and numerically minor in the overall scheme of things. There were also several instances of cosmopolitans relocating problems from the socio-cultural environment to individuals. For example when parochials expressed concern about cultural enclaves or religious extremists, cosmopolitans often responded by relocating the problem in either racism or faulty reasoning in individuals. In the cosmopolitan schema threat appears to be imminent in some people's minds, rather than the world at large.

Conclusion

Whether cosmopolitans' successful adaptation to the global environment necessarily means that cosmopolitanism is the logical and imminent next step for civilisation (Beck, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2005) is debatable, particularly given the culturally

conservative tendencies of populism in Western democracies (Furedi, 2005). While cosmopolitanism 'is better adapted and suited to our regional and global age [it is] a cultural and cognitive orientation, not an inevitability of history' (Held, 2002: 58). We suggest that to the extent that cosmopolitanism is an adaptation, it is one that is made possible by an underlying sense of cultural security, itself achieved by various threat-minimising strategies. Unlike either the romanticised ideal or elastic cultural competence described in the literature (Skrbis et al, 2004), it is more a cognitive survival strategy amid cultural uncertainty.

Although our aim has been to explore cosmopolitanism, parochialism is also part of the social world and parochials do not appear to be cognitively prepared to embrace cosmopolitan ideals. This is not only a cultural reality, but also a democratic one. To the extent that we value democracy we necessarily need to accommodate the various views of the public, including the parochial. This raises a challenge for the more idealistic theorists of cosmopolitanism, as a genuine empathy for others would surely recognise the fears of parochialism and take them into account. Certainly such fears have been magnified and exploited for political purposes, but a belief in empathy for otherness must include the otherness of parochialism if it is to be considered universal.

Skrbis et al argue that theorised cosmopolitanism 'must be purged of its political utopianism' (2004: 132) to be of practical use for political purposes. That cosmopolitanism is closely associated with (perceived) Leftist elitism in Australia creates further difficulties, as the possibilities of politically Right wing cosmopolitanism are hampered by the notion that it is the exclusive territory of a subsection of the Left. Australian cosmopolitanism needs to be 'purged' of this political alignment if it is to have any appreciable impact at an ongoing national level. Similar alignments elsewhere in Europe and the United States (Furedi, 2005, Hunter, 1991) have resulted in similar consequences, but within politically and culturally specific contexts. Beyond the exploitation of the cosmopolitan/parochial divide for populist political purposes, the cosmopolitan Left would need to be willing to share its high moral ground with the Right for the adversarial political/cultural nature of this divide to subside at both national and global levels.

On the question of varying extents or intensities of cosmopolitanism, future research could endeavour to establish whether cosmopolitans are motivated to act on their values and whether the ability to comfortably accommodate otherness can be correlated with degrees of active support for minority groups or other categories such as the environment. Do they routinely engage in the style of logic observed here or is this also context specific? Is cosmopolitanism stable through the lifetime? Can the popular perception that universities breed cosmopolitans be verified? These and many other questions are yet to be answered. Historical and political contexts also require further exploration, particularly in view of the numerous references made by participants to past events, and also with regard to changing immigration policies and political rhetorics.

Hage observes that 'a fantasy has to be well grounded and if it manages to sustain itself for a long period of time it is because it constantly finds empirical validations of its main components in everyday life' (1998:19). Cosmopolitan conceptualisations of otherness are constantly empirically validated, not necessarily because those

validations objectively exist, but because of the ways reality is constructed in the cosmopolitan schema. In the context of Australian multiculturalism, particularly in heavily populated areas, otherness is a mundane element of the minutiae of everyday life. Cosmopolitans appear to have adapted well to high levels of immigration from diverse sources and the consequent changes in their socio-cultural environment, aided by a type of logic which conceptualises otherness as benign and easily accommodated. The significance of the cosmopolitan as a symbolic figure in both the political landscape and popular discourse appears to be out of proportion when Australian cosmopolitanism is simply the ability to passively accommodate otherness already manifest and ordinary.

Table 1. Focus group composition

<u>Group 1</u>. 'Young, blue-collar': 18-30 years old, combination of manual and sales/clerical occupations, mixed gender composition

<u>Group 2</u>. 'Older, blue-collar': 50+ years old, combination of manual and sales/clerical occupations, mixed gender composition

<u>Group 3</u>. 'Older, white collar': 40-60 years old, professional and managerial occupations, mixed gender composition

<u>Group 4</u>. 'Younger, white-collar': 18-30 years old, professional and managerial occupations, mixed gender composition

<u>Group 5</u>. 'Non-citizen residents': 18+ years old, mixed occupations, mixed gender composition

<u>Group 6</u>. 'Mixed European': 18+ years old, mixed occupations, mixed gender composition

Group 7. Mixed Asian': 18+ years old, mixed occupations, mixed gender composition

Group 8. 'Mixed Middle-Eastern': 18+ years old, mixed occupation, all male

<u>Group 9</u>. 'Regional city': mixed age group, 20-60 years old, mixed occupational categories, mixed gender composition

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