THE REDUCTIVE NATURE OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS: DEGRADING DEBATES REGARDING THE OTTOMAN-ARMENIAN 'GENOCIDE'

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ABSTRACT
The struggle to label the deaths of Ottoman-Armenians in the early twentieth century as "genocide" has spread across the globe. The label "genocide" has emerged even in geographically distant Australian parliamentary discussions. Using and refusing such terms raises tension between Australians of Armenian and Turkish backgrounds. This feat is achieved with the development of Web 2.0, which supports the dissemination of emotive exchanges that ignore empirical evidence and have the potential to create an "other" – an enemy. Arguably, such naive and ill-informed discourses spread to parliamentary debates, which often mirror constituent concerns. This study analyses interactions across three online platforms – Australian mainstream press, Australian-Armenian local ethnic press and Australian-Turkish local ethnic press – in order to consider how the removal of barriers to allow for citizen journalism can form barriers in political communication. It will examine how social media platforms can degrade contentious debates and stigmatise the "other", decreasing their sense of belonging and social cohesion.

INTRODUCTION
The development of Web 2.0 has changed the manner in which information is disseminated. The removal of barriers to restrictive communication is not, however, without consequences. With no restraints on communication, language can be used to undermine regimes and create conflict between groups. Words can, and are, used to reframe history and even justify war. Technology and media advancements have altered cultural and social relations, affecting the construction of national identities and decreasing sense of belonging in predominantly multicultural nations.

Australia is merely one example of a nation where online developments have inadvertently decreased sense of belonging. Jupp (2003) explains Australia was formerly "immune" to international influences due to its geographically remote location, however, globalisation has increased the media's presence in politics. Events which take place in Australia are broadcast internationally, allowing heavy criticism of Australian politics; "nothing done here at the ends of the earth can remain immune from instant international comment" (p.202). In contrast, international agendas can also make their way into the Australian domain and influence political narratives.

Web 2.0 has created a new form of democracy. Blogs, social networking sites and video sharing sites, amongst a whole host of other virtual communities, facilitate participatory information sharing at an unprecedented capacity; everyone can find or create a forum on which to have their say. Web 2.0 is not necessarily a new technical version of the web, but rather a development of the old to support a user-centred design (Laningham, 2006, August 22). Still, it has led to a vast increase in user generated content, and consequently, a vast increase in biased, emotive exchanges that ignore empirical evidence. Arguably, such ill-informed discourses spread to parliamentary debates, decreasing social cohesion

Words are a powerful tool to say the least, they can be employed to frame and re-frame historical events. Language devices have played a substantial role in shaping debates surrounding the deaths of Ottoman-Armenians from 1915 to 1916. The term "facts speak for themselves" is not uncommon. It is, however, inaccurate; it is the historian, or in this case, the political actor or media member, who gives them life. Facts are chosen, analysed and interpreted. Moreover, "individual interpretations, unavoidably, are fated to be biased," explains Hallett (1961, p.25). Such biased arguments are capable of creating conflicting and reductive arguments between those of differing cultural backgrounds. These arguments shirk social responsibility, affect national identity, and are a barrier to reconciliation processes.

Many contentious labels have been assigned to describe the deaths; genocide, civil war, tragedy, issue, holocaust, calamity, event and massacre are merely a few. Conflicting narratives surround the events of this period, and it is not the purpose of this thesis to determine whether the date in question marks "genocide", "civil war", or any other label. As such, throughout this paper, the deaths from 1915 to 1916 will be referred to as simply as "X".

Throughout this paper, the term "political actors" will be in reference to politically active "agents" capable of sculpting messages and communicating themes to audiences. This includes lobbyists and government spokespeople, alongside elected members of parliament. Interactions across three online media platforms were analysed in order to consider how the removal of barriers to online communication can form barriers in political communication, and if contentious debates are degraded in an online presence. Empirical data was collected from mainstream Australian newspapers, *The Australian, The Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald*, as well as Australian-Turkish local newspaper *Yeni Vatan,* and Australian-Armenian local newspaper *Armenia Online*. Items in these publications were deemed relevant if they contained the necessary key words and phrases, including "genocide", "civil war", "1915 to 1916" and "genocide recognition". The communication tools used to disseminate key messages have been identified, and the presence and frequency of key words noted.

The analysed content was restricted from January 1, 2011 to February 29, 2012. This 14 month period encapsulates the Sarkozy Government's attempts to make denial of the alleged "Armenian genocide" a criminal offence. It covers the passing of the bill in the French Senate, followed by the quashing of the bill by the Constitutional Court for restricting freedom of speech. This period heightened tensions in regards to debates surrounding "X". The findings provide a summary of the disseminated tense narratives, and the resulting effects of said narratives on migrant communities.

This paper assesses how the removal of barriers to allow for citizen journalism results in barriers in political communication. Journalists are not commonly expected to dig through archives or dedicate themselves to scholarly research, citizen journalists even less so; that is normally considered to be the role of the historian. Media members instead often quote political actors, who use the opportunity to disseminate their reductive arguments, structured around simplistic labels. Consequently, off-the-cuff comments are broadcast as "absolute reality".

"Journalists must always consider the possibility that they are wrong." (Waterford, 2002, p.40). A seemingly honest source is quite capable of unknowingly communicating biased or even inaccurate "fact" (Ibid), particularly if they are taken in by their own performance (Goffman, 1959; Meyrowitz, 1986). "The selves we project are not simply the masks we slip on...but personalities we become attached to. The longer we play a given role, the more the role comes to seem real, not only to our audiences, but also ourselves," Meyrowitz (1986, p.31) claims. This level of self-awareness, however, is rare amongst journalists, and even rarer amongst citizen journalists. As such, it is not uncommon for biased, emotive exchanges to make their way into political discourses, which arguably mirror constituent discussions.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
Literature regarding "X" is vastly contradictory, and this paper will not hazard an opinion as to what may or may not be a just label; such formal definitions require extensive archival research and informed debate, which is beyond the scope of this paper. This paper instead

examines how the development of Web 2.0 platforms is hastening the spread of the "genocide" label in contemporary media representations of "X", degrading contentious debates and drawing other nations into the vicious political cycle Armenia and Turkey are already trapped in.

It should be noted that, despite having many contradictory aspects, the majority of narratives agree on the fundamentals—that many Ottoman-Armenians were relocated during World War I amidst fears of revolutionaries cooperating with the Russian invaders of Eastern Anatolia to seize Ottoman cities, and that it was the civilians who perished in the crossfire and during relocation. Yet, there are great discrepancies between the final labels assigned (Suny, 2009; McCarthy, 2005). For decades, political actors from the Armenian and Turkish Governments have used the media to frame "X" in a light favourable to their agendas, effectively declaring an "information war", which continues to this day. Said actors have spun nationalistic tales, neither tale complimentary to reconciliation.

Debates surrounding "X" often have a national undertow present; "X" is considered to form a part of each concerned nation's cultural identity. Undoubtedly, those involved feel a strong affinity towards the respective arguments. As Hall (1994) observes, the development of each individual's cultural identity is reliant on the past as much as it is the future. "Cultural identity is constantly negotiated between the retelling of history and an ongoing struggle about power and knowledge," argues Madmoni-Berber (2009, p. 181). Unfortunately, retellings of "X", and the differing opinions surrounding it, result in conflict, which is only further intensified by media coverage (Tichenor, Donohue & Olien, 1999).

The continued "X" debate on Web 2.0 platforms fuels exclusion and prejudice, leaving Australians feeling like outsiders. According to the Special Broadcasting Service report titled *Connecting Diversity: Paradoxes of Multicultural Australia*, "many Australians have experienced or observed instances of prejudice, discrimination and intolerance firsthand" (Ang, Brand, Noble & Sternberg, 2006, p.7), leaving numerous Australians from ethnic backgrounds not feeling a "complete sense of belonging" (Ang, Brand, Noble & Wilding, 2002, p.7). Young citizens from diverse backgrounds, who identify themselves as "Australian", feel disconnected to their Australian heritage when faced with instances of ignorance and prejudice.

Calls to assign a label to "X" have been increasing in Australian parliaments. Australian relations with Turkey and Armenia were ushered into a new era in 1997, following the New South Wales Parliament's recognition of "X" as "genocide"; the first such acknowledgement by an Australian legislative body (Armenian National Committee of Australia, 2007; New South Wales Parliament, Record of Proceedings, April 17, 1997 and May 13, 1999). The term "genocide" was also later recognised by the South Australian Parliament in 2009 (Armenian Genocide Resource Centre, 2009; South Australian Parliament, Record of Proceedings, April 30, 2009). Both State Parliaments passed a motion designating 24 April as a day of remembrance (Armenian Genocide Resource Centre, 2009; Armenian National Committee of Australia, 2007).

The first reference to "X" in an Australian Parliament was in 1985, "X" was then discussed 13 more times till the end of the 1980s. In the 1990s, there were 15 references to "X" in the Australian Parliament. In the first decade of the new millennium, that number jumped to 256; that is an average of over 25 references per year, which is clearly much higher than the number of references per decade in the past. Since 2010 there have been 90 references to "X", which is average of over 40 references per year (ParlInfo Document Repository, February 29, 2012). There is a clear increase of discussion regarding "X" in Australian Parliaments. While it cannot be said for certain that this upward trend is a result of online developments, the increase in discussions does mirror the increasing social networking capabilities of the web, and so it may be assumed the increase in parliamentary discussions is a result of increased constituent discussions across user-centred platforms.

Political actors wishing to maintain power must be attentive to the petitions and lobbies presented by their constituents. If not, the loss of support is almost guaranteed (Laswell, 1976). Still, the Sarkozy Government has received heavy criticism for its raising of the "genocide denial bill". Critics claim the bill is merely a ploy to secure the votes of the 500,000 Armenians residing in France. Interestingly, the claims that their party politics are being moulded around constituent discussions is not being denied. "That is democracy", said Valerie Boyle, the Sarkozy Government senator who wrote the bill. Boyle explained it is the duty of politicians to pass the bills their constituents lobby for (Dilorenzo, 2012, January 24).

Constant lobbying of an issue, from a decided angle, makes that perspective accessible and easier to commit to memory; increasing the chances of that issue surfacing to the public agenda. Lobbying is one of the most effective techniques an interest group can employ. However, providing all constituents with a voice is impossible; opposing groups will undoubtedly have differing opinions. Frequently, it is the quieter minorities who are left unheard, though their opinion may be just as valid (Laswell, 1976).

Migrant citizens constitute a large portion of quieter minorities in Australia, as explained by Jupp (1984). "The political dilemma of the 'ethnic'...is that while he or she may be legally a citizen...his or her access to power is restricted by majority prejudice and the preservation of long-established elites." (p.5) Consequently, a barrier is created in political communication and underrepresentation of certain Australian migrant communities, in political environments, becomes unavoidable.

One-sided representations in political forums and the media can decrease sense of belonging. "Media can create a sense of sharing and belonging or a feeling of exclusion and isolation. Media can reinforce a "them vs. us" feeling or they can undermine it." (Meyrowitz, 1986, p.7). With the use of a few carefully selected terms, political actors are able to present those with opposing views as the "other"—an enemy (Hamelink, 1997; Meyrowitz, 1986; Terzis 2008). Actors suggest to the target audience that the "other" threatens security, cannot be reasoned with, and requires elimination (Hamelink, 1997; Terzis 2008). The justification of war requires framing the "other" as inhuman, opposed to "our" liberal views (Butler, 2009). This same technique was employed by the Nazi German media to influence public opinion towards the "evil" Jewish people (Goldhagen, 1996). "In order to disseminate hatred on a massive scale, the Nazis constructed a tightly-controlled and carefully organized propaganda machine," explain Freedman and Freedman (1995, p. 78). This included labelling the Jewish populace as "villains" and the Nazis as "heroes" (Ibid, p. 54). Simplistic and constricting descriptions, in turn, can create conflict between nations and communities, particularly in a multicultural environment such as Australia.

SETTING AGENDAS AND PRIMING AUDIENCES

Political actors can employ a host of tools to create a dominant view. Agenda-setting, the process of using news stories to form public agendas, is one such tool (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). However agenda-setting does not have a life of its own. If it is used to raise issues, it is done so because there are journalists, political actors and social networks which deem these issues to be significant (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987). "The activities of interest groups, policymakers, journalists, and other groups interested in shaping media agendas and frames can have an impact on both the volume and character of news messages about a particular issue" (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, p. 12). While the media does not tell citizens what to think, it does influence what they think about (Mackey, 2000). The constant barrage of images and sound-bites communicated to media audiences results in "strong, long-term effects" (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, p. 10). High volumes of coverage increase attention and can lead to the subsequent creation of an agenda (Ibid.).

The development of Web 2.0 platforms has arguably increased the capabilities of agenda-setting. The Australian-Armenian press' interactive media presence is a noteworthy example. *Armenia Weekly* launched the internet version of its weekly newspaper in 2009. *Armenian Online* publishes articles regarding "Australia, Armenia and the greater Diaspora" (Armenia Online, 2011). The website claims to deliver news to more Armenian-Australians than any other publication. However, as the articles are published in both English and Armenian,

the site is also accessible to the wider Australian public; critical to agenda-setting. The website publishes its own content, as well as content from other sources. It also loads audio and video files, delivers an e-newsletter, hosts an Armenian-Australian business directory and announcements page, facilitates petitions, uses tags and provides readers with the means to comment on articles. *Armenia Online* published 228 articles referring specifically to the "Armenian genocide" in this study's data collection period. Not a single one of the articles described "X" as anything other than "genocide". Of these articles, more than 10 percent covered the Sarkozy Government's "genocide denial bill". *Armenia Online* presented a clear message; it considers "X" to be an act of "genocide".

During the same time period, a total of 27 articles regarding "X" were written in the reviewed Australian mainstream publications; six in the *Sydney Morning Herald,* five in the *Age,* and 16 in *The Australian.* Of the *Sydney Morning Herald* articles, 50 percent described "X" as "genocide"; of the *Age* articles, over 30 percent described "X" as "genocide", and 40 percent of the articles in *The Australian* described "X" as "genocide". Of the stories that described "X" as "genocide", three were profile features, five were opinion pieces, and only one was a news story. It can be assumed that the writers who described "X" as "genocide" were doing so based on their personal biases or those of their interviewees.

In comparison, during the same period, Turkish weekly newspaper, *Yeni Vatan*, published only 28 articles. Attempts to label "X" were not prominent; the focal point of the articles instead was the denial of "genocide" accusations. Of these articles, 19 were reactions to the Sarkozy Government's "genocide denial bill". *Yeni Vatan* also presented a clear message; it does not consider "X" to be an act of "genocide". However, due to sheer numbers alone, *Armenia Online* has a much stronger agenda-setting capability. Butler (1993) highlights the importance of repetition in the acceptance of a performance; referring to the theory of iterability – "a regularized and constrained repetition of norms" (p.95) – as developed by Derrida (1981). "'[P]erformance' is not a singular 'act' or event, but a ritualised production." (Butler, 1993, p.95) Constant repetition of this ritual allows the actor to maintain a position of power (Ibid).

Yeni Vatan's agenda-setting capability is also weaker in comparison because the newspaper does not utilise the Web 2.0 functions *Armenia Online* does. *Yeni Vatan* is uploaded as a pdf, making the process of accessing articles of interest a laborious task. The website is not search engine optimised, and articles cannot be commented on. The only way for a reader to be heard is to write a column or to submit an announcement. Most importantly, *Yeni Vatan* is published only in Turkish and is not accessible to the wider Australia community.

Constant coverage can work for and against political actors. While constant coverage does have the ability to set agendas, frequent coverage of a political actor can also wear away the mysticism surrounding said actor, leaving citizens underwhelmed by the ordinary individual on their screen. To successfully communicate their message, political actors require the correct balance of media exposure (Meyrowitz, 1986). The frequent coverage of "X" by *Armenia Online* is not, however, detrimental to agenda-setting. The coverage does not focus merely on one political actor, but rather on scores. For example, the "genocide denial bill" could potentially become one of the greatest victories in the efforts to label "X" as "genocide", however it is only covered in 10 percent of the 228 article referring to "X". Thereby, individual political actors are not excessively covered and maintain an element of mysticism. *Armenia Online* successfully communicates the messages of the Armenian diaspora.

Priming is another key political communication tool; political actors can "suggest" news audiences use "specific issues as benchmarks for evaluating the performance of leaders and governments" (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, p. 11). Essentially, priming changes the way in which the general public evaluates political actors. Like agenda-setting, priming is a memory-based model which assumes information at the forefront of an individual's memory will be used to form decisions (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007; Tversky & Kahneman, 1973). Political actors can prime constituents to take certain factors into account by disseminating agenda-setting messages via the media, which outline the aspects to be considered when evaluating a political issue (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). The Armenian National Committee did so rather blatantly when it provided *Armenia Online* with "*The ANC Australia Guide to Federal Election 2010*" (Meguerditchian, 2010, August 12) and the "*ANC Australia Guide to NSW State Election 2011"* (Meguerditchian, 2011, March 22) to post on their website. Other instances of priming may be more subtle. For example, an article in *Yeni Vatan* titled *"Bu Ulusal Sorunu Birlikte Savunal m"* (*"This is a National Problem Let's Defend Against it Together"*) describes how Turkish Federal Opposition Leader, Kemal Kilicdaroglu, believes the "French genocide bill" is a "national problem". Kilicdaroglu "invites" the Turkish Federal Government to "duty" in order to together protect the legacy of Turkey and the nation's grandfathers (Yeni Vatan, 2012, January 24). Essentially, he is priming audiences to assume the Government is not fulfilling its duties; an attack, veiled as an invitation to work together. Furthermore, he identifies an "enemy" against which the public and Government must work together.

The listed language tools, while evidently influential if wielded correctly, would possess merely minute clout if not for the media and its use of Web 2.0 platforms. Members of the media play a key role in persuading societies to "negotiate" in a specific manner (Allan & Zelitzer, 2004; Bond, 2005; Terzis, 2003, 2008). "Media forms become tools for translating the unknown, the abstruse into the understood, and the strange into the familiar" (Mander, 1999, p. 3). The media becomes what Fredric Jameson recognised as the "political unconscious"; building an individual's "understanding" of events, on a national and international scale, and influencing the parameters of discussions surrounding social change (Ibid.).

The successful use of agenda-setting and priming also requires the precise employment of labels. This precision is often applied in the United States to manage perceptions and "manufacture consent" through the media (Chomsky & Herman, 2002). The opening lines of a paper by Andrew Garfield**,** a Senior Fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute and US Director of the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) for Defence and Security Studies, clearly indicates the US stance towards perception management. "In the ongoing 'War against Terrorism', it is absolutely vital that the Perception Management campaign of the United States and its allies be coordinated at the highest possible level... such a campaign could be a war-winning capability... Even a poorly chosen word, used in the heat of the moment (e.g. 'crusade'), can have significant negative consequences," writes Garfield (2002, p. 30).

Unlike Garfield, Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, is less precise in the selection of his words; an attributing factor to the country's shortcomings in internationally distributing labels. Erdogan lacks the gentle art of persuasion. Following resolutions in the United States and Sweden to describe the deaths of Ottoman-Armenians as "genocide", Erdogan stated that Turkey was turning a "blind eye" to 100,000 illegal Armenian immigrants. "Tomorrow, I may tell these 100,000 to go back to their country, if it becomes necessary." (BBC, 2010) The reactive statement merely exemplified how the Prime Minister employs empty intimidation techniques, which is a common theme in Turkish media and politics. Of the articles published in *Yeni Vatan* referring to "X", 75 percent were written in reaction to an organised event or a comment made by the Armenian Government, Armenian diaspora, or other "genocide recognisers". In comparison, more than 50 percent of the articles published by *Armenia Online* were pre-emptive stories that showed "support" for "genocide recognition".

Pre-emptive messages are crucial to perception management; yet the Turkish Government has a long history of neglecting to do so, which to an extent explains their inability to create a dominant label for "X" today, despite access to Web 2.0 platforms. By seizing the initiative, political actors can sculpt messages to suit their own agenda; forcing their opposition into a reactive position, where they are forced to defend their actions. Arguably, once the seeds of an idea have been planted in a timely manner, herd mentality takes over. With Web 2.0, ideas spread instantly, infecting the masses and manipulating social outcomes.

In regards to managing perceptions regarding "X", Turkey has been on the back foot since day one. Following World War I, Turkey was preoccupied with post-war reconstruction and the assembly of the new republic. Consequently, the administration was not the first to set forth a label describing "X". Furthermore, it was slow in responding to genocide accusations. The result was a simplification of the issue into "victims and villains" (McCarthy, 1996). Responding in a timely manner is critical to effective crisis and perception management. "Audiences tend to accept the self projected by the individual performer during any current performance as a responsible representative," explains Goffman (1959, p. 235). Consequently, a political actor who seizes the initiative, and supplies the first acceptable representation, is capable of swaying swinging audiences to a particular side (Huang & Su, 2009). It is apparent from the collected data that the Turkish Government is still not practicing strategic political communication. Had it not been for factors such as timeliness and herd mentality, the framing of "X" may have greatly differed, as would the popularly accepted version of events. This, however, is not to say the differing version would not again have been a simplification of "X" into "victims" and "villains". In the case of "X", both sides use Web 2.0 platforms to set forth labels relieving their people and governments of any guilt.

In terms of crisis management, had the political actors accepted some level of responsibility, then the debate may not have lasted this long (Johnston & Zawawi, 2000), and reconciliation may have already been grasped. Instead, tension continues to filter through community groups who continue to see the "other" as a "villain".

SHATTERING OF THE CULTURAL MOSAIC

Narratives surrounding "X" produce no small amount of stigma. The term "stigma" refers to "an attribute that is deeply discrediting" (Goffman, 1963, p. 3). As a result of "X", Turks and Armenians across the world are stigmatised for merely belonging to a family which descended from "X". The stigmatised person is seen as less than human and discriminated against, which can effectively endanger their life (Ibid). Numerous Turks and Armenians have been threatened, and even killed, for voicing their opinions too loudly; the murder of journalist Hrant Dink by a fanatical Turkish national is only one example (Christensen, 2007).

It is important to note that the stigmatised individual does not see him or herself as any different from other members of the populace. They too are "normal" and deserve a "chance". Yet, more often than not, this chance is long-awaited. The "other" does not "accept" the stigmatised as an "equal" (Goffman, 1963, p. 7). Such unacceptance pushes these individuals to the outskirts of society and subsequently influences group alignments. The individuals form their "own group" (Ibid, p. 114; Mander, 1999), wherein group members will have lived through "similar learning experiences" and "similar changes in conception of self" (Goffman, 1963, p. 32). In doing so, the stigmatised may establish a sense of belonging; however, they also prime their minds for the entry of the herd's separatist mentality.

The stigma that occurs as a product of debates surrounding "X" results in protests, the defacement of monuments and even threats of deportation (The Australian, 2011, December 23;Armenia Online, 2011, June 28; BBC, 2010, March 17). Ten such instances of disruptions to social cohesion were reported by *Armenia Online* within the data collection period, two were reported by the *Sydney Morning Herald* and three were reported by *The Australian.* As previously mentioned, the majority of articles in *Yeni Vatan* were reactive and consequently did not cover outbursts resulting from instances of stigma.

Instances where a lack of social cohesion is reported can be attributed to irresponsible journalism. There are two methods of investigative political journalism. The first is to speak to the key source or sources at the centre of an issue. The second is to interview everyone who had some involvement or knowledge of the issue and to then report the "consensus view" (Richardson, 2002, p.181). It is difficult to obtain an accurate assessment with the first approach, as it could easily be coming from a biased perspective. The second, however, requires time, resources and access to interviewees who may be reluctant to share information (Ibid.). It is rare for journalists to undertake the second approach due to strict deadlines, however, that is the approach least likely to produce biased coverage. Citizen journalists are even less likely to take the second approach as they do not have to adhere to the Journalism Code of Ethics (MEAA, 1999). Rarely do journalists utilise archives and the Freedom of Information Act, according to a study conducted by the University of Tasmania. Instead, other sources are used, such as political actors and activists, to pick up stories and sound bites. "This undermines not only their own interests but their responsibility to society," argue Ricketson and Snell (2002, p.154).

The spread of naive and ill-informed discourses on Web 2.0 platforms can arguably create a decreased sense of belonging and become a detriment to multiculturalism as a normative concept. During the data collection period, 63 comments were posted in response to *Armenia Online* articles on "X". Of these comments, 29 were identified to be disparaging as they contained derogatory words. Two of these derogatory comments were posted by members of the Australian-Turkish community and were directed at the Australian-Armenian community. The rest were written by members of the Australian-Armenian community and directed at the Australian-Turkish community. Such negative discussions serve only to sever social cohesion.

Similar discussions took place in the Australian mainstream press, though on a much smaller scale. Two comments were made in response to an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and one was made in response to an article in *The Australian.* All three comments were made by members of the Australian-Armenian community towards members of the Australian-Turkish community; all three were disparaging remarks. Comments were not made in response to *Yeni Vatan* articles as the newspaper's site does not support such a function. Instead, members of the Australian-Turkish community were able to express their opinions by way of columns. Of the 28 articles written, nine were columns which served this purpose. The columns were not disparaging as such, however, they did call upon members of the Australian-Turkish community to defend themselves. The columnists wrote under the assumption that their view of "X" was definitive and did not leave room for other considerations.

The history the Australian-Turkish and Australian-Armenian communities shared may have been the same, however they now have vastly different interpretations of "X". The resulting reductive arguments prevent the acceptance of multiculturalism as a normative concept. By moving beyond "confrontation and reductive hostility", Edward Said (2005, p. 595) believed individuals could learn to respect the details of human experiences, gain understanding which stems from compassion, alongside moral and intellectual knowledge. "[I]n the process we can dispose finally of both residual hatred and the offensive generality of labels like 'the Muslim', 'the Persian', 'the Turk', 'the Arab' or 'the Westerner'..." Multiculturalism cannot be truly embraced until the frames and labels, which oversimplify complex discourses, and tense narratives, are understood. However, such an occurrence does not appear likely in the near future.

SUMMARY

Web 2.0 environments are spreading the "X" debate and increasing the rate at which it is dispersed. The contentious labels used to describe "X" are travelling as far as Australia and entering its political sphere. It can be assumed increased media coverage, whether it is prepared by political actors or citizen journalists, increases constituent awareness and affects parliamentary discourses. However, with few barriers to online communication, the exchanges can be emotive and absent of empirical evidence. As such, at times, debates regarding contentious international issues are degraded. Such naive and ill-informed discourses can create an "other", an outside who is seen as an enemy and someone to be despised. In reality, they are all members of the same multicultural community, and heeding such discourses serves only to decrease sense of belonging and social cohesion.

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