Your bloomin’ lot: An empirical study of the popular baby boomer stereotype.

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[A] Statement of originality

This Thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my Thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

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[B] Acknowledgment of authorship / collaboration

I hereby acknowledge that the work embodied in this Thesis is the result of original research, the greater part of which was completed subsequent to admission to candidature for the degree.

I wish to acknowledge that part of the work was conducted in collaboration with researchers from the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women’s Health (ALSWH), who I thank for their expertise and guidance. Due acknowledgement of the ALSWH has been, and will continue to be, given on all related presentations and publications.

[C] Presentations given of the current research


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Chapter 8

Thesis conclusions
None
This research focused on people born during the post-World War II baby boom period. Research questions tested were:
1. Does a popular stereotype exist regarding baby boomers?
2. What features characterise the stereotype? and
3. To what extent does the stereotype apply to a sample of Australian women born during the post-War baby boom period?

This Thesis was underpinned by the contention that if a popular stereotype did exist, it would relate to a minority of baby boomers. This study involved:
1. Development of key criteria which characterised the popular baby boomer stereotype (Chapter 4);
2. Testing stereotypic repertoires against scholarly expertise and a sample of baby boomer women (Chapters 5 and 6); and
3. Describing the characteristics and behaviours of women who did and did not meet the popular stereotype, and exploring issues of social identity through narrative analysis (Chapter 7).

A review of 110 news text articles and 54 images from two Australian newspapers evidenced selective repertoires when describing people born during the post-War baby boom. Key criteria of a baby boomer stereotype were identified and tested by interviewing experts and surveying 900 mid-aged women from the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women’s Health. In-depth exploration of baby boomer reality, as opposed to rhetoric, revealed marked differences within the baby boomer cohort, which informed the development of four baby boomer
categories, based on self-reported levels of health and material comfort versus levels of disadvantage. Analysis of free text comments of baby boomers revealed feelings of isolation and aloneness, financial difficulties, uncertainty about the future, and health worries - findings that differed from the popular stereotype.

Evidence from this research into baby boomers suggests that the popular stereotype may apply only to a minority. A great number and variety of differences existed, which need to be acknowledged.

**Note to readers of this Thesis**
The term “baby boomer” will be used throughout this Thesis for reasons of brevity when describing those individuals who were born during the Australian post-War baby boom period of 1946 to 1965. However, connotations which accompany this popular label are not necessarily supported by the candidate.