



What Do We Mean by 'Representation'?: Towards a Systematic Corpus-Assisted Critical Discourse Analysis of First Nations People(s) in Australian Print News

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CARLY BRAY

The University of Sydney
carly.bray@sydney.edu.au

Abstract

Given the enduring influence of news media on public awareness and opinion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people(s) and related issues, systematic analysis of how these communities are represented in news media remains socially significant. However, what analysts mean when they use the term 'representation' shows considerable variation across the literature, from the amount of coverage relevant stories are afforded, to the inclusion of First Nations sources, to the narratives that a given version of events constructs. Moreover, while language is central to the discursive construction of these matters, few linguistic studies of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media representations exist. To begin to address these gaps, this study first maps the forms of representation identified in previous research, before analysing three of the four types (visibility, naming strategies and portrayal) via a corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis of news articles about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people(s) and issues. It finds that, by and large, how First Nations people(s) are represented is inconsistent—while in some areas, representation broadly aligns with expectations expressed by First Nations communities (i.e. for increased coverage, respectful terms of reference and strengths-based discourses), problematic practices persist. Importantly, however, the analysis also illuminates a range of journalistic practices that can be implemented to improve representation in areas currently lacking.

Key words: *Aboriginal people(s), corpus, critical discourse analysis, representation, print news media*

1. Introduction

Whether deliberate or unconscious, those working in the media have the power to influence how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are perceived and understood. Inaccurate or inflammatory reporting from a position of power can have a detrimental impact on an already oppressed community (Media Diversity Australia [MDA], 2018, p. 2).

This caution, taken from Australian media language guidelines, highlights that news media remain an influential source of information that has the ability

to alter the public's perceptions of First Nations people(s). In Australia, First Nations peoples include culturally diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from many language groups and nations, each with unique histories, beliefs and practices. Torres Strait Islander peoples are descendants of the original inhabitants of the Torres Strait Islands to the north of Queensland's Cape York, and the many Aboriginal peoples belong to the mainland and other islands (see <https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/australias-first-peoples> for a broader discussion). Notwithstanding the considerable diversity within this group, terms such as *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander* or *First Nations peoples* can be used as a cover term to refer to these communities together.

While a considerable body of work has analysed media representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people(s), what exactly is meant by the term 'representation' shows considerable variation across the literature. It is variously investigated in terms of the visibility of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs in the media space (Bacon, 2005; Banerjee & Osuri, 2000), in terms of the inclusion of First Nations voices and perspectives as primary sources (Bullimore, 1999; Meadows et al., 1997), and the way in which First Nations people(s) are constructed in the coverage that does exist (Carden, 2017; Due & Riggs, 2011; Macoun, 2011). First Nations researchers and activists have additionally pointed out that naming strategies are an important facet of representation (Media Diversity Australia, 2018; Public Health Association Australia, 2017; Roberts et al., 2021). However, the diverse manner in which the term 'representation' has been used in this context has not so far been explicitly considered.

Moreover, while language plays a crucial role in how such representation is achieved, there are very few linguistic studies of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation in Australian print news (for known exceptions see Bednarek, 2020; Bray, 2022). The vast majority of discourse analysis studies examine Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media representation without a systematic focus on language practices (see for example Belfer et al., 2017; Bullimore, 1999; Carden, 2017; Due & Riggs, 2011; Hollinsworth, 2005; Porter, 2015; Sercombe, 1995).

To address this gap in the literature, this study first maps the ways in which representation has been analysed in previous research, before undertaking a corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis of a corpus of news articles about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people(s) and the issues that relate to them (e.g. Aboriginal health, constitutional recognition, deaths in custody, with focus on the unexpected discourse of business and commerce). It uses a broad range of analyses with different foci—including analysis of the spread of articles across time, political orientation and publication type, as well as linguistic analysis of wordlists, concordances and collocation patterns—and has three main aims:

1. To map the ways in which representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people(s) has been understood in previous research and to propose a systematic categorisation of different types of representation (addressed in Section 2)
2. Building on research aim 1, to illustrate how corpus linguistic techniques can be deployed to study such types of representation, and to identify relevant patterns in representation (addressed in Section 4)

3. To explore and discuss whether the identified patterns of representation align with community expectations and explain them in relation to their institutional and socio-cultural context.

To my knowledge, this is the first article to take a ‘big picture’ approach to analysing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation across a wide range of print news coverage and combining analysis of three different types of representation (as explained in Section 2). I advise readers with ties to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, that this study contains instances and discussions of dispreferred terms and racial slurs, in Sections 2.1, 2.3.2, 3.1 and 4.1.

2. Representation of First Nations People(s) in Print News Media

This section reviews the existing literature that examines news media representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people(s). It sets out the different ways that representation has been analysed in previous studies—that is, in terms of naming strategies, visibility, portrayal, and inclusion—and presents their findings. The work surveyed here has largely taken place since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (a commission responding to the disproportionate frequency of deaths in custody of Aboriginal people) which found that Aboriginal people held extremely negative opinions of the Australian media (Johnston, 1991):

Their view was that Aboriginal people were presented as problems. They considered that their achievements were very seldom given any prominence even if noted at all, whereas failure of an enterprise..., on the one hand, or antisocial or unlawful behaviour, on the other hand, were given much publicity.

Importantly, such representations, and the texts that construct them, are embedded in a historical context that began with colonisation. As Fforde et al. (2013, p. 164) put it: ‘[a]ssumptions and accusations of Indigenous deficit have saturated the history of cultural relations in Australia since contact, and are a key component of racism and prejudice’. The Royal Commission’s finding that institutional media contribute to the racist cultural milieu that results in over-representation and deaths of First Nations people(s) in custody has since been corroborated by academic research demonstrating the links between negative media portrayals and poor outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in policy (Fforde et al., 2013; Macoun, 2011; McCallum, 2011, 2013; McCallum & Waller, 2013; McCallum et al., 2012) and sentencing (Storr, 2009). At the time of writing, a referendum to amend the constitution to recognise Australia’s First Peoples and enshrine an Indigenous Voice to Parliament failed unequivocally, owing in no small part to misinformation circulated by the media (Muller, 2023). Clearly, media treatments of First Nations people(s) and issues matter and understanding the ways in which ‘representation’ can be analysed and evaluated is an important foundational step.

2.1 Representation as Appropriate Terms of Reference

In attempts to address such negative media treatment, several media language guidelines have been published outlining appropriate language conventions for reporting on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. As the summary in Table 1 shows, the majority of recommendations relate to strategies for naming or referring to individuals and groups with First Nations ties—the type of representation I am calling ‘terms of reference’. (For definitions of the terms discussed here, refer to the guidelines from Media Diversity Australia and Public Health Association of Australia ([MDA], 2018; [PHAA], 2017).)

1. Seek guidance and use the preferred descriptor(s) of the person being referred to.
2. Be specific wherever possible and preferred: use nation/language group names and avoid *Indigenous* in most cases. Some feel that collectivising terms like *Indigenous* oversimplify the diversity of these communities and cultures.
3. Register plurality wherever possible, e.g. ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples/First Nations/First Peoples’ but also ‘histories/perspectives/ways of being’ etc.
4. Avoid *Aborigine* and other historically racist terms such as *native* and those relating to blood-quantum.
5. Avoid using *Aboriginal* in the nominal sense.
6. Avoid acronyms such as *ATSI*, as this implies homogeneity and lacks due respect.
7. All terms should be capitalised, including *Peoples* when referring to multiple nations.
8. Avoid deficit framing, stereotypes, and patronising and paternalistic rhetoric, instead acknowledging the strength and resilience of First Nations peoples and their contributions.

Table 1. Summary of guidelines for referring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people(s)

Individual preferences for reference terms differ and it is advised to seek guidance from the person(s) in question (MDA, 2018; Reconciliation Australia [RA], n.d.). However, the term *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples* is considered appropriate in most contexts, as are *First Nations* and *First Peoples* (PHAA, 2017). In such cases, *peoples/Peoples* and *Nations* should be pluralised to recognise the multiplicity and diversity of these identities (MDA, 2018, p. 4; PHAA, 2017), as should ‘histories/perspectives/ways of being’ etc. (RA, n.d.). *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people* in the singular can be used to refer to multiple individuals (rather than nations or groups) (PHAA, 2017, p. 2). Where possible and preferred, people should be referred to using nation and language group names (MDA, 2018). All terms of address should be dignified with a capital letter to align with the respect afforded to other nationalities (Roberts et al., 2021).

Terms to avoid include historically racist terms such as *Aborigine(s)* (PHAA, 2017; RA, n.d.), and use of *Aboriginal(s)* in the nominal sense (e.g. *an*

Aboriginal) (MDA, 2018). Abbreviations (e.g. *ATSI*) are felt to prioritise convenience over respect and should be avoided (Canuto & Finlay, 2021). The term *Indigenous* can be considered problematic because there is no pan-Indigenous identity to which it would refer (Pearson, 2021, [online]), and many people feel it is too generic (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, n.d.). There are contexts in which its use is common practice—in titles, organisation names or quotes when it cannot be changed, or in short texts to avoid repetition of *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander*—but, generally, it should be replaced with more preferred forms (MDA, 2018). *First Australians* is also dispreferred because it invokes the nation state and notion of citizenship introduced only after colonisation, and which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were the last to be afforded (Pearson, 2021, [online]).

Regarding linguistic-informed Critical Discourse Analysis, terms of reference are typically examined as part of analysis of Referential/Nomination strategies (e.g. social actor representation, van Leeuwen, 2008) but have not yet been examined for First Nations people(s) in Australian print news. An exception is Bednarek (2020), who investigated the application of media guidelines specifically in reporting on diabetes and found it was inconsistent. For example, *Indigenous* was widely used but not always in the prescribed ways and was capitalised in only 11 of 55 instances. On the other hand, all instances of *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander* were capitalised as advised, and acronyms and nominal use of *Aboriginal(s)* did not occur. Since use of dispreferred terms demonstrates a lack of respect and cultural safety (Canuto & Finlay, 2021), this inconsistency is problematic. However, it is not yet known whether these tendencies apply beyond diabetes-related health news coverage, and what socio-cultural and institutional factors may be prompting them. These aspects are investigated in Section 4.1.

2.2 Representation as Coverage of First Nations People(s) and Issues

Where First Nations representation has been analysed in terms of visibility of relevant issues and events in the Australian media space, work suggests that some topics are covered more than others. Coverage of deaths in custody, for example, is rare—many deaths are not reported on, and those that are covered are often afforded fewer than 100 words (Bacon, 2005, p. 32). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health similarly receives only minimal attention despite significant challenges in this area (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2022). For example, reporting on nutrition among First Nations people(s) was found to amount to fewer than 4 articles per year (Browne et al., 2018), while fewer than 6 articles per year reported on obesity in First Nations communities (Islam & Fitzgerald, 2016). Accordingly, just 5% of 694 articles on diabetes published between 2013 and 2017 mentioned Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people(s), even though these communities are disproportionately affected by the condition and experience related complications at much higher rates (Bednarek, 2020). Regarding First Nations representation in climate change coverage, among a sample of 92 articles published in four countries, just six appeared in Australian newspapers (Belfer et al., 2017).

Conversely, there are issues that receive a disproportionately large focus. Sercombe (1995), for example, argues that the discursive link between

Aboriginality and criminality is overemphasised. He found that roughly 85% of stories referencing Aboriginal young people focused on crime (Sercombe, 1995, p. 79), while none discussed contributive factors like homelessness, or alternative stories about high achievers. It appears then that where First Nations people(s) are the victims of police violence, and where they face disadvantage deriving from Australia's colonial heritage, these stories are not widely reported. While these are valuable insights, such studies all focus on the volume of coverage afforded to a particular issue. How coverage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people(s) and issues patterns more broadly, across the full spectrum of First Nations affairs reporting, has not yet been analysed. Volume of coverage is therefore explored here, in Section 4.2.

2.3 Representation as Portrayal

Beyond visibility and terms of reference, representation also includes what I term 'portrayal', or the discourses that recur in news coverage, a type of analysis regularly undertaken in Critical Discourse Analysis. Regarding the representation of First Nations people(s) and issues, recurring discourses have been found to be negative and stereotypical in nature. The negative discourses identified in the literature tend to relate to notions of failure and dysfunction, each of which is discussed in turn.

2.3.1 Failure

A discourse of failure has been found to be particularly apparent in First Nations health news coverage. Most recently, Bednarek (2020) shows that in diabetes coverage references to First Nations people largely occur in negative contexts, e.g. in phraseologies to do with risk such as *being at risk* or *high-risk populations*. For Brough (1999, p. 90), individual and government failure is 'the most common (and depressing) feature of Indigenous health print media imagery'. However, discussions of solutions tended to position health as an individual responsibility (Brough, 1999; Browne et al., 2018; Islam & Fitzgerald, 2016). Although structural and bureaucratic causal factors are acknowledged, the 'failures' associated with the health of First Nations people(s) are ultimately attributed to those people(s) themselves.

2.3.2 Dysfunction

Dysfunction discourses are often ascribed to whole groups or communities, and often arise in relation to instances of community violence. For example, in reporting on events in the remote majority First Nations Queensland community of Aurukun in which a school was closed due to student violence, 'The discourse of community breakdown permeates the dataset' (Carden, 2017, p. 596). Due and Riggs (2011) make a similar observation in relation to coverage of the 2004 Palm Island protests, where 91% of residents identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.¹ They found that in the wake of the demonstrations, Palm Island was represented as 'dysfunctional and "devoid of social obligation"' (Due & Riggs, 2011, p. 82). In both cases, community dysfunction is linked to social obligations around law and order. Stories of individual violence can also support this discourse if frequently reproduced (Sercombe, 1995). According to the literature, violence perpetrated by First

Nations people is constructed as maximally threatening (Bullimore, 1999; Hollinsworth, 2005; McCallum, 2007; Simmons & Lecouteur, 2008), irrational (Goodall, 1993) and unmotivated (Due & Riggs, 2011; Goodall, 1993; Selby, 1999; Simmons & Lecouteur, 2008). For Macoun (2011), through recurrent representations of First Nations communities as violent dystopias requiring settler intervention to establish law and order, First Nations violence is discursively tied to notions of primitivity. By focusing on social dysfunction, such coverage constructs First Nations people as unable to function as members of cohesive, law-abiding society.

Likewise, the rejection of capitalist ideals by some First Nations people(s) can be constructed as a form of dysfunction. Due and Riggs (2011, pp. 33-49) found that coverage of Native Title negotiations positioned First Nations claims to land (which would prevent mining of sacred sites) as counter to the 'universal' principle of capitalist progress. Adopting a business framing, coverage uncritically centred the economic interests of mining companies (as well as states and territories which benefit from this economic activity) as paramount, while the concerns and interests of claimants were portrayed as 'stifling development' (Due & Riggs, 2011, pp. 41-42) and the broader social and cultural implications of Native Title (land rights) were simply ignored. Similarly, in coverage of coal-seam gas (CSG), Aboriginal people(s) were constructed as anti-CSG development and, therefore, uninterested in economic advancement (Wheeler-Jones et al., 2015). Moreover, cost to the taxpayer in the areas of climate change and health and welfare is another recurrent theme (Belfer et al., 2017; Browne et al., 2018; Morris, 2005). Morris (2005, p. 80) found that a demonstration in the town of Brewarrina became a symbol of the abject failure of the welfare state, and the 'welfare Aborigines [sic] [became] the antithesis anew of the neo-liberal entrepreneurial subject'. The so-called dependence of Aboriginal communities on government welfare was constructed as a burden on economic growth and counter cultural to the dominance of capitalism. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people(s), then, are positioned as unable, or unwilling, to conform both to the legal system that upholds social conventions of law and order, and to the prevailing economic system of capitalism. Such discourses evidently run counter to recommendations made in media guidelines that 'the tone and framing [of stories] is not deficit focussed' (PHAA, 2017, p. 1).

2.4 Representation as Sourcing Practices

The final form of representation that I identified in the literature is the inclusion of First Nations voices as primary sources, and the majority of studies report a dearth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. Meadows et al. (1997) analysed coverage of a series of protests in Brisbane, regarding issues such as deaths in custody and the failure of Native Title legislation. Although these are specifically First Nations issues and First Nations protestors were the subject of the story, less than a third of stories included a direct quote from a First Nations person. Analysing coverage of Native Title negotiations, Meadows (2000, p. 90) found that 'the number of non-Indigenous sources outnumbers Indigenous voices by a factor of around four to one'. Bullimore (1999, p. 75) refers to this outnumbering as 'counterbalancing'. She points out that while Aboriginal voices are often absented entirely, where they do occur, they are rarely permitted to stand alone, instead being accompanied by three to

five 'non-indigenous elite voices'. These studies do not systematically analyse in what capacity Aboriginal voices are included (such as authorities or bystanders, for example). However, Bullimore (1999, p. 76) argues that those that are included are selected as 'culturally approved', both aligning with 'Anglo-elite perceptions' of 'authentic' Aboriginality and presenting a sufficiently moderate viewpoint. In most cases these are the voices of established leaders (Bullimore, 1999; McCallum et al., 2012; Mesikämmen, 2013), foregrounding authoritative accounts. Nonetheless, direct quotation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is rare and usually included as counterpoint to the government position on an issue, around which the story is framed (Mesikämmen, 2013).

Due at least in part to institutionalised sourcing practices, established links between news organisations and political offices, and the news value of 'eliteness' (Bednarek & Caple, 2017), people such as politicians, police and the courts, spokespeople for government-funded organisations, academics and published reports are preferred sources for stories and comment (Browne et al., 2018; Bullimore, 1999; Carden, 2017; Sercombe, 1995). Moreover, elite sources are often used to mediate Aboriginal perspectives, such that a non-Aboriginal source speaks on behalf of Aboriginal people (Bullimore, 1999). Regarding Critical Discourse Analysis, sourcing can be and has been investigated by focussing on reported speech and thought practices (e.g. Fairclough, 2003) and it is clearly possible to use corpus linguistic approaches in this analysis (e.g. Bednarek et al., 2024). However, the literature cited above typically does not take a linguistic perspective on sourcing practices, but rather focusses simply on categorising sources.

2.5 Summary

The research reviewed here has shown that media representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people(s) is often lacking; overall volumes of coverage of relevant issues is low, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives are not included, discursive negativity is common and harmful labelling practices persist. Moreover, the notion of 'representation' itself is complex and multifaceted. It can mean visibility of First Nations people(s)/affairs in the media space, the use of appropriate naming strategies, fair and strengths-based portrayal, and inclusion of First Nations perspectives and voices. Overall, the term 'representation' has historically been used to mean any of the above, without explicit discussion of the scope and complexity of the concept. In response, I developed Figure 1 to summarise the above discussion and propose a systematic approach to considering questions of First Nations media representation.

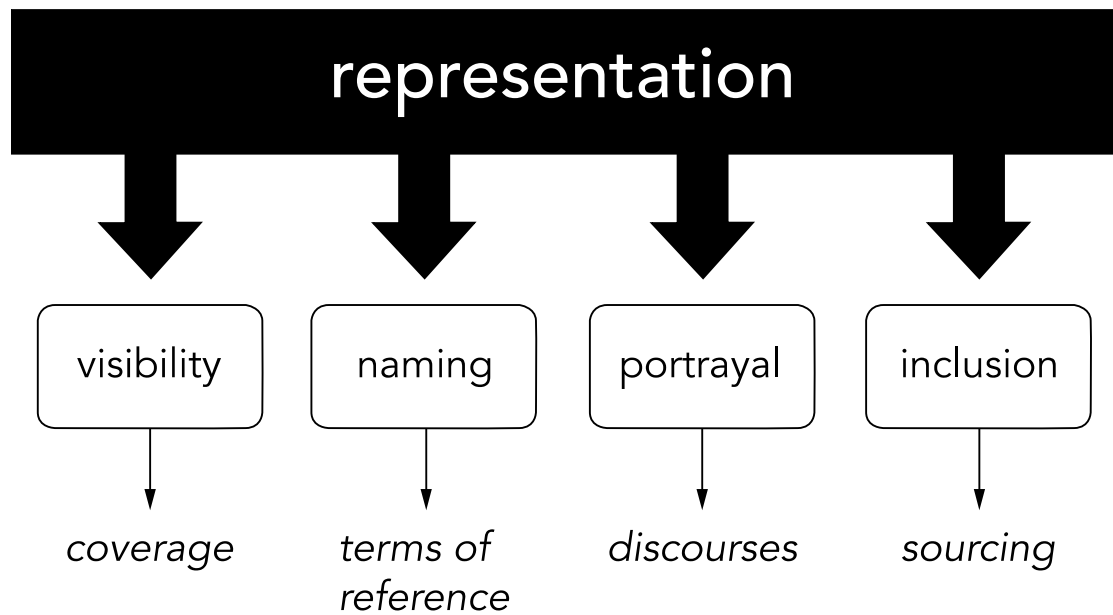


Figure 1. Media representation analysis schema

Figure 1 simultaneously offers a synthesis of the diverse ways in which media representation has been considered in this context (as visibility, naming, portrayal, inclusion) and aligns analytical approaches to these types of representation. Thus, visibility can be investigated by analysing amount of coverage, naming can be explored through analysis of terms of reference, portrayal can be described by analysing discourses, and the extent of inclusion can be gauged by analysing the sources that are cited. However, a comprehensive analysis of all four types (visibility, naming, portrayal, inclusion) is beyond the scope of this article. Since inclusion (analysis of sources) is the topic of a significant body of existing work, I focus here on visibility (via an analysis of coverage), naming strategies (examining terms of reference) and portrayal (investigating discourses). This is the first known study to take such a big picture approach to analysing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation and to systematically consider three different *types* of representation, across a wide range of print news coverage, using a large dataset.

3. Data and Methodology

3.1 Data

This study analyses the newly built Ngaraguun Corpus of Australian News (NCAN)³ which contains 168 mainstream newspaper articles referencing Aboriginal people(s) or matters. The articles were published in the three months prior to data collection (24 March to 24 June 2019, inclusive) and include news and opinion genres. NCAN contains all relevant articles from each of the Australian daily metropolitan newspapers, and the one national daily, making it representative of the mainstream print news context in Australia. Table 2 below outlines the included publications, their style and political leaning, as well as the articles and tokens comprising the corpus and the codes,

I use in this study to cite articles from the included newspapers (e.g. AUS = *The Australian*; SMH = *The Sydney Morning Herald*). Publications produced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people(s) and regional publications are not considered part of the mainstream media space and, therefore, are not included in this corpus.

State	Newspaper	Type	Orientation	Articles	Tokens*
National	<i>The Australian</i> (AUS)	Broadsheet	Right-leaning	41	36,755
NSW	<i>Daily Telegraph</i> (DAT)	Tabloid	Right-leaning	7	5,180
	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i> (SMH)	Broadsheet	Left-leaning	40	37,197
Victoria	<i>The Age</i> (AGE)	Broadsheet	Left-leaning	15	13,438
	<i>Herald Sun</i> (HES)	Tabloid	Right-leaning	4	3,018
QLD	<i>Brisbane Times</i> (BRS)	Broadsheet	Left-leaning	11	9,744
	<i>The Courier Mail</i> (CRM)	Tabloid	Right-leaning	8	7,211
ACT	<i>Canberra Times</i> (CAN)	Broadsheet	Left-leaning	20	16,027
SA	<i>The Advertiser</i> (ADV)	Tabloid	Right-leaning	9	7,465
Tasmania	<i>Hobart Mercury</i> (HOM)	Tabloid	Right-leaning	3	3,027
NT	<i>Northern Territory News</i> (NTN)	Tabloid	Right-leaning	6	5,158
WA	<i>The West Australian</i> (WEA)	Tabloid	Right-leaning	4	2,578
				168	146,798
* Hyphens and apostrophes included within words					

Table 2. Newspapers represented in NCAN

The search terms used to return relevant articles were as follows: *aboriginal* OR *aborigine* OR *aborigines* OR *aborigine's* (case insensitive). The terms *Indigenous* and *First Nations* were not included in the search syntax because such terms are commonly used to refer to Indigenous peoples worldwide and therefore less likely to capture articles that are about Australia. The search syntax covers both preferred (*Aboriginal* as adjective, including in the label *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander*) and dispreferred (*Aborigine[s]* as outdated label that many now consider offensive) terms of reference. Dispreferred terms were included to enable analysis of their potential use. A minimum threshold of three mentions of these terms was applied to exclude any articles containing only mentions in passing. Duplicate articles within the same publication were excluded and where an article was republished with edits, only the more recent version was retained. Duplicates published in different newspapers were retained as being representative of the widespread syndication of the news media industry in Australia (see Ricketson et al., 2021 for an account of the scale of redundancies and downsizings experienced in newsrooms). This also enables comparison of the number of articles published across newspapers. Finally, a minimum text length of 500 words was applied to ensure captions, truncated texts and text fragments were excluded. While this measure means that the corpus does not include all news coverage, it does make certain that texts of insufficient length for my purposes do not occur. Finally, individual texts were assigned codes consisting of a newspaper code (see Table 2), publication date, section code where applicable and number of words (e.g. AUS_26062019_NAT_1876.txt). The above settings returned 168 articles, resulting in a total token count of 146,798 for the corpus.

3.2 Methods

This study takes a corpus-assisted critical discourse analytical approach, which integrates the empirical reliability of corpus linguistic methods with the contextual sensitivity of critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Narrey & Mwinlaaru, 2019). The methodology outlined below consists of three phases, which correspond to three types of representation being analysed, as per Figure 1: phase 1 = terms of reference (→ naming), phase 2 = volume of coverage (→ visibility) and phase 3 = discourses (→ portrayal). Analyses of terms of reference and discourses are linguistic in nature, while analysis of the amount of coverage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs are afforded, is not. This choice is informed by the understanding that ‘discourse’ refers to ‘practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak’ which includes but is not limited to language (Foucault, 2013, p. 54). Thus, while language is central to this study and an important locus of representation, these elements form part of much larger semiotic structures which are also instantiated through non-linguistic means, such as the relative presence (or absence) of news items relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people(s).

3.2.1 Terms of reference

As a starting point for the first phase, analysing terms of reference, I used the corpus analytic program, WordSmith (Scott, 2017) to generate a wordlist, which lists all unique word forms in the corpus, along with their raw frequencies. I sorted the results alphabetically to search and identify terms of

interest (following Bednarek, 2020). Because wordlists return only single-word forms, I also used the WordSmith's cluster function to identify multi-word units, such as *First Nations*. As further discussed below, the analysis deliberately retrieves (preferred and dispreferred) terms of reference that were used for the retrieval of articles for the corpus (e.g. *Aboriginal*, *Aborigines*) and words that were not used in the corpus creation (e.g. *Indigenous*, *First Nations*). The combined list is provided in Section 4.1.

I then consulted concordances of each term to understand how they are used in the corpus and assess the application of the recommendations made in the media guidelines. Concordancers (i.e. Concord in WordSmith) collate every instance of a word form as it occurs in the corpus, along with some co-text to the left and right which can also be sorted alphabetically, allowing additional usage patterns to be observed. In particular, I analysed rates of capitalisation among preferred terms and the co-text of dispreferred terms to ascertain why they were chosen over those that are requested by community.

3.2.2 Volume of coverage

The second phase focussed on patterns in coverage volume. Gabrielatos and Baker (2008, p. 9) point out that '[n]ewspapers select, highlight, or reject content and decide on the extent and frequency of coverage according to their editorial policy or agenda'. In the studies discussed in Section 2.1, the amount of coverage that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people(s) and issues attract is usually quantified in terms of the number of articles, rather than word frequencies (as Baker et al. 2013b do, for example). Similarly, in their corpus-based study of representations of autism, Karaminis et al. (2023) used article counts to calculate a measure of newsworthiness over time (i.e. the number of articles referring to autism as a percentage of total articles published, calculated by year). Evidently, the number of news items which are published in relation to an issue is useful for understanding how (un)likely the topic is to be selected for coverage.

On this basis, article counts were also used in this study to investigate patterns in coverage volume and identify social and organisational factors that may have determined them. These factors included real-world events that drive temporal 'attention spikes' (following Baker et al., 2013a, p. 74), political orientation of the respective publications (Brookes, 2022; Burrows, 2004; Proudfoot & Habibis, 2013a), and finally, publication type (i.e. broadsheets versus tabloids, following Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008).

To analyse attention spikes, I divided the period covered by NCAN into sub-sections of one week (Monday to Sunday)⁴, counted the number of articles for each sub-section and plotted these figures over time. I then read the content of the articles contributing to each spike to determine the real-world event(s) that prompted the coverage increase. I also established article counts for right- and left-leaning publications and broadsheets and tabloids respectively, and compared their relative proportions to the overall make-up of the corpus to better understand how these factors might impact on the prioritisation of stories of relevance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In each case, I identify additional contextual factors—e.g. newsroom practices or other political forces—which may further explain the observed trends.

3.2.3 Discourses

The final phase investigates patterns in the discourses that are constructed in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people(s) using collocation analysis, also conducted in WordSmith. Collocation refers to the regular co-occurrence of two words that is statistically meaningful in some way (Baker, 2006, p. 95-96). When a word occurs within a specified span of the search term more (or less) often than expected, considering the individual frequencies of the two words across the corpus, it is returned as a collocater. Collocates give an indication of the ‘meanings and associations’ between words (Baker, 2006, p. 96), and in turn can help us understand how these linguistic patterns construct collective understandings of a concept, such as Aboriginality. The search term (or node) chosen for this study is *Aboriginal* as this is the most frequent and most widely used preferred term of reference in the corpus (n=715; see Section 4.1). It was also one of the four-word forms used to create the corpus (see Section 3.1), and is the most frequent among these word forms. Following Gabrielatos and Baker (2008), I set a span of five words to the left and right of the node (5L-5R) and used a combination of MI-Score and log-likelihood, with a minimum score of 3 and a p-value of 0.05 respectively. Finally, I set a minimum collocation frequency of 5 to ensure that the collocational patterns were not the result of article duplication (described in Section 3.1) alone. While cut-off parameters vary across the literature, these produced 72 collocates, a number large enough to be indicative of trends across the corpus but small enough to allow qualitative analysis.

Patterns of usage were again analysed using concordances, this time in two ways. Firstly, I consulted the concordance lines of each collocater to semantically group them into discourses, following Baker (2012), for example. I randomly down-sampled the concordances of each collocater to 25 lines (reducing a total of 1,530 lines to 824) and manually examined these to determine a predominant usage for each collocater and assign them to semantic categories. These categories—Groups, Governance, Business, Culture, Cooperation and Health and Welfare—were established inductively based on observed usages. The categorised collocater list is provided in Section 4.3 below. The second application of concordances was to analyse all lines of the collocates associated with one particular discourse (Business) to better understand its implications for representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people(s). Although collocates categorised as ‘Business’ were not the most frequent, Business discourse was chosen for closer analysis because it appears to challenge the discourses of economic failure and counter-capitalism identified in Section 2.3.2. In particular, I analysed whether journalists follow media guidelines in avoiding negative, deficit framings and using strengths-based language. To do so, I made use of the concept of *appraisal* (alternatively known as *evaluation* or *stance* in linguistics, see Bednarek 2006 for an overview). Appraisal is concerned with the attitudes and stances speakers/writers take up in relation to the things they talk about and the people they talk to, and how these attitudes are encoded in language (Martin & White, 2005). Appraisal resources in English are complex and detailed, with multiple sub-categories of meaning. However, owing to space constraints, this analysis is limited to positive vs negative attitude. This aligns both with Bednarek’s (2006) evaluative parameter of ‘emotivity’ (or evaluations of good/bad, approval/disapproval) and with the goal of identifying deficit and strengths-based language. More

specifically, positive and negative attitude—which is concerned with the expression of feelings and evaluations—will be analysed through identifying positive and negative lexis in relevant sentences that include the analysed collocates within the Business discourse, regardless of whether the attitude is explicit ('inscribed': e.g. *it's a win-win* [pos]; *have plagued us* [neg]) or implicit ('invoked': e.g. *they exceeded their goal* [pos]; *don't have the experience* [neg]). This type of analysis is undertaken in section 4.3, which focusses on the qualitative analysis of the Business discourse.

Figure 2 summarises the above methodology in line with Figure 1 above, showing how the methods align with the different types of representation introduced in Section 2. Section 4.1 analyses naming/terms of reference using a wordlist and concordances; Section 4.2 analyses visibility/coverage via article distribution; and certain elements of portrayal/discourses (namely, an unexpected discourse of economic success) are analysed using collocation, concordances and appraisal in Section 4.3. As stated above, inclusion/primary sourcing is not investigated in this study, but practices relating to secondary sourcing are noted where particularly relevant.

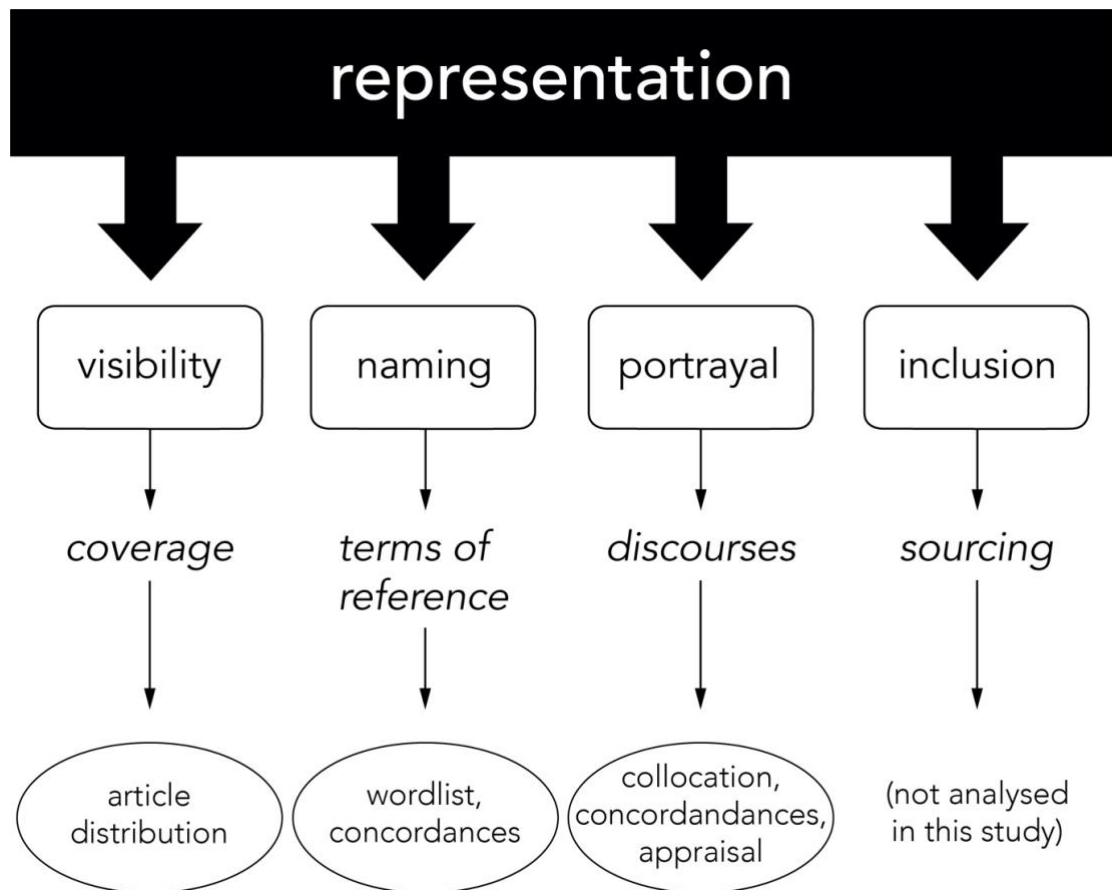


Figure 2. Media representation schema with methods applied in this study

4. Analysis

4.1 Naming Strategies: Terms of Reference

According to the various guidelines summarised in Table 1 above, culturally sensitive terms of reference are an important form of representation for First Nations people(s). As Canuto and Finlay (2021, p. 305) put it, ‘A small but essential act of self-determination for the original inhabitants of the nation now known as Australia is defining what we are called’. To identify relevant reference terms in NCAN, an alphabetised wordlist was consulted. The terms and their frequencies are listed in Table 3. As a reminder, both preferred and dispreferred terms of reference occur in the search syntax that was used to create the corpus, retrieving articles that contain either (see Section 3.1). Importantly, the actual frequencies in the corpus of the word forms used in corpus construction vary widely, with *Aboriginal* (n=715) far more frequent than *Aborigines* (n=40) and no occurrences of *Aborigine* or *Aborigine’s*. Terms that were not used to create the corpus also differ widely in frequency – for instance *Indigenous* is far more frequent than *First Nations* or *First people(s)*.

Term of reference	Tokens	Percentage
INDIGENOUS	805	44.21%
ABORIGINAL	715 ²	39.26%
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER	146	8.02%
FIRST NATIONS	57	3.13%
ABORIGINES	40	2.20%
FIRST PEOPLES	27	1.48%
FIRST PEOPLE	11	0.60%
ABORIGINAL AND/OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER	6	0.33%
FIRST AUSTRALIANS	6	0.33%
ABORIGINAL OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER	3	0.16%
ABORIGINALS	2	0.11%
FIRST PEOPLE’S	2	0.11%
INDIGENES	1	0.05%
TOTAL	1821	100.00

Table 3. Terms of reference in NCAN

As shown in Table 3, *Indigenous* is the most used term of reference (44.21% of the instances of reference terms identified here) despite not being included as a search term in the corpus construction. This is followed by *Aboriginal* (39.26%) and *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander* (8.02%). Another preferred term, *Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander*, accounts for 6 mentions (0.33%). The strongly dispreferred term *Aborigines*, on the other hand, occurs 40 times (2.2%) and in 23 separate articles. Since the guidelines in Table 1 are so clear about the racist origins of this term, its prevalence in such a recent corpus is problematic. The dispreferred nominal form *Aboriginals* also occurs twice, though the singular nominal form does not. The term *indigenes*

(0.05%) is not discussed in any of the guidelines cited in this study, but given its similarity to *Aborigines* in that its usage is pluralised and therefore nominal, it is also probably best avoided.

Despite its relative novelty, the term *First Nations* is well represented within the corpus with 57 tokens (3.13%). While the plural form *First Peoples* is in the majority (n=27, 1.48%), there are also 11 instances of *First People* and 2 of *First People's*. Singular forms, such as *First People* and *First Nation* (which did not occur in NCAN), are dispreferred because they imply homogeneity (PHAA, 2017). The dispreferred term *First Australians* also occurs 6 times (0.33%). In sum, the guidelines are applied inconsistently. The most preferred terms are, in general, the most frequent in the corpus, but Table 3 shows that problematic or dispreferred terms and forms still occur, even as recently as in 2019.

As mentioned above, the term *Aborigines* is considered by many Aboriginal people to be particularly offensive because ‘Historically, it has been used in racist contexts as a derogatory term to belittle or objectify Indigenous people’ (MDA, 2018, p. 5). It is therefore important to determine whether the tokens in NCAN occur in historical mentions or quotes or whether they ‘originate in the institutional voice of the newspaper’ (Bednarek, 2020, p. 7). Concordances reveal that just 18% of instances are truly historical in that they occur in the name of former organisations, government bodies or legislation, or in historical direct quotations. The newspaper could opt to include an editorial comment on the dispreferred status of the term, but none do. The below concordance lines exemplify such historical usages.

(1) Bodies such as the Federal Council for the Advancement of *Aborigines* and Torres Strait Islanders were highly active in the years before the change... (AGE 01/06/2019)⁵

This extract refers to a council which operated from 1958-1978. A further 20% of instances are used in describing past events, such as:

(2) ...*Aborigines* settled on outstations on tribal territories as the old mission system was wound down... (CRM 01/06/2019)

The event described in extract 2 occurred in the 1970s when use of the term *Aborigine* might have been the norm within secondary source materials such as policy documents and contemporaneous media accounts on which the article presumably draws. Nonetheless, it forms part of the editorial voice, and the language of any source materials could—and should—have been updated. The remaining 63% refer to Aboriginal people(s) in relation to recent events as the following demonstrates:

(3) QUT students argued computer rooms reserved for *Aborigines* was segregation. (DAT 13/05/2019)

This instance is in the voice of the respective newspaper and, among others, is authored by an editor themselves. The term appears in 9 of the 12 newspapers (75%), in broadsheets and tabloids, and in left- and right-leaning publications alike. Once again, the advice to avoid this term is followed in general—in that instances of *Aborigine* constitute only 2% of total references to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people(s) identified in the corpus—but it is not followed

consistently—in that all but three of the newspapers include at least one occurrence.

The guidelines all recommend that *Aboriginal*, *Torres Strait Islander*, *Indigenous* and *First Nations* be capitalised as a mark of respect. As seen in Figure 3, all instances of *Aboriginal* and(/or) *Torres Strait Islander* and *First Nations* in the corpus are capitalised, and 99.44% of instances of *Aboriginal* are capitalised. (*First Peoples* is not included because advice is not unanimous.) Only four instances of *aboriginal* occur, and within two articles (BRS 21/05/2019 and CAN 29/05/2019). The two instances in the *Canberra Times* occur in a direct quotation of Section 51 of the constitution, which was removed following a referendum in 1967, meaning they are historical usages. The instances in the *Brisbane Times* are current but attributed to an external source, also via a direct quote. It is not clear from the co-text whether the quote was reproduced directly from a written press release or transcribed by the author from speech and, therefore, within the level of editorial control. It does bear noting that all six further mentions of *Aboriginal* in the article are capitalised. Regardless, a total of two non-historical instances across the corpus, and just 0.2% of total instances of *Aboriginal*, shows notable consistency.

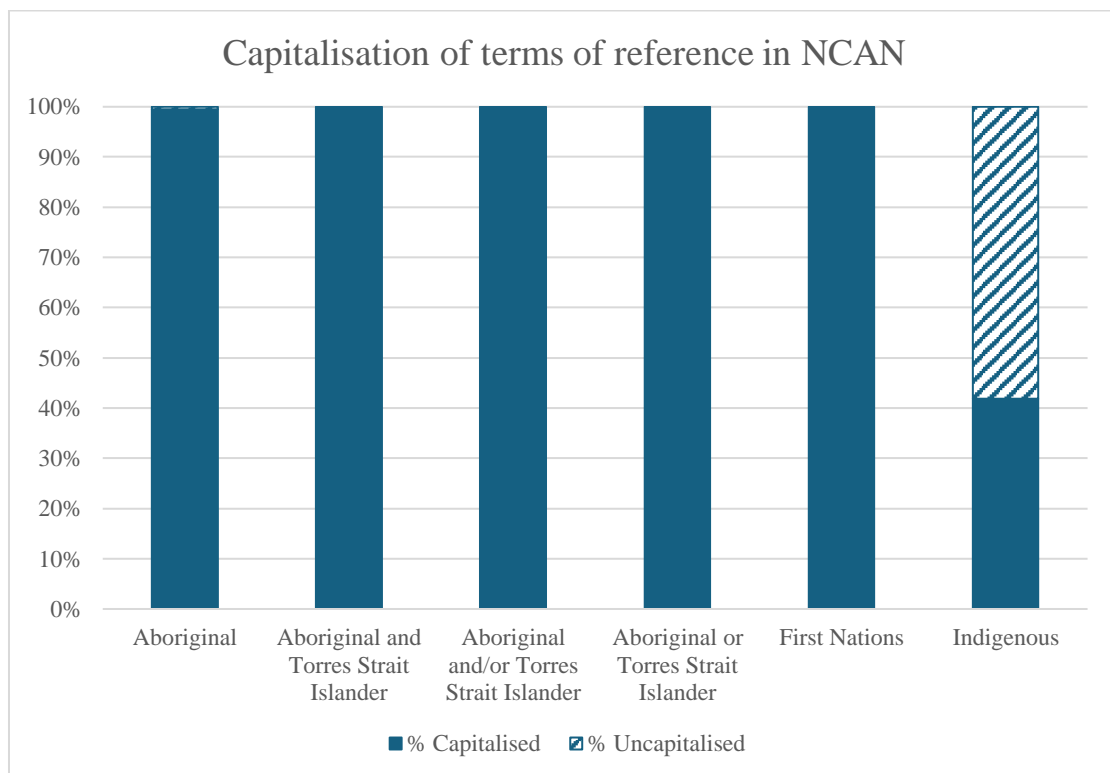


Figure 3. Percentages of capitalised tokens of terms of reference in NCAN

On the other hand, capitalisation of *Indigenous* is highly variable and depends upon political stance, as shown in Figures 4-5. Only 58.1% of instances of *Indigenous* are capitalised, confirming a trend identified by Bednarek (2020) that lack of capitalisation of these terms is widespread in diabetes news coverage. Figures 4 and 5 show the proportions of capitalised to non-capitalised tokens for each newspaper. In all four left-leaning publications, capitalisation is well above 90% (Figure 4). In right-leaning publications, capitalisation

ranges from 40% in the *Northern Territory News* to 0% in *The Advertiser* and *The Daily Telegraph* (Figure 5). Information about community expectations regarding capitalisation is readily available, being addressed in all of the guidelines consulted here, which in turn suggests a degree of resistance to this feedback on the part of right-leaning publications.

Indeed, conventions like capitalisation are often governed by a house style guide. The Fairfax Media stylebook (2010; Fairfax Media owned all four left-leaning publications at the time of corpus construction) indeed directs journalists to capitalise both *Aboriginal* and *Torres Strait Islander* and *Indigenous*. This goes some way to explaining the high degree of consistency seen in those publications. News Corp (owner of the right-leaning *Australian*, *Advertiser*, *Courier Mail*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Herald Sun*, *Hobart Mercury* and *Northern Territory News*), on the other hand, has faced criticism of its guidelines on language regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identities (Burton-Bradley, 2018). In general, whether or not a token is capitalised depends on a range of factors beyond just political ideology (e.g. references to ‘indigenous flora and fauna’ or capitalised organisation names). In NCAN, however, such usages account for only two instances of *indigenous*, in SMH 18/04/2019 and SMH 31/05/2019 respectively. These trends indicate that a house style can be influential in journalistic practice and suggest an area for improvement for individual newspapers, especially right-leaning ones. To improve consistency further—given the time pressures under which journalists work—it would be possible to also update the relevant spell-checker used by newspapers such that capitalisation is the default option, and any non-capitalised instances are automatically flagged.

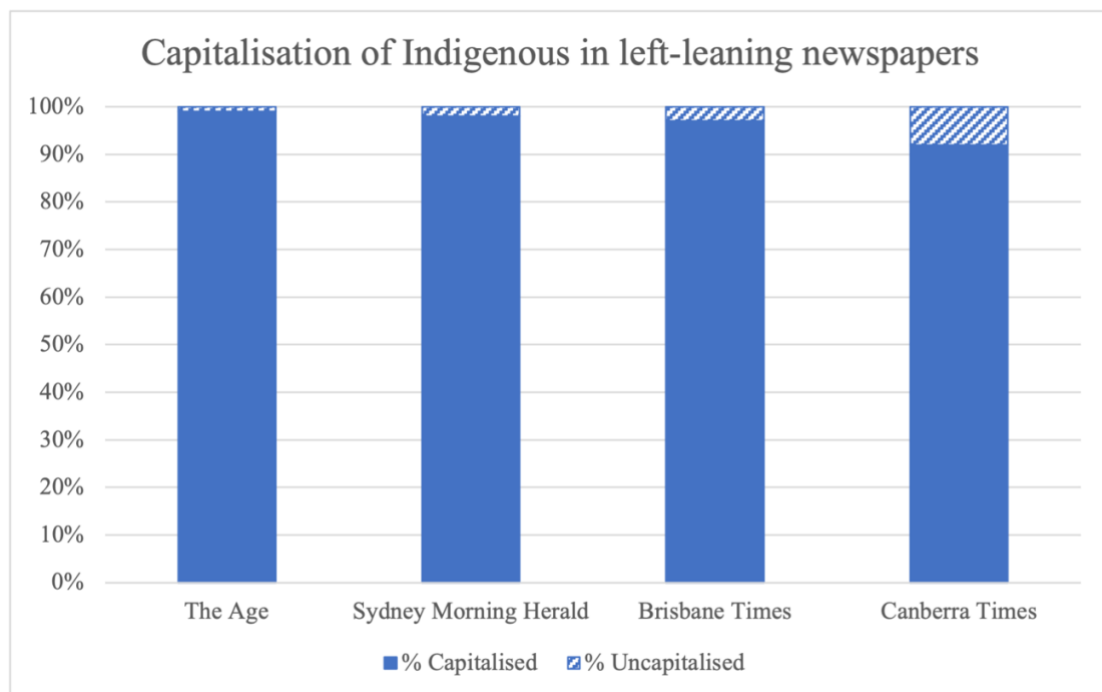


Figure 4. Percentages of capitalised tokens of *Indigenous* in left-leaning newspapers

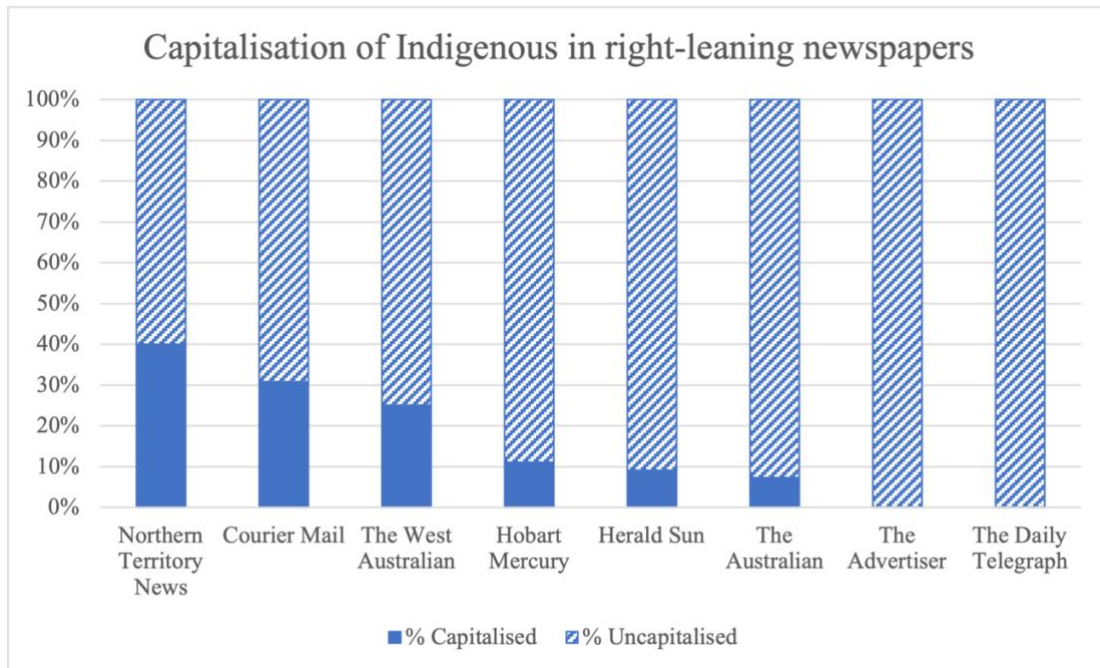


Figure 5. Percentages of capitalised tokens of *Indigenous* in right-leaning newspapers

4.2 Visibility: Patterns of Coverage in NCAN

This section considers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation in terms of the volume of coverage that these matters attract, and attempts to identify the contextual factors that help to determine these volumes. As outlined in 3.2.2, the spread of articles across time, according to political orientation and according to publication style are all analysed. Regarding the temporal spread of articles, the visualisation presented in Figure 6 below revealed a series of attention spikes. The major spike in Week 10 relates to the second anniversary of the First Nations National Constitutional Convention and the reading of the Uluru Statement from the Heart (<https://ulurustatement.org/the-statement>),⁶ a major initiative on the part of First Nations activists from across Australia. 24 of the 46 articles (52.2%) discuss matters relating to the Statement, constitutional recognition or an Indigenous Voice to Parliament—these were key recommendations from the statement. The remaining 22 articles cover other stories about First Nations issues, perhaps in response to National Reconciliation Week which also falls at this time.

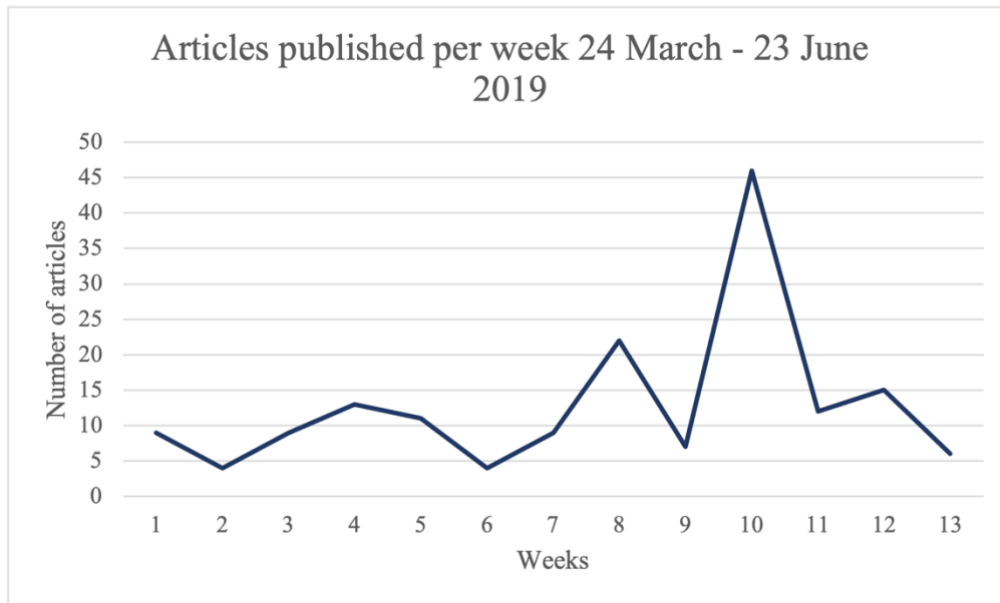


Figure 6. Total articles published in each week of NCAN

The spike in Week 8 coincides with the publication of an edition of *The Australian's* magazine 'The Deal' dedicated to First Nations business (Trinca, 2019). The smaller spikes in Weeks 4-5 and Week 12 are due to small numbers of articles being published on a wide range of stories, indicating no correlation to a major event or initiative. This is by no means a negative finding; that journalists cover minor stories related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and matters indicates diversity. Nonetheless, both First Nations-led initiatives like the Constitutional Convention and coverage initiatives of individual newspapers like that seen in *The Australian's* 'The Deal' can positively impact the amount of coverage these issues attract.

Baker et al. (2013) demonstrate that political orientation can influence the level of coverage of stories about minorities. When the number of articles in NCAN published in each newspaper (see Table 2 above) are collapsed into two totals according to left- and right-leaning political orientation, this trend seems to be supported. Though there are twice as many right-leaning newspapers ($n=8$; see Table 2 above) as left-leaning ($n=4$), the left-leaning publications contribute just over half the total articles (51.2%). However, this correlation is not absolute. *The Australian* (which is right-leaning) contributes the highest numbers of articles of all publications ($n=41$). Despite its conservative stance, McCallum (2013) found, in an analysis of coverage of First Nations health, that *The Australian's* was most extensive, noting that Indigenous affairs is a major campaigning theme for the newspaper. Since a left-leaning orientation does not categorically correlate to more articles published on this topic, political orientation alone does not seem to be strongly determinant of levels of coverage. Additionally, the low rates of capitalisation demonstrated above highlight that more coverage, as argued for by researchers who criticise current volumes of coverage (see Section 2.2), does not necessarily mean that this coverage is respectful or culturally sensitive. What *The Australian* shares with the left-leaning publications is its type—the five newspapers with the highest number of articles are broadsheets. When the articles published in tabloids and broadsheets are tallied respectively, the difference in distribution is marked

(see Table 4 below). Although broadsheets are again in a minority (5 titles compared to 7) they contribute 76% of total articles. The 500-word minimum applied during corpus construction is likely to impact these frequencies since tabloid articles tend to be shorter than those in broadsheets; however this could not be verified. Nonetheless, among longer articles, which are perhaps more likely to contain sustained discussion of relevant matters, broadsheets are in the majority.

Publication	Articles: Tabloids	Articles: Broadsheets
<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	7	
<i>Herald Sun</i>	4	
<i>The Courier Mail</i>	8	
<i>The Advertiser</i>	9	
<i>Hobart Mercury</i>	3	
<i>Northern Territory News</i>	6	
<i>The West Australian</i>	4	
<i>The Australian</i>		41
<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>		40
<i>The Age</i>		15
<i>Brisbane Times</i>		11
<i>Canberra Times</i>		20
Total	41	127

Table 4. Article counts for tabloids and broadsheets

Bacon (2005) notes that having a dedicated Indigenous affairs correspondent on staff greatly improves the overall level and breadth of coverage of First Nations issues. This is a practice that all five broadsheets share and that the tabloids do not. At the time of writing, Paige Taylor is Indigenous Affairs Correspondent for *The Australian*,⁷ and Cameron Gooley⁸ and Jack Latimore⁹ fill this role for publications owned by the media company Nine. Though it must be born in mind that a range of journalists authored the articles in the broadsheet newspapers in NCAN, the finding that the newspapers employing dedicated Indigenous affairs reporters produced more coverage overall does seem to support Bacon's (2005) assertion that having an Indigenous affairs correspondent can contribute to an organisational culture where these stories are prioritised.

4.3 Portrayal: A Discourse of Business and Commerce

The final type of representation to be considered is portrayal, which in this study is approached by analysing collocation patterns. As outlined in Section 3.2, the collocation analysis identified 72 collocates which were categorised into the discourses shown in Table 5. The discourses that emerge from this analysis include Groups (collocates relating to general and specific groups of people), Governance (collocates pointing to government, law, law enforcement), Business (collocates relating to economics), Culture (collocates pointing to

heritage, art, etc), Cooperation (collocates relating to collaboration/partnership) and Health and Welfare (collocates pointing to aspects of medical and other welfare). Most of these categories of portrayal are expected, given what is known from previous research (see Section 2), and are discussed in more detail in Bray (2022). Two categories are more unexpected: Cooperation and Business. Since Bray (2022) includes discussion of how the discourse of Cooperation is linguistically constructed, and given the limitations of space, I will focus here on qualitative analysis of the second unexpected discourse, i.e. the category of Business. Given the discourse of economic failure described in Section 2.3.2, how notions of commerce relate to First Nations representation in NCAN is of interest. In particular, I focus on whether the businesses being discussed are Aboriginal owned or operated and, using appraisal analysis, whether these dealings are characterised by the kinds of deficit framings that the language guidelines advise against.

			Total types	Average log-likelihood
Groups	General	<i>people, peoples, leaders, women, children, community, communities, carers, groups, remote, region, residents person, population</i>	19	179.88
	Ethnicities	<i>Torres, Strait, Islander, Islanders, European</i>		
Governance	Government	<i>affairs, Burney, peak, director, nation's, minister, department</i>	15	12.62
	Law	<i>licensing, declared, owners, agreement, recognition, laws</i>		
	Law Enforcement	<i>officers, police</i>		
Business		<i>corporation, controlled, businesses, organisations, owned, owners[†], organisation, employment, executive, business, training</i>	11	15.50
Health and Welfare		<i>health, legal, service, medical, problems, rate, responsibility, strategy, protect, living</i>	10	9.44
Cooperation		<i>partnerships, division, consultation, relationship, with, between</i>	6	13.99

Culture	<i>flag, heritage, artists, clothing, cultural, stories</i>	6	26.42
Other	<i>hand, move, using, trying, many, among</i>	6	5.85
†Collocate owners was double-classified because its uses were equally split between Law and Business.			

Table 5. Collocates of *Aboriginal* in NCAN

The 11 collocates related to Business (significance and frequency information is shown in Table 6), will be discussed in three groups: words for ‘business’ (*corporation, business(es), organisation(s)*); words for ownership/control (*controlled, owned, owners*) and words related to employment/instruction (*employment, training*).

Starting with the first group, five collocates are singular and plural forms for semantically similar words for ‘business’: *corporation, businesses, organisations, organisation* and *business*. Beginning with the most statistically significant collocate, *corporation*, all 17 instances refer to Aboriginal owned or controlled corporations. Most of these are traditional owner corporations which manage the lands awarded in Native Title rulings—such as Olkola Corporation. Others provide essential services to remote communities, like Mutitjulu Community Aboriginal Corporation. Close to half of the instances of *corporation* (47.37%) introduce a representative of the named corporation as a source on some other issue such as government-mandated dry zones or tourism in Queensland. (The majority of instances of *executive* are used the same way—this is not analysed further.) The person providing this commentary is often Aboriginal, which is noteworthy given previous findings that First Nations voices are underrepresented (Section 2.4).

Collocate	Log-likelihood score	Collocation frequency
corporation	53.7	17
controlled	21.5	6
businesses	19.5	13
organisations	18.2	9
owned	14.5	6
owners	10.3	9
organisation	8.0	6
employment	7.2	9
executive	6.9	8
business	6.5	9
training	4.2	5

Table 6. Collocates of *Aboriginal* referencing business in NCAN

Second to *corporation* in statistical significance is *businesses* (n=13). Again, all instances refer to Aboriginal owned businesses. Constructions include ‘Aboriginal **businesses**’, ‘Aboriginal people DO X in their **businesses**’, ‘Aboriginal owners of X **businesses**’ and so on. The concordances show that,

unlike *corporation*, these businesses are the predominant topic of discussion. Attitude (hereafter shown underlined) is also much more frequent. One instance positively appraises Aboriginal business practices:

(4) Aboriginal **businesses** will naturally employ *Aboriginal* people. It's a win-win [pos] for us. (AUS 17/05/2019)

The remaining 88.88% of Attitude resources register negative evaluations of challenges faced by the businesses. This is primarily achieved through negative affect (i.e. emotion terms) attributed to Aboriginal business owners, for example:

(5) We're all bewildered [neg] at the moment, trying to figure out why Aboriginal people should not use the *Aboriginal* flag in their **businesses**. (SMH 12/06/2019)

Alternatively, the challenges themselves are negatively appraised:

(6) Blaze Kwaymullina has seen the horror stories [neg] that have plagued [neg] many *Aboriginal* **businesses**... (AUS 17/05/2019)

Although Aboriginal businesses are covered, they are constructed as facing significant difficulty. First Nations successes (e.g. owning a business) are therefore couched in discussion of deficit, invoking the kinds of deficit discourse the language guidelines advise against (see Bamblett, 2011; Fforde et al., 2013; Gardiner, 2003 for similar findings).

Uses of the singular form *business* (shown in Figure 7) are slightly more varied. Of 9 instances, 5 reference Aboriginal owned businesses (lines 1-3, 8 and 9). Three refer to business as a general concept (e.g. *everyday business* in line 6). The remaining instance (line 7) refers to another challenge, that of 'black cladding', the practice of non-Aboriginal owned businesses 'seeking out Aboriginal partners, figureheads and front men/women to present their business as an Aboriginal organisation'. The practice receives strong negative appraisal in the following clause attributed to the author and Murri woman, Kristy Masella: *It makes me ill to watch*.

N	Concordance	File
1	started selling boomerangs 25 years ago and has grown into a commercial business that works with Aboriginal artists to sell fabric products all over the world. "I just don't know what to believe - I thought as	BRS_11062019_744.txt
2	started selling boomerangs 25 years ago and has grown into a commercial business that works with Aboriginal artists to sell fabric products all over the world. "I just don't know what to believe - I thought as	AGE_12062019_532.txt
3	started selling boomerangs 25 years ago and has grown into a commercial business that works with Aboriginal artists to sell fabric products all over the world. "I just don't know what to believe - I thought as	SMH_12062019_667.txt
4	there are around 57 different agencies and groups responsible for northern Australian business - that's not Aboriginal business only, it's mainstream business as well. We need to streamline that, and the	AUS_17052019_2321.txt
5	artwork and plaques will also be displayed at specific police facilities, officers will make more visits to Aboriginal communities and a business case will be undertaken for increasing understanding of	WEA_28052018_496.txt
6	views on that, but what's not up for debate is it's pretty clear in all the mining and oil and gas sector that Aboriginal engagement is considered everyday business," he says. "If you're out of step with that, you	AUS_17052019_694.txt
7	seeking out token Aboriginal partners, figureheads and front men/women to present their business as an Aboriginal organisation - "black cladding". It makes me ill to watch mainstream businesses sniffing out	AUS_17052019_2321.txt
8	were made in Indonesia, the court found. Clothing the Gap is part of Spark Health Australia, an Aboriginal owned business that runs health and wellbeing programs for the Indigenous community in	BRS_11062019_744.txt
9	were actually made in Indonesia, the court found. Clothing the Gap is part of Spark Health Australia, an Aboriginal owned business that runs health and wellbeing programs for the Indigenous community in	SMH_12062019_667.txt

Figure 7. *Aboriginal + business* concordances

Two further collocates related to Business are *organisation* and *organisations*, which occur 6 and 9 times respectively (Figures 8 and 9). Aside from line 5, the instances of *organisation* do not contribute significantly to the Business theme.¹⁰ The majority of concordances of *organisations* (88.88%), on the other hand, do demonstrate sustained discussion of Aboriginal controlled business. Three lines describe challenges faced by the organisations: black cladding (line 9), bullying by non-Aboriginal companies (line 6) and funding limitations (line 4). This negativity is counterbalanced by 6 instances of

solutions, namely additional funding and policy intervention from the government (lines 1-4, 5 and 8). The media language guidelines (PHAA, 2017; RA, n.d.) state, however, that to counter deficit discourses, the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities should be reflected in the language used to talk about them. Discussion of the solution of additional funding may be preferable to a discussion of the issues only, but since it originates with the government, i.e. outside the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities concerned, it does not reflect their strengths or resilience.

N	Concordance	File
1	will co-chair the first meeting of the joint council alongside Pat Turner, the chief executive of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation and on behalf of the Coalition of Peaks. "The	AUS_27032019_NAT_542.txt
2	is uppermost in many Aboriginal leaders' minds. Closing the Gap is another urgent priority. National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation head Pat Turner has welcomed Wyatt's	AUS_31052019_NQ_2099.txt
3	do. A central tenet of the principles is the need to ensure that the Aboriginal community, and specifically an Aboriginal community controlled organisation , is involved in all decisions affecting an Aboriginal child in	CAN_10062019_OPN_1030.txt
4	seeking out token Aboriginal partners , figureheads and front men/women to present their business as an Aboriginal organisation - "black cladling". It makes me ill to watch mainstream businesses sniffing out	AUS_17052019_2321.txt
5	Treasurer, Deputy Premier and minister for indigenous partnerships, Jackie Trad, met with an Aboriginal organisation , Okolota Corporation , to discuss mining bans on its land. Trad said she was	AUS_27052019_COM_772.txt
6	plan, the highest across all states. Last year Victoria adopted an approach that enables the head of an Aboriginal organisation to assume full legal responsibility for an Aboriginal child, with the aim of providing	AGE_18042019_699.txt

Figure 8. Aboriginal + organisation concordances

N	Concordance	File
1	The Morrison government is funding a coalition of peak Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations "to change the way governments and indigenous	AUS_27032019_NAT_542.txt
2	governments can take," she said. Ms Espinosa urged the state government to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to implement a number of reforms, including	CAN_28032019_498.txt
3	governments can take," she said. Ms Espinosa urged the state government to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to implement a number of reforms, including	SMH_28032019_533.txt
4	ongoing training to CYPFS staff on culture and unconscious bias. More funding should also be provided to Aboriginal community controlled organisations to provide early support to families. Further, we believe	CAN_09052019_750.txt
5	"Our communities see our services as being crucial in their lives and when we've seen the demise of many Aboriginal community controlled organisations by this government with the reduction of funding, we are	CAN_10042019_559.txt
6	people. It's a win win for us. It's also been interesting to watch the other side of the story ... the dark side: Aboriginal organisations being bullied into joint ventures or one sided "partnerships" because	AUS_17052019_2321.txt
7	walked this country for millennia. On that timeline, 250 years is such a short part. Local government, local Aboriginal organisations , settler and convict descendants and recently arrived peoples are all wanting to	HOM_28052019_OPD_891.txt
8	the high rates of incarceration, funding for rehabilitation and reintegration programs should be allocated to Aboriginal owned and led organisations . As Aboriginal people, we know what our communities need. We	AGE_01062019_OPN_555.txt
9	solutions to the scale needed to hit government targets; mainstream organisations seeking out token Aboriginal partners , figureheads and front men/women to present their business as an Aboriginal	AUS_17052019_2321.txt

Figure 9. Aboriginal + organisations concordances

Moving on to the second group of collocates, these three collocates are semantically related and refer to ownership/control: *controlled*, *owned* and *owners*. Five of 6 instances of *controlled* occur in relation to Aboriginal controlled businesses and one to an area of land 'controlled by [...] Aboriginal culture' (SMH 01/06/2019). Five of 6 instances of *owned* discuss Aboriginal owned businesses and one refers to 'Aboriginal owned land' (NTN 12/06/2019). Similarly, 4 instances of *owners* occur within the phrase *Aboriginal owners of two clothing businesses*, while the remaining 5 instances refer to the traditional owners of land, a designation that is awarded under Native Title legislation contributing to a possible legal discourse. It bears mentioning that the notion of land ownership itself has been described as a Western, capitalist concept (Rigsby, 1999). As such, we can think of even the instances of *owners* which refer to traditional land ownership as implicitly reinforcing a capitalist discourse.

The final group of the Business collocates includes *employment* and *training*. Four instances of *employment* refer to the recruitment company Aboriginal Employment Strategy which is (implicitly) positively appraised as *encourag[ing] Indigenous women into construction and engineering careers* (SMH 24/04/2019). Two further positive constructions occur:

(7) They exceeded their goal [pos] for *Aboriginal employment* hours by something like five times... (AUS 17/05/2019)

(8) Coles said it sought guidance [pos] from *Aboriginal employment* specialists big and small... (AUS 24/06/2019)

The remaining 3 instances register negative circumstances:

(9) 2 instances of ‘an impediment [neg] to *Aboriginal employment*’... (AUS 17/05/2019)

(10)...don’t have the experience [neg]...to deliver *Aboriginal employment* solutions to the scale required... (AUS 17/05/2019)

The uses of *training* are also mixed, two duplicate lines appraise rates of training among Aboriginal people as *still not good* [neg] (AUS 17/05/2019 and AUS 17/05/2019). Two further lines name Aboriginal people who have ‘completed training via the Aboriginal Employment Strategy programs’ (SMH 24/04/2019) and mining company ‘Rio’s *Aboriginal* Training and Liaison division’ (AUS 17/05/2019), and one notes Northern Territory company, CfAT’s future investment in ‘training *Aboriginal* people’ (NTN 12/06/2019).

In sum, the Aboriginal people being referred to are most often discussed as business owners (58.58% of total collocations relating to business)—and occasionally as benefitting from employment and training (22.22%)—constructing them as economically successful. Given the discourses of economic failure described in previous studies (see Section 2.3.2), it is understandable that stories of First Nations people engaging in the economic sphere might be considered newsworthy. Indeed, *The Deal* editor, Helen Trinca, describes First Nations business owners as ‘Not so much good news stories as GREAT news stories’ (Trinca, 2019), suggesting that stories which reproduce this idea are selected for publication at the editorial/organisation level. Moreover, significant column space is dedicated to highlighting and negatively appraising the challenges Aboriginal business owners face. However, only 6 collocations offer concrete solutions (33.33%) compared to 12 mentions of problems (66.66%), and these solutions amount to additional funding from the government rather than solutions originating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people(s) as the following statement from FreeTV Australia (n.d., [online]) recommends:

Balanced portrayal is particularly important when the reports or programs deal with negative aspects of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ lives. Descriptions of problems should, where possible, be balanced by details of efforts being made by the people themselves to resolve them.

Moreover, Section 2.3.2 identified that cost to the taxpayer is a recurrent theme in coverage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people(s) (Belfer et al., 2017; Browne et al., 2018; Morris, 2005). As such, the focus on aid from the government, and the implication that First Nations people(s) need help, does not adhere to the recommended ‘strength-based approach’ (RA, n.d., p. 2).

Finally, while a discourse of economic success is a positive finding in that it challenges the deficit discourse of economic failure identified in Section 2.3.2, it is imperative that this is not the only type of First Nations success that is publicised. As Wiradjuri, Kamilaroi and Dharawal man and veteran journalist, Stan Grant (2020, [online]) states: ‘Individual academic or economic achievement is not the only measurement of success. Keeping our culture, languages, kinship alive is essential to who we are’. Of course, detailed analysis of the other categories has not been undertaken here and we cannot therefore rule out the presence of more positive constructions. However, Bray (2022) found that the Cooperation discourse, the other seemingly positive discourse, in fact served to disempower First Nations people(s) in relation to

governmental actors by syntactically demoting them away from the Subject positions that carry full discursive agency. Further research would be required to ascertain the prevalence of deficit versus strengths-based language in the other semantic categories as well. This notwithstanding, to focus on economic success at the expense of other positive stories would risk reinforcing the notion that in order to be considered successful, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people(s) must be ‘assimilated’ (Grant, 2020) to the dominant capitalist system, a system which does not align with many traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldviews (Lloyd, 2010; Rigsby, 1999). Both the capitalist system and the notion of assimilation are inherently colonial. As such, in the interest of genuinely fair and self-determinant reporting, this economic success discourse ought to be supplemented with other positive non-economic discourses.

5. Conclusion

As demonstrated throughout this study, according to both academics and First Nations activists, representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people(s) and issues are lacking. This study has analysed such representations by first systematically mapping the forms of representation identified in previous research, before combining analysis of three different types of representation: visibility (amount of coverage), naming (terms of reference), and portrayal (discourses).

In analysing the visibility of First Nations people(s) and issues in the media space, I identified a number of practices which can influence levels of coverage. Both newspaper initiatives and activism by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people(s) have an important role to play in increasing coverage of relevant stories. I also demonstrated that a broadsheet newspaper type was a stronger indicator for a high level of coverage than political orientation. This is likely due, at least in part, to the tendency of broadsheets to publish longer, more critical and political stories (Tiffen, 2011, p. 48-50). However, it was also suggested that employing a First Nations affairs correspondent—a practice of all broadsheets in the corpus—can help foster an organisational culture which prioritises coverage of issues relevant to First Nations people(s). Regarding naming strategies, while the most preferred terms of reference are generally the most frequent across the corpus, use of dispreferred terms and forms persists. In this area, the right/left-leaning distinction was relevant, with left-leaning newspapers performing significantly better in the use of naming strategies than right-leaning newspapers. House style guides were also identified as influential but not fully deterministic of language use, and a suggestion was made to update spell-checkers to improve consistency. Finally, a new discourse of economic success was uncovered. Importantly, this discourse runs counter to a discourse of social dysfunction due to economic disengagement that had previously been described. This may in turn suggest either that there has been improvement in the earlier discourse, or that this insight was brought to light by using a larger or more diverse dataset. Nonetheless, I showed that prioritisation of economic success stories was largely an editorial (and therefore organisational) choice and that highlighting other forms of success is another way to improve First Nations representation.

This study also identified several areas for future research. Firstly, more complete analysis of each of the types of representation would be welcome, including systematic analysis of sourcing patterns in NCAN. Whether sourcing practices have seen improvement since the studies discussed in Section 2.4 is of particular interest, as the majority of this research was produced more than twenty years ago. Analysis of each of the types of representation would also benefit from a corpus covering a period of more than three months. Strong claims about overall visibility of First Nations people(s) and issues in the media space, in particular, would require a more robust sample. A period of coverage which did not include an anniversary of the Uluru Statement from the Heart may demonstrate lower levels of coverage than was the case here, for example.

Despite these limitations, this study has sharpened our understanding of media representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people(s) in important ways. Systematically mapping the forms of representation discussed in the (academic and non-academic) literature is an important step in understanding the nature and scope of the problem, as well as some ways in which it might be addressed. Rethinking representation through the lens of four different types (visibility, naming, portrayal, inclusion) could additionally prove helpful in critical analysis of media representation of other marginalised communities, whether such analysis is linguistic or non-linguistic in nature. Moreover, by linking patterns in coverage and terms of reference to organisational practices which condition them, the study has deepened our understanding of how hegemonic ideas and absences come to be instantiated in texts via institutional norms. These, of course, are useful findings for practitioners of (both traditional and corpus-based) CDA who investigate news media, but they also have important implications for journalistic practice. Regarding linguistic features such as terms of reference and capitalisation, there may be scope for this to be implemented automatically (e.g. via a spell-checker adjustment). These insights, as well as the linguistic construction of the economic success discourse through lexis and appraisal resources, have the capacity to make an important contribution to journalism pedagogy around reporting on marginalised groups of all kinds, the need for which has been repeatedly highlighted in the literature (Johnston, 1991; McCallum & Holland, 2010; O'Donnell, 2003). Finally, the analysis highlighted the impact of political initiatives by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people(s), illustrated through the extensive media coverage attracted by the Uluru Statement. This emphasises the strength and agency of First Nations peoples themselves. As Yidinji man Kootsy Canuto states, 'We may be few, but we are fierce, resilient and determined, but what we are not is equal, and we are not getting a fair go or receiving proper acknowledgement or respect' (Canuto & Finlay, 2021).

Notes

1. Census data relating to the First Nations populations of Aurukun and Palm Island is available at <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/ILOC31000901> and <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/IQSLGA30250> respectively.
2. In calculating token frequencies, hyphens separated words (to exclude non-Aboriginal, for example) and apostrophes were treated as characters. This total includes one instance of *Aborginal* which is taken to be a typo.

3. I so titled the corpus to pay respect to the traditional custodians of the land on which it was compiled; *ngaraguun* is the Dharug word meaning ‘researching language’.
4. The final date included in the corpus (24/06/2019) fell outside the final seven-day period and thus was excluded. As only one article was published on this date, the impact on results was negligible.
5. The abbreviations used to refer to individual articles are established in Table 2.
6. The Uluru Statement from the Heart is a collective statement made by delegates of the convention regarding their desires for constitutional recognition.
7. <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/author/Paige%20Taylor>
8. <https://www.smh.com.au/by/cameron-gooley-p4yway>
9. <https://www.theage.com.au/by/jack-latimore-p4ywbz>
10. Two instances name the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation in discussing a forum on welfare (lines 1 and 2). Line 4 was already discussed above in relation to the practice of ‘black cladding’. Lines 3 and 6 describe solutions to concerns around foster care.

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