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Reading between the crimes: Online media's representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's interaction with the criminal justice system in post-apology Australia

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**Reading between the crimes: Online media's representation
of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's interaction
with the criminal justice system in post-apology Australia**

Jonathan Cannon

This thesis is presented in partial fulfilment of the degree of

Master of Criminal Justice by Research

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Edith Cowan University

2018

USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

Abstract

Australian research confirms that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience high levels of social inequality, racism and injustice. Evidence of discrimination and inequality is most obvious within the criminal justice system where they are seriously over-represented. The Australian news media plays a large part in reinforcing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inequality, stereotypes and racist ideology within specific situations such as the Northern Territory Emergency Response and the Redfern riots. This study widens the scope from how the media reports a single criminal justice event to how the media reports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's interaction with the criminal justice system. The study relies on Norman Fairclough's (2003) theory of critical discourse analysis to analyse critically 25 Australian online news media articles featuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Specifically, the study applies Fairclough's (2003) three assumptive categories (existential, propositional and value). It identifies discourse reinforcing dominance and inequality within those media articles and reveals two major findings. The first significant finding is the unwillingness of any article to challenge or question the power structures that reinforce or lead to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inequality. The second major finding involves three ideologies within the text communicating racism and inequality: neo-colonial, neo-liberal assimilation and paternalistic ideologies. The concern is that although the twenty-five news media articles appear neutral, the critical analysis reveals racist ideologies being communicated and an unwillingness to challenge the power structures that create these. This position suggests that racism is not just a problem of a bygone era—it is a contemporary issue continuing at a deeper level nestled in the underlying assumptions and ideologies found within news media discourse. These findings would bring awareness to the media's discursive practices and generate further discussion and research to address the discursive structures responsible for perpetuating the systemic harm to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

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List of Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
APC	Australian Press Council
CDA	Critical discourse analysis
CJS	Criminal justice system
CL	Critical linguistics
CLP	Country Liberal Party
FSL	Functional systemic linguistics
MEAA	Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance
NT	Northern Territory
NTER	Northern Territory Emergency Response
PTSD	Post-traumatic stress disorder
RCIADIC	Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody
SOWIP	State of the world's Indigenous peoples
WA	Western Australia

Chapter 1: Introducing Media Influence and Indigenous Inequality

In 2008, the then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd officially apologised for the laws, policies and government decisions that “inflicted profound grief”, particularly the stolen generations. The apology was made to “remove a great stain from the nation’s soul and, in a true spirit of reconciliation, to open a new chapter in the history of this great land” (*Apology to Australia’s Indigenous peoples*, 2008, p. 1). Although the event was a landmark moment in Australian history, it was not the end of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s experiences of inequality (Watson, 2011). Watson (2011) summarised the situation best, stating, “The more things change, the more they stay the same” (p. 905). Watson (2011) was referring to the sadly ironic removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families in the Northern Territory (NT) during and after Kevin Rudd’s apology. I use Rudd’s (*Apology to Australia’s Indigenous peoples*, 2008) speech and Watson’s (2011) comments to illustrate that while much progress has been made, there is still a long way to go to achieve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander equality within the dominant white society.

Foucault (1977) argued that often we mistake the present for the pinnacle of societal development when we should see it as just another point in history and subject to critique. Just because we are in the present does not mean we are not subject to the social problems of the past, such as racism and inequality. Jang (2015, p. 17) contended, “The issue of Indigenous people, and its place in discourses surrounding racism, is among the most complex and divisive in Australia today”. Racism is still a contemporary issue within Australia, although it is now been argued as kinder, sanitised and harder to detect than it was before (Bullimore, 1999; Proudfoot & Habibis, 2015).

Budarick and King (2008) and Proudfoot and Habibis (2015) used frame analysis and critical discourse analysis (CDA) to research racism in the news associated with a single criminal justice event, such as the Redfern riots and the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER). Both studies found that the Australian media presented a negative and racist portrayal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities. The aim of this study is to expand upon these two studies by widening the scope from a single criminal justice event, to include the media’s coverage of Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander people's relations with the criminal justice system (CJS). This thesis's understanding of CJS is defined as "the people, processes, institutions and laws associated with defining, monitoring and enforcement of the rules, for which the breach attracts a financial or custodian sanction" (Butt & Hamer, 2011, p. 106). This study aims to investigate how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's interactions with the CJS are portrayed in Australian news media post apology.

1.1 Defining Indigenous

The initial two challenges when beginning this study were identifying ways to define the intricacy of what it is to be Indigenous and deciding who fits this category because there are many different Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and language groups (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2018; Walsh & Yallop, 1993). The next challenge was determining how to refer respectfully to Indigenous Australians within this study. I began by defining the term 'Indigenous', which is difficult because dimensions shift in what it means to be Indigenous and because of the delicateness required of the task (Cobo, 1987; Niezen, 2003; Stephens, Nettleton, Porter, Willis, & Clark, 2005). Maybury-Lewis (1997) offered a continuum in an attempt to separate Indigenous people from other definers, such as ethnicity or tribal ties. However, Maybury-Lewis (1997) concluded, "There are no distinctions that enable us to place societies unambiguously within these categories" (p. 55).

Stephens, Porter, Nettleton and Willis (2006) summarised the two major areas of debate surrounding indigeneity. The first is, "How does one define what the idea of being Indigenous is?"; and the second, "Who is Indigenous in any particular setting?" (Stephens et al., 2006, p. 2019). The difficulty in defining the concept of Indigenous peoples is further highlighted by the United Nations, which has never adopted a specific definition of the term Indigenous (United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2009, 2013). It was concluded in the *State of the world's Indigenous peoples* (SOWIP) report that a specific definition was not necessary; instead, what was necessary according to the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* under Article 33, was to highlight the "importance of self-identification, that Indigenous peoples themselves define their own identity as Indigenous" (United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2009, p. 5).

However, this thesis needs a definition for what it means to be Indigenous. The United Nations has adopted a working definition of the word Indigenous (United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2009). This working definition appeared in Jose R. Martinez Cobo's Study (1987) and is the "intellectual framework" behind the United Nations working definition (United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2009, p. 4). Cobo's (1987) working definition is as follows:

Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal system. (p. 50)

For Australia, it is fairly clear under Cobo's (1987) working definition of the term Indigenous, that Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people would be considered Indigenous (United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2009). Stephens et al. (2006) remarked that in some circumstances, as in Australia, it is easier to identify who is Indigenous since a clear distinction exists between the first human inhabitants of the country and European settlers. Stephens et al. (2005) also pointed out that in countries such as Australia, Canada and New Zealand, which have resources to research those populations, it is easier to identify who is and is not Indigenous because Indigenous people are less isolated and more regulated than in some other countries.

Now that I have established what Indigenous means, the second task is to acknowledge the many different Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language groups. Upon first European contact in Australia, there were around 250 defined languages with many having multiple dialects (Walsh & Yallop, 1993). According to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (2018), around 120 languages are still spoken at present. Referring to each language group individually in this study would be impractical. However, there are many respectful ways to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within a research setting (Korff, 2018). Terms such as Indigenous Australians, First Nation people, Aboriginal Australians and First Australians are cited as respectful terms that can be used (Korff, 2018; Walsh & Yallop, 1993). I have chosen to

use the inclusive terminology Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over any other term because my dataset is national and refers neither to a region nor to a specific language group. Therefore, using this terminology is the most efficient way to be inclusive of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups within this study. There may be a temptation to use the term Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in acronym form for the sake of efficiency, but this has been deemed inappropriate (Korff, 2018).

1.2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Disadvantage

Indigenous people worldwide experience disadvantage. The SOWIP report (United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2009) states that globally, Indigenous people “face systemic discrimination and exclusion from political and economic power” (p. 1). They also experience high levels of poverty and substandard health care and have inadequate access to education (United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2009, 2013). They face a difficult task because their identity is inextricably linked with difficult histories, such as colonisation, genocide, marginalisation and cultural eradication (Niezen, 2009). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are no exception to these challenges faced by Indigenous people elsewhere. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are among the most imprisoned minority groups in the world (Blagg, 2008). According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), they constitute approximately 27% of the adult prison population in Australia, although Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults aged 18 years and over comprise only approximately 2% of Australia’s total population (ABS, 2017). This disparity is also evident between proportions of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prison population and those from the general population. Their over-representation jumps to a staggering 38% of the adult prison population for Western Australia (WA), making WA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 17 times more likely to be imprisoned than non-Indigenous people (ABS, 2015).

It is not just within Australian prisons that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience inequality and over-representation. Across Australia, they have a 17% deficit in their average life expectancy when compared with non-Indigenous Australians (Australian Indigenous Doctors Association, 2010; Gruenstein, 2008). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people battle higher rates of substance and alcohol abuse (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2011). Alcohol misuse accounts for 0.8% of

deaths for non-Indigenous Australians, but accounts for 6.7% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths (Calabria, Doran, Vos, Shakeshaft, & Hall, 2010; Vos, Barker, Stanley, & Lopez, 2007). Attitudes towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people also appear unfavourable. Pedersen, Beven, Walker and Griffiths (2004) found a “disturbing amount of prejudice against Indigenous Australians” within WA and Australia as a whole (p. 233). These statistics suggest that there are a great many challenges and factors that make Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people a vulnerable minority group within Australia. Their large-scale over-representation in prisons, their health deficits and negative attitudes held by non-Indigenous Australians leave Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people vulnerable to misrepresentation in the news media.

1.3 Media

The media is an important tool used to gain knowledge about public matters and concerns (McCombs, 2014; Mesikämmen, 2016). Walter Lippmann (2004), regarding the media’s role in providing news, stated almost 100 years ago that “The world that we have to deal with politically is out of reach, out of sight, out of mind” (p. 34). This statement helps summarise the media’s critical role in providing information and knowledge on social and political issues that most people will never experience directly (McCombs, 2014). The media keeps people aware of events in the world that are most likely beyond their immediate experience (McCombs, 2014). In choosing what to cover, journalists and the media “influence our perceptions of what are the most important issues” (McCombs, 2014, p. 20).

The ability to influence perceptions as regards salient issues has allowed the media to play a key role in shaping our social and political understanding and views (Entman, 2007; Harding, 2006; McCombs, 2014; Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006). There is strong evidence that the media routinely helps shape political and public perceptions (Callanan, 2005; Davis & Dossetor, 2010; Fox, Van Sickle, & Steiger, 2007; Harding, 2006; Indermaur & Roberts, 2005; Lotz, 1991; Mesikämmen, 2016; Richardson, 2007; Weatherburn & Indermaur, 2004). Australian media discourse is argued to be the primary and often only source of information on which people form their opinions about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Meadows, 2001, 2005; Mesikämmen, 2016). This tendency leaves the Australian media with a significant amount of power and

control over what information is communicated to Australians about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The news media is currently in a state of transition, moving towards an online format as the market adapts to the internet age (Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2009; Sayre, Leticia, Dhavan, Wilcox, & Chirag, 2010). Traditional news media formats, such as newspapers, are declining in popularity, whereas online news media continues to expand (Sayre et al., 2010). In such a changing media landscape, it is necessary to ensure that vulnerable groups, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, are represented and portrayed accurately and respectfully.

1.4 Research Significance

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have experienced large-scale over-representation and inequality within Australia's multi-jurisdictional CJS (ABS, 2015, 2017; Blagg, 2008). The media, via its various techniques, can be a very influential tool for communicating powerful ideologies (Entman, 2007; Fairclough, 2003; Richardson, 2007). These powerful ideologies may influence beliefs, attitudes, knowledge and values (Fairclough, 2003; Wodak & Meyer, 2001). Harding (2006), Love and Tilley (2013), McCallum and Waller (2013), Proudfoot and Habibis (2015) and Mesikämmen (2016) have shown that racism and racist ideology have been, and still are, embedded within media discourse. For example, Proudfoot and Habibis (2015) demonstrated that racist stereotyping and ideology were present in contemporary Australian news media discourse within the context of the NTER. Following on from the example of Proudfoot and Habibis, in this research, I challenge media stereotypes and ideology on a broader scale.

My study aims to go beyond the singular criminal justice event considered by Proudfoot and Habibis. Instead, I examine Australian news media's reporting of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the broader context of the CJS. To do this, this study uses CDA to investigate the assumptions and underlying ideologies within Australian news media discourse. CDA as a methodology aims to produce enlightenment on, and awareness of, social inequality (Fairclough, 2003; Wodak & Meyer, 2001). The results of the present study would raise awareness of the normalised discursive practices of the Australian news media, as well as generate discussion on the topic to create cultural awareness. My research project aims to expose how discussions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people contribute to maintaining social practices and power relations (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002) and recommends measures to address the situation. In

understanding the harm that discourse creates towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, steps are made in addressing the discursive structures that lead to the harm.

1.5 Research Questions

How does Australia's online news media report and represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's interaction with the CJS in post-apology Australia?

1. Does the news media's portrayal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders contain particular ideologies and discourse?
2. Are these ideologies advanced by the news media?
3. What assumptions are inherent in the portrayal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in online media articles?

1.6 Thesis Structure

This thesis consists of six sections containing a total of seven chapters. Each section is represented by a chapter except for the findings section, which is divided into two chapters because of its size. Chapter one gave a brief introduction of the research problem and explored and defined the classification of Indigenous. It then gave an overview of this study's two major topics. Those two topics are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage, and the media and its influence over contemporary society. Chapter one concludes with a statement of the research significance and presents the research questions.

Chapter two of this thesis is the literature review, which begins with the historical context and background research of colonial Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Next, the major concepts that inform this thesis are contextualised, covering ideology, hegemony, media theory and its influence over society, and Indigenous disadvantage is established. Chapter two then reviews and critiques international research on Indigenous people, research on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and research specifically using CDA. Lastly, chapter two concludes with the reiteration of the study's research significance.

Chapter three introduces the study's theoretical framework, methodology and Norman Fairclough's (2003) method of CDA used to conduct the study's analysis. This chapter presents the data selected and its sampling rationale, ethical considerations and the research approach towards data analysis.

Chapters four and five constitute the findings section of this study. Chapter four contains the analysis and findings of ten articles in total. The chapter is divided into two subsections. Each subsection focuses on the analysis and findings from five articles from *The Guardian* and *The Age* news websites. Chapter four then concludes with a summary of the major findings from the analysis of the first ten articles. Chapter five is the second chapter of the findings section of this thesis. This chapter is divided into three subsections. Each subsection examines the analysis and findings of five articles from *Perth Now*, *News.com* and *9news*. Chapter five ends with a summary of the chapter and the entire findings section.

Chapter six is the discussion section of the thesis, explaining the results from the CDA of the twenty-five news articles. The chapter is divided into nine subsections, with each subsection addressing a major finding from the data analysis. Chapter six then addresses the limitations of this study and concludes with the implications of the results and a brief summary.

The final chapter is chapter seven, the conclusion of the study. I summarise my thoughts on the larger significance of the study and the importance of the study's findings and provide a detailed conclusion on the entire study.

Chapter 2: Media Theory, Ideology and Research in Review

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are among the most imprisoned minority groups worldwide (Blagg, 2008), forming approximately 27% of the adult prison population in Australia (ABS, 2017). They comprise 38% of the adult prison population for WA, making WA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 17 times more likely to be imprisoned than non-Indigenous people (ABS, 2015). Further, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people throughout Australia have a 17% deficit in their average life expectancy compared with non-Indigenous Australians (Australian Indigenous Doctors Association, 2010; Gruenstein, 2008). Attitudes towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people also appear negative. Pedersen et al. (2004) found a “disturbing amount of prejudice against Indigenous Australians” within WA and Australia (p. 233). Their large-scale over-representation in prisons, their health deficits and negative attitudes held by non-Indigenous Australians leave Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people vulnerable to stereotyping and misrepresentation in the news media.

This is a qualitative study firmly rooted in social constructivism. I do not intend to illustrate or argue a gap in current research. Instead, I follow a discovery model exploring what assumptions and ideologies arise within media discourse using CDA. The function of this literature review is to acknowledge important research that informs my methodology and analysis, as well as identify and critique studies using similar methods in media and Indigenous studies.

I begin this literature review with background research on early contact between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and European ‘settlers’. Context will be an important part of the proposed research and the colonial history, and the historical treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is an important backdrop to their present-day inequality.

The second section concerns ideology and hegemony. Both concepts are prominent in media studies and my chosen methodology of CDA. Given that there are varying interpretations of both concepts, I need to identify where my research stands vis-à-vis these concepts. It is also the aim of this study to identify and analyse dominant ideologies within media discourse and how they affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In the third section, I describe the media and indicate the ways in which the news media manipulates perceptions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and reinforces dominant social structure and ideologies.

In the fourth section, I explore how research has been conducted on Indigenous people. The literature review starts with international research and then narrows in focus to research in Australia using CDA. Finally, I explicitly detail the research problem and research questions for the study.

2.1 Background Research

In the 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC), Commissioner Elliot Johnston highlighted the “importance of history” (RCIADIC, volume 1, 1.4), suggesting that outside of historians, academics and Aboriginal people, not much is known of Aboriginal history (RCIADIC, volume 1, 1.4.1). The RCIADIC stated that Australia’s history of post-colonisation was an insightful tool because “It helps explain their [Indigenous Australians] economic, social, residential status and their attitudes to non-Aboriginal Australians and the nation whose foundation was premised on their dispossession” (Volume 2, 10.1.1). In a similar vein, Tait (2007, p. 619) argued that Australians wear a “white blindfold”, thereby hiding the dispossession of Aboriginal Australians and emphasising the benefits gained from English colonisation.

Elder (1998) made another strong claim. Elder asserted that Europeans invaded the land of Indigenous Australians, took it from them and destroyed it, killing much of the native flora and fauna and denying most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people their spiritual connection to the land. Moreover, guns, poison and disease were employed to kill the latter and to subject them to a “long-term holocaust” (p. 33). Elder went on to state:

The blood of tens of thousands of Aboriginal people killed since 1788, and the sense of despair and hopelessness which informs so much modern-day Aboriginal society, is a moral responsibility all white Australians share. Our wealth and lifestyle is a direct consequence of Aboriginal dispossession. (1998, p. 33)

Elder’s words encapsulate an immense topic and imply that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should not be considered just an ethnic minority to be problematised

(Blagg, 2011; RCIADIC, 10.4.4). As a researcher of my chosen topic, I need to give forethought to the historical context that saw Aboriginal people dispossessed of their land (Blagg, 2011). However, Australia's history after the arrival of English 'settlers' may not be the most enlightened account of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's experiences of colonisation (RCIADIC, Volume 2, 10.1.8). The RCIADIC stated that Australia's history of post-colonisation was an insightful tool because "It helps explain their economic, social, residential status and their attitudes to police, non-Aboriginal Australians and the nation whose foundation was premised on their dispossession" (Volume 10, 10.11.).

The police were the most prominent and common point of contact between Aboriginal people and the colonial justice system (Cunneen, 2001). Cunneen's (2001) historical recollection of cruelty, usually meted out by the police, allows insight into the current relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the justice system (Cunneen, 2001). During the dispossession era, colonial police were involved in what Cunneen (2001), Reynolds (1987) and Goodall (1996) refer to as a war against Indigenous Australians. It has been estimated that approximately 2,000 non-Indigenous people, mostly European settlers, were killed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people between 1788 and the early 20th century (Harris, 2003). This is contrasted by the estimated 20,000 Indigenous Australians killed during the colonisation of Australia (Cunneen, 2001; Harris, 2003; Reynolds, 1987).

Dispossession was the period in Australia's history when the police, justice system and the government aggressively repressed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The first instances of interaction between police and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians were the takeover of land, summary justice and eradication of clans or tribal groups (Cunneen, 2001). Reynolds (1987) and Cunneen (2001) have also characterised this period as a war of extermination where the police were used in a military capacity to enact colonial control and takeover.

According to Cunneen (2001), the legal fiction was that Australia's colonisation was a peaceful means of settlement. Cunneen (2001) contended this rendition helped legitimise the denial of Indigenous rights. There are many accounts of police massacres during the dispossession era. The Battle of Pinjarra is one such operation where at least 30 Indigenous Western Australians, including one woman and several children, were killed

by police (Cunneen, 2001). In the Waterloo Creek massacre in NSW, mounted police killed 200–300 Kamilaroi people (Cunneen, 2001). These incidents of violence and murder by police continued for 150 years. The last documented case of mass killing was in 1928: In the NT, police killed between 70 to 100 Walpiri people (Cunneen, 2001). It is understandable that Indigenous Australians have a foreboding distrust of the CJS. Morris (1992) argued that the dispossession era was based on a culture of terror, and Cunneen (2001) remarked, “The summary executions and the hanging of corpses in trees, the attacks on tribal groups as a form of collective punishment, the indiscriminate killing of men and women, adults, and children were intended to terrorise and pacify” (p. 61). Indigenous Australian’s retaliation to such atrocities was framed as inhuman or barbaric acts or a breach of criminal law (Cunneen, 2001). This is a prime example of how powerful discourse can shape the narrative (as a breach of criminal law instead of people defending their homes).

Further injustices were committed through the forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, referred to as the stolen generation, a period occurring approximately between 1905 and 1969 (Read, 2006). This was a ‘civilising’ process aimed at turning these children from “savages to Christians” (Cunneen, 2008, p.165). However, the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families (1997) stated, “The policy of forcibly removing Indigenous children fell within the international legal definition of genocide” (Volume 6, 6.10), matching the definition employed by the United Nations in its Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Article 2, 1951).

Moving to more recent times, the NTER, also known as the Northern Territory Intervention, has been a controversial topic ever since its enactment in 2007 (Altman, 2007; Watson, 2011). Concern over the rates of child sexual abuse reached the media and created a political outcry for action to be taken in the NT (Stringer, 2007). A media frenzy and the conclusive evidence of abuse provided by the *Little Children are Sacred* report was met by the Federal Government’s *Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007* (Cth). This Act was criticised as an unprecedented piece of legislation that created a wide range of concerns (Watson, 2011), such as the controversial move by the government to suspend the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth) to enact this Act (Mesikämnen, 2016). There were two significant reasons the *Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007* (Cth) was important. The first is the strong

presence of the media reporting on the events that led to this Act. The media's influence on the intervention was a contentious topic for researchers who often argued that it was influential in the government's committed response to the situation (Mesikämnen, 2016; O'Dowd, 2009; Proudfoot & Habibis, 2013; Stringer, 2007; Vivian, 2010; Watson, 2011). The second important point was that the government's chosen method of response in the NTER "continues the history of official control and interference in Indigenous lives by governments since colonisation" (Mesikämnen, 2016, p. 722). In the United Nations report *Observations on the Northern Territory Emergency Response in Australia* (2010), special rapporteur James Anaya labelled some components of the NTER as "racially discriminatory and incompatible with Australia's international human rights obligations" (United Nations, p. 12). Further, the report recommended that the Federal Government reinstate the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth) (United Nations, 2010, p. 12). It could be argued that the NTER is a sanitised modern-day version of the stolen generation. Certainly, it is not on the same scale or level of aggression, but the NTER resulted in the forced removal of children from their families by the CJS. Altman (2007) labelled the NTER as a demonstration of the neo-liberal ideology of assimilation. Altman (2007) argued that the NTER response reflected 'neo-paternalism', coined by Altman to refer to NTER as a return of an "era of assimilation" (p. 1). Despite the significant criticisms above, the NTER is still in effect continuing under the guise of the *Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Act 2012* (Cth).

This account of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's interaction with the criminal justice processes illustrates how colonial Australia controlled them through the formal process of criminalisation. Further, colonisation is not something that just occurred in the past; it is a continual and "ongoing process" (Cunneen, 2001, p. 6). Colonisation is an ongoing process of subjugation, with implicit methods of force, cultural oppression and exploitation to achieve its goals (Cunneen, 2001). Cunneen (2001) characterised the present process of colonisation as "neo-colonialism" (p. 8). Neo-colonialism recognises the continuation of criminalisation as a form of control and normalisation towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, while acknowledging the political and legal developments of recent history.

2.2 Ideology and Hegemony

Ideology is a controversial concept, with varying interpretations (Richardson, 2007). ‘Ideology’ was conceived in 1796 by Antoine Destutt de Tracy to refer to a new “science of ideas” (Kennedy, 1979, p. 355). De Tracy’s ideology referred to the study of ideas formed through interaction with our social surroundings (Gee, 2008; Richardson, 2007).

Marxist theory further refined ‘ideology’, arguing that ideology is more than “individual ideas formed through experience”, adding that it was influenced heavily by one’s economic status (Richardson, 2007, p. 32; Volosinov, 1986). Marxist theory went on to argue that ideology was an indication or display of the social and economic status of those in power and their need to sustain that power and privilege (Richardson, 2007). Marx and Engels asserted, “The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production” and people who have no agency regarding mental production are dependent on those who do (Marx & Engels, 1972, p. 4). This may appear as a slightly obtuse statement, but it has had lasting repercussions on our modern understanding of ideology. Here, Marx is maintaining that the ruling class, or those in power, can produce and control knowledge and ideologies. Further, those who are not in the ruling class and unable to produce ideologies tend to adopt and consume knowledge and ideologies as provided by those in power (Marx & Engels, 1972; Richardson, 2007). Those who have power and authority over economic systems and institutions dominate both politics and ideological production (Altheide, 1984; Marx & Engels, 1972).

Ideology can then be understood as a tool for “justifying, defending, disguising or concealing economic exploitation or political and social inequalities and oppression” (Jones, 2001, p. 227). It is here that we reach the post-Marxist, ‘critical’ viewpoint or understanding of ideology informing this research project. Fairclough (2003) defined ideology as “representations of aspects of the world which can be shown to contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination and exploitation” (p. 9). The critical view describes ideology is a process of power rather than a passive system of ideas (Fairclough, 2003). This modality of power can be enacted using mass media to communicate discriminatory, dominating and biased ideologies by elite groups (Fairclough, 2003; Weninger, 2008; Wodak & Meyer, 2001). In this way,

ideology can be used as an exploitive form of social organisation disguised as rational and natural (Jones, 2001).

This exploitation prompts the question: Why or how is ideology used in an exploitive manner? To answer this, I need to discuss the closely linked concept of hegemony, which is a specific way of viewing or understanding power (Fairclough, 2003). Hegemony is described as the process that involves the ruling class convincing every other class to accept their rule and superiority (Gramsci, 1971). Cox (2004) describes hegemony as “a condition in which the governed accepted or acquiesced to authority without the need for the application of force. Although force was always latent in the background, hegemony meant leadership rather than domination” (p. 311). This means that hegemony represents power as consent rather than force. Hegemony also has strong ties to Marxism (Altheide, 1984). Those in power use ideology through hegemonic rule to maintain and sustain power using discourses of legitimisation and normalisation (McNair, 2005; Wodak & Meyer, 2001). However, as Gramsci (1971) contended, hegemony is often uncontested by those being ruled. Indeed, those with power need the support from other classes to maintain power. This opens an interesting dynamic where, in countries that are somewhat democratic, governing elites must consider and sometimes concede to the requests of the public (Richardson, 2007). This makes those in power responsive to mass opinion, which, in turn, creates a governing power that must both respond to and utilise mass media effectively to maintain class rule (McNair, 2005). This then puts the mass media in an important position, even sometimes having ‘the balance of power’, with ideological struggle and class domination (Fairclough, 2003; Wodak & Meyer, 2001). A prime example of the media having the ‘balance of power’ is the NTER discussed earlier in this study. McCallum and Waller (2013, p. 146) stated that the media played a “particularly powerful role” in the political debate and policy formation surrounding the NTER. The NTER could be characterised as an ideological struggle between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and those in power.

There are weaknesses to the theory of hegemony. Altheide (1984) argued that hegemony could not be advanced through the media because journalists had varying or opposing opinions and often rejected established ideologies. Certainly, at a micro level there are far too many variables to lay claim to hegemony being the singular influencing factor in journalistic decision-making (Altheide, 1984). This is a weakness within the theory of hegemony, because it cannot be assumed to control or inform every decision-making

process by those producing media. However, there is strong argument that at the broadest level hegemony is present (Altheide, 1984; Richardson, 2001). Richardson (2007) characterised this best, pointing out that whereas the media and journalists may oppose the symptoms or effects, rarely do we see questioned the cause of those symptoms. Richardson (2007) referred to economic and political systems, such as capitalism, where the media will often question the effects of capitalism but will rarely question the system itself. Ultimately, Altheide (1984) conceded hegemony's presence at a broad level, where hegemony and ideologies are used to "justify, smooth over and naturalize the contradictions and exploitations of capitalist societies" (Richardson, 2007, p. 134).

2.3 Media

Denemark (2005) claimed that Australians in the 21st century are entangled in an intricate web of post-modernism, where reality, knowledge and value are constructed through discourse, in which the mass media "plays a vital and changing role" (p. 220). What makes Australia unique among Western democracies, and possibly more susceptible to media influences, is the media industry's ownership and control by a few "powerful, profit-seeking families" (Denemark, 2005, p. 220; Mesikämmen, 2016). Indeed, profit is a major motivator since media production is a business. The concern is that when media owners strive for profit, ethical, objective and professional journalism is eroded (Richardson, 2007). It must also be acknowledged that people, the consumers of media, are also the product being sold to advertisers. Mass media markets its audiences to advertisers, which could influence the material produced to improve profits (Richardson, 2007). According to Weatherburn and Indermaur (2004), the media's reporting is often discriminating in its selection of stories and on occasion is "downright misleading" (p. 179), so to increase viewership and profits. Downing and Husband (2005) in their book titled *Representing Race* argued that the mainstream media are "workshops of today's and tomorrow's racist ideology" (p. 39), which is an alarming observation when considering vulnerable minority groups. Downing and Husband's (2005) identification of racism as an ideology is important because "ideologies are representations of aspects of the world which can be shown to contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination and exploitation" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 9). It is understood that the media can and does communicate ideologies (Fairclough, 2003). The media "often purport to be neutral in that they provide a space for public discourse, that

they reflect the state of affairs disinterestedly” (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 6). However, there is strong evidence that the media routinely shapes political and public perceptions (Callanan, 2005; Davies & Dossetor, 2010; Fox et al., 2007; Indermaur & Roberts, 2005; Lotz, 1991; Weatherburn & Indermaur, 2004). By identifying ideologies communicated by the media, I intend to reveal the ways in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are represented.

2.4 Media Bias

The epitome of political power wielded through the media is through expression of bias (Entman, 2007). However, what exactly is bias? Entman (2007) defined three types of bias that exist within a media context: (1) distortion bias: “news that purportedly distorts or falsifies reality” (p. 163); (2) content bias: when the media gives preference to one side over another when covering a political dispute; and (3) decision-making bias: this is the bias that the journalists may personally exhibit within their work.

2.5 Framing, Agenda Setting and Priming

To research media representations, one needs to understand the strategies that news media uses to communicate (Entman, 2007). According to Fox et al. (2007), these strategies are encapsulated in the hypodermic needle model, limited effects model and minimal effects model.

The *hypodermic* needle model is at one extreme, proposing that the media has a direct and significant effect on people (Fox et al., 2007), and that “mass media effects are uniform, direct, and powerful, because the stimuli are strong and the atomized audience receiving them is virtually powerless to resist” (Lotz, 1991, p. 41). It is referred to as the hypodermic needle approach because it is argued that media information is injected directly into the brain (Callanan, 2005; Fox et al., 2007; Lotz, 1991).

The *limited effects* model is at the other end of the spectrum, assuming that the media’s influence is “significantly mitigated by other factors” (Fox et al., 2007, p. 9). Similar to the hypodermic needle model, the limited effects model assumes people turn to the media for their information. However, in this model people evaluate the validity of the information they receive from the media, comparing it with knowledge already gathered from other sources, such as family, friends, associations and education bodies (Fox et al.,

2007; Lotz, 1991). This means, people “have pre-existing, relatively independent (and often longstanding) perceptions that condition or blunt the power of new information, such as that emanating from mass media” (Fox et al., 2007, p. 9).

The *minimal or subtle effects theory* is the middle ground, arguing that the mass media’s influence is neither absolute nor moderated (Fox et al., 2007). Instead, the minimal effects theory proposes that the media’s influence is subtler, exerting influence through three devices: “framing, agenda setting, and priming” (Fox et al., 2007, p. 9). These devices are argued to be “how one exerts political influence in non-coercive political systems” (Entman, 2007, p. 165; Fox et al., 2007). Minimal effects theory underpins how this thesis understands the media’s influence. An elaboration of minimal effects of the three main devices follows.

The first device of minimal effects theory is *framing*, arguing, “The content and format of news coverage may result in citizens adopting particular political attitudes” based on underpinning assumptions (Fox et al., 2007, p. 10). Entman (2007) described framing as “the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation” (p. 164). Entman (1993) further argued that successful framing contains four main functions. Framing identifies or increases the prominence or significance of ideas, which activates “schemas that encourage target audiences to think, feel, and decide in a particular way” (Entman, 2007, p. 164).

Agenda setting is successfully influencing framing (Entman, 2007). Agenda setting occurs because the media decides to cover a limited instead of a broad range of topics. This limited range of topics is then presented as the topics that the public should be thinking about (Fox et al., 2007; Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006). For example, the media’s focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and crime may set the agenda for the public by encouraging viewers to think about the legality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander behaviour rather than their need for health care or education. Thus, agenda setting purports that the media, by choosing the topic, dictates the most important issues on the public’s minds. Harding (2006) suggested that mass media may not be able to “tell

us what to think, but it is frequently successful in telling us what to think about” (p. 231). This is agenda setting, a device of minimal effects theory discussed above.

Priming is the successful fulfilment of framing and agenda setting: the “intended effect, of strategic actors framing activities” (Entman, 2007, p. 165). Therefore, framing, agenda setting and priming, when combined, act as the means by which political power is exerted (Entman, 2007).

2.6 Indigenous Disadvantage

Estimations of the world’s Indigenous population start at around two hundred and fifty-seven million (Stephens et al., 2005). More recent estimations by the United Nations in its SOWIP reports (United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2009, 2013) and Hall and Patrinos (2012) suggested that Indigenous people constitute somewhere around three hundred fifty to three hundred and seventy million of the world’s population and reside in over 90 countries. The SOWIP report (United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2009) estimated that they comprise roughly 5% of the world’s population while constituting 15% of the world’s poor. These figures suggested that Indigenous people all over the world experience disadvantage at some level. The SOWIP report (United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2009) stated that they “face systemic discrimination and exclusion from political and economic power” world over (p. 1). They also experience higher rates of poverty, substandard health care and inadequate access to education (United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2009, 2013). An unfortunate result of the challenges faced by Indigenous people is that their identity is inextricably linked with difficult histories, such as colonisation, genocide, marginalisation, cultural eradication, forced settlements and relocation (Niezen, 2009). These historical realities have had devastating and continued consequences on them globally (Stephens et al., 2006). Often, an Indigenous community’s traditional ways of life have been replaced by Western standards of living, resulting in ‘unemployment, poor housing, alcoholism, and drug use’ (Stephens et al., 2005, p. 11). Robbins (2007) argued that people who belong to capitalist societies all too often view Indigenous people as less developed, regressive, economically poor, and “in need of civilizing” (p. 121). Others, such as Stephens et al. (2006), point out that there is a delicate line between romanticised traditional aspects of the Indigenous way of life and “negative portrayals of primitive

groups” (p. 2020). I now move towards reviewing the research on how Indigenous people have been portrayed in the media both internationally and within Australia.

2.7 International Research on Indigenous Populations

Using broad brush strokes, I begin with a study of Canada, which has many similarities with Australia as regards English colonisation of Indigenous populations. Harding (2006) compared the headings of Canadian newspaper articles about Canada’s First Nation people in the 19th century with those of the 20th century. Harding (2006) used CDA to deconstruct and reveal the racial bias of newspaper article headlines. He found that the 20th century articles were more nuanced, providing space for opposing views, including those of First Nation people. However, he noted that journalists tended to represent First Nation people as emotional or violent in both the 19th and 20th century headlines (Harding, 2006). The author identified agenda setting as a key component for framing his analysis (Harding, 2006, p. 231). Harding (2006), in taking the time to illuminate his theoretical framework, allowed a reader such as myself to access and understand the theories, framework and assumptions under which he was operating.

In New Zealand, Love and Tilley (2013) examined six New Zealand media articles using CDA, the same methodology used by Harding (2006). However, Love and Tilley’s CDA method of analysis is not identical (Fairclough, 2003). They used computer programs to compile word frequency counts and the collation of themes in their analysis and their scope of six news media articles. I hasten to add that a large dataset is not the main objective for CDA use: Critical and in-depth analysis of discourse is the primary goal (Fairclough, 2003; Wodak & Meyer, 2001). Love and Tilley (2013) emphasised two major concepts within the article. The first was how the dominant post-colonial society operates on a chronological, linear time model where periods are finite with a beginning and an end point. Indeed, the word post-colonial itself infers that colonisation was something that had a start and an end in New Zealand’s history, whereas Indigenous New Zealand people’s conception of time is very different. For Maori people, occurrences in time, such as colonisation, do not have a beginning and an end point; they have a continual, flexible and ongoing timeframe constructed through discourse (Love & Tilley, 2013).

The second major concept presented by Love and Tilley (2013) was ‘critical whiteness’ or whiteness theory. Critical whiteness views being white not only as a physical appearance but as a social construct that attributes “race privilege” to whiteness (Frankenberg, 1997, p. 1). In societies such as Australia and New Zealand, with their colonial history, critical whiteness includes all migrants who are not Indigenous but are part of the dominant white culture (Love & Tilley, 2013; Ravenscroft, 2004). Critical whiteness implies that those who belong to the white social construct “do not experience the world through an awareness of racial identity or cultural distinctiveness” (Green, Sonn, & Matsebula, 2007, p. 396). Instead, whiteness and its cultural practices are experienced as “normative, natural and universal” rendering the whiteness and its advantage invisible to those who belong to it (Frankenberg, 1997; Green et al., 2007, p. 396; Sullivan, 2006). In effect, those who belong to the dominant white society take for granted the privileges afforded to its members. This makes whiteness theory an important concept to be aware of as a researcher, because the cultural influences that affect a researcher’s perspectives and conclusions, such as the conception of time, may be easily overlooked. For this reason, critical whiteness is an important component in this study’s theoretical framework.

Love and Tilley (2013) concluded, “Discursive uses of linear time ultimately narrate a present and future white belonging that displaces or appropriates Indigenous belonging” (p. 185). Therefore, the researchers implied that colonisation displaces Indigenous ways of knowing and understanding with its own set of views and understandings, to serve its own ends (Love & Tilley, 2013). Their research helped me recognise how fundamental cultural influences are to understanding and interacting with the world. I intend to adopt their inclusion of critical whiteness as I investigate the differences between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and dominant white culture and the ways in which these differences influence media representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

2.8 Australian Research of Australia’s First People

Moving to our shores, “Media dreaming: Representation of Aboriginality in modern Australian media” by Bullimore (1999) also used whiteness theory to describe how dominant white Australia occupies a privileged place within society and the Australian media. The author examined data from the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Australian*

newspapers; however, it is not clear what type of discourse analysis was used or how many articles were included in the analysis. I believe Bullimore's (1999) most important contribution was her focus on the presence (or lack) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander role players within the media. Further, when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were consulted, or used as the primary source of information in the media, they were culturally approved, 'blessed', that is, by the gatekeepers of dominant white society (Bullimore, 1999). The author's inclusion of the details of the role players used within the media was an interesting angle, but one that is outside the dimensions of my research question.

Although the modern-day mass media shows Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in a more positive light than the media 10 to 20 years ago did, the media still represents and portrays these people using the dominant elite perspective (Bullimore, 1999). Thus, Bullimore (1999) argued that racism is not a thing of the past; it continues in a kinder, sanitised, more acceptable form in contemporary media. Although the article is now nineteen years old, its finding may still be relevant.

Plater (1993) in her "Aboriginal people and the media: Reporting Aboriginal affairs" article, although dated and not the most academically robust, offered a few practical recommendations, something previous studies have not included. Plater (1993) focused on individual journalists' racial stereotyping of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the media, which is a microscopic examination, whereas the aforementioned research examined an amalgam of examples. Plater's (1993) focus on the journalists could be retrospectively considered an instance of Entman's (2007) decision-making bias. Plater (1993) found that only a few journalists were consciously racist; the majority were simply ignorant of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures because of their (the journalists') lack of interaction with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Plater, 1993). A suggestion Plater (1993) made to overcome the problem was for organisations such as the Australian Journalists Association to improve their existing code of practice by consulting, and enlisting the help of, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups to educate journalists. Whether or not journalists would actively seek out such professional development is another issue. Further, Plater (1993) suggested that journalism degrees at the tertiary level could offer a more holistic and conclusive component on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for students to broaden their understanding. Another practical recommendation by Plater was to create Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

media liaison groups to “raise awareness and improve standards as well as hold forums for the media on how to improve reporting” (1993, p. 206).

I move now to two articles in which the authors investigated how the media affected policy. In the first, titled “Raising the volume: Indigenous voices in news media and policy”, McCallum, Waller and Meadows (2012) investigated how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities made themselves part of the debate and influenced policy development. The researchers used inductive qualitative analysis to draw themes from 50 interviewees from political, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and media spheres. It seemed meaningful for the authors to represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices, given that the voices are significantly under-represented in the media. This under-representation is not because Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities lack the agency to advocate on behalf of themselves; rather the media has chosen to exclude these voices (McCallum et al., 2012).

In the second research article, McCallum and Waller (2013) focused on the bureaucrats and policy advocates involved in the policy process surrounding the NTER, using inductive qualitative analysis to interview key players in the NTER policy development. The researchers identified three main themes: “media alignment with political imperatives; mediatized practices of public servants; and the singular influence of a small number of Indigenous people” (McCallum & Waller, 2013, p. 146). Ultimately, they concluded that the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the government was continually subjected to “sharp and dramatic policy shifts” and that the media deeply affected related policy development, such as the *Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Act 2012* (Cth) (McCallum and Waller, 2013, p. 146). McCallum and Waller (2013) maintained that the media affected policy by making the “space for public discussion virtually impenetrable” (p. 147) for voices or viewpoints other than the dominant perspective. The result was a policy that was ‘done to’ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people rather than ‘done with’ them.

“Framing ideology in the niche media” by Budarick and King (2008) examines the ideological role the media played in reporting on the Redfern riots in 2004. The riots were sparked by the death of Thomas Hickey, an Indigenous Australian youth who died while being chased by police. Tensions then arose between the residents of Redfern and police, resulting in a nine-hour violent skirmish (Budarick & King, 2008). Budarick and King

(2008) argued that when the media covers social issues, such as the Redfern riots, this presents an opportunity for it to “engage with ideological norms and constructions”, as well as, to use the occasion as a tool for hegemony (p. 356). This assertion parallels strongly with the theoretical framework of my research.

Budarick and King (2008) analysed 155 articles from *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Koori Mail*. They used frame analysis as their method. Similar to CDA, frame analysis examines ideology, discourse, material power and the ways in which they interact (Budarick & King, 2008). Rather than for its method of analysis or findings, I chose this article for its contrasting perspective. The authors maintained that much of research conducted on media, race and discourse has focused on the dominant forms of ideology being communicated. They chose to illustrate how a niche media outlet, such as the *Koori Mail*, can challenge mainstream discourses and ideologies within the media, when it “framed powerful ideological positions regarding racial identity and imagined racial communities to construct a different ... version of the riots” (Budarick & King, 2008, p. 356). This way, the *Koori Mail* disputed mainstream media discourse on the riots and “provided alternative symbolic resources” for readers (Budarick & King, 2008, p. 356). The core of the authors’ argument here is that niche media can construct its own powerful ideologies to confront and challenge those held by mainstream media. The authors are clearly building on Meadow’s (2005) research, in which Meadows argued that Indigenous media could provide a “counter discourse, and interpret their own identities and experiences” (p. 38). It would be easy to slip into the assumption that the media is one big hegemonic machine with the same ideological goal in mind. Although I am analysing mainstream media’s effect on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, I thought it important to acknowledge and maintain that the media is not just a tool for those in power to maintain hegemony. It can also be used to challenge the powerful and give a voice to marginal groups, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Budarick & King, 2008).

2.9 Western Australian Research on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and Media

I now explore state-based research about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the media in WA. The first article from WA is entitled, “Everyone’s agreed, the west is all you need: Ideology, media & Aboriginality in Western Australia”. The author, Trigger

(1995), analysed coverage of Aboriginal people by *The West Australian* newspaper and talkback radio from 1984 to 1990, followed by a randomised survey in two Perth suburbs sixteen days after a negative article in the newspapers on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Trigger finally concluded that the media played a critical role in shaping our perceptions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Perhaps the overtness of Trigger's conclusion can be excused given the article is twenty years old. What really stood out in this article were its questionable research methods. First, the author neither indicated the method of qualitative analysis used, nor how it was used. Themes within the discourse were not clear and it appears that little thought or acknowledgement was given to cultural biases and preconceptions the author himself brought to the analysis (Trigger, 1995). Second, there was insufficient information regarding the lack of a comparison group within the quantitative survey component. The absence of a comparison group made it difficult to account for other media influences affecting respondents.

The second article, "The face of the criminal is Aboriginal" by Howard Sercombe (1995), was actually a chapter taken from a larger and broader study on youth and youth culture and how the media articulated youth and youth culture to its readership. During the data collection process, Sercombe noted that in the media, there was a "major moral panic intimately involving Aboriginal young people in relation to the issue of high speed chases involving stolen cars" (1995, p. 77). Sercombe (1995) collected newspaper articles from *The West Australian* newspaper from April 1990 to March 1992. The articles chosen for analysis were all discussing young people, operationalised by Sercombe as 12–15 years old. In total, 2,683 articles were collected from which 275 articles referenced Aboriginality, which is a very strong sample size. Sercombe used a combination of content analysis and discourse analysis as his methods in the study. Sercombe (1995) found that of the 275 articles discussing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, 233 of those articles were specifically about them and crime. In other words, a staggering 84.7% of all articles regarding young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were framed within the context of crime. Sercombe (1995) concluded that news about Aboriginal young people was almost always crime news, with the most common source for the crime news being the WA police (21.1%). In 2010, Western Australian Commissioner of Police Karl O'Callaghan enacted a policy that banned the use of ethnic or religious words to describe offenders (Deceglie & Cox, 2010), potentially making it

much harder to reveal whether the news media is referring to an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander individual. A follow-up study of the period after 2010, to see if this change in policy has had any effect on the ways journalists identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within news articles relating to crime, would be useful but is, however, beyond the scope of this thesis.

One of the most significant parts of Sercombe's (1995) article was the discussion on the laws applying to race and ethnicity in the media. Sercombe (1995) identified the contentious topic regarding the legality of journalists identifying people as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander when reporting on crime, which in turn feeds into the broader topic of regulation versus freedom of speech. At present the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) Journalist Code of Ethics (2012, p. 1) states: "Do not place unnecessary emphasis on personal characteristics, including race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, sexual orientation, family relationships, religious belief, or physical or intellectual disability".

Two things need to be pointed out about the MEAA code. First, the MEAA cannot undertake any action or investigation involving people who are not MEAA members. This means that this code of ethics does not apply to all journalists but only to those who are MEAA members. Second, the code does not dictate whether or not a journalist can reveal the ethnicity of a person when reporting specifically on a crime.

WA is the only state to have criminal sanctions at a state level to combat racism (Meagher, 2006). The *Racist Harassment and Incitement to Racial Hatred Act 1990* (WA) was introduced in 1990. Although not conceived to address them, this law could be applied to journalists. How successful it would be in suppressing racism is another matter entirely. Perhaps, because of the enormity of the topic regarding criminalising racism and the loopholes available to journalists, such as using a source to give an opinion, Sercombe (1995) chose not to discuss the matter. He could be forgiven for not including it given the breadth of the topic.

Sercombe (1995) did not mention whether WA could be perceived to take racism more seriously because of the stiffer sanctions. Neither did he mention whether the laws had any perceived effect on media reporting and how racism was handled in the public eye.

However, that would have required a comparison between WA and other states; Sercombe's (1995) data were limited to *The West Australian* newspaper.

2.10 Australian Research using Critical Discourse Analysis

Various qualitative methodologies have been used to analyse media portrayals of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people internationally, nationally and in WA (Love & Tilley, 2013; McCallum & Waller, 2013; Sercombe, 1995). In the final section of the literature review, my focus returns to how CDA, my proposed research methodology, has been used to analyse news media and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Teo (2000) used CDA in his study of the presence of racism in its subtle form in nine Australian newspaper articles in two Sydney newspapers: *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* (Teo, 2000). Teo specifically compared the portrayals of a Vietnamese gang and the Sydney police over the nine articles. The Vietnamese gang, called the 5T, had allegedly committed violent crimes and the police took subsequent actions (Teo, 2000). While this is obviously not relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the methodology, method, and the topic of racism in the media, are directly relevant to my topic.

Central to his CDA, Teo chose to follow Halliday's method of functional systemic linguistics (FSL; Halliday, Matthiessen, & Matthiessen, 2004), analysing the articles in two stages. The first stage was what Teo called a "general characterisation" of the articles (2000, p. 7). In this stage, Teo examined the generalisations, quotation patterns and over-lexicalisation of the discourse within the articles.

In the second stage, Teo (2000) used some of the key components of Halliday's FSL, specifically the concepts of transitivity, thematisation and lexical cohesion for deeper analysis of the text. Teo claimed that using these three FSL techniques revealed "an ideological battle that is being waged between the 5T and the police in the newspaper discourse" (p. 40). The author suggested that there was a racist undercurrent throughout the articles. The articles depicted the events as divisive: "ethnics" on one side and "whites" on the other (Teo, 2000, p. 40). Teo (2000) ultimately concluded that, the two newspapers' reporting of Vietnamese people was "inherently prejudiced" (p. 43).

In their contemporary research article entitled “Separate worlds: A discourse analysis of mainstream and Aboriginal populist media accounts of the Northern Territory Emergency Response in 2007”, Proudfoot and Habibis (2015) investigated the media’s role in the implementation of the NTER. The Federal Government initiated the NTER in 2007 after the media had made allegations of child sexual abuse in remote NT Aboriginal communities. The Federal Government declared the alleged issue a national emergency and implemented extreme measures, which was received with much criticism from academics because it led to the suspension of the *Racial Discrimination Act (1975)* (Cth) (Altman, 2007; Brown & Brown, 2007; Proudfoot & Habibis, 2015; Tait, 2007; Watson, 2011).

Proudfoot and Habibis (2015) argued that their understanding of whiteness theory shifts the research focus away from the disadvantaged group to the dominant, white, privileged majority. Whiteness theory is especially relevant to discourse analysis because the theory allowed the authors to investigate the “implicit power of whiteness within Australian society” (Proudfoot & Habibis, 2015, p. 173). Whiteness theory is an important concept: I cannot investigate media representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from their perspective because I have a different cultural background, which influences the ways I interact with and understand the world. The pragmatic approach would be for me to follow Proudfoot and Habibis (2015) and Love and Tilley (2013), acknowledging in recognising my cultural biases and analysing how dominant white culture affects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s representation within the media.

Proudfoot and Habibis (2015) analysed data using CDA, “to identify the structuring principles of particular texts within media accounts of the NTER and their effects on constructions of Aboriginal populations” (p. 174). They categorised discourses into digital and print; the *Herald Sun* and the *Daily Telegraph* were the two digital sources and the *Koori Mail* was the print source. Data were analysed from 82 articles. By including the *Koori Mail*, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-run media outlet, the authors achieved a more balanced set of data. The analysis examined the discursive practices of the media articles, using the categories of “intertextuality, assumptions, co-locations of words, absences and silences” (Proudfoot & Habibis, 2015, p. 175).

Results showed that the mainstream media depicted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as different, and hence, this implied that they did not deserve the same legal rights

afforded to other Australians and “were undeserving of the right to be legally protected from racial discrimination” (Proudfoot & Habibis, 2015, p. 183). The authors emphasised the urgent “need to challenge media stereotypes and provide alternative discourses” (Proudfoot & Habibis, 2015, p. 184), supported by a well-structured method of analysis, containing a diverse and extensive amount of data.

Continuing, topically, with the NTER, I refer to the article entitled “Limited interests, resources, voices: Power relations in mainstream news coverage of Indigenous policy in Australia” (Mesikämmen, 2016). It examined the role the media played in “constructing knowledge about the Northern Territory Intervention” (Mesikämmen, 2016, p. 722). Mesikämmen investigated who is invited to speak about and construct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues and the repercussions of these dominant discourses within Australian society. To do this, the author used a mixed method approach to analysing newspaper articles and interviews with journalists, employing both content analysis and CDA. Mesikämmen (2016) established that there was a serious lack of Indigenous voices being invited to speak about the intervention. This meant that the most influential discursive power surrounding the NTER was from the government. The author concluded that more effort was needed to give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people a voice to counter one-sided media discourse. Solutions recommended by Mesikämmen (2016) included better resources and funding to provide rural Indigenous voices in the media, and journalists being educated on the intricacy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Mesikämmen (2016) highlighted that McCallum et al. (2012) had already made this point, as discussed earlier in this literature review. Both articles suggested that “cultural competence” needs to be developed within the media industry (McCallum et al., 2012, p. 107).

Mesikämmen’s (2016) research bears significance for my research because it illustrates that CDA can be a useful contemporary research method for tackling the social implications and power relations created by the media that affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. However, Mesikämmen’s (2016) article did not stipulate a solid theoretical framework for her research. CDA is not one ubiquitous method; rather it is a methodology with many distinct methods within CDA. Given the strict word count on journal articles, perhaps Mesikämmen was not given enough room to extrapolate theoretically. This, I felt, compromised the strength and context of the findings as a result.

2.11 Significance

There seems little doubt that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have experienced large-scale inequality within Australian's multi-jurisdictional CJS (ABS, 2016; Blagg, 2008). The media, through its various techniques, can be a very influential tool for communicating certain perspectives and ideologies (Entman, 2007). Harding (2006), Love and Tilley (2013) and McCallum and Waller (2013) showed that racism and racist ideology have been, and still are, found within media discourse. For example, Proudfoot and Habibis (2015) demonstrated that racist stereotyping and ideology were present in contemporary Australian news media discourse. Following on from the example of Proudfoot and Habibis, in this study, I challenge media stereotypes and ideology on a broader scale. Therefore, my study aims to go beyond the singular criminal justice event they considered, that is, the NTER. Instead, it examines Australian news reporting of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the broader topic of the CJS. This is performed through investigating the assumptions and underlying ideologies within Australian news media discourse. The results of the study would help raise awareness of the normalised discursive practices of the Australian news media. My research project aims to help people understand that the way we talk about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people contributes to social practices and support of unequal power relations. If we understand the harm that discourse can create towards them, we can then take steps to correct the discursive structures that lead to the harm.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Critical Discourse Analysis

3.1 Research Problem

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people face racism and prejudice in everyday life (Pedersen et al., 2004), and they are imprisoned at much higher rates, have less access to health care, education and employment and have lower life expectancies than non-Indigenous Australians (Australian Indigenous Doctors Association, 2010; Blagg, 2008; Gruenstein, 2008). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice issues are frequently reported in the media. There is strong evidence that the media plays a significant role in shaping political and public perceptions. The media may not tell us what to think but “what to think about” (Harding, 2006, p. 231). Previous researchers have found that the news media publishes crime-related stories far more than any other topic relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Sercombe, 1995). Given their vulnerability within Australian society and the ubiquity of media in modern society, it is important to understand what, why and how the news media communicates news about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice issues. My aim in this research is to examine how online news media discursively reports such justice issues. This is performed by analysing the discourse to reveal the underlying assumptions, ideologies and discursive patterns within the discourse.

3.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

My methodology is CDA, which is based on the idea that language is a social practice, through which power relations are communicated (Fairclough, Mulderrig, & Wodak, 2011). CDA as a term has been used interchangeably with critical linguistics (CL), although CDA is the more common term used currently (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). CL existed much before CDA and their amalgamation (Fairclough et al., 2011; Wodak & Meyer, 2001). CL was first used as a term by Fowler, Hodge, Kress and Trew (1979) and Hodge and Kress (1979); however, CL had its beginnings in England in the University of East Anglia in the 1970s and was closely related to Halliday’s work on FSL in Australia (Fairclough et al., 2011; Kress, 1990). The formation of CL and subsequently CDA was a significant moment in linguistic research because up until this point research had focused on formal characteristics of language and the competence of those speaking

(Chomsky, 1957). In particular, the prior research focused on language variation, change and communicative interaction exemplified in works such as Alexander, Stoyale and Kirk (1968). CL/CDA brought new perspectives to sociolinguistics by viewing language as a place where power, history and ideology were constructed and maintained, and, most importantly, it brought the perspective that language was a social process and a site for domination (Fairclough et al., 2011; Wodak & Meyer, 2001). The components of power, history, ideology and domination are key to understanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's interaction with the CJS (Cunneen, 2001). Given that these are the key components of CDA's methodology, CDA and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's interaction with the CJS make a well-reasoned fit.

CDA views discourse as a "circular process in which social practices influence texts, via shaping the context and mode in which they are produced" (Richardson, 2007, p. 37); reciprocally, texts affect society by contributing to the perspectives of those who consume texts (Richardson, 2007). CDA can trace its intellectual origins to Marx, who was concerned with the "role of cultural dimensions in reproducing capitalist social relations" and focused on meaning and ideology as the key processes (Fairclough et al., 2011, p. 397). Discourse is not assumed to be powerful by itself; discourse is the conduit through which people exert their power (Wodak, 2001). CDA is an amalgam of methodological and theoretical approaches; what unites them under the banner of CDA is the shared critical perspective towards performing discourse analysis (Fairclough et al., 2011; Wodak, 2001).

It is CDA's critical framework and its interdisciplinary approach that distinguishes it from other methods of discourse analysis (Fairclough et al., 2011; van Dijk, 1993; Wodak, 2001). The 'critical' in CDA is a fundamental component, which is described as "having distance to the data, embedding the data in the social, taking the political stance explicitly, and a focus on self-reflection" (Wodak, 2001, p. 9). Thus, CDA aims to reach an "understanding of how language-in-use contributes to and reproduces social inequality" (Weninger, 2008, p. 4); therefore, I view CDA as an appropriate methodology for understanding how media discourse may reproduce the inequalities Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience. Concepts such as "globalization, power, ideology and hegemony" are used in CDA to refer to the links between discourse, power and society (Weninger, 2008, p. 4). Typical research contexts are "institutional, political, gender and media discourses" (Wodak, 2001, p. 2).

According to Vaara and Tienari (2010), CDA has four main features. First, CDA examines how language is used in constructing and reproducing dominance within or over society (Wodak, 2001). Second, CDA is an intrinsically critical perspective that assumes a form of oppression exists that warrants investigation (Fairclough et al. 2011; Vaara & Tienari, 2010; van Dijk, 1993; Weninger, 2008; Wodak, 2001). Fairclough et al. (2011) asserted that CDA is “not a dispassionate and objective social science”: It is “a form of intervention in social practice and social relationships” (p. 395). This is an important component in my methodology because objectivity is neither where I begin my research nor is it the end purpose. The theoretical underpinnings of my research are not informed by positivism where one assumes an “ordered universe made up of discrete and observable events” (Blaikie, 2004, p. 3). Positivism assumes “reality is both singular and real in such a way that it can be measured” objectively (Broido & Manning, 2002, p. 435). Instead, my research is firmly grounded in constructivism where social reality “is the product and processes by which human beings together negotiate the meanings of actions and situations” and “human experience is a process of interpretation rather than direct perception of an external physical world” (Blaikie, 2004, p. 3).

My research resides in a theoretical world where pure objectivity is not possible, and subjectivity must be acknowledged and embraced. Therefore, I take a critical stance on the CJS’s treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the media’s representation of the treatment. Third, context is paramount; that is, I locate the discourse within its social, cultural, institutional and historical contexts (Vaara & Tienari, 2010; Wodak, 2001). Fourth, CDA’s focus is on linking different discourses, often referred to as intertextuality (Vaara & Tienari, 2010). CDA presumes that a full understanding of a particular discourse or text is only achieved through connecting it with, and juxtaposing it with, its related discourse (Vaara & Tienari, 2010).

3.3 Analysis

Three typical methods are used in CDA (Fairclough et al., 2011; Wodak & Meyer, 2001): socio-cognitive method, discourse-historical method and Fairclough’s method (Fairclough et al., 2011; Wodak & Meyer, 2001). Of those three approaches, I favour Fairclough’s (2001; 2003) method, which has been described as “the most sophisticated framework for analysis” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 60). Fairclough’s method was designed for those without formal training in linguistics and has been characterised as the

most appropriate when analysing mass media (Fairclough, 2001; Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 6). Given that my data reside in mass media and I have no formal training in linguistics, Fairclough's method is the logical choice.

Fairclough concentrated on "social conflict in the Marxist tradition and tries to detect its linguistic manifestations in discourse". Specifically, he considered "dominance, difference and resistance" and modern processes of social reconstruction (Wodak, 2001, p. 22; Fairclough et al., 2011, p. 399). Fairclough's approach is understood to be in "dialogical relationship with other social theories" (p. 121). In other words, Fairclough (2001) brings different social sciences, theories and methods into his research, engaging with, and adding to, them. Fairclough refers to this as a 'transdisciplinary' approach, which is further characterised by being collaborative (Fairclough, 2001; Fairclough et al., 2011). Fairclough also describes discourse as semiotic, that is, a study of signs and symbols, including visual images, body language, language and text (Fairclough, 2001, p. 122).

Fairclough (2001) employed a five-stage analytical framework, which I have adopted and adapted. The first step is to "focus upon the social problem which has a semiotic aspect" (Fairclough, 2001, p. 125). Fairclough (2001) reminded us that the social problem must be one where there is a power imbalance and the researcher typically takes the side of the powerless group, in this case, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Second, the researcher determines the barriers to the power imbalance (Fairclough, 2001). This is performed through examining the "network of practices it is located within; the relationship of semiosis to other elements within the practices"; and the discourse/semiotics itself (Fairclough, 2001, p. 125). Analysis of the discourse is broken down into four sub-groups: structural, interactional, interdiscursive and linguistic (Fairclough, 2001). Third, the researcher considers whether the social problem, discourse and practices rely on the existence of power imbalance for support (Fairclough, 2001). Fourth, the researcher determines how these problems can be addressed. Fifth, the research "reflects critically on the analysis" (Fairclough, 2001, p. 125).

The table below presents examples of how Fairclough's (2001) five-stage framework is used to diagnose "the problem" and identify "unrealised" issues and approaches for addressing the problem (p. 125).

Table 1: Fairclough’s 5-stage framework

Stage	Objective	Finding
1	identify social problem	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inequality
2	identify barriers	Crime, racism, healthcare etc.
3	necessity of power imbalance	Does Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inequality need to exist for the sake of social order?
4	ways around the problem	How can Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inequality be overcome?
5	reflect critically	

With Fairclough’s framework established, my next step is to identify intertextualities within the text (Fairclough, 2003). Fairclough (2003, p. 39) referred to intertextuality as “the presence of actual elements of other texts within a text—quotations”. This means that intertextuality includes the use of direct and indirect quotations or speech (Fairclough, 2003). Fairclough (2003) stated that identifying the presence of intertextuality is “analytically useful” (p. 47). It is a set of important first questions to ask in analysis: “Which texts and voices are included, which are excluded, and what significant absences are there?” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 47). Once the intertextual links have been identified, the researcher then moves to Fairclough’s (2003) three categories of assumptions for analysis: existential, propositional and value assumptions. *Existential assumptions* are assumptions about what exists, which can be identified by concepts that involve social phenomena, such as inequality or globalisation. These existential assumptions are intended to be understood as permanent and rational parts of society (Fairclough, 2003, p. 56). *Propositional assumptions* are “what is, can, or will be” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 55). These assumptions can be identified when a generalised claim, such as reconciliation is successful, and is intended to be uncontested and understood as fact. Finally, Fairclough (2003) identifies *value assumptions*, which are about “what is good or desirable” (p. 55). For example, text could contain the assumption that reconciliation is desirable and that alternative actions are therefore undesirable (Fairclough, 2003, p. 57). It is through these three assumptions that the researcher can identify how those who exercise social power and domination shape the “common ground” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 55). Attempting to make meanings universal or to shape the common ground is understood to be the actions of maintaining social dominance or a mechanism for communicating the ideology of those dictating the assumptions within

discourse (Fairclough, 2003). Identifying these universalising assumptions will reveal the ways those in power maintain their dominance and communicate their ideology and therefore reveal how minorities, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, are dominated.

A full analysis using CDA would go beyond identifying propositional, existential and value assumptions (Fairclough, 2003). Some researchers have argued that a complete CDA is impossible to achieve (e.g., Weninger, 2008, p. 9). Further, van Dijk (2001, p. 98) claimed that CDA does not provide a ready-made 'how to' analysis; it must be attuned to the social issue. Given the complexity of completing a full CDA, and the time constraints on this research project, I intend to use these three assumptive categories as a streamlined variation of Fairclough's method. Donkin (2012) used Fairclough's assumptive categories as a method of CDA under similar circumstances.

3.4 Sampling Rationale

As outlined in section 3.3, my research project aims to produce a CDA of data following Fairclough's (2003) assumptions. I analyse online news articles about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and criminal justice in post-apology Australia. I selected online news articles as my source of secondary data because 86% of Australian households now have access to the internet (ABS, 2016). The news media industry is in a state of flux as traditional media adapts to the internet age and online news media replaces the role of traditional newspapers (Gaskins & Jerit, 2012; Sayre et al., 2010).

The websites from which the articles were accessed are *News.com.au*, *Theguardian.com*, *Theage.com.au*, *9news.com.au* and *Perthnow.com.au*. The first four sites were chosen because they provide the highest amount of online viewership within Australia according to the Alexa website ranking system, *Top Sites in Australia* (2016). *Perthnow.com.au* was chosen because it represents a state-based online media outlet and is likely to yield more localised stories specific to WA. Five articles will be analysed from each website, constituting a total sample size of twenty-five articles for analysis. The sample of twenty-five articles could be categorised as excessive for a CDA; however, using a streamlined version of Fairclough's method has allowed me a larger dataset.

Each article's inclusion in the analysis was reliant on the discourse involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their interaction with the CJS after 2007. I deemed

it important to use post-apology articles as a criterion because this allowed the scope of potential articles to be narrowed to articles published after former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's apology in February 2008 (*Apology to Australia's Indigenous peoples*, 2008). This selection also enabled the research to be conducted on contemporary data. All articles were collected from October 2008 to October 2016, covering a period of eight years.

Chapter 4: Analysing the Discourse—Part One

The findings section has been separated into two chapters. Chapter four focuses on the following news websites, that is, *The Guardian* and *The Age*. Chapter five then covers news websites: *Perth Now*, *News.com* and *9news*. In each section, I have analysed five articles from each website using Fairclough's (2003) three assumptive categories: (1) *propositional assumptions*, which are "assumptions about what is or can be the case"; (2) *value assumptions*, which are assumptions about "what is good or desirable"; and (3) *existential assumptions*, which are assumptions about what exists (p. 55).

4.1 The Guardian

4.1.1 Article 1

The first article, published on 10 September 2015, is titled "Western Australia passes Bill to recognise Aboriginal people". The title itself contains two propositional assumptions. The words propose that "Aboriginal" people will be recognised with the passing of a Bill. This assumes that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were unrecognised prior to the Bill passing as law. The second propositional assumption is that recognition is something the WA State Government can give or 'allow' them. These two assumptions indicate that within the title, the author has established an understanding that the state government has authority over Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and they are about to be recognised by WA. The title also establishes an understanding that they are not currently allowed the right to self-determination and reinforces an unequal power relationship.

The article begins:

The Recognition of Aboriginal People Bill, tabled by Kimberley Labor MP Josie Farrer, amends the WA Constitution to recognize Indigenous people as the first people and custodians of the state.

Here, we see another reference to recognition, and again, the propositional assumption is that the WA Government has the authority to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This assumption is countered by the final words of the paragraph: "first people and custodians of the state". The propositional assumption is that they are

“custodians” and therefore have authority over caring for and protecting WA. However, this assumption is undermined by the already established authority of the WA Government. If Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were truly the custodians of WA, they would not need approval from the state government.

In the next excerpt, the author quotes Indigenous Labor MP Josie Farrer and her thoughts on the Bill being passed:

Farrer told reporters she was elated that the Bill had passed, adding it would give Aboriginal people a platform to negotiate on issues. “It gives them that security as to knowing who they are and how they sit with a lot of the policies in this country,” she said.

The first assumption in this section is the value assumption “she was elated”. Here we can see that the word “elated” ascribes value to the Bill as inherently good. Next is the propositional assumption that the Bill “would give Aboriginal people a platform to negotiate”, inferring that this Bill will allow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to raise issues that otherwise would not have been possible. Next, we have Ms Farrer saying, “It gives them security as to knowing who they are”. This is a propositional assumption that the Bill will provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people security and an understanding of who they are. Here, we can see a patronising ideology emerging, where the state government is seen to be giving them understanding and security through new laws. This Bill may not be of malign intent by the government, but it does cover evidence of a continued culture of controlling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people using the justice system.

4.1.2 Article 2

The second article is titled “Indigenous prison rate soared 52% in decade, report reveals”. The title contains the propositional assumption that 52% is excessive because the “prison rate soared”.

Australia’s Indigenous incarceration rate has risen by 52% over the past decade, exacerbated by a lack of culturally appropriate rehabilitation programs, a new report commissioned by the Australian Institute of Judicial Administration has found.

The first assumption, a value assumption stating that the “incarceration rate has risen by 52%”, is given context in the next line by the word “exacerbated”, suggesting that the author views this increase in incarceration as negative. Further, stating that the “incarceration rate has risen by 52%” entails the propositional assumption that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are committing more crime. The next assumption is the propositional assumption that the “culturally appropriate rehabilitation programs” would reduce incarceration rates. The final assumption is another value assumption. Using the word “exacerbated” implies that both the incarceration rate and non-culturally sensitive rehabilitation programs have a negative effect on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners. These assumptions form what appears to be a critical stance on the correctional system’s treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The report found Indigenous prisoners frequently did not qualify for rehabilitation programs because their sentences were too short; that programs provided had too few places to accommodate them and were often culturally inappropriate; and that correctional authorities were not transparent or forthcoming with data about the programs.

The first assumption identified in this paragraph is the existential assumption that rehabilitation programs are “often culturally inappropriate” for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners. The second assumption is propositional: “correctional authorities were not transparent or forthcoming”. This proposition assumes that correctional authorities should be transparent and forthcoming with data, which in turn leads the reader to a negative value assumption that correctional authorities are being deliberately evasive because they should be “transparent or forthcoming”. This paragraph again presents a critical view of the correctional system.

Indigenous Australians accounted for 27% of Australia’s prison population, he said, despite comprising just 2.5% of the general population as of the 2011 census, he said.

His findings follow those published in July by the University of Technology Sydney which found Indigenous Australians are being unfairly sentenced for their crimes because of the racist and prejudicial views held by some members of the judicial system.

Here, the author is paraphrasing Dr Clark Jones, an author of the report. Dr Jones is shining a light on the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

within prisons. Dr Jones, with perhaps the other author, is most likely intending a negative value assumption in that the CJS is failing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people because they are over-represented, especially considering the previous critical opinions on the correctional system. This point is further reinforced by the propositional assumption that “racist and prejudicial” views result in unfair sentencing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Again, we see a negative value assumption, this time towards the judicial system because it is linked with being unfair, racist and prejudiced in this paragraph. Despite this critical stance on the CJS, and the obvious attempt at advocating on the side of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the article still contributes towards the discourse that they are linked with crime.

In this final paragraph, the author quotes the CEO of the Lowitja Institute, Romlie Mokak:

More of our people are being locked up, the costs are going through the roof, and the flow-on effects for our communities and families are crippling. The corrections system is having the opposite effect of what is needed, and we need to examine how as Indigenous people we can empower ourselves to engage with the corrections system in a transparent relationship.

First, there is the propositional assumption that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander incarceration is increasing because “more of our people are being locked up”. Second, there is the propositional assumption that the cost of incarcerating them must be expensive because “costs are going through the roof”. There is also a value assumption that increasing imprisonment costs is undesirable because “costs are going through the roof”. Next, there is the statement; “the flow-on effects for our communities and families are crippling”. This claim has two assumptions within it. *Prima facie* is a propositional assumption that increasing incarceration rates and costs affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and families. If we look deeper, there is a negative value assumption attached: the “effects for our communities and families are crippling”. It is the effects of the CJS on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that is “crippling”.

In this light, it could be argued that the text is proposing the CJS is victimising these communities and families because it is crippling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with imprisonment rates and costs. This critical view of the CJS is further reinforced by the value assumption that another approach towards their imprisonment is desirable or “needed”: “The correction system is having the opposite effect of what is

needed”. The following value assumption is again triggered by the word ‘need’, referring to Indigenous empowerment being more positive interactions with the corrections system: “we need to examine how as Indigenous people we can empower ourselves”.

There is a great deal to unpack in this final piece of the paragraph. First, there is propositional assumption that empowerment will facilitate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to “engage” in a “transparent relationship” with the correction system. Second, the text makes both an existential assumption that a “transparent relationship” is something that exists and a value assumption that a “transparent relationship” is worthwhile because it is the desired result. Third, there is a propositional assumption that a people or an individual can engage in a “relationship” with the corrections system. Fourth, there is the suggestion that empowerment will promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s engagement with the corrections system. The propositional assumption is that they are not engaging with the corrections system. Not engaging with the system is framed as negative because the discourse holds the positive value assumption that engaging with the corrections system is desirable and therefore not engaging is undesirable. Lastly, the text highlights how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should “engage”. Here, the onus is on them to create the “transparent relationship”. Interestingly, nothing is mentioned of the correctional system’s obligations. This paragraph is clearly critical of the current “relationship” the correction system has with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Romlie Mokak’s words also appear to be more critical of their role rather than that of the correctional system.

Several criticisms of the corrections system are raised, such as costs, family and community impact and lack of transparency. The underlying assumptions suggest that the current system can be improved through empowerment and transparency, but the text is also critical of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s role in “engaging” with the corrections system. There appears to be no underlying racist ideology towards them within these assumptions. However, Richardson’s (2007) argument that the media will question the effects of dominant rule but refrain from questioning the system itself appears to be in effect. This article contains the admission of high incarceration rates and the questioning of the effects and culturally inappropriate rehabilitation programs and the ramifications of high imprisonment rates. Despite these critiques, I cannot identify any questioning of the neo-colonial ideology itself.

Nowhere is the efficacy of imprisonment questioned or the dominant ideology that allows large-scale imprisonment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be understood as natural and normal. Their criminalisation and imprisonment as a form of control and normalisation is a trademark of neo-colonial ideology (Cunneen, 2001). The author of this article has chosen to point out the symptoms of a neo-colonial ideology rather than questioning the ideology itself. It may appear unfair to single out one author, but as we progress through the findings, it will become clear that this is not an isolated case. This action could be characterised as hegemony in progress, where the action of imprisoning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in large numbers is understood as normal. If questions or frustrations do arise, the criticisms or solutions are contained within the dominant ideological system rather than the system that allows high imprisonment rates to exist. This allows reform to occur within our current ethnocentric legal system while those in power continue their dominance over society.

4.1.3 Article 3

The third article is titled “Aboriginal deaths in custody: 25 years on, the vicious cycle remains”. This title contains a negative value assumption: “Aboriginal deaths in custody” are characterised as part of a “vicious cycle”. “Deaths in custody” is already a bleak topic, but with the addition of the word “vicious”, a topic that is bleak gathers violent undertones. The phrase “vicious cycle remains” also contains the propositional assumption that violent deaths in custody have been and still are an issue for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Dhu, a 22-year-old Yamatji woman, died from a severe infection in police custody in Port Hedland on 4 August 2014. She is one of about 340 Indigenous people to have died in custody since the Royal Commission into such deaths handed down its final report on 15 April 1991.

This paragraph includes the propositional assumption that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander death rates in custody have not improved since the RCIADIC, but should have. The author refers to the death of a young woman from “severe infection” in police custody and “about 340” deaths since the RCIADIC. The internal logic of these discursive assumptions that the text implies is that the RCIADIC should have stopped or at least reduced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths in custody to less than 340 fatalities since 1991. The above assumptions combined reveal a value assumption that the current

rate of deaths in custody is unacceptable. There is also a propositional assumption hidden within the description regarding Ms Dhu's death in custody. The journalist could have chosen to just state that Ms Dhu died from infection while in police custody. The fact that Ms Dhu died is information enough to comprehend the seriousness of her condition. However, the author chooses to describe the infection as severe. The journalist may have intended to portray the police as negligent because if the infection was "severe" then how was it missed?

The bulk of the commission's 339 recommendations remain unimplemented or only partially implemented, a 2015 report by law firm Clayton Utz found. In some places laws have been introduced that directly contradict the recommendation that jail be the option of last resort for Indigenous people.

In the above text, "bulk of" and "339 recommendations remain unimplemented" include the propositional assumption that more of the RCIADIC recommendations could or should have been implemented. This is evidenced by the choice to accentuate the high number of recommendations that "remain unimplemented" and "bulk" of the report, rather than focusing on those that have been implemented. Jail stated as a "last resort" for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is a propositional assumption that alternative methods of punishment should be used before incarceration. Lastly, there is the negative value assumption that the laws contradicting the RCIADIC recommendation are unacceptable because they "contradict" the recommendations. To contradict is to deny the truth (Oxford English Dictionary, 2015); therefore, this makes the RCIADIC recommendation that prison remain as a last resort the "truth". This reveals the RCIADIC recommendations as desirable and the laws that challenge them as undesirable. Pat Dodson is quoted here:

"Certainly, one has to wonder what happened to the principle of imprisonment as a last resort, and the 29 recommendations relating to this issue," Dodson told the press club. "A quarter of a century after we handed down our findings, the vicious cycle remains the same".

Dodson's first words contain a propositional assumption. The words "Certainly" and "has to" propose that people should be questioning why imprisonment is not a "last resort". This then leads to the value assumption that prison as a last resort is desirable and important because without the last resort ideal, the "vicious cycle" will remain. Pat

Dodson's words also contain the existential assumption that there exists a "vicious cycle" that leads to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths in custody. Theoretically, it may be possible to identify patterns of mistreatment but to refer to this as a "vicious cycle" is to assume that the cycle exists as a clearly identifiable entity. These assumptions are openly critical of the CJS and its treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The state police minister, Liza Harvey, said in a statement to the Guardian Australia that the government was "continuing working on tackling the issue of Aboriginal over-representation in the justice system and deaths in custody" and that "several programs have already been implemented and others are progressing".

Using the word "tackling" propositionally assumes that the state government is addressing the issue head on in a strong and perhaps aggressive manner. Further, employing the word "continuing" suggests this process has been going on prior to the statement and will proceed into the future. This is reinforced again in the second sentence in confirmation that programs are already in practice with others "progressing". It could be argued that this is a discursive attempt to emphasise the state government's control of the situation because it is an issue already being directly tackled. The final part of the state police minister's quotation contains the propositional assumption that 'programs' are an effective response to over-representation and deaths in custody. This is substantiated by the statement that the "government was continuing working on tackling the issue" and that "issue" is being addressed using 'programs'.

The state police minister's statements were in complete contrast to the preceding discourse. Both the author and Pat Dodson were clearly critical of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander death rates in custody and the government's seemingly lax effort towards implementing the RCIADIC's recommendations. Additionally, the author and Pat Dodson proposed that imprisonment should be the "last resort". Liza Harvey, as a member of state government, reinforced the government's control by "tackling the issue" and presenting the solution through implementing "programs". Although neither the author nor Pat Dodson questions the overarching ideologies of neo-colonialism or the system of rule within Australia, they do question punishment as the first response to crime. However, including the police minister's reinforcement of the government's control of the situation, "tackling" the situation and its ability to reduce Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander deaths in custody through “programs” reinforces neo-colonial ideology. The state police minister’s assertion that programs to tackle deaths in custody are the solution could be characterised as misguided if these programs have not adequately addressed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths in custody. If these programs have indeed been implemented without results, reinforcing the program’s efficacy despite the programs failings indicates undertones of an ideology of paternalism with a ‘we know what’s best’ attitude.

4.1.4 Article 4

The fourth article is entitled “‘At last’: Kenbi land returned to Aboriginal owners after 37-year fight”. The words “at last” convey the propositional assumption that the Kenbi land should have been returned much earlier because “at last” communicates a sense of relief at a long-awaited result. Continuing, there is the existential assumption that Kenbi land was or is owned by “Aboriginal owners”. There is also the propositional assumption that the land was taken from the “Aboriginal owners”, evidenced by the word “returned”, which implies previous ownership. The final assumption within the title is the propositional assumption stemming from the word “fight”. The word “fight”, when no object is attached, means to have a violent struggle (Oxford English Dictionary, 2015). Violent struggle, arguably, is quite a poetic characterisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s interaction with the CJS. From these assumptions, it could be asserted that the traditional owners are the legitimate owners; they had to violently struggle for the land and the “fight” went on far too long. The title seems to be advocating on the side of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and has a critical view of the government. The culminating assumption is one of value, that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are of good moral virtue because they fought hard and long, resulting in the rightful reclamation of their land. Conversely, the value assumption for the government is one of negative value; the government took the Kenbi land and then engaged in excessively long and injurious struggle with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This is a good example of how a title can set the scene.

“The Kenbi land claim was a hard-fought land rights battle,” the prime minister told the gathered crowd. “But it represents so much more than just a battle over land. It is a story that epitomises the survival and resilience of our First Australians, the survival of Larrakia people.”

The author was quoting Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, who began by employing a propositional assumption. Using “hard-fought land rights battle” suggests the Larrakia people and the government fought strongly over the Kenbi land claim. The word “battle” is an existential assumption that the land rights claim was a conflict. This is the second time in this article that the interaction between the government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people has been referred to as violent conflict. The first use was “fight” and then “hard-fought” and “battle”. Discursively, Malcolm Turnbull is positioning the Federal Government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in opposition to each other. The prime minister is then quoted as having said: “But it represents so much more than just a battle over land”. There is a propositional assumption that the land rights claim was more than a “battle”. By itself, it would be a stretch to link Malcolm Turnbull’s assumption with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s struggle with colonial and neo-colonial dominance. However, it is given context in the next sentence with, “a story that epitomises the survival and resilience of our First Australians”. The assumption here is one of proposition, indicating that “First Australians” have survived and are resilient.

When linking the assumption that it is “more than just a battle” with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people being survivors and resilient, it could be argued that the prime minister is acknowledging the government’s previous transgressions. This is a prime example of how *critical whiteness* can diminish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s own experience of colonisation (Love & Tilley, 2013). Love and Tilley (2013) stated that “Discursive uses of linear time ultimately narrate a present and future white belonging that displaces or appropriates Indigenous belonging” (p. 185). Here, the prime minister, through his assumptions, is placing colonisation and its effects in the past when this may not be how colonisation is experienced by the Larrakia people. There is also the existential assumption using the word “resilience” to indicate that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are tough and recover quickly. This is not the first approbation from the prime minister, who uses words such as “epitomise” to refer to the Larrakia people as a perfect example and “resilience” to suggest toughness or the ability to recover quickly. These two words combined create the value assumption that the Larrakia people are an ideal example of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Ostensibly, this is a broad compliment, but if we apply this assumption, it could be framed

as praise for conforming to the dominant criminal justice process because the Larrakia people used the legal system of dominant society.

Turnbull said the leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in working with each other and with governments was the key to ending Indigenous disadvantage and pointed to the 12 Indigenous candidates for the federal election.

Further on, the discourse is again focused on praising the Larrakia people for conforming to dominant white society's legal process. There is the propositional assumption that working with "each other and with governments" is the "key" to how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can end disadvantage. Further, it is also a value assumption: "working with each other and with governments" is of positive value because it will end "disadvantage". The land rights victory could be framed as positive progress, at least within the bubble of critical whiteness. Under discursive scrutiny, it could be contended that this is a sanitised form of Altman's (2007) neo-liberal assimilation process. The closing assumption within this paragraph is the propositional assumption that the "12 Indigenous candidates" are a representation of the disadvantage ending. Parity within our government would be a positive step; conversely, it could be contextualised as positive reinforcement for playing by the rules.

Snowdon thanked Turnbull for the bipartisanship of his speech. "But it hasn't always been that way," he said, accusing former CLP governments of trying to "strangle at birth" the Kenbi land claim.

Above is the propositional assumption that the Country Liberal Party (CLP) governments have not always worked with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, through "but it hasn't always been that way". This is followed by the value assumption that the CLP is of negative value because it tried to "strangle at birth" the Kenbi land claim. There is also the propositional assumption that the Kenbi land claim was attacked by the CLP, through "strangle at birth". That Warren Snowdon is an Australian Labor Party member should be factored into the motivations (left-leaning) for his accusations.

Snowdon said the ceremony recognised only what has always been Aboriginal land. He told the Tommy Lyons group they had a responsibility as traditional owners, and noted the division surrounding the claim.

The initial line contains the existential assumption that the land has “always been Aboriginal land”. Second, there is the propositional assumption that “traditional owners” have a “responsibility”, but a responsibility for what? This is answered by the next propositional assumption that there is “division surrounding the claim”. It could be asserted that the overall assumption that Warren Snowden is proposing is that the Tommy Lyons group, as traditional owners, have a responsibility to address the “division surrounding the claim”. There is an underlying proposition that returning of land to the traditional owners adds the burden of dealing with conflict.

A performance by the Kenbi Dancers followed, but the event was interrupted by Eric Fejo, a Larrakia man who has also claimed traditional ownership of the land, without success. “Prime minister, what deals are you doing with multinationals in regards to environmental issues?” he said.

The “division surrounding the claim” stated by Snowden is given a little more context in this paragraph, where it is stated that there was more than one claim from the Larrakia people and not all were acknowledged, that is, these were “without success”. The propositional assumption that not all claims were successful reinforces the government’s and the CJS’s authority over who is awarded the title of “traditional owner”. Dominant white power figures ultimately decided which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had legitimate claim to ownership of land that was taken from them. Again, we see critical whiteness at play in this article, where the author and politicians view the interaction from within race privilege (Frankenberg, 1997). The author and the politicians frame this story as one of progress for the relationship between dominant white society and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. However, under analysis, ethnocentric ideology is in motion. Progress of the relationship has been measured and rewarded when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people work within the government-imposed system of control. This could be characterised as the subtle process of neo-liberal assimilation.

4.1.5 Article 5

Article 5 is titled “The custody notification system saves Aboriginal lives: Why isn’t it national?”. The article title begins with the value assumption that the custody notification system is desirable because it “saves Aboriginal lives”. The same line contains the propositional assumption that the notification system does indeed “save Aboriginal

lives”. The author used these two assumptions to establish the value and function of the custody notification system, and then asks why it is not national. The question creates the propositional assumption that it should be national, especially if it is, as assumed, worthwhile and effective.

When someone is arrested and detained they are at an elevated risk to life-threatening levels of anxiety. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are at much higher risk than the rest of the population because of the distrust that has developed from generations of racism and marginalisation.

The opening sentence contains the propositional assumption that anxiety can be “life-threatening”, followed by the value assumption that being arrested and detained is of undesirable value because of “life-threatening levels of anxiety”. Next, there is the propositional assumption that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are at “higher risk” of “life-threatening ... anxiety” because of “racism and marginalisation”. There is then the propositional assumption that “distrust” has grown because of “racism and marginalisation”. Lastly, there is the existential assumption that a phenomenon such as “generations of racism and marginalisation” exists. The discourse in this paragraph distinctly separates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from the larger population as having a “much higher risk than the rest of the population”.

With so many of the nation’s arrests comprising of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, it is unjustifiable that the rest of the nation has not implemented this service. It is beyond exasperating that right-mindedness has been side-lined for so many years by one government after another and in turn many lives lost.

The paragraph starts with the propositional assumption that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are arrested at higher rates nationally “so many ... arrests comprising of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders”. The next sentence has two assumptions. The first assumption is the propositional assumption that it is “unjustifiable” that the custody notification system is not “implemented” nationally. Second, there is the positive value assumption that having the program made national is desirable because implementing it is warranted. The next sentence has a great deal to unpack. I start with “beyond exasperating” since this is establishing a value assumption in that for something to be beyond exasperated is a very strong choice of words. This creates a negative value assumption towards the “government” because they have caused “exasperation” and not

used “right-mindedness” and “lives have been lost” as a result. Following this is the propositional assumption that “right-mindedness has been side-lined”. This proposes that the government has not behaved in a proper and ethical way, which could then be argued to propositionally assume that having “right-mindedness” would result in the implementation of the custody notification service. Next, there is the existential assumption that a construct such as “right-mindedness” exists in the way that the discourse suggests. Certainly, right-mindedness in itself exists as a concept but it might be a stretch to declare one perspective as “right-minded” and the other not, when views and principles can vary greatly. There is also the propositional assumption that multiple governments have not done the “right-minded” thing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: “one government after another”. This paragraph appears to be very critical in its perspective of the government’s treatment of them while also positioning them as needing extra care and protection compared with the rest of society. This position communicates a paternal ideology.

The death of 22-year-old Ms Dhu in a WA police watch house should have led to the immediate establishment of the CNS in that state. The memory of Ms Dhu has been betrayed by the WA government. It is my firm belief that a CNS advocate would have seen to the hospitalization and proper treatment of Ms Dhu.

Before assessing the assumption within this paragraph, I wanted to draw attention to the presence of *intertextuality* between this article and article three. Fairclough (2003) states that intertextuality is “how texts draw upon, incorporate, re-contextualise, and dialog with other texts” (p. 17). This is the second article that refers to Ms Dhu’s death. The article used Ms Dhu’s death in the same manner as an example for reform and better treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the CJS. By mentioning Ms Dhu, the text is allowing itself to be connected to the ideas and information contributed by article three, and in this way, intertextuality has allowed the discourse to create a narrative between these two articles.

Moving on to the assumptions within, the paragraph starts with the propositional assumption that Ms Dhu’s death “should have” ensured that the custody notification system be put into practice in WA. The following sentence contains the negative value assumption towards the WA Government because it “betrayed” the memory of Ms Dhu. The discourse also includes the propositional assumption that the WA Government’s act

of having refused an “immediate establishment” of the custody notification system following Ms Dhu’s death is an act of betrayal. This leads to an assumption that the custody notification system should have been effectuated. In the final sentence is the propositional assumption that Ms Dhu’s life would have been saved had the custody notification system been in effect: “firm belief that a CNS advocate would have seen to the ... proper treatment of Ms Dhu”. The words “proper treatment” propositionally assumes that Ms Dhu received improper treatment. Concluding this paragraph is the value assumption that the custody notification system is desirable because it results in “proper treatment”.

4.1.6 The Guardian Summary

Overall, these five articles from *The Guardian* appear to be communicating a critical perspective towards the government and the treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by the CJS. It is apparent that the discourse is attempting to advocate better treatment of them within the CJS. I have also identified intertextual links between articles, such as articles three and five linking their arguments with the death of Ms Dhu. Many of the articles have used specific ‘buzz’ words or words to prime the reader. Discourse such as “marginalisation”, “racism”, “deaths in custody”, “traditional owners”, “disadvantage” and “over-representation” was often used. Discourse such as this can be intertextual in the way that it incorporates previous knowledge, dialogues and concepts and allows the reader to access these external ideas and incorporate them into their understanding of the article in front of them. Intertextuality works both ways. These articles are also contributing to an existing discourse or dialogue. In this instance, it is the government’s failure to address the inequality experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the CJS. The assumptions discussed above communicate, what I might call, paternalistic advocating. In using the term paternalistic advocating, I am referring to the discourse arguably advocating on the side of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their clear disadvantages within the CJS. This is followed by a request that they should receive specialised resources and treatment. The process of advocating is arguably worthwhile and although well intentioned, sometimes results in further restrictions, scrutiny and supervision applied to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In this manner, the process of advocating on behalf of their needs could have negative paternalistic repercussions. Thought needs to be given as to how to approach advocating on behalf of a vulnerable group of people. A disaster such as the

NTER, which I discussed in the literature review, is a fine example of good intentions applied with devastating results.

All five articles focused on what Richardson (2007) called the ‘symptoms’ of, in this case inequality, such as “over-representation” in custody, “marginalisation”, or “disadvantage”. When the articles offered solutions, they were in the guise of programs or reform. These inequalities are arguably symptoms of our dominant white culture and its neo-ideological structures. Rather than bringing into question the system itself, each article chose to address the symptoms of the dominant system instead. This approach could stunt growth in creating a dialogue questioning dominant ideologies and discussing alternative systems. Finally, I was able to analyse quotes in article four from the former prime minister, Malcolm Turnbull. Within that discourse, the assumptions revealed that the Larrakia people were being rewarded for working within the prescribed legal system, and possibly also for engaging with the process of assimilation. This could be characterised as the first clear instance of a neo-liberal ideology of assimilation within these articles, that is, the assimilation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into the dominant Australian society.

4.2 The Age

4.2.1 Article 1

The first article from *The Age* is entitled “Case for Aboriginal referendum muddled”. The title contains the propositional assumption that the argument or “case” for an “Aboriginal referendum” is in disorder, evidenced by the word “muddled”. There is also the value assumption that this particular “case” is undesirable because it is disorganised or “muddled”.

Pearson also rails against section 51 (xxvi) which gives the Commonwealth a power over “the people of any race for whom it is deemed necessary to make special laws”.

Those words are now thought to be offensive. Yet they are the very words the Aboriginal leadership sought in 1967!

The paragraph above begins with Indigenous lawyer and activist Noel Pearson’s feelings on the Commonwealth’s power to make special laws concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. There is the propositional assumption that Noel Pearson objects

strongly to section 51 of Australia's Constitution through the use of the word "rails". Next, the propositional assumption within "Those words are now thought to be offensive" is that section 51 is offensive. In turn, section 51 creates a value assumption because if it is "offensive" it is therefore unsuitable. In diving a little deeper and examining the word "thought", it appears that the journalist has distanced himself from the statement, using "it is thought" rather than just stating that section 51 is offensive. The discourse's unease with section 51 being "offensive" is further alluded to in the final sentence "Yet they are the very words the Aboriginal leadership sought in 1967!".

The propositional assumption within is that Noel Pearson is contradicting what "Aboriginal leadership sought in 1967". It could even be argued that the text propositionally assumes that the "Aboriginal leadership" in 1967 was responsible for the "offensive" section 51. The exclamation mark at the end of the sentence signifies surprise at the apparent contradiction between Noel Pearson and the Aboriginal leaders in 1967. This establishes the propositional assumption that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders should all be in agreement despite 50 years of progression. To put this into context, entering a dialogue requesting the updating of legislation that has not changed in over 50 years does not seem controversial by itself. However, it seems to be the topic of race that creates the conflict. Lastly, I wanted to discuss the existential assumption regarding "Aboriginal leadership". It could be argued that the discourse existentially assumes this is an officially formulated and cohesive group that represents Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's interests when this could be separate and distinct representatives from different cultural groups with competing interests.

The question I shall ask will be: "How often must we change the constitution purely because the Aboriginal leadership asks us to do so?"

The propositional assumption is that the Australian Constitution is changed too "often" and the reason it is changed "often" is "Aboriginal leadership". The entire sentence itself propositionally assumes that the Constitution should not be changed. There is also a propositional assumption, evidenced by "how often", "must" and "purely because", that Aboriginal leadership requests are not reason enough to warrant changes be made to the Constitution. The wording creates a negative value assumption that the opinions or requests of Aboriginal leadership are unwelcome. The text in this section continues using "we" and "us", discursively separating "Aboriginal leadership" from "us". The discourse

establishes a propositional assumption that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and perhaps Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by association are separate from dominant white society. These assumptions indicate both a paternal and ethnocentric ideology. The discourse is suggesting that the Aboriginal leadership's request is not a legitimate enough reason to change constitutional laws that are offensive towards them. The article also discursively separates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from dominant society. The underlying assumptive theme is that only dominant white society should have the authority to change the Constitution and therefore it is hoped the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Given that Pearson now loudly proclaims “we got it half wrong in 1967” I predict that, if we now vote to recognise Indigenous Australians, before too long we shall find a new generation of Aboriginal leaders saying that “we got it half wrong in 2017”.

The first line indicates with “loudly proclaims” the propositional assumption that Noel Pearson was strident in his opinions regarding the Constitution; the words are an interesting choice because “proclaim” already gives the impression that Pearson is publicly stating his opinion and “loudly” is not necessary to construct the sentence. The words “vote to recognise Indigenous Australians” contain the propositional assumption that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are not yet recognised. Next, there is the propositional assumption denoted by “before too long ... a new generation of Aboriginal leaders saying, ‘we got it half wrong in 2017’”; this assumes the Constitution should not be altered because it may have to be changed again at the request of a “new generation of Aboriginal leaders”. The position reinforces the earlier assumption proposing that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people finding offence with the Constitution is not reason enough for revision. This position leads to an overall value assumption that their opinions are worth less than other Australians' opinion. This is not overtly racist, but these assumptions are symptomatic of an ethnocentric perspective. When ethnocentricity is coupled with the underlying paternal ideology in the previous paragraph, it could be contextualised as discriminatory. This article propositionally assumes an internal logic that the Constitution should not be changed because revision may occur again in the future. This appears to be a flimsy justification for not allowing amendments to occur.

4.2.2 Article 2

Article two is titled “Aboriginal refugees moved”. The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951, p. 152) states that a refugee:

“As a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it”.

This describes a refugee as someone who is forced to leave his or her own country for fear of persecution. The words “Aboriginal refugees” is an existential assumption that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can be refugees in their own country. Choosing the word “refugees” propositionally assumes that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are refugees once they leave their community, as well as compounding the perspective that they are a vulnerable minority group. Lastly, the title is a value assumption that these Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are vulnerable because they are seeking refuge and therefore are a worthwhile cause.

The group of about 100 people fled their remote community on September 21 following an outbreak of violence and have been housed at an Anglicare facility in Adelaide’s north.

The text above holds the value assumption that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community is undesirable because of an “outbreak of violence”. Using the word “outbreak” propositionally assumes that violence was sudden and could not be contained.

“We’ve made arrangements with police that they can stay there until its safe for them to go home”, Mr Clemow said.

This particular article did not contain many underlying assumptions, with a matter-of-fact style of reporting. However, it still contextualised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as violent and in need of intervention by government authorities. This perpetuates the longstanding colonial relationship of superiority of the dominant white society over

them and communicates an ideology of neo-liberal assimilation because the group needs to be brought into dominant white society to be protected.

4.2.3 Article 3

The third article from *The Age* is the first article to cover a specific crime. The article is called “Speeding drunk driver got suspended sentence for first death, then killed again”. The title establishes a negative value assumption that the drunk driver is dangerous having killed twice, as well as being a “speeding drunk”. The “suspended sentence” and “killed again” propositionally assume that had the sentence been imprisonment, the second death could have been avoided.

Allan McDevitt, 31, was at twice the legal blood alcohol limit, and driving at almost double the speed limit when he drove a stolen car down the wrong side of the road and hit a parked car in Hadfield last July, the County Koori Court heard on Tuesday.

This paragraph is discussing the previous incident in which Mr McDevitt received a suspended sentence. The discourse contains the negative value assumption “twice the legal blood alcohol limit”, “double the speed limit”, “stolen car” and “wrong side of the road”. These phrases construct Mr McDevitt as incredibly reckless. Restating the offence and its similarity to the new offence propositionally assumes that Mr McDevitt has not learned from his mistake. Notice that there is no direct mention of whether or not Mr McDevitt is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. This omission links back to my discussion of Sercombe’s (1995) article in the literature review. There, I discuss the legality around stating a person’s race or ethnicity. Number nine of the MEAA principles states: “A newspaper should not, in headlines or otherwise, state the race, nationality or religious or political views of a person suspected of a crime, or arrested charged or convicted, unless the fact is relevant”. The MEAA principles are national and hence applicable to “Hadfield”, a suburb in Melbourne. The words “Koori Court” in the paragraph above is a perfect example of how the media can still communicate a person’s race or ethnicity without directly stating it. Mentioning the “Koori Court”, which only deals with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander defendants, propositionally assumes that Mr McDevitt is either Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Ms Guzzo's daughter, Patricia Russo, cried as she read her victim impact statement to the court. She said her mother had been killed just when she had found "peace and happiness in retirement".

Including the fact that Patricia Russo "cried" as she delivered her victim impact statement propositionally assumes sympathy should be given to Ms Russo. The same sentence "she read her victim impact statement" contains the propositional assumption that Ms Guzzo was not the only victim. The following sentence remarks that her mother had been killed just as she found "peace and happiness", propositionally assuming that Ms Guzzo's life was taken at a pivotal point and that the death of Ms Guzzo is made more tragic because she only just found "peace and happiness".

While it did not excuse his actions, McDevitt had been racially abused as a young child. "He didn't believe [he had a] space in society and saw alcohol and drugs as a refuge to allow him to feel, even for a moment, like he belongs."

Foremost in this paragraph, the phrase, "did not excuse his actions" is the propositional assumption that suffering racial abuse does not excuse an offender who commits a crime. Choosing to include Mr McDevitt's experience of racial abuse leading to "alcohol and drugs" establishes the propositional assumption that racial abuse contributed to Mr McDevitt's actions. Mr McDevitt's grandfather is then quoted—"He didn't believe he had a space in society"—which propositionally assumes that racial abuse can make a person feel excluded from society, which then led to drug and alcohol abuse.

This article is a clear example of the ramifications that racism can have on people's lives. Interestingly, the journalist did not choose to establish a clear-cut good versus bad dichotomy between the offender and victim. Racism is cited as a mitigating factor in the offence, giving context to the crime instead of choosing to label Mr McDevitt as inherently inimical. The article still contributes towards the racial stereotype of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people committing crime as well as suffering from drug and alcohol abuse. Unlike previous articles, there were unnecessary opportunities taken to reveal the offender's race despite the MEAA principles, thus linking Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with the common racial stereotype of criminality.

4.2.4 Article 4

The fourth article is titled “Aboriginal inmates suffering trauma”. The title contains the propositional assumption that Aboriginal inmates are victims experiencing pain and distress evidenced by “suffering trauma”. Next is the propositional assumption that “Aboriginal inmates” are the only inmates who suffer from trauma, given that no other category of inmate was mentioned. The title also immediately links Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with prison.

More than half the Aboriginal male inmates in prison for violent crimes are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, an academic says. And without effective intervention, the “stressors” for the disorder will be passed on to other generations, perpetuating the cycles of crime.

The paragraph begins with the propositional assumption that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males commit “violent crimes” and that “more than half” of them suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Here, we can see that the article links them with violent crime and mental health. Next, is the value assumption that “effective intervention” is desirable because without it “stressors” will be passed on to “other generations” and result in continuation of “cycles of crime”. This value assumption then leads into the propositional assumption that “generations” of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are committing crime. The last assumption within this paragraph is the existential assumption that crime has “cycles”. In the first paragraph, the article has established that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males commit violent crimes and that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander crime can become generational owing to the “stressors” of PTSD.

More than half of the 58 Aboriginal males she questioned at prisons nationwide were suffering from the symptoms associated with post-traumatic stress disorder.

Following from the initial paragraph of the article is a more specific account of Dr Caroline Atkinson’s research. It is discovered that Dr Atkinson’s findings do not back up the previous propositional assumption that “more than half of Aboriginal inmates in prison” suffer from PTSD; instead, what the research reports is “more than half” of the “58” Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males questioned exhibited PTSD symptoms.

The way the author chose to report these findings in the opening paragraph resulted in overstated existential assumptions being communicated within the discourse.

Dr Atkinson, who was conferred a PhD from Charles Darwin University (CDU) for her research into intergenerational Aboriginal violence, said she had “harrowing stories” from the incarcerated men.

Beginning this excerpt is the propositional assumption that Dr Atkinson is an authority on “intergenerational Aboriginal violence” because she has a “PhD from Charles Darwin University”. The text makes a point of stating Dr Atkinson’s education level and where she was educated. This ascribes the value assumption that Dr Atkinson provides positive value because she has an education, which places her within conventional Australian society. These two assumptions combined act as a process of legitimising Dr Atkinson, her findings and the article itself. Next, we have two assumptions from within “research into intergenerational Aboriginal violence”. First, is the existential assumption that “intergenerational Aboriginal violence” is something that exists. The second is the propositional assumption that intergenerational violence is a significant issue because it has warranted research into the topic. The final assumption within this segment of text is the propositional assumption that the incarcerated men have experienced acute distress because of their “harrowing stories”.

“It’s crucial that we have a tool to measure the success of such interventions and address issues of violence across Aboriginal families and communities throughout Australia,” she said.

In this last sentence of this fourth article is a propositional assumption created by “we have a tool to measure the success”, which propositionally assumes that the “interventions” into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander violence are successful. Following the last sentence, there is the positive value assumption towards addressing “issues of violence across Aboriginal families and communities” because addressing these issues is labelled as “crucial”. This also leads into the propositional assumption that violence within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities is present and is an “issue” throughout Australia.

The article in question reinforces the preconception of the dangerous and violent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individual through assumptive references to the

extent of violence and mental health experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people throughout Australia. Dr Atkinson reinforces the legitimacy of the CJS, which could be contested as a justice system based on their punishment and control (Cunneen, 2001). Commendable as the research and articles are in advocating better treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within prison, the article does not offer a counter-narrative to the violent depiction of them. This is an example of critical whiteness, that is, trying to address the issues experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people wearing a “white blindfold” and failing to address the bigger picture (Tait, 2007, p. 619). This is surely harsh criticism to single out one article or researcher, but this is not an isolated occurrence. It is a constant narrative between articles reinforcing the link between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and crime, as well as the power structures and ideology of neo-colonial Australia.

4.2.5 Article 5

The final article from *The Age* is titled “Aboriginal community discusses suicide”. The title contains the propositional assumption that suicide is an issue within the “Aboriginal community” because it has generated community discussion.

Racism, discrimination and a lack of employment have contributed to a spate of suicides in a small West Australian town, grief-stricken Aborigines say.

First, there is a propositional assumption that Aboriginals in this community experience “racism, discrimination” and underemployment at levels significant enough to be partially responsible for “a spate of suicides”. The word “spate” propositionally assumes that there were a large number of suicides in succession. Lastly, there is the value assumption the suicides are of significant negative value because they have left the community “grief-stricken”.

“We need strong Aboriginal leaders in this community. When I talk about leaders, it’s not just men, it’s the ladies too,” Mr Bolton said. Discrimination against Aborigines included being told there were no jobs at the council, only to see jobs offered to white people, Mr Bolton said.

Starting this paragraph is the value assumption that “Aboriginal leaders” “need” to be “strong”, which suggests that strong leadership is desirable. It also contains the propositional assumption that the community currently lacks strong leadership, evidenced

by “We need strong Aboriginal leaders”. Selecting the word “strong” as the single attribute an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community leader needs, implies the propositional assumption that power and force are needed to lead. Cunneen (2001) contended that historically, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership structures have been systematically dismantled or undermined throughout the colonisation process, and hence, it makes sense that strength is a valued attribute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership. Continuing from there, there is the propositional assumption that the council is discriminating against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members because they only offered jobs to “white people”. Further, using the word “included” propositionally assumes that the former have been discriminated against in other ways. This paragraph is establishing the idea that there is an unequal power relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the rest of the Narrogin community. Mr Bolton’s words communicate his view that the former are being purposefully denied entry into dominant society through the denial of jobs.

Mr Calma said after the meeting that racism was a major issue alongside the need to encourage Indigenous students to complete high school, health concerns and interactions with police.

This text extract contains the propositional assumption that racism is not the only factor contributing to the suicides. As well as racism, education, “health concerns and interactions with police” are cited as contributing factors. This then leads into the positive value assumption that education and specifically “completing high school” is desirable, indicated by the words “need to encourage”. Mr Calma cites racism as a major factor in the “spate” of suicides and then suggests solutions, such as to “encourage” Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to complete high school, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health concerns and “interactions with police”. This position appears to communicate a neo-liberal ideology of assimilation. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth are suffering because of racism and inequality, and the answer to fixing these issues is further indoctrination into the dominant white culture.

WA Coroner Alastair Hope has conducted two coronial inquiries in the last 12 months in the Kimberley region, investigating the link between Aboriginal suicides and cannabis use.

The discourse holds the propositional assumption that cannabis use may be a factor in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicides because a WA Coroner is officially investigating it. Following on from this point is the existential assumption that a correlation or “link” exists between these suicides and cannabis use. The article, which ends abruptly, diverges to a different region of WA. The coronial inquiry had been conducted in the Kimberly, a very different region of WA from the town of Narrogin in the wheat belt region of WA. Linking Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths with cannabis is a stretch that undermines or at least changes the tone of the article.

The article commences by highlighting the “spate” of suicides and then lists the contributing factors, such as racism, discrimination, health and education. The final section introduces and undermines the preceding discussion on inequality with a narrative of cannabis use, not linked with the town or its people, and uses this to create a propositional assumption that cannabis use may be a factor in the suicides in Narrogin. This position reinforces the stereotype that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are deviant and commit more crime than other Australians. Advocating the fixing of the cultural issues through further steps towards integration into dominant white culture, such as further “education”, health and “police interaction”, suggests that an ethnocentric and neo-liberal ideology of assimilation is present within the text. The final forced link between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and cannabis use could be contextualised as a racist red herring. This focus is disappointing given that the beginning of the article is ostensibly focused on inequality.

4.2.6 The Age Summary

These five articles from *The Age* all contained elements of critical whiteness, where the underlying assumption was that dominant white society’s systems, such as the justice system, are not at fault for the continued difficulties experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Rather, the issue is often shifted towards the neo-liberal ideology that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be further integrated or assimilated into the dominant society to reduce their crime rates and disadvantage. The resulting assumptions in articles one, two and five may not have been overtly racist, but they did contain elements of critical whiteness and contribute to a discourse of neo-liberal ideology. Articles three and five were perhaps the most egregious with their assumptions. Article three intentionally worked around MEAA code of ethics to reveal the offender’s

race, and article five undermined its own narrative, concluding on an unrelated inquiry into suicides involving cannabis. Overall, I was surprised at the distinct tonal shift from *The Guardian's* advocating narrative towards the harsher, ethnocentric narrative put forward by *The Age*. Ultimately, neither of the media outlets questioned the neo-colonial or neo-liberal ideologies, only ever arguing for changes within the current system. This reinforces Richardson's (2007) argument that rarely does the media question the system itself. Instead, the media chooses to focus on the symptoms of the system. In this case, both media outlets focused on the symptoms of inequality rather than questioning the ideological systems that allow inequality to exist.

4.3 Chapter Summary

As we move towards the second chapter of the findings, three ideologies have started to emerge. Those ideologies are neo-colonialism, neo-liberal assimilation and paternalism. Thus far, it appears that propositional assumptions are occurring at higher rates in the text and existential assumptions are occurring at much lower levels, with value assumptions occupying the middle ground. Lastly, it seems that *The Guardian* is more critical of both the government and the CJS. *The Guardian* has also made a clear attempt to advocate on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people whereas *The Age* had a harsher, ethnocentric reporting style. Going forward, it would be interesting to see whether the other news media sites have a particular agenda or narratives connecting their articles.

Chapter 5: Analysing the Discourse—Part Two

5.1 Perth Now

5.1.1 Article 1

The first article from *Perth Now* is titled “Peter Collier says planned changes to Aboriginal Heritage Act ‘not racist’”. Choosing to include the defence “not racist” in the title propositionally assumes that the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972* (WA) changes have been previously labelled as being racist. This inclusion immediately establishes the value assumption that the changes to the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972* (WA) are undesirable because the amendments could be racist.

Under the proposed changes, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs would be responsible for most of the decision-making sparking fears the legislation would not give enough of a role to Indigenous people. There would also be increased penalties for damaging or destroying sacred sites

Beginning this paragraph is the value assumption that the amendments are of negative value because they are “sparking fears”. Next, there is the propositional assumption that roles are given to “Indigenous people” by government through the medium of “legislation”. This reinforces the paternal ideology of control over Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The state government is functioning as a gatekeeper, holding the power to determine whether they have a “role” in their own affairs. This paternal ideology is reinforced by the propositional assumption that the state government essentially performs the act of penalising of people through “increased penalties” for “damaging or destroying sacred sites”.

The man asked Mr Collier if the government could increase the political temperature around the Bill. “Can we please overcome our fear of being called racists to take this on?” the man asked.

To give the discourse above some context, the question is being asked by another member of parliament in a sarcastic manner. The article establishes the controversy surrounding the Bill earlier in the article, but I chose not to include that particular section. The beauty of CDA and Fairclough’s (2003) assumptive techniques is that it is possible to establish

the intended meaning without any context, evidenced by the propositional assumption that if the “political temperature” “could increase” assumes that there is already a level of disagreement surrounding the Bill. There is also an existential assumption that there is such a thing as a “political temperature”. The next sentence contains the value assumption that “being called racist” should invoke “fear” and is therefore of undesirable value. Next is the propositional assumption that “fear of being called racists” is impeding political process because “fear” should be “overcome” to “take this on”. It could be argued that the underlying logic here is that accusations of racism should not be reason enough to affect a politician’s decision-making process. This is a concerning thought and potentially reinforces the idea that cultural insensitivity and perhaps racism are acceptable within government.

Mr Collier said he was currently facing a backlog of 15,000 section 18 (Aboriginal Heritage Act) applications and his amendments were designed to streamline the process.

In the previous text extract, the assumptions demonstrated that the fear of being racist was not justification enough to refuse the amendments to the *Aboriginal Heritage Act* (1972). The above concluding excerpt from article 1 of *Perth Now* goes on to justify the need for the amendments because of the “backlog of 15,000” heritage applications. This contains the value assumption that “to streamline the process” is a more valued priority than ensuring the amendments are culturally sensitive. Lastly, there is the propositional assumption that the government decides whether or not to approve the Aboriginal heritage applications. It could even be argued that the *Aboriginal Heritage Act* (1972) is a subtle form of assimilation, rewarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who follow the legal system in return for their sacred sites. This point reinforces a neo-liberal ideology of assimilation (Altman, 2007) because it portrays the control, regulation and assimilation of them as natural and normal.

5.1.2 Article 2

The second article from *Perth Now* is titled “Rally over closure of WA Aboriginal communities causes chaos for commuters in Melbourne”. The title contains the propositional assumption that the rally “caused” disorder and confusion, or “chaos”, for people trying to reach their workplace. This title is poetic in how it juxtaposes the needs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people facing their communities’ closure

against the needs of dominant society functioning unimpeded. It is a very good representation of the clash between two cultures and the struggles experienced on both sides.

A key Melbourne bridge was hijacked at the height of the protest of up to 1000 people marching against the forced closure of Aboriginal communities in WA.

Using the word “key” to describe the bridge assumes positive value because the bridge is of crucial importance. Then the word “hijacked” propositionally assumes the bridge was unlawfully seized or taken over by the protesters. Combining these two assumptions puts the protesters in a combative light because it suggests the protesters took over a crucially important bridge without authorisation “at the height of the protest”. Lastly, there is the propositional assumption that the “Aboriginal communities” did not have a choice regarding community closure, because the closure was “forced”.

Even though the crowd was much smaller than the 6000 expected, a change of plans caused headaches for police and Friday-night commuters.

The text above contains the negative value assumption that the protest changing its plans is undesirable because “a change of plans caused headaches” and causes disruption to others such as “police” or “commuters”. The underlying assumption proposed here is that protests should be planned so they do not disrupt society’s normal functioning. This could be classified as communicating a neo-liberal ideology of assimilation because it is reinforcing behaviour that results in conforming to the imposed system of dominant society.

“This is a trigger and it’s one we’re going to use. We’re not going to stop here, Aboriginal people have nothing to lose.”

The above quotation comes from one of the protesters and has the propositional assumption that protesting is a way of fighting back because protesting is referred to as a “trigger ... we’re going to use”. The next section “Aboriginal people have nothing to lose” is a deeply saddening statement, but also could be seen as self-empowerment. First, it is saddening because “nothing to lose” propositionally assumes that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have already lost everything. However, there is the value assumption that there is power or strength in having nothing left to lose because it means the protesters can fight back unimpeded: “We’re not going to stop here”. Further, “we’re

not going to stop here” propositionally assumes that the protesters have not given up the struggle, despite having lost everything.

“They should have exterminated us properly because they have to recognise our human rights.” “We’re not the terrorists – the terrorists came on the First Fleet.”

The words “should have exterminated us properly” contain the propositional assumption that the colonisation process was, and is, an attempt to exterminate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Next, “have to recognise our human rights” holds two propositional assumptions. The first is factual, proposing that the Australian government is obligated to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s human rights. The second is that “have to recognise” proposes that previously, their human rights may not have been recognised. Further, the words “We’re not the terrorists” includes the propositional assumption that there is a belief that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are terrorists because the statement is a rebuttal. The following text “the terrorists came on the First Fleet” propositionally assumes that those who first colonised Australia for colonisation were terrorists. The word terrorist might appear heavy-handed, but under the *Security Legislation Amendment (Terrorism) Act 2002 (Cth)*, a terrorist act is defined as “the action is done or the threat is made with intention of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause”. The colonisation process could have arguably fitted the definition of a terrorist act on many occasions.

Article two started by juxtaposing the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people against the needs of dominant Australian society and continued the theme throughout the article. The neo-liberal ideology of assimilation was identified in the earlier excerpts and presented as natural and normal. However, towards the end of the article, it was contrasted by the quotations of one protester who communicated the deep suffering of the colonial past and the continued struggle between neo-colonial Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within dominant Australian society.

5.1.3 Article 3

Article three is titled “WA Government aims to reform Aboriginal justice, overrepresentation in jails”, which holds the existential assumption that there is such a thing as “Aboriginal justice”. If there is “Aboriginal justice”, this propositionally assumes there is a separation between Aboriginal justice and other matters of justice. Choosing the

words “Aboriginal justice” acts in a way that distinguishes justice from “Aboriginal justice”, discursively separating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Next is the propositional assumption that “Aboriginal justice” needs “reform” because of “over-representation in jails”.

The over-representation of Aboriginal people in the West Australian justice system and number of deaths in custody will be addressed in a ministerial working group, the state government says.

Beginning the above selection of text is the propositional assumption that the “over-representation of Aboriginal people” and the “number of deaths in custody” is a significant enough issue to warrant government action. The seriousness or concern that might accompany topics such as “deaths in custody” and “over-representation” is mitigated by the propositional assumption that the state government is in control of the situation because the issues “will be addressed”. These assumptions serve to both assert the state government’s power and lessen the seriousness of overcrowded prisons with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people losing their lives.

Premier Colin Barnett identified three areas of focus including the creation of safer custody environments, avoiding incarceration for low level offending, and supporting prevention and diversion initiatives that keep people out of the criminal justice system.

The passage begins with the value assumption that “safer custody environments, avoiding incarceration for low level offending, and supporting prevention and diversion initiatives” is desirable because these are the “three areas of focus” chosen by the Premier. The same text fragment contains the propositional assumption that making “custody environments” safer, “avoiding incarceration for low level offending”, and “supporting prevention and diversion initiatives” will address the over-representation and the deaths in custody of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Of course, the other side of this propositional assumption is that “custody environments” are unsafe, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are incarcerated for “low level offending” and prevention and diversion initiatives are unsupported. Lastly, the line “keep people out of the criminal justice system” indicates a positive value assumption towards diversionary tactics over imprisonment.

Aboriginal prisoners make up 40 per cent of the total adult prison population in WA, but Aboriginal adults represent only 2.9 per cent of the state's population.

The obvious propositional assumption here is that "Aboriginal adults" are seriously over-represented in the WA prison system. The reasoning as to why "Aboriginal adults" comprise 2.9% of the population but consist of 40% of the adult prison population is not given. The propositional assumption could go one of two ways. (1) If Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are over-represented in prison, this propositionally assumes they are committing more crime. (2) If they are over-represented in prison, perhaps the system unfairly targets them. Given the way the discourse ascribes a negative value assumption towards the CJS's impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, evidenced by "deaths in custody", "overrepresentation in prison" and unsafe custody environments, suggests the narrative is proposing that the system unfairly targets them.

Overall, this article does not contribute to the strong ideological themes of neo-colonialism or neo-liberal assimilation as do some of the other articles. The article does contain the pervasive ideology of paternalism towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people evidenced by the "ministerial working group" tasked to address over-representation and deaths in custody as well as the aforementioned propositional assumption that the government is in control of the situation. Finally, whether well intentioned or not, the article contributes to the racial stereotype that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people commit more crime than other Australians.

5.1.4 Article 4

Article four is titled "Parliamentary inquiry will examine a spate of Indigenous suicides in WA's north". The title contains the propositional assumption "spate" suggesting a large number of suicides occurred and thus sparked the inquiry. Second, there is the propositional assumption that the "spate of Indigenous suicides" is a serious matter because there will be a parliamentary inquiry.

There was public outcry earlier this month after the girl, who was understood to have been a victim of domestic violence and was in informal foster care with extended family, died in the remote community of Looma.

Beginning the above passage is the value assumption triggered by the words "public outcry", indicating the girl's suicide aroused the public's disapproval and anger and is

therefore of significant negative value. Next, is the propositional assumption that the girl was a “victim” of her circumstances, illustrated by “domestic violence” and “informal foster care”. Stating that the girl was a “victim of domestic violence and was in informal foster care” propositionally assumes that these may be factors contributing to the “outcry” and inquiry. Lastly, the phrase “remote community” is notable. This is the second time it has been used in an article. The first was article two of *The Age*, and it is an example of Fairclough’s (2003) intertextuality point. Intertextuality contends that words cannot be viewed in isolation, but must link with existing text and the assumptions that come with it (Fairclough, 2003; Richardson, 2007). The words “remote community” can then begin to take on meaning beyond the original definition that links with the existing narratives (Richardson, 2007). In both examples, “remote community” had been used to describe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as having violence and crime as central issues. This results in “remote community” becoming a phrase that assumes a link between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and violence and crime. Lastly, choosing to list “informal foster care” alongside being a “victim of domestic violence” ascribes a negative value assumption. Following this assumption to its logical conclusion suggests that perhaps formal foster care would have mitigated the chances of domestic violence, illuminating an ethnocentric value assumption that the formal process used by dominant society is superior to the “informal process” that was used.

In a statement released late last week, the committee said it would report in November on what could be done to halt the worrying number of suicides among Aboriginal youths, particularly in remote communities.

The above piece holds the propositional assumption in the words “worrying number of suicides”, which proposes that the number of suicides is alarming. The “committee” saying it “would report on what could be done” propositionally assumes that something can be done to reduce or stop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth suicides. This position reinforces a persisting ethnocentric ideology that those in positions of power, in dominant society, are in control and will address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inequality. Finally, the text “particularly in remote communities” propositionally assumes that youth suicide rates are of more concern in remote communities. Earlier, we observed the intertextual linking of the phrase “remote communities”. I noted that the words “remote communities” were linked twice with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander violence and crime. Again, we see that “remote communities” is propositionally assumed

to have higher rate of youth suicide and is connected with domestic violence. It appears that “remote communities” are being depicted as experiencing more violence and criminality than other communities, within the discourse of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander criminal justice.

5.1.5 Article 5

The final article from *Perth Now* is titled ““Welfare tragic for Indigenous Australians’ says Aboriginal leader Noel Pearson”. First, there is the propositional assumption through the word “tragic”, that welfare causes extreme distress or sorrow for “Indigenous Australians”; “tragic” is also a negative value assumption that welfare is undesirable for “Indigenous Australians”. The word “welfare” has an intertextual function because of an existing discourse that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people depend on, and therefore have a negative relationship with, the welfare system (Martin, 2001; Pearson, 2001). The words “welfare” and “tragic” link with, communicate with and contribute to the existing narrative that they are adversely dependent on the welfare system. The final assumption within the title is propositional. “Aboriginal leader” suggests that Noel Pearson is an authority on, and within all, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The discourse is legitimising Noel Pearson and by doing so legitimises the statement as well.

Aboriginal leader Noel Pearson has said Australia is reaping the tragedy of a system which did not seek to engage Indigenous people. Mr Pearson has backed comments by Indigenous academic Marcia Langton that a sense of entitlement had poisoned Aboriginal society.

Starting the above selection is the propositional assumption that the welfare system should “seek to engage Indigenous people” because one that does not is a “tragedy”. As discussed in the title, there is a negative value assumption attached to the welfare system because it is a “tragedy” and “did not seek to engage Indigenous people”; therefore, the system is undesirable. Next, is another value assumption that “entitlement” is undesirable because it has “poisoned Aboriginal society”. The words “poisoned Aboriginal society” also hold the existential assumption that a society can be poisoned by “entitlement”.

“The flipside of the opening up of the doors of citizenship to our people, was the provision of welfare. What should have been provided was opportunities to engage in ... the mainstream economy.”

It has already been established above that “welfare” is assumed to be of negative value. Here, citizenship is argued as the “flipside” or reverse of welfare, which assumes a positive value. Next, is the existential assumption that there is such an economy as the “mainstream economy”. The above text contains the propositional assumption that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were not provided an opportunity to “engage in the mainstream economy”. The discourse also ascribes a positive value assumption to the “mainstream economy” because it would have provided “opportunities to engage” and consequently makes the “mainstream economy” desirable.

“We’ve got to embrace Aboriginal success,” he said. “Money and materialism shouldn’t be an anathema to Aboriginal people.” He said Indigenous people needed to be striving for a better life.

This text extract holds the propositional assumption that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should “embrace” success. The word “anathema” propositionally assumes that they strongly dislike “money and materialism”. The words “shouldn’t be an anathema” conveys a positive value assumption towards “money and materialism” itself. This could be contextualised as communicating a neo-liberal ideology of assimilation because the discourse is positively reinforcing the value structure of neo-liberalism. There is then the propositional assumption that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are not striving for “a better life” evidenced by the factual verb “needed”. However, what does “better life” mean in this context? Based on the positive value assumptions, the “better life” is based on embracing “success” and “money and materialism”. This is a clear example of an underlying value system of dominant neo-liberal society being communicated discursively.

“We still haven’t gotten out of the mind-set of Aboriginal people being the poor, benighted victims in Australian society,” Mr Pearson said.

The above quotation has the propositional assumption that Australian society sees Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as “poor benighted victims”. The words “we still haven’t gotten out of the mind-set” assume negative or undesirable value towards

being stuck in this mind-set of “poor, benighted victims” and assume positive value towards getting out of this mind-set. These assumptions acknowledge frustration at a perceived existence of racist ideology within Australian society and encourage moving beyond this ideology. However, the underlying narrative of this article contains the argument that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should adopt the value system of dominant society to succeed, which reinforces a neo-liberal ideology of assimilation. The discourse within the article renounces an ideology of racism, but maintains that to move forward Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people must adopt a neo-liberal value structure. Academics have argued that assimilation, sometimes referred to as neo-assimilation, is also based on racist assumptions and ideology (Altman, 2007; Moran, 2005). Pearson’s perspective has caused controversy in the past and drawn criticism from Martin (2001).

5.1.6 Perth Now Summary

The five articles analysed from *Perth Now* did not all have the same agenda or communicate identical ideologies. Most notably, articles one, two and five communicated an explicit ideology of neo-liberal assimilation as the dominant narrative. Articles two and five, countering the assimilative ideology to some degree, included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices and perspectives that communicated the deep suffering in the colonial past, racism and their continued neo-colonial struggle within dominant Australian society. Article three did not contain any neo-colonial or neo-liberal ideology but it did hold a paternal ideology within its discourse. Neo-colonial ideology was not identified in any of the articles that could be characterised as a positive element in *Perth Now’s* articles. Overall, I have observed a commonality through each media producer. Thus far, *The Guardian*, *The Age* and *Perth Now* all have contributed to neo-colonial, neo-liberal and paternalistic ideologies. These ideologies may not be present in every article, but they have permeated each media outlet. While each article may not contain one of the three major ideologies I have identified thus far, they do usually hold a perspective that could be described as ethnocentric or from the perspective of critical whiteness. These are the developments as I move to the next media producer.

5.2 News.com

5.2.1 Article 1

The first article from *News.com* is titled “Police evict Aboriginal campers”. The title holds the propositional assumption that “Aboriginal campers” were not there legally because the police evicted them.

The sight of dozens of tents, camp fires, Aboriginal flags, protest signs and people has been a regular and divisive fixture at the Swan River island for more than a year.

The above excerpt contains the propositional assumption that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people camping on the Swan River island has divided opinions, evidenced by “divisive fixture”. The text also propositionally assumes that these campers have been there for a long time because it has been “more than a year”.

Perth Council decided residents of the so-called “Matagarup refugee camp” or “camp for the homeless” had been illegally living there for long enough and sent in rangers and police on Tuesday.

This selection of discourse holds the propositional assumption that the “Matagarup refugee camp” is named inappropriately, questioning the camps legitimacy because it is a “so-called” camp that “had been illegally living there”. There is also the value assumption that the Matagarup camp is undesirable because they have been “illegally” camping and for too long, that is, “long enough”. Next, is the propositional assumption that the Perth Council control or decide where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homeless are allowed to live and for how long, suggested by the words “decided residents ... had been illegally living there for long enough”. Perth Council’s command over the situation conveys the power structure within the discourse.

There was violence at the site in 2012 when a ‘tent embassy’ was established to protest native title issues.

This section of text stood out in the article both in its placement and in its purpose, having almost no context to the rest of the story. It stood alone as a sentence—it was neither linked with any other paragraph and nor did it serve to summarise, join or continue the narrative. The propositional assumption is that “there was violence” in 2012 during the

previous protest involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This could serve to insert the propositional assumption that violence should either be a concern or be a possibility regarding the current protest because it occurred previously. This sentence unnecessarily links Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with violence in a very blatant manner.

“We need water, we need food and shelter ... the government should come and discuss it with us and not send their goon squad ... there is other police work out there in the community,” Nyoongar man Desmond Burton told AAP

The quotation above has the propositional assumption that the use of police was unnecessary because the government could have discussed the issues with the protesters but instead chose to use force through “their goon squad”. The words “goon squad” also convey a negative value assumption about the police. “Goon squad” implies the police are bullies or thugs and therefore are undesirable. Calling the police “goons” also propositionally assumes that the police are violent or act in a criminal manner. These assumptions reinforce the perception of a poor relationship between police and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people stemming from accusations of unnecessary force (Cunneen, 2001; National Inquiry into Racist Violence in Australia, 1991). The above assumptions may not reinforce neo-colonial ideology, but they do acknowledge the existence of neo-colonial systems and criticise the control of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through crime and force.

Perth Council did not comment on Tuesday but its view is that it has adequately offered services to people, that most campers have access to housing if they want it but many have refused.

The propositional assumption here is that offering services and housing is adequately addressing the situation. The Perth Council does not acknowledge the reason or purpose of the protest. Instead, we have an interaction where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have lost their communities and rather than enter into a dialogue with them or attempt a resolution, the Perth Council placates the “Matagarup refugees” with “services” and alternative “housing”. To be fair, the Perth Council has in no way the capacity to undo the closure of these communities, but it is clear that no other government body made any effort. In offering access to housing as an adequate resolution, the discourse propositionally assumes the problem is a loss of residence rather than a loss of

community. This distinction ostensibly allows the Perth Council to remedy the situation rather than engage with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on the loss of their community. Discursively, this article shows an arm of the WA's local government that uses neo-colonial methods of force and criminalisation to control them.

5.2.2 Article 2

Article two from *News.com* is titled "Victims need Aboriginal listeners: Labor". The title holds the propositional assumption that victims' opinions should be heard. There is also the propositional assumption that the victims are "Aboriginal" because they "need Aboriginal listeners". The "victims" needing such listeners propositionally assumes that the victims have not been heard or understood adequately, which leads to the positive value assumption that Aboriginal listeners are needed for victims to be heard.

"This royal commission has to be done with Aboriginal people, not to Aboriginal people," Mr Shorten told reporters in Darwin on Saturday. "Their stories deserve to be heard and they deserve to see Aboriginal commissioners hearing their story."

The above quotation holds the propositional assumption that previous royal commissions did not include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the process because the royal commissions were not "done with" them. The quotation also contains the value assumption that a royal commission that involves them in the process is positively valued. Next is the propositional assumption that having people "hear their story", specifically "Aboriginal commissioners", acts as a reward. The function of rewarding is evidenced by "deserve". This propositionally assumes suffering abuse while in detention is worthy of reward in the form of "Aboriginal commissioners hearing their story".

Mr Turnbull revealed the terms of reference for the royal commission on Thursday, just days after the ABC aired footage of brutal abuse of children behind bars.

The words "just days after" contain the propositional assumption that revealing the terms of reference was a quick reaction to the footage released by the ABC. There is also the propositional assumption that the footage was highly disturbing, which is evidenced by the words "brutal abuse of children". Abuse of children is already a disturbing proposition; framing it as "brutal" ascribes a strong negative value assumption because it is not just abuse but "brutal" abuse.

Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce labelled Mr Shorten's call for two Indigenous co-commissioners a "fly-by-the-seat-of-his-pants idea". "I can't think of one where there's been a number of judges with equal powers," he told ABC television on Saturday.

The above quotation "fly-by-the-seat-of-his-pants idea" propositionally assumes that having two Indigenous commissioners is illogical or lacks understanding of the situation. The same quotation also holds a negative value assumption that having two Indigenous commissioners is undesirable because it is not a well-thought-out idea. The next sentence propositionally assumes that judges on a royal commission should not have equal powers because there is no precedent: "I can't think of one". Therefore, having two Indigenous commissioners should not be allowed because there is no precedent for two commissioners of equal power.

Article two combines the competing narratives of opposing political parties. The political reasons as to why they have made their respective statements have no relevance for my research. However, their competing arguments still communicate different views about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within Australia. Bill Shorten's discourse does not come across as ethnocentric or racist, arguing that they should be included in, and preside over, the royal commission into the abuse of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offenders at Don Dale detention centre. Barnaby Joyce argued that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should not be allowed to preside over the royal commission. This is a royal commission focusing on the abuse of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young offenders. Joyce's position could be easily characterised as paternalistic and most certainly ethnocentric. Perhaps there is room for the argument that excluding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander commissioners from an inquest into the abuse of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth is racist. Ultimately, the discourse within article two contains a paternal ideology by demonstrating that powerful members of dominant white society decide whether Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be included in the criminal justice process. Further, despite the seriousness of the abuse within Don Dale detention centre, there was no questioning of the neo-colonial structure of punishment as a form of controlling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Only the severity of the abuse was questioned instead of the neo-colonial system that facilitates an environment where the abuse of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children can exist.

5.2.3 Article 3

The third article from *News.com* is titled “Violence against Aboriginal women 80 times worse”. The title contains the propositional assumption that this is an alarming figure for “violence against Aboriginal women” because it is “80 times worse”.

Do you want the shocking truth? There’s a place in the world where dreadful violence is regularly inflicted upon women: rape, terrifying assault and murder. In this place, women of a certain ethnic group are 80 times more likely to be hospitalised for assault and injury.

The above excerpt holds the propositional assumption that this article or story is the “truth”, while also attaching a value assumption that this “truth” should be desired with “do you want”. The same initial sentence possesses the value assumption that what is being reported is appalling because it is the “shocking truth”. Choosing the words “There is a place in the world” instead of naming the town in the NT propositionally assumes that the violence is so “dreadful” that it is almost unimaginable that this is occurring in Australia. This assumption reinforces the previous proposition that the story is “shocking” because of the “dreadful violence” described above. Next, there is the negative value assumption that the violence and abuse in the article are worse or more undesirable than usual because this violence and abuse are dreadful and terrifying. Arguably, violence and abuse are dreadful and terrifying in their own right, and applying the extra descriptors of “dreadful” and “terrifying” increases the negative value to the abuse described above. In the next sentence, “certain ethnic group” propositionally assumes the ethnic group is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander because “Aboriginal women” was employed in the title. Lastly, there is the propositional assumption that Aboriginal women are 80 times more likely to be abused; this is suggested by the words “80 times more likely to be hospitalised for assault and injury”.

“The society where this is going on is very different from the middleclass Aboriginal people that many people know.” These are hair trigger communities where people fly into a rage in a second.

This text excerpt separates “middleclass Aboriginal people” from the “hair trigger community”, using middle-class as the defining characteristic. This first assumption is existential: the discourse assumes that a “middleclass” exists within society. Next, is the

value assumption that “middleclass Aboriginal people” are more desirable because “many people know” middle-class Aboriginals; they are not from “hair trigger communities where people fly into a rage”. Further, the words “middleclass Aboriginal” propositionally assume that these Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more a part of dominant society because they are middle-class individuals. Following this point, is the propositional assumption that dominant society only knows middle-class Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people because these people are “very different from the middleclass Aboriginal people that many people know”. The words “very different” propositionally assume that there is a large degree of variation between middle-class Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the community experiencing the violence and abuse. The next sentence holds the existential assumption that there is such a community as a “hair trigger community” in existence. There is also the propositional assumption that the people and the community are unpredictable and lack self-control: “fly into a rage in a second”.

The figures for children from very remote areas of the territory [include] ... school attendance rates of 65 per cent [with children] attending less than three days a week. “That is outrageous. It’s disastrous”.

I chose this excerpt to again point out the intertextuality of the word “remote”. Article two of *The Age* and article four of *Perth Now* linked the phrase “remote communities” with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander violence and crime. Although this article refers to communities as “areas”, it adds twice to the intertextual assumption that “remote” communities or places with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are violent and high in crime. This way, when someone reads the word “remote” in the context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, it is from an understanding that it is often linked with violence and crime. The discursive extract above has the positive value assumption that Australia’s education system is of desirable value. This is because “65 per cent” of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children going to school on fewer than three days a week is referred to as “outrageous” and “disastrous”. There is also the propositional assumption that going to school less often than three days a week is “outrageous” and “disastrous”.

“Dozens of my female relatives have been killed this way.” Convictions usually lead to light sentences. “I was told by a senior lawyer that no jury in Alice Springs will

convict an Aboriginal person for murder if the victim is also Aboriginal and he or she is only stabbed once.”

The above text, “convictions usually lead to light sentences”, propositionally assumes that sentences should be harsher. This is evidenced by the “dozens ... killed” resulting in “light sentences”, as well as the overall value system communicated through the article. The phrase “light sentences” regarding “dozens ... killed” also has the value assumption that harsh sentences are more desirable. Even though the next sentence is anecdotal, it holds the propositional assumption that no jury in Alice Springs “will convict an Aboriginal person for murder if the victim is also Aboriginal” and “only stabbed once”. This also contains the propositional assumption that juries in Alice Springs treat murder and violence less seriously if it occurs between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Following this logic, it could be argued that the discourse holds the value assumption that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lives are worth less than non-Indigenous lives.

“Why hasn’t there been the same outrage over the continuing killing of our women and abuse and neglect of our kids? If these women victims were white, we would hear very loud outrage from feminists”

This quotation “Why hasn’t there been the same outrage” holds the propositional assumption that people should be more outraged over the killings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and “abuse and neglect of ... kids”. Next, there is the value assumption that white lives are more important because there would be “loud outrage” if it were white women in these circumstances. This is also a propositional assumption that Australian society is ethnocentric and possibly racist because white lives are more important.

Article three of *News.com* attempts to shock with its vivid detail of violence and criminality. Unfortunately, this article links remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities negatively with violence, abuse and crime. An ideology of neo-liberal assimilation was quite strong, especially in the excerpt that assumed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that were part of Australia’s “middleclass” were superior to those in remote communities. It was also clear that the discourse contributed to racist ideology in the paragraph above where it is propositionally assumed white lives have more worth. The neo-colonial ideology of punishment as a form of controlling Aboriginal

and Torres Strait Islander people is also present within this article's narrative, evidenced by the assumptions that sentencing was too "light". To conclude, this article is by far the most discursively harmful article thus far.

5.2.4 Article 4

Article four of *News.com* is titled "WA inquiry to examine Aboriginal deaths". I debated whether including this article would be worthwhile because, aside from the title, it is a carbon copy of article four from *Perth Now* called "Parliamentary inquiry will examine a spate of Indigenous suicides in WA's north". However, the opportunity to compare these articles is a unique circumstance.

The titles achieve the same general message but have distinct differences. First, the title of *News.com*'s article four, "WA inquiry to examine Aboriginal deaths", does not include the word "spate" as in *Perth Now*'s article four. This means there is no propositional assumption on the number of suicides or deaths that have occurred. Second, there is the same propositional assumption that this is a serious matter because there will be an "inquiry". However, *Perth Now* elected to include more information, using "parliamentary inquiry" instead of *News.com*'s choice to label it a "WA inquiry". The difference this makes is perhaps minimal, but there is room for the argument that *Perth Now*'s choice to use "parliamentary inquiry" creates a stronger focus on the propositional assumption of the seriousness of the issue. Although *News.com*'s choice to use "WA inquiry" is vaguer, there is still the propositional assumption that this is a serious matter, but it is not as strong an assumption. The final difference is *News.com*'s choice to use death instead of the more specific "suicide" that *Perth Now* chose. Choosing to use "death" is less specific when the story is about suicide, and it also propositionally assumes that the story is about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths in general. Overall, *Perth Now* seems to incorporate more colourful language, perhaps in an attempt to capture the audience's attention.

The two articles are verbatim so the assumptions within also mirror each other, as such I will not go through the assumptions again. I would like to point out that even though the assumptions are the same, they are being produced twice to reinforce the same ideologies. In this case, it was an ethnocentric and paternal ideology that those in positions of power, in dominant society, are in control and have the solutions to address Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander inequality. Finally, this was one of the articles to include the text “remote communities”. Earlier, we noted the intertextual linking of the phrase “remote communities”. I identified that “remote communities” was linked four times with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander violence and crime. Again, we see here that “remote communities” are propositionally assumed to have higher rates of youth suicide and are connected with domestic violence and death. It appears that “remote communities” are continually being framed as experiencing more violence and criminality than other communities, within the discourse of these articles.

5.2.5 Article 5

Article five from *News.com* is titled “We deserve better, say Aboriginal leaders”. The title contains the propositional assumption that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have not received what they “deserve”. There is also the value assumption that what they have is undesirable because they “deserve better”.

“We are tired of being marginalised, tired of being ignored, and we have come here today to present a united front in terms of all our very present issues that will not be denied,” Jackie Huggins, from the National Congress of Australia’s First People, told reporters on Thursday.

The text selection “We are tired of being marginalised, tired of being ignored” holds the propositional assumption that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been marginalised and ignored for too long. Next, is the propositional assumption that the marginalisation and ignoring of them are current or “present issues” within Australia. The words “united front” propositionally assume that all of them are united in wanting an end to being ignored and marginalised. Further, these words also propositionally assume that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have made an alliance against a common enemy who marginalises and ignores them. The text “will not be denied” propositionally assumes that they are taking a strong stance on their “very present issues” because there is no room for refusal. Lastly, “very present issues” propositionally assumes that being ignored and marginalised is not something that just occurred in the past. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are currently facing these issues.

Ms Huggins said Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were prepared to stand together for justice, equity and representation. “Ignore us at your peril because we vote

too and it is our people who are the most severely disadvantaged people in this country,” she said.

The quotation “stand together for justice, equity and representation” contains the propositional assumption that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience injustice and inequality and are misrepresented within dominant society. Following this with “ignore us at your peril” has the propositional assumption that disregarding the issues they raised is serious because they “vote”. This then leads to the propositional assumption that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who vote are influential because they can threaten election results. The implied value system within the narrative suggests that effecting change through influencing election results is valuable. Therefore, this also contains the value assumption that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who vote are also more desirable under this framework. The words “our people ... are the most severely disadvantaged” propositionally assume that everyone else within Australia experiences more advantage or less inequality than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

First People’s Disability Network’s Damien Griffiths said there was a lot of “we hear you” but not enough action, while Victorian Aboriginal Legal Services chief executive Wayne Muir said Thursday’s gathering was evidence of the frustration Indigenous people feel about not being heard.

The text excerpt above has the value assumption that action is more desirable than being listened to. This is evidenced by Damien Griffiths’ words of frustration: “there was a lot of ‘we hear you’ but not enough action”. Within this discursive value system, action is more desirable than being heard. The following statement from Wayne Muir contradicts the above value system that action is more desirable. Here Mr Muir states, “the frustration Indigenous people feel about not being heard”, which has the value assumption that being heard is also desirable, resulting in a mixed and unclear narrative.

Discourse in article five communicates that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people still experience racism in the form of marginalisation, injustice, being ignored and inequality. The government is framed as being uncooperative towards their requests for “justice, equity and representation”. The discourse does not communicate or reinforce any of the ideological themes discussed so far. However, it does highlight the implications

or ramifications of racist ideologies by highlighting the marginalisation, inequality and disregard Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people still experience.

5.2.6 News.com Summary

Two of the major ideologies, neo-colonialism and paternalism, were persistently presented throughout the discourse of *News.com*'s five articles. The articles offered an array of perspectives from politicians, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and community members, academics and the authors. Despite the variation of voices, the same ideologies of paternalism and neo-colonialism were identified, whether from a perspective that reinforces those ideals or from a perspective experiencing the repercussions of such systems. Lastly, *News.com* also added to, and continued, the intertextual assumption that "remote communities" are inherently more violent and criminal. The phrase "remote communities" is arguably taking on the function of a trigger phrase for assuming violence and criminality.

5.3 9news

5.3.1 Article 1

The first article from *9news* is titled "Aboriginal people 'take abuse for granted'". The words "take abuse for granted" propositionally assume that there is overfamiliarity with abuse in their lives. This also holds the propositional assumption that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are so familiar with abuse that they do not respond as non-Indigenous Australians.

Aboriginal people almost take for granted the level of abuse depicted in footage of young boys being mistreated at Darwin's Don Dale detention centre, says Mick Gooda.

The above selection again has the phrase "take for granted" when referring to abuse. This reinforces the propositional assumption that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience abuse at a level high enough for it to become overly familiar. Next, there is the propositional assumption that the mistreatment of "young boys" at Don Dale detention centre is unsurprising because of the "levels of abuse" that "Aboriginal people almost take for granted". This propositionally assumes that this kind of abuse occurs often enough to create desensitisation of violence among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

“What we have seen is in part the consequences of people thinking their conduct is not required to meet the standards and will not be held accountable for their actions. This must change.

Starting this quotation is the propositional assumption that the abuse at Don Dale is the result of people thinking they are not required to meet standards of conduct and “will not be held accountable for their actions”. Following that point, is the value assumption that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth are of less value because they do not experience the same standard of treatment as other Australian youth. Lastly, there is the propositional assumption that “people” have not yet been held accountable and “this must change”.

He says the royal commission announced by Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull last week must look at the role of race, as well as the action of the guards at Don Dale. He also urged the inclusion of Aboriginal people in finding solutions to the problem.

Beginning the above excerpt is the propositional assumption that the guards’ actions and the resulting abuse were racially motivated, suggested by the words “we must look at the role of race”. The words “we must look” propositionally assume that the role of race has not yet been explored and is possibly ignored. Next is the propositional assumption that the government excludes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people because it has to be “urged” for it to include them. This appears to evidence the paternal behaviour of the Australian government, where the government takes control of the problem and finds or applies the solutions without their involvement.

“This royal commission must deliver more than a set of recommendations that remains on a shelf like so many reports of royal commissions and inquiries that have been done in the past,” Mr Gooda said.

This extract contains the propositional assumption that previous royal commissions were ineffective because their recommendations “remain on a shelf”. This leads to the value assumption that royal commissions that do not implement their recommendations are of negative value. To be of value, the royal commission “must deliver more”. Having a royal commission also reinforces the formal processes of the CJS and its ability to effect change. This propositionally assumes an ethnocentric ideology because it is suggested that the dominant society’s methods are a natural and normal process.

Article two of *News.com* also included a story on the royal commission sparked by the abuse at Don Dale detention centre. *News.com*'s narrative was different because it mostly contained the perspectives of politicians on the issue. Both *News.com*'s article and *9news*'s article included calls to incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into the royal commission process. Both articles on this occasion finally reinforce the same paternalistic ideology by demonstrating that it is powerful members of dominant white society who decide whether Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be included in the criminal justice process. Precisely like *News.com*'s article two, the discourse in article one of *9news* fails to challenge the neo-colonial practice of punishment as a form of control. Once again, this represents the media's failure to address the overall system and instead focus on the symptoms rather than the cause.

5.3.2 Article 2

Article two from *9news* is titled "Cartoonist defends 'racist' depiction of Indigenous parenting". The title holds the propositional assumption that the depiction has attracted accusations of racism because the cartoonist is defending his work, which leads to the propositional assumption that the cartoon is indeed "racist".

The cartoonist behind a controversial portrayal of Indigenous parenting has hit back at the "sanctimonious Tweety Birds" who deemed it racist, saying they suffer from "chronic truth aversion disorder".

The text selection above contains the propositional assumption that the cartoon has caused controversy because it is a "controversial portrayal". Next is the existential assumption that there exists a "sanctimonious Tweety Bird". The words "sanctimonious Tweety Bird" also has the propositional assumption that those on social media who think the cartoon is racist are self-righteous. This leads to the negative value assumption that people labelling the cartoon as racist are undesirable because they are making a show of being morally superior and "sanctimonious". Further, there is the propositional assumption that those who think the cartoon is racist are cognitively impaired because they "suffer from chronic truth aversion disorder". The words "truth aversion" propositionally assume that those who label the cartoon racist do not understand that the cartoon is a true representation, which also implies that the cartoon is a true representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parenting. This position prompts the propositional assumption that the cartoon cannot be racist because those who label it racist have an "aversion" to the "truth". It

propositionally assumes that if there were no “aversion” to the “truth” then the cartoon would not be labelled racist. Following the logic of the assumptions within this paragraph results in the propositional assumption that the cartoon is not racist because it is the “truth”. Within the ontology of constructivism, pure objectivity is not possible; therefore, the idea that there is a singular objective “truth” is arguably non-existent (Broido & Manning, 2002; Crotty, 1998; Lewis-Beck, Bryman, & Futing Liao, 2004). This position therefore suggests that the paragraph contains the existential assumption that there is a singular “truth” and because it is true, the cartoonist is not racist.

“I was trying to say that if you think things are pretty crook for the children locked up in the Northern Territory’s Don Dale Youth Detention Centre, you should have a look at the homes they came from.”

This quotation has the propositional assumption that the experience of children locked up in Don Dale detention centre is very unsatisfactory if not illegal, which is implied by the words “pretty crook”. The text “you should have a look at the homes they came from” propositionally assumes that the homes of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at Don Dale detention centre are unsafe or unsatisfactory. Contrasting Don Dale detention centre with these children’s home life generates a negative value assumption that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander homes in the NT are undesirable and injurious to these children. The words “you should have a look” propositionally assume that people are ignorant to the conditions of these children’s homes in the NT. Lastly, if the “homes they come from” are as bad as the Don Dale detention centre, this propositionally assumes that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are poor parents for not providing better conditions for their children.

“The CTAD (chronic truth aversion disorder) epidemic that is raging unchecked through Australia’s social media population is rendering impossible any intelligent debate on serious social issues, such as the rampant violence, abuse and neglect of children in remote Indigenous communities,” he wrote.

The selection above propositionally assumes that there is widespread hostility, suggested by “epidemic that is raging” against “intelligent debate on serious social issues”. The same sentence also propositionally assumes that accusations of racism do not constitute “intelligent debate” because accusations of racism make debate “impossible”. This point leads to the value assumption that portraying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

as negligent parents is of positive value because it is facilitating “intelligent debate”. The word “debate” also holds a positive value assumption that the discourse communicates frustration at not being able to have “intelligent debate” and therefore having an “intelligent debate” is desirable. Using this discursive logic racism is then acceptable for the purposes of debate because if objections of racism were voiced, “intelligent debate” would then be made “impossible”. This strengthens the idea that racism is acceptable in the name of “debate” and therefore contributes to an ideology of ethnocentrism and racism. This is a prime example of the presence of critical whiteness because the discourse does not see the harm in perpetuating racial stereotypes, or at least does not think that is a good enough reason to stop making racist stereotypes in the name of creating “debate”. Perhaps only someone who is a part of dominant white society, unaware of their race privilege, could not recognise the harmful implications of racist stereotyping. To conclude article two, I wanted to draw attention to the sixth instance of “remote communities” being associated with violence, abuse and criminality among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The intertextual phrase “remote communities” is arguably becoming a tool for priming audiences to link violence, abuse and criminality with remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This perspective contributes to reinforcing an ethnocentric ideology that dominant white society is superior to remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

5.3.3 Article 3

The third article from *9news* is titled “Family says Aboriginal man is ‘brain dead’ after Adelaide prison incident”. The title holds the propositional assumption that the incident and the prison are violent because it left an “Aboriginal man ... brain dead”. This is the first article in the dataset to have successive articles publish on the same topic as the story unfolds.

An Indigenous inmate is in a critical condition after allegedly sparking a violent incident with guards at an Adelaide prison.

The above excerpt contains the propositional assumption that the “Indigenous inmate” initiated the violence with the guards, evidenced by the words “Indigenous inmate ... sparking a violent incident”. One could argue that the word “allegedly” raises doubt about who started the incident and undoes the assumption that it was the inmate who initiated the violence. If it is unclear who started the incident, why suggest it was one or the other?

By pointing the discursive finger at the inmate, it is propositionally assuming that he was the one to start the violence, which leads to the value assumption that the inmate is undesirable because he was the one to spark the violence.

The prisoner was waiting in the admissions area at Yatala Labour Prison for a scheduled court video link appearance at 11.30am on Friday when he allegedly started an altercation with prison staff.

Even though the word “allegedly” is used, there is still the propositional assumption that the prisoner “started an altercation with prison staff”. This is the second time that the value assumption has been identified that the prisoner is undesirable because he initiated the violence.

He suffered a suspected heart attack and remains in the intensive care unit at the Royal Adelaide Hospital.

Given that there is no account of how violent the guards were in subduing the prisoner and the prior articles’ coverage of the guard’s injuries and hospitalisation, it leaves the propositional assumption that it was not the guards who caused the heart attack but the prisoner’s own violent actions.

The Prison Guards’ Union says it will investigate whether more training is needed for its members, and if the use of tasers would have assisted. South Australia Police’s major crime division will further investigate the incident.

The words “whether more training is needed” contains the value assumption that more training and Tasers are desirable because the Prison Guard’s Union is identifying these two options for improving future interactions with prisoners. The final assumption is the propositional assumption that the justice system is taking the matter seriously because the major crime division is investigating the incident. The proposal to use Tasers could be categorised as being based in neo-colonial ideology because it is increasing the level of punishment to increase the level of control they have over inmates, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Overall, the article frames the prisoner as having negative value because he initiated the incident. The article also reinforces the racial stereotype that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males are more violent. It will be interesting to see if these assumptions and ideological threads were carried over to the next article covering the same incident.

5.3.4 Article 4

The fourth article from *9news* continues the story from the previous article and is titled “Family of Aboriginal man who died after Adelaide prison incident demands answers”. The title holds the propositional assumption that the family has not been told how or why the “Aboriginal man” died because they are demanding “answers”. There is also the propositional assumption that the “Aboriginal” man’s death is suspicious and may involve foul play because the “incident” occurred within prison and the family have not been given “answers” regarding the death.

He had been waiting for a scheduled court video link appearance in the admissions area of the prison on Friday when he allegedly started an altercation with officers. He reportedly suffered a suspected heart attack while being restrained by officers and became non-responsive.

Comparing the initial two paragraphs from articles three and article four, article four is far less specific in its description. The above section of text “he allegedly started” contains the propositional assumption that it is unclear whether Mr Morrison initiated the “altercation with officers”. This leads to the propositional assumption that it could have been the officers who initiated the “altercation”. The following sentence contains the propositional assumption that a heart attack may not have been the cause of Mr Morrison’s death because the heart attack is only “suspected”. Next, is the propositional assumption that the officer’s method of restraining Mr Morrison was aggressive because it caused Mr Morrison’s “suspected heart attack” and he became “non-responsive”.

Five officers were taken to hospital after the scuffle, including one female guard who suffered a broken nose. The officers have since been discharged from hospital and have been offered ongoing psychological support.

The text excerpt above contains the propositional assumption that Mr Morrison was excessively violent because “five officers were taken to hospital after the scuffle”. The words “five officers were taken to hospital” propositionally assume that five officers sustained injuries serious enough to warrant hospitalisation, despite a “broken nose” being the only detailed injury. Next is the propositional assumption that Mr Morrison caused the officers to experience psychological trauma because they were offered “ongoing psychological support”. Following this is the value assumption that Mr

Morrison is undesirable because he caused physical and mental trauma, evidenced by the words “five officers were taken to hospital”, “female guard”, “suffered a broken nose” and “ongoing psychological support”. The account of the injuries sustained by the guards and the hospitalisation of the five guards propositionally assumes that the guards are the victims and Mr Morrison is the offender. The assumptions within this paragraph paint a more sympathetic picture towards the officers than towards Mr Morrison, tapping into the stereotype of the violent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male.

Mr Morrison’s family is planning protests across the country. An investigation and coronial inquest will look at claims Mr Morrison had complained of health problems during his seven days in custody.

The combination of the family protesting against Mr Morrison’s death and Mr Morrison complaining about “health problems” prior to his death propositionally assumes that Mr Morrison’s health complications were not handled properly while in custody. This suggests that there is the propositional assumption that Mr Morrison’s death could have been avoided had his health concerns had been acknowledged or handled more appropriately. However, the words “investigation” and “claims” propositionally assume that the legitimacy and circumstances of Mr Morrison’s health concerns are unclear. The final assumption proposes that Mr Morrison’s health claims are not legitimate unless proven to be so by the justice system, evidenced by the words “an investigation and coronial inquest will look at claims”. This reveals and continues the underlying power structure of the justice system revealed in the previous article because it is deciding what the narrative will be. The discourse within this article did not overtly discredit or ascribe blame towards Mr Morrison, but through the above value assumptions, Mr Morrison’s actions are brought into question more readily than the actions of the guards or prison system. The neo-colonial ideology present in article three was not identified here in article four. The last point I wanted to make is that both articles’ discourses arguably contributed to the racist stereotype that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males are violent. This was done through highlighting the physical and mental injuries sustained by the “five” officers.

5.3.5 Article 5

The fifth and final article from *9news* is titled “NT Aborigines ‘most policed’ in Australia”. The title holds the propositional assumption that the NT over-police

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people because they are the “most policed in Australia”. In contrast, there is the propositional assumption that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people outside of the NT do not experience the same level of policing.

“The worst thing the intervention ever did was take us adults off the street and put our children in the street.” She said she spoke with the mother of Dylan Voller, the boy shown hooded and tied to a chair in the most shocking footage on Four Corners.

The selection of text above contains the propositional assumption that other negative things resulted from the intervention because “the worst thing” is stated above, which suggests other negative effects have occurred because of the NTER. Next is the value assumption that adults being off the street and “children” being in the street is undesirable because it is “the worst thing the intervention ever did”. This leads to the value assumption that the intervention itself was, or is, undesirable and harmful because it has taken adults off the street and put “children in the street”. The last assumption within this paragraph is the propositional assumption that people should be shocked by the treatment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth by the justice system in the NT because the boy “tied to a chair” is “the most shocking footage”. This paragraph certainly communicates some of the hardships Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have experienced because of the NTER, and in some ways, vindicates the criticisms discussed early in the literature review.

“Why can’t these screws go to jail for beating and stripping our boys?” Mr Gunner said everyone involved would be held accountable. “The royal commission is a very serious thing and it’s going to drag up in front of it ministers and public servants and guards, and everyone’s going to be held to account,” he said.

The quotation above holds the propositional assumption that the prison guards should go to “jail” for their actions because they deserve it. This then feeds into the propositional assumption that sending people to prison holds them “accountable” for their actions. Next is the value assumption that prison is desirable because it holds the “screws” accountable for “beating and stripping our boys”. The use of the term “screws”, a derogatory term for a prison guard, propositionally assumes that these guards are less than human because they are reduced to the singular role of a screw. “Screws” who beat and strip boys deserve to go to jail. The next sentence has the positive value assumption that the royal commission is desirable because it is a “very serious thing” and will hold everyone “to

account”. Earlier in the paragraph, being held accountable was linked to punishment and using this narrative logic propositionally assumes that the royal commission will serve to punish “ministers, public servants and guards” because it will hold them accountable. Therefore, the royal commission is viewed in this discourse as a form of punishment. The last sentence above also contains the propositional assumption that it is not just the guards at fault for the abuse of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth in detention but “ministers and public servants” because they will be “held to account” alongside the guards. The overall narrative throughout this paragraph is that all those who were involved in some way with the mistreatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth in the NT deserve retribution. Paradoxically, it was the retributive CJS that caused the initial suffering and outrage.

Ms Shaw also told the meeting that the Country Liberals government’s slew of alcohol and policing measures unfairly targeted Aboriginal people living in remote communities, and said black market alcohol vendors had sprung up as a result.

This excerpt contains the propositional assumption that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are over-policed when it comes to alcohol in the NT, suggested by the word “slew” regarding the “policing measures”. Next, is the propositional assumption that the alcohol and policing measures have failed because black market vendors have “sprung up as a result”. Following, is the propositional assumption that remote communities have alcohol problems because policing measures “unfairly targeted ... remote communities”. This paragraph also holds the value assumption that paternal policies are undesirable because they unfairly target Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and gave rise to “black market alcohol vendors”. Lastly, I wanted to draw attention to the seventh use of “remote communities”. This instance of “remote community” was linked with alcohol problems and criminality and continues a negative trend of negatively framing the phrase “remote communities”. This further bolsters the proposition that the phrase “remote communities” is an intertextual primer for negative assumptions.

“The rest of Australia, they look at us as useless blackfellas, women-beaters, child-rapists, mothers and fathers that can’t look after our children, that’s how they stereotype us and that’s because it’s come out of Canberra through the intervention,” she said.

The above quotation contains the propositional assumption that dominant Australian society—“the rest of Australia”—racially stereotypes Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander people as violent, criminal and negligent towards their children. Following is the propositional assumption that the Federal Government and the NTER contributed heavily towards this racial stereotyping, suggested by the words “it’s come out of Canberra through the intervention”. This is an interesting observation and also a propositional assumption that policy directed at a certain demographic has the potential to create and reinforce stereotypes. Further, the narrative and above assumptions arguably communicate a frustration at a perceived racial ideology within Australia resulting from such policies. Overall, this article does not contain any reinforcement or contribution towards any of the major ideologies of paternalism, neo-colonialism or neo-liberal assimilation. However, the article is primarily focusing on NT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s perspectives. Through the discourse of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people expressing their experience of the NTER, I am able to analyse their experience of racist ideologies. This article contains the perceptions and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people concerning over-policing and the NTER, which has been characterised as containing both neo-colonial ideology and an ideology of neo-liberal assimilation (Altman, 2007; Mesikämnen, 2016; Watson, 2011). Articles such as this allow an examination of the ideologies of paternalism, neo-colonialism and neo-liberal assimilation from both ends of the spectrum, from those producing and reinforcing harmful ideologies to those experiencing the ideological effects.

5.3.6 9news summary

Article one from *9news* was found to contribute towards an ideology of paternalism through discursively demonstrating that it is the dominant white society that decides whether Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are included in the criminal justice process. Article two offered a perspective communicated within its text: Racism was deemed acceptable to facilitate free-flowing debate. Not only does this position deem racism as acceptable in certain circumstances but it also validates the existence of critical whiteness. Article two contained the sixth use of “remote communities” in the context of violence, abuse and criminality. Repeatedly framing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander “remote communities” as violent and criminal has allowed the phrase to take on a new meaning. Article three furthered the racial stereotype that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males are more violent by structuring its discourse to focus on the number of guards injured and the injuries that were sustained. The discussion of Tasers as a method of reducing prisoner violence also suggests a neo-colonial ideology because the

fundamental argument is an increase in punishment to extend control. Article four reported on the same story a few days later but did not contain the same neo-colonial ideology because of its exclusion of discussion on Tasers. Article four did, however, promote similar racial stereotyping found in article three, that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males are more violent than non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males. Article five presented an opportunity to examine ideologies of paternalism, neo-colonialism and neo-liberal assimilation from opposite ends of the spectrum, from those producing and reinforcing harmful ideologies to those experiencing the effects of such ideologies.

5.4 Chapter summary

As I now move towards the discussion, it is apparent that three ideologies have consistently appeared within the discourse. Those ideologies are neo-colonialism, neo-liberal assimilation and paternalism. All three of these ideologies are potentially harmful for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and I will discuss these ideologies and their impact on these people in detail in the next chapter. The second trend in the findings was the occurrence rates of each type of three assumptive categories of Fairclough. Propositional assumptions occurred at the highest rate, followed by value assumptions, whereas existential assumptions had the lowest occurrence rate, based on *The Guardian's* critical stance on the government and CJS and its advocating on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Early signs suggested each media site might have its own distinctive voice. However, *The Guardian* appears to be the only media site with a clear agenda or narrative running throughout its articles. Finally, I wanted to bring to attention Richardson's (2007) argument that news media tends to focus on the symptoms of inequality rather than the causes of inequality. My analysis has found the same tendency within these twenty-five articles. I look forward to diving a little deeper into this trend in the next chapter.

Chapter 6: Discussing Outcomes and Harmful Ideologies

Indigenous people worldwide experience disadvantage, poverty, discrimination, genocide, colonisation, racism and substandard health (United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2013). Australia is no exception as regards its treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, in particular, whose everyday experiences include racism and prejudice (Pedersen et al., 2004). The situation is most evident for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are imprisoned at significantly higher rates than non-Indigenous Australians, comprising 27% of the total prisoner population and only 2.8% of Australia's total population (ABS, 2016, 2017). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people also experience lower life expectancy and less access to health care, education and employment opportunities (Australian Indigenous Doctors Association, 2010; Blagg, 2008; Gruenstein, 2008). Consequently, they are particularly vulnerable to how Australian news media portrays them.

There is evidence that the media plays a significant role in shaping political and public perceptions, especially in a concentrated media market such as that of Australia (Mesikämmen, 2016; Richardson, 2007; Teo, 2000). Meadows (2005) argued, "No other marginal group in Australia has such a public relationship with the state" (p. 37). The media can be very influential, and although it may not tell us what to think, it has been argued that the media is very skilled at telling us "what to think about" (Harding, 2006, p. 231). Meadows (2005) contended that the media played a key role in framing the ways we view topics and nowhere was the media's role more influential than when discussing Indigenous issues.

Understanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's vulnerability within Australian society, and the pervasiveness of the media, requires comprehending what, why and how the news media communicates news about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice issues. My research examined how online news media discursively reported these justice issues. An analysis of the media revealed the underlying assumptions and ideologies communicated within its discourse. I now discuss and link the major findings with existing literature and theory. The discussion is also an opportunity to compare my findings with other related research and consider unexpected results.

6.1 Ideology

I will clarify this study's understanding of ideology to contextualise the findings. Fairclough (2003, p. 9) defined ideology as "representations of aspects of the world which can be shown to contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination and exploitation". The critical view understands ideology as a process of power rather than a passive system of ideas (Fairclough, 2003). This method of power can be enacted using the mass media to communicate discriminatory, dominating and biased ideologies (Fairclough, 2003; Weninger, 2008; Wodak & Meyer, 2001). Using the media to communicate ideologies allows those in control to maintain class rule and can be described as hegemony in practice (McNair, 2005). This then puts the mass media in an important position, even sometimes having the balance of power, with ideological struggle and class domination (Fairclough, 2003; Wodak & Meyer, 2001). This is why I have chosen to search for hegemonic constructions of harmful ideologies relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the news media. Within the articles I have analysed, the discourse presents three discriminatory, dominating and biased ideologies: neo-colonialism, neo-liberal assimilation and paternalism. I now discuss each ideology in turn.

6.2 Neo-colonial Ideology

Neo-colonial ideology was the most prolific of the three major ideologies revealed within the twenty-five articles. Before discussing neo-colonialism, however, colonisation must be defined. Colonisation is an ongoing process of subjugation, with implicit methods of force, cultural oppression and exploitation to achieve its goals (Cunneen, 2001). Cunneen (2001) characterised the current colonising process as a new form of colonialism called "neo-colonialism" (p. 8). Australia is not in a post-colonial era where the colonisation process has finished; instead, colonisation continues, having taken on new modes of control and normalisation in the form of neo-colonialism. Neo-colonialism extends the colonising process towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, while acknowledging contemporary political and legal developments. Cunneen (2001) suggested that the genesis of neo-colonialism emerged with the 1967 referendum where they officially became Australian citizens. Cunneen (2001) argued that the 1967 referendum signified that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were no longer

seen as an excluded race within Australian society and the new rights under citizenship meant previous colonial treatment had to change.

White (1997) contended that as a part of the neo-colonising process, the policing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people shifted from protection policies and warfare into a “racially-neutral” mode of policing (p. 280). During this time, overt colonial regulation of their communities was abolished, but Edmunds (1989) suggested that the process of regulation and control merely shifted so that the communities themselves were institutionalised in entirely new forms. Rose (1996) referred to this process as “deep colonising” (p. 6) where she acknowledged that “many formal relations between Indigenous people and the colonising national have changed in the past three decades” as well as the institutions that regulate these interactions. Moreover, Rose (1996) argued that colonisation processes were still deeply embedded in Australia’s legal institutions. Earlier, Bird and O’Malley (1989) stated that “colonial relationships of superiority and inferiority established over a long period” (p. 40). The colonial relationship of superiority and inferiority appears to still exist in contemporary Australia (Cunneen, 2001; Jang, 2015). Jang (2015), referring to neo-colonial Australia, stated that “Many of the problems experienced by Indigenous communities today are due not only to past and ongoing traumatic change but also to complicated aspects of the present social structure” (p. 17). This reiterates that colonisation is not something that occurred in the past, but instead is something that is present in current practices. Neo-colonialist processes rely on the criminalisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the primary form of control. Cunneen (2001) stated that such mass criminalisation has resulted in “day-to-day discrimination, racism, violence and terror” (p. 8).

Of the twenty-five articles analysed, nine communicated a neo-colonial ideology. Neo-colonial ideology was present within *The Guardian’s* articles two and three; *The Age’s* article four; *News.com’s* articles one, two and three; and lastly, *9news’s* articles one, three and five. Four out of the five online news websites contained an ideology of neo-colonialism in at least one article out of five and as many as three articles out of five. This could be contextualised as the hegemonic production of racist and discriminatory ideology within these four websites. Marx argued that the ruling class, or those in power, can produce and control knowledge and ideologies (Marx & Engels, 1972). In light of this, I have identified the production of neo-colonial ideology. Marx’s argument continues in which he argued that those who are not in the ruling class and are unable to

produce ideologies tend to adopt and consume knowledge and ideologies as provided by those who are in power (Marx & Engels, 1972; Richardson, 2007). Those who have power and authority over the economic systems and institutions control both politics and ideological production (Altheide, 1984; Marx & Engels, 1972). Neo-colonialism is an ideology based on criminalisation as one of the primary forms of control. The effects of neo-colonialism have been characterised as racist, discriminatory and violent, as well as causing social disruption, negative economic effects, reduced employment opportunities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be constructed as criminal (Cunneen, 2001; Rose, 1996). This ideology is extremely harmful towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and was communicated in nine of the twenty-five articles from four of the largest news websites within Australia. The concern is that large portions of contemporary Australian society absorb neo-colonial ideologies via the media. My findings align with the neo-colonial argument that the methods of colonisation have not faded into history—instead, they have changed over time and are still being communicated via *The Guardian*, *The Age*, *News.com* and *9news*. The ideology based on reinforcing criminalisation as a legitimate form of controlling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is reflected within these articles.

I discussed above the serious over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within Australia's prison systems. The fact they comprise 27% of the total prisoner population and only 2.8% of Australia's total population is serious in its own right (ABS, 2016, 2017). An attitude of controlling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through criminalisation is reflected in the articles I have analysed. Neo-colonialism, as a legitimate form of control, could be contributing to, or linked with, their over-representation in prison. This study has focused on the power that words and ideology can hold within society and their ability to shape attitudes and ideas. Further investigation is warranted into the link between communicating neo-colonial ideology in the media and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander over-representation within Australian prisons, because a system of ideas based on criminalisation as the main form of control, could contribute to high imprisonment rates.

6.3 Paternalism

An ideology of paternalism was found in eight of the twenty-five articles analysed. This makes it the second most prolific of the three major ideologies found within the discourse.

Aycan (2006) argued that paternalism has proved difficult to define because it is complex. Defining paternalism needs to be specific because it can refer to a positive overall social strategy that is balanced between control and care (Aycan, 2006). Paternalism in a general sense “refers to acting in a manner similar to the way a father behaves towards his children” (Aycan, 2006, p. 446). However, paternalism is a specific strategy and ideology applied to particular cultural groups resulting in negative and harmful effects. Paternalism is understood as an ideology founded on the concept that “Indigenous people are like minors or wards who must be protected by the parent-like Europeans” (Nielsen & Robyn, 2003, p. 39). Nielsen and Robyn (2003) suggested that paternalism, as an ideology, permeates the entire process of colonisation. Altman (2007) and Maddison (2008) further developed paternalism, suggesting that paternalism has progressed towards neo-paternalism. Neo-paternalism exists in a neo-liberal society, such that the goals of paternalism are now to create economic production from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Altman, 2007; Howard-Wagner, 2018; Maddison, 2008). This made it difficult to distinguish between neo-liberal assimilation and neo-paternalism.

The confusion arose from both concepts existing within neo-liberalism and its goal to make Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people contributing members to the economy (Howard-Wagner, 2018). If we strip away neo-liberalism, it is easier to distinguish the two. Assimilation is centred on absorbing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into dominant society (Howard-Wagner, 2018). By contrast, paternalism is treating them as children with a ‘we know what’s best’ attitude (Nielsen & Robyn, 2003). Paternalism has been argued to erode Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s autonomy, taking away their ability to govern themselves as both individuals and as communities (Maddison, 2008; Nielsen & Robyn, 2003). Howard-Wagner (2018) contended that a paternal ideology normalises racial violence and portrays Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as culturally and socially “dysfunctional” (p. 1344). An ideology of paternalism was communicated in all five news media sites, although neo-colonialism scored the highest occurrence rate at nine articles. Paternalism was the only ideology to permeate every single news media site: *The Guardian’s* articles three and five; *The Age’s* article one; *Perth Now’s* articles one and three; *News.com’s* articles two and four; and *9news’s* article one.

Paternalism may not be as harmful an ideology as neo-colonialism or neo-liberal assimilation, but it is perhaps the most insidious. The reason I say this is that paternalism,

as an ideology, was present in discourse that was advocating on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The other two ideologies predominantly emerged out of more culturally neutral discourse. Particularly in *The Guardian*, there were occasions where the discourse was advocating on the side of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their disadvantages within the CJS. This point was followed by a request for them to receive specialised resources and treatment. The request is most clearly demonstrated in article five of *The Guardian* entitled “The custody notification system saves Aboriginal lives: Why isn’t it national?”. The process of advocating is worthwhile, and although well intentioned, advocacy sometimes results in further restrictions, scrutiny and supervision applied to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In this manner, the process of advocating on behalf of their needs could have negative paternalistic repercussions. Thought needs to be given as to how to approach advocating on behalf of a vulnerable group of people, especially when perspectives are muddied by ethnocentrism and critical whiteness. Despite good intentions, advocating better regulation is not necessarily going to be what is best for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people if they are finally even more over-regulated as a result.

6.4 Neo-liberal Assimilation

Neo-liberal assimilation was the least prolific of the three major ideologies revealed, showing up in seven of the twenty-five articles analysed. Neo-liberalism is commonly understood as an economic order with an open market and minimal regulation (Howard-Wagner, 2018). Here I am discussing neo-liberalism not as an economic system only, but also as a social system. In more recent times, neo-liberalism is being understood as a social order, which contrastingly, experiences excessive regulation and aims to turn the poor and disadvantaged into contributing members of the economy (Howard-Wagner, 2018). Neo-liberal assimilation is the progeny of the assimilation process used towards Indigenous Australians between the 1930s and 1970s (Watson, 2011). Referred to as the assimilation era, the predominant view was that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians needed to be normalised, integrated into conventional mainstream Australian society (Blagg, 2008). The ideals of assimilation “demanded Aboriginal conformity to the values, norms and lifestyles of the majority nation” (McGregor, 2009, p. 5) The assimilation era was characterised by the horrific dehumanising treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and destroyed the lives of many of their families

(Watson, 2011). Cunneen (1999) characterised the effects of assimilation as cultural genocide. The assimilation era was eventually superseded by newer policies based on self-determination, beginning in the 1970s (Watson, 2011). Neo-liberal assimilation contends that policies of self-determination have faded and are being replaced by neo-assimilation; that is, the conformity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with mainstream Australian society (Cunneen, 1999; Howard-Wagner, 2018). Proponents of neo-liberal assimilation argued that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage would be eliminated through socio-economics; that is, “material inequality is overcome” through strategies such as jobs, education and housing (Howard-Wagner, 2018, p. 1340). Cunneen (1999) goes as far as to say neo-assimilation holds the inherent assumption that if Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people “were more like middle-class Australia their crime problem would disappear” (p. 134).

The neo-liberal ideology of assimilation was identified in seven of the twenty-five articles analysed. Those articles with neo-liberal assimilation ideology were *The Guardian's* article one; *The Age's* articles two and five; *Perth Now's* articles one, two and five; and *The Age's* article three. The neo-liberal ideology of assimilation had the lowest rate of occurrence when compared with neo-colonial and paternal ideologies within the discourse, but only marginally. An ideology of assimilation may be explained by the presence of two other theories, critical whiteness and ethnocentrism, found in the discourse. Critical whiteness contends that those who belong to the white social construct “do not experience the world through an awareness of racial identity or cultural distinctiveness” (Green et al., 2007, p. 396). Instead, whiteness and its cultural practices are experienced as “normative, natural and universal”, rendering whiteness and its advantage invisible to those who belong to it (Frankenberg, 1997; Green et al., 2007, p. 396; Sullivan, 2006).

Ethnocentrism is a term used to refer to cultural bias where individuals understand the world from the perspective of their own cultural or ethnic groups (Cooper, 2012). The basic premise of ethnocentrism is that people view their cultural group as superior and all others as inferior (Heaven, Rajab, & Ray, 1985). Ethnocentrism and critical whiteness are linked with racism, prejudice and discrimination (Cooper, 2012; Green et al., 2007). Under a perspective of critical whiteness or ethnocentrism, it would be seen as logical for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be assimilated into the superior, “normative, natural and universal” white society (Green et al., 2007, p. 396). Those under

critical whiteness would not see the harm done to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures through the process of assimilation and those with ethnocentric views would understand assimilation as a positive process. These two theories create a landscape where the ideology of neo-liberal assimilation is communicated freely within the media articles. If the journalists writing the articles or those consuming it can be categorised as ethnocentric or blinded by critical whiteness, it is feasible that this would create an environment where an ideology of neo-liberal assimilation could be communicated unimpeded. Then, the concern is that the media articles were complicit in communicating an ideology that contributes to the slow eradication of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures through the process of assimilation. Hence, the question becomes: Should tighter restrictions be imposed on the media and potentially limit freedom of speech or should ways be investigated to create a more culturally engaged and aware society? Both appear to be monolithic tasks.

6.5 Assumptions

The analysis of the news media articles was conducted using Fairclough's (2003) three assumptive categories: (1) *propositional assumptions*, which are "assumptions about what is or can be the case"; (2) *value assumptions*, which are assumptions about "what is good or desirable"; and (3) *existential assumptions*, which are assumptions about what exists (Fairclough, 2003, p. 55). Before beginning the analysis, it was not clear which or if any of the three assumptive categories would occur at higher or lower rates. Following the analysis, it was evident that propositional assumptions occurred within the twenty-five articles at a much higher rate than either value assumptions or existential assumptions. On the other end of the spectrum, existential assumptions had the lowest occurrence of the three assumptive categories. There appears to be no literature that addresses why propositional assumptions might occur at higher rates or existential assumptions at lower rates. The high rate of propositional assumptions could be influenced by it being easier to propose a particular point of view compared with assuming value or what exists. Both value and existential assumptions are almost binary in their use; these have either positive or negative value, and something either exists or does not exist (Fairclough, 2003). This may have led to less room for interpretation and therefore less opportunity to make an existential or value assumption. However, propositional assumptions were often about assuming a certain perspective, which may

lead to more room for interpretation and therefore more assumptions. The type of text analysed could also have influenced the rates at which each of the assumptive categories occurred. The news media articles could be argued to be focused on reporting a story, reporting 'facts', and attempting to be 'objective'. As a result, there may be less room for media articles to make existential assumptions. If I had analysed more academic or theoretical discourse, I would find more existential assumptions given that research is often informed by different ontological, epistemological and theoretical assumptions.

6.6 News Media Sites

Considering five news media producers, *The Guardian*, *The Age*, *News.com*, *Perth Now* and *9news*, allowed me the opportunity for comparison. Of the five news media sites, only *The Guardian* maintained a clear and consistent 'agenda' or narrative. It was consistently critical of the government and the CJS. Most of the discourse from *The Guardian* attempted to advocate better treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the justice system. By contrast, the other four sites were quite inconsistent, offering conservative, liberal and neutral perspectives. This outcome was unexpected, since I had thought that more than one media producer would display a clear and consistent narrative or agenda. *Perth Now* did not stand out from the other national media sites, which suggests that harmful ideologies are not unique to any particular state. However, it was clear that *The Guardian* had taken a much stronger liberal view of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the CJS. This did not mean that *The Guardian* was free of harmful ideologies. Neo-colonialism, neo-liberal assimilation and paternalism were all found within *The Guardian's* articles, excluding article one. However, *The Guardian* took more of an adversarial role on the side of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, but is not without its complications either. Often, *The Guardian* articles suggested reform or new regulation that would better suit them. However, further regulation needs to be strategic to avoid a 'we know what's best' attitude, which has paternalistic undertones and could potentially contribute to the over-regulation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Cunneen, 2001; Altman, 2007).

The Guardian's distinct tonal difference could be explained by the business strategies of media producers and their profit-driven motives (Denmark, 2005; Richardson, 2007). Richardson (2007) argued that the audience is the consumer and the success of a media

producer relies on selling the product, the news, to its audience. Richardson (2007) continues, suggesting that there are many types of audiences or groups of consumers, who choose varying types of media depending on their preferences. McQuail (1994) referred to audiences with certain preferences as a “gratification set” and these gratification sets, or groups are based on gratifying “individual need or purpose independent of the media, relating, for instance, to a political or social issue” (p. 290). Media producers then identify and target certain gratification sets or consumers in search of profit (Richardson, 2007). *The Guardian* may have chosen a gratification set that aligns itself with a more liberal audience and because of this tends to produce articles in line with the political views of its targeted audience. Comparatively, the other four news websites all displayed more variation without a clear political or social narrative. Perhaps this shows that the other four news websites had all aimed at appealing to many different gratification sets instead of one particular group. Despite the difference between *The Guardian* and the other four media producers, they still communicated the same ideologies to their respective audiences. Consequently, the ideologies of neo-colonialism, neo-liberal assimilation and paternalism have permeated varying audience gratification sets and are not restricted to any one audience set within these twenty-five articles.

6.7 Symptom, Not Causes

In the findings section, under *The Guardian* summary, I explored a phenomenon identified by Richardson (2007). When analysing media articles on social inequality, Richardson (2007) revealed that the articles he analysed focused on the symptoms of social inequality rather than addressing the causes of inequality. This mirrors Gramsci’s (1971) original argument that hegemonic rule often goes uncontested by those under the rule of others. Unexpectedly, within the twenty-five articles analysed, my results have aligned with Richardson’s (2007) results. All of these articles failed to address the causes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inequality; instead, they addressed the symptoms of inequality. However, not every article had the opportunity to do so. *The Guardian*’s article one and *9news*’s article two had topics that did not offer an opportunity to discuss or critique the causes of such inequality.

The remaining twenty-three articles either addressed symptoms of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inequality or did not address inequality at all. A perfect example is *Perth Now*’s article three entitled “WA Government aims to reform Aboriginal justice,

overrepresentation in jails”. It stated that Premier Colin Barnett identified three points of focus, “safer custody environments, avoiding incarceration for low level offending, and supporting prevention and diversion initiatives”. These reforms address the symptoms of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inequality from within the CJS. The journalist paraphrases the Premier and offers no further recommendations. The reforms only address problems that were born out of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander over-representation in prison.

Fixing these symptoms of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander over-representation in prison does not address the larger systems at play contributing to over-representation. Neither the Australian legal system’s efficacy nor its retributive model of punishment is questioned. Neo-colonial strategies of controlling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through crime are also not addressed. Further, Australia’s neo-liberal society and its effects on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the inequality they experience are not considered aggravating factors. These are larger systems that have been attributed to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inequality, racism and over-representation in prison, which were not raised within the article (Altman, 2007; Blagg, 2008, Cunneen, 2001; Howard-Wagner, 2018; Maddison, 2008; Nielsen & Robyn, 2003). It may be difficult for articles to discuss or articulate criticisms or question the causes of inequality when the priority is revenue and appealing to audience gratification sets. Alternatively, critical whiteness theory has a role to play. It is possible that these systems appear natural and normal within dominant society, making scrutiny and analysis irrelevant. I would argue that this tendency to focus on Richardson’s (2007) symptoms of inequality demonstrates that we need more discussion and critique on the fundamental systems and structures of dominant white society that contribute to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inequality.

6.8 Limitations

This study’s theoretical framework is based on a discovery model with its foundation in social constructivism. Therefore, this means that my results are not intended to be generalisable or represent Australian news media. This project resides in a theoretical world where pure objectivity is not possible, and subjectivity must be acknowledged and embraced. Therefore, I take a critical stance on the CJS’s treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the media’s representation of the treatment. From a

positivistic perspective, this may be understood as a limitation because the study denounces pure objectivity. This study strictly represents what was discovered within the twenty-five articles analysed and is meant to generate further discussion and critique.

The second limitation of this study is the decision to analyse twenty-five articles. This is a considerable amount of discourse to analyse using CDA. This meant that the study had to use a streamlined version of CDA rather than a complete CDA. I elected to follow Donkin's (2012) method of using the three assumptive categories outlined by Fairclough (2003) to analyse the text. Time constraints aside, a complete CDA may have yielded additional data, but would have restricted the variability and quantity of articles analysed.

The third limitation is my own cultural bias. Critical whiteness contends that those who belong to the white social construct "do not experience the world through an awareness of racial identity or cultural distinctiveness" (Green et al., 2007, p. 396). As I have made clear in the literature review, I did not investigate media representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from their perspective because I have a different cultural background. My background influences the ways I interact with and understand the world. My study followed Proudfoot and Habibis (2015) and Love and Tilley (2013) in acknowledging and recognising my cultural biases. This allowed me to analyse the ways in which dominant white culture affects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's representation within the media. Despite the study design having been constructed to acknowledge and accommodate cultural bias, it should be acknowledged that my cultural upbringing could still influence the research process.

6.9 Implications and Summary

Ideology and its impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been identified in Australian media previously in research such as that by Sercombe (1995). Sercombe (1995) concluded that the media plays a critical role in the reproduction of ideologies regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This study reinforces Sercombe's (1995) study by highlighting that ideology is present and being reproduced within these twenty-five articles. This study showed that within contemporary news media, racist ideology is still a reality. Sercombe (1995) argued that the Australian media "exercise considerable influence over the quality of debates about aboriginal relations with the wider society" (p. 120). Having such influence, finding racist ideology present

within these twenty-five articles suggests that the media could make improvements as to how it presents and discusses issues involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people because the media outlets have the power to influence positively and change the narrative.

Bullimore's (1999) research on whiteness theory described how dominant white Australia occupies a privileged place within society. This, and many other studies, argued that racism is not a thing of the past; it continues in a kinder, sanitised, more acceptable form in contemporary media (Bullimore, 1999; Love & Tilley, 2013; Mesikämmen, 2016; Proudfoot & Habibis, 2015; Teo, 2000). On the surface, these articles may not appear to contain racist undertones, but under critical analysis, this study has found media discourse communicating ethnocentric views, critical whiteness, neo-colonial ideology, neo-liberal assimilation and paternalism. This finding reinforced Bullimore's (1999) finding that racism is harder to detect but is still present within contemporary media. These three ideologies have been identified as racist and their presence within these contemporary media articles suggests that despite the nineteen years that have passed since Bullimore's (1999) research, racist ideology is still present within the discourse of these twenty-five articles. *The Age*, *News.com*, *The Guardian* and *9news* have the highest online news media viewership within Australia, excluding *Perth Now*, according to Alexa's *Top Sites in Australia* (2016). Harmful and racist ideologies are present within these twenty-five articles, articles reaching mainstream audiences in significant numbers.

Based on what was discovered in these twenty-five articles, there are still significant steps to be taken to combat racism and inequality more effectively within news media discourse. Australia's then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has acknowledged the harm done in the past (*Apology to Australia's Indigenous peoples*, 2008), but this does not mean there is no harm being done in the present and potentially in the future. This raises the question: How should such a large-scale problem be addressed? Mesikämmen (2016) and McCallum et al. (2012) suggested that "cultural competence" needs to be developed within the media industry (McCallum et al., 2012, p. 107). Based on their studies' findings, the suggestion by Mesikämmen (2016) and McCallum et al. (2012) appears to be relevant. However, the presence of entrenched racist ideologies in the news media is an issue that needs addressing far beyond improved cultural competence for journalists. Wodak and Meyer (2001) contended that the goal of CDA is to produce enlightenment of the topic and root out particular kinds of deceptions. The largest deception to stand out

within these twenty-five articles was articles that appeared to challenge power structures such as the government and CJS or advocate on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Upon analysis, it became clear that my findings reinforced Richardson's (2007) results that the news media largely focuses on addressing the symptoms of social inequality rather than the fundamental causes. This is deceptive because it gives the appearance of advocating change but shies away from addressing the core causes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inequality. The result is restricted discussions exploring potentially inadequate solutions for large-scale issues and could potentially lead to further over-regulation (Cunneen, 2001; Richardson, 2007). The risk is that we are left with news media discourse focusing on the efficacy of various Band-Aids for a serious wound. There needs to be open mainstream discussion and critique of the social and legal structures that lead to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inequality and racism. I now move to the conclusion chapter where I can bring together and merge the study's findings to address the research problem and objectives of the study.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people face racism, prejudice and inequality in everyday life (Pedersen et al., 2004). They are imprisoned at significantly higher rates, comprising 27% of the prison population while accounting for only 2.8% of Australia's total population (ABS, 2017). They also have less access to health care, education and employment, and have lower life expectancies than non-Indigenous Australians (Australian Indigenous Doctors Association, 2010; Blagg, 2008; Gruenstein, 2008). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice issues are frequently reported in the media. There is strong evidence that the media plays a significant role in shaping political and public perceptions. Researchers have previously found that the news media publishes crime-related stories far more than any other topic relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Sercombe, 1995). Given their vulnerability within Australian society and the ubiquity of media in modern society (Mesikämnen, 2016), it is necessary to understand what, why and how the news media communicates news about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice issues.

This study examined how online news media discursively reports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice issues. This was accomplished by critically analysing the discourse to reveal the underlying assumptions and ideologies. Proudfoot and Habibis (2015) demonstrated that racist ideology was present within a specific context in Australian media through its coverage of the NTER. The results of my study have extended their findings, suggesting that racist ideology is present within mainstream news media in the broader context of criminal justice.

Twenty-five articles discussing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their interactions with the CJS were found to contain neo-colonial, neo-liberal assimilation and paternalistic ideology communicated within the text. Ideology is not just an innocuous system of ideas. Fairclough (2003, p. 9) defined ideology as "representations of aspects of the world which can be shown to contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination and exploitation". Ideology is a process of power that can be wielded through discourse (Fairclough, 2003). This modality of power can be enacted using mass media to communicate discriminatory, dominating and biased ideologies by elite groups (Fairclough, 2003; Weninger, 2008; Wodak & Meyer, 2001).

This study identified racist ideology within Australian news media articles, which could be contextualised as confirming that the news media is complicit in reinforcing the control, criminalisation and assimilation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The media is allowing ideology to be communicated, and in addition, these twenty-five articles reinforce an attitude of domination over Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a natural and normal form of treatment. As Bullimore (1999) concluded, racism is not a thing of the past; it continues in a kinder, sanitised, more acceptable form in contemporary media. More contemporary studies, such as Love and Tilley (2013) and Proudfoot and Habibis (2015), have shown racism's presence in the modern-day media landscape. My findings strengthened the argument that racism is not a thing of the past. Instead, racism is still present within the contemporary news media in the form of neo-colonial, neo-liberal assimilation and paternalistic ideology.

Ideology is a tool used in hegemonic rule to maintain and sustain power using discourses of legitimisation and normalisation (McNair, 2005; Wodak & Meyer, 2001). Gramsci (1971) argued that hegemonic rule often goes uncontested by those under the rule of others. Richardson's (2007) research reinforced Gramsci's (1971) original argument when he contended that news media would question the symptoms of inequality rather than the underlying power structures that cause inequality. My findings are consistent with both Gramsci's (1971) and Richardson's (2007) findings. Rather than challenging the fundamental power structures that lead to inequality, the twenty-five articles were found to either communicate racist ideology or question the symptoms of inequality. *The Guardian* was the only news media site to challenge consistently the symptoms of inequality by advocating improved regulation on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. However, advocating better regulation is not necessarily going to be what is best for them if they are finally even more over-regulated as a result.

The failure of these twenty-five articles to challenge unequal power structures creates a process that normalises and legitimises racism towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The identification of racist ideologies and the absence of questioning these ideologies or the systems that produce them substantiates that hegemony is implied in these twenty-five articles. The results of this study suggest that the news media sites appear unwilling to challenge what is perceived as natural and normal within dominant white society. According to the minimal effects model and research such as that of Harding (2006), the media does not necessarily tell us what to think, but it is successful

at framing the discussion by telling us what to think about (Entman, 2007; Fox et al., 2007; Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006). The failure to address the causes of inequality could signify that the media does not consider the causes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inequality an important topic. Regardless of the news media's motive, discussion of the causes of such inequality is being left out of the social conscience when the media fails to address the topic. Further research could look into the role of critical whiteness and ethnocentricity when the media does not challenge the natural and normal function of society. If the function of dominant white society is seen as natural and normal, as it is with critical whiteness, then potentially that may blind those within dominant white society to those systems that cause inequality towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Therefore, journalists may not recognise the causes of such inequality because those systems are perceived as 'normal'. Ethnocentric views could also lead to the media articles being complicit in communicating racist ideology. Further research could explore tighter restrictions on journalists and news media. However, this would potentially limit freedom of speech. Alternatively, continued research could examine ways to create a more culturally engaged and aware society.

The lack of news media discussion, questioning and critiquing of the causes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inequality also potentially inhibits development of culturally understanding and ways of interacting. It is a concern that ideologies reinforcing the subversive tactics of neo-colonialism, paternalism and assimilation are present within these twenty-five news media articles. Mesikämmen (2016) and McCallum et al. (2012) have argued that cultural competence should be further developed in the media industry to combat racism and cultural bias. However, I would argue that entrenched racist ideology in the news media is an issue that needs addressing beyond cultural competence for journalists. My findings warrant continued research exploring further strategies for combating racist ideology and cultural bias in Australian news media.

It is well established that there is significant over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia's prison systems (ABS, 2017). The most prolific ideology found within the twenty-five articles was neo-colonialism. A fundamental part of neo-colonialism is the criminalisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a form of control (Cunneen, 2001). In theory, a system of ideas based on criminalisation as a form of control could contribute to high imprisonment rates. On the basis of my findings, further research could investigate a possible relationship between

communicating neo-colonial ideology in the media and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander over-representation within Australian prisons.

The greatest challenge presented in this study was the large dataset that would make conducting a complete CDA of twenty-five articles overwhelming. Using Donkin's (2012) streamlined method of CDA, which applies Fairclough's (2003) three assumptive categories, I was able to analyse the large dataset within the time constraints of the study. CDA, as a methodology, aims to reach an "understanding of how language-in-use contributes to and reproduces social inequality" (Weninger, 2008, p. 4). The study has accomplished this goal through two major findings. First, the study identified that all the media producers and articles were unwilling to challenge or question the power structures that reinforce or lead to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inequality. Second, three key ideologies communicating racism and inequality were revealed within the discourse. Those ideologies were neo-colonial, neo-liberal and paternalistic ideologies. The concern is that at face value, these news media articles appeared like any other article. However, a CDA revealed that racist ideologies were communicated. This suggests racism is not just a problem of the past. It is a current issue continuing at a deeper level hidden in the underlying assumptions and ideologies found within the discourse. Fairclough (2011, p. 395) argued that CDA is "a form of intervention in social practice and social relationships" and a way of bringing awareness and enlightenment to a topic. It is hoped that these findings will bring awareness to the media's discursive practices and generate further discussion and research to correct the discursive structures responsible for causing further harm towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It has brought a new level of awareness of the intricacies of their portrayal in news media for me as a researcher and for readers.

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Appendix

1.1 Article Example

We deserve better, say Aboriginal leaders

JUNE 9, 2016 8:14PM

AAP

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders have issued a stark warning to political leaders ahead of the federal election: “Ignore us at your peril.”

“We are tired of being marginalised, tired of being ignored, and we have come here today to present a united front in terms of all our very present issues that will not be denied,” Jackie Huggins, from the National Congress of Australia’s First People, told reporters on Thursday.

“Our people deserve much, much better than what we are seeing at the moment and what is being delivered to us at present.”

Ms Huggins said Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were prepared to stand together for justice, equity and representation.

“Ignore us at your peril because we vote too and it is our people who are the most severely disadvantaged people in this country,” she said.

Antoinette Braybrook, the chief executive of the Victorian Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service, called for action on domestic violence and its broader effects.

She said more than 90 per cent of Aboriginal women in prison were family violence victims.

“Aboriginal women are 34 times more likely to be hospitalised because of family violence and 10 times more likely to die from a violent assault,” she said.

“Our women’s lives are being lost and our children are being taken and our government needs to work with us to make this right.”

Conversations have been had about broader health concerns, but that too is an area where Indigenous Australians say they are feeling ignored.

First People's Disability Network's Damien Griffiths said there was a lot of "we hear you" but not enough action, while Victorian Aboriginal Legal Services chief executive Wayne Muir said Thursday's gathering was evidence of the frustration Indigenous people feel about not being heard.

"Aboriginal people in this country are getting organised and we will stand together and we will stand united—we won't be divided and we will make a difference to election processes," he said.

"It's time the politicians of this country learn the lesson."

1.2 Article Analysis Example

Each assumption was allocated a colour. Propositional assumptions were allocated purple, existential assumptions were allocated green and value assumptions were allocated blue. Yellow-highlighted text represents paragraphs that bore particular importance to the study, and red-highlighted text represents extremely relevant assumptions.

We deserve better, say Aboriginal leaders

June 9, 2016

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders have issued a stark warning to political leaders ahead of the federal election: “Ignore us at your peril.”

PA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are threatening political leaders.
PA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been ignored by political leaders.

“We are tired of being marginalised, tired of being ignored, and we have come here today to present a united front in terms of all our very present issues that will not be denied,” Jackie Huggins, from the National Congress of Australia’s First People, told reporters on Thursday.

EA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are marginalised and ignored.
EA issues have been denied.
PA being ignored and marginalised is tiring.
EA about colonial history

“Our people deserve much, much better than what we are seeing at the moment and what is being delivered to us at present.”

EA they represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Not government.
VA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are getting much less and worse than they deserve.
PA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people deserve more.

Ms Huggins said Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were prepared to stand together for justice, equity and representation.

EA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people currently do not stand together.

“Ignore us at your peril because we vote too and it is our people who are the most severely disadvantaged people in this country,” she said.

PA non-Indigenous Australians have advantages compared to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
PA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are being ignored.

Antoinette Braybrook, the chief executive of the Victorian Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service, called for action on domestic violence and

its broader effects.

PA DV is affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

She said more than 90 per cent of Aboriginal women in prison were family violence victims.

PA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in prisons are victims.

“Aboriginal women are 34 times more likely to be hospitalised because of family violence and 10 times more likely to die from a violent assault,” she said.

PA non-Indigenous women are less likely to experience DV or die from assault.

“Our women’s lives are being lost and our children are being taken and our government needs to work with us to make this right.”

EA stolen generation continues.

VA Government is doing the wrong thing.

PA governments responsibility to make it right.

Conversations have been had about broader health concerns, but that too is an area where Indigenous Australians say they are feeling ignored.

PA health concerns are not being acted upon. Just discussed.

PA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are not a part of the conversation.

First People’s Disability Network’s Damien Griffiths said there was a lot of “we hear you” but not enough action, while Victorian Aboriginal Legal Services chief executive Wayne Muir said Thursday’s gathering was evidence of the frustration Indigenous people feel about not being heard.

PA being heard means politicians need to follow through with actions.

PA Those who did not gather are not frustrated.

“Aboriginal people in this country are getting organised and we will stand together and we will stand united—we won’t be divided and we will make a difference to election processes,” he said.

EA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been unorganised.

PA divided Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people do not make a difference to elections.

“It’s time the politicians of this country learn the lesson.”

PA politicians have not learnt their lesson.

PA treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people has been inconsequential to government so far.

VA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be feared politically.

