

**CHARLES UNIVERSITY**

**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

Institute of Political Studies

Department of International Relations

**Constructing Indigenous Identity: Critical Discourse  
Analysis of the “Yes” and “No” Campaigns in the 2023  
“The Voice” Referendum in Australia**

Master's Thesis

Author of the Thesis: Sara Camussi

Study programme: Master's in International Relations

Supervisor: Anna Kotvalová, Mgr.

Year of the defence: 2024

## **Declaration**

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on 30.07.2024

Sara Camussi

## References

CAMUSSI, Sara. *Constructing Indigenous Identity: Critical Discourse Analysis of the “Yes” and “No” Campaigns in the 2023 “The Voice” Referendum in Australia*. Praha, 2024. Master’s thesis (Mgr). Charles University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of Political Studies, Department of International Relations. Supervisor prof. Anna Kotvalová, Mgr.

**Length of the Thesis: 167.497**

## **Title**

Constructing Indigenous Identity: Critical Discourse Analysis of the “Yes” and “No” Campaigns in the 2023 “The Voice” Referendum in Australia

## **Keywords**

Indigenous Identity, Referendum, Discourse-Historical Analysis, Language, Discourse Theory, Post Colonial Theory, Booklet

## **Abstract**

This master’s thesis investigates the discourses surrounding Indigenous identity in the context of Australia's 2023 referendum on the "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice." The study aims to explore how the "Yes" and "No" campaigns in the referendum shaped representations of Indigenous identity, employing a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, specifically the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA). Australia's colonial past and ongoing discrimination and marginalisation against its Indigenous communities underline the importance of this research. The 2023 referendum aimed to establish an advisory body to give Indigenous communities a Voice in governmental decisions affecting them and shape more effective policies to combat institutional discrimination. However, the referendum was rejected, with a 60.06% majority voting "No", remaining the only Western country that does not recognise its First People in the constitution. This study examines how each campaign used language to influence public perception and perpetuate power structures. Utilizing the DHA framework composed of five sections of analysis, this research focuses on the narratives and strategies employed in the “Yes” and “No” campaign materials that were created to be presented in the referendum booklet, which was widely distributed nationwide. These materials reflect the public information landscape and serve as primary data sources for this thesis. The research draws on critical theories, such as Postcolonial Theory and Critical Race Theory, and applies insights from discourse analysis theorists such as Michel Foucault, Ruth Wodak and Martin Reisigl to understand how colonial legacies continue to shape discourse and identity in Australia. The findings aim to contribute to broader discussions on reconciliation, recognition, and the role of discourse in shaping societal attitudes towards Indigenous peoples in Australia. This thesis also aims to highlight the ongoing impact of colonialism on modern Australian society and emphasizes the need for meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities to foster genuine reconciliation.

## **Název práce**

Konstruování domorodé identity: Kritická diskurzní analýza kampaní „Ano“ a „Ne“ v referendu o „Hlasu“ v Austrálii v roce 2023.

## **Klíčová slova**

Domorodá identita, referendum, diskurzně-historická analýza, jazyk, teorie diskurzu, postkoloniální teorie, brožura

## **Abstrakt**

Tato magisterská práce zkoumá diskurzy týkající se identity původních obyvatel v kontextu australského referenda o „hlasu domorodců a obyvatel ostrovů Torresova průlivu“ v roce 2023. Cílem studie je prozkoumat, jak kampaně „Ano“ a „Ne“ v referendu utvářely reprezentace domorodé identity, a to za použití rámce kritické analýzy diskurzu (CDA), konkrétně diskurzně-historického přístupu (DHA). Koloniální minulost Austrálie a pokračující diskriminace a marginalizace jejích domorodých komunit podtrhují význam tohoto výzkumu. Cílem referenda v roce bylo zřídit poradní orgán, který by domorodým komunitám poskytl hlas ve vládních rozhodnutích, která se jich týkají, a utvářel účinnější politiku boje proti institucionální diskriminaci. Referendum však bylo zamítnuto, většina 60,06 % hlasujících se vyslovila proti, a zůstala tak jedinou západní zemí, která neuznává své první obyvatele v ústavě. Tato studie zkoumá, jak jednotlivé kampaně využívaly jazyk k ovlivňování veřejného mínění a k upevňování mocenských struktur. S využitím rámce DHA, který se skládá z pěti částí analýzy, se tento výzkum zaměřuje na narativy a strategie použité v materiálech kampaně „Ano“ a „Ne“, které byly vytvořeny pro prezentaci v brožuře k referendu, jež byla široce distribuována po celé zemi. Tyto materiály odrážejí veřejné informační prostředí a slouží jako primární zdroje dat pro tuto práci. Výzkum vychází z kritických teorií, jako je postkoloniální teorie a kritická rasová teorie, a uplatňuje poznatky teoretiků analýzy diskurzu, jako jsou Michel Foucault, Ruth Wodaková a Martin Reisigl, aby pochopil, jak koloniální dědictví nadále formuje diskurz a identitu v Austrálii. Cílem zjištění je přispět k širším diskusím o usmíření, uznání a roli diskurzu při utváření společenských postojů k původnímu obyvatelstvu Austrálie. Cílem této práce je také poukázat na přetrvávající vliv kolonialismu na současnou australskou společnost a zdůraznit potřebu smysluplného zapojení domorodých komunit pro podporu skutečného usmíření.

## **Acknowledgement**

Firstly, I want to thank my supervisor, Mgr. Anna Kotvalová, for her valuable suggestions, while writing this thesis. Furthermore, this experience would not have been the same without the support of my family, Patrizia, Audax, Raffaele, and Astrid, who pushed me every day to be the best version of myself even from hundreds of kilometres away. I would like to also thank my boyfriend Riccardo and his family for their invaluable support that helped me overcome all the difficulties I encountered. Lastly, I want to mention my friends from all the cities I have been studying: Trento, Konstanz and Prague: thank you for all the good memories I will carry with me.

I would like to dedicate my thesis to every one of you, but especially I want to dedicate this to my grandfather Silvano who always believed in me, and even though he could not see my final success, he knew from day one I could achieve all of these. Thank you.

## Table of content

<b>Introduction</b> .....	9
<b>1. Background</b> .....	12
<u>1.1</u> First Nation People and the Beginning of Colonisation .....	12
1.2 The Colonization Period.....	14
1.3 The Stolen Generations .....	17
1.4 The Contemporary Situation and the Institutional Racism Built in Australian Society .....	19
1.5 The Road to the Voice Referendum .....	21
<b>2. Theoretical framework</b> .....	25
2.1 Critical Theories .....	25
2.2 Foucauldian Discourse .....	27
2.3 Post-colonial theory.....	30
2.4 Critical Race Theory.....	32
<b>3. Existing research</b> .....	34
3.1 Neo-colonialism and institutional racism in Australia .....	34
3.2 International Indigenous rights in the neoliberal era .....	35
3.3 Discourse Surrounding Indigenous Identity .....	37
3.4 The Discourse Surrounding Indigenous Rights Recognition and Reconciliation.....	39
<b>4. Methodology</b> .....	42
<b>5. Data Selection</b> .....	48
5.1 Data Selection Choice .....	48
5.2 Data Selection Process .....	49
<b>6. Analysis and Results</b> .....	51
6.1 Nominations .....	51
6.2 Predications .....	55

6.3 Argumentation .....	58
6.4 Perspectivations .....	62
6.5 Intensification and Mitigation .....	65
6.6 Discussion of Results: Representation of Indigenous Identity .....	69
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>75</b>
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	<b>77</b>



# Introduction

Australia is the biggest island of the Oceania continent, and Indigenous Communities have inhabited it for thousands of years before British explorers started to claim it as their own land.

These Indigenous Communities are called the Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, and it is estimated that they have been in the continent for at least 40,000 or possibly as even as 65,000 years before the invasion of their land by British explorers, one of them being Captain Cook in the 1770 (Richard, 2017).

After the long and drastic colonisation of the British Empire on the island, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities started to be pushed to the fringes of the newly created white society. This is just the beginning of the history of discrimination and racism that keeps the Indigenous communities at the margins of also nowadays Australian society.

The discourse surrounding Indigenous identity in Australia has long been a complex and contentious issue, and still nowadays reflects the nation's ongoing struggle for reconciliation with its First Peoples after centuries of severe discrimination.

What we can understand from their contemporary absence from the Constitution is glaring and they continue to be among the most marginalised and disadvantaged groups by virtually all socioeconomic indicators. Today, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals constitute 3.8% of Australia's total population of 26 million (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021) and their discrimination is often described as "*institutional racism*" (Lennon, 2023) due to systematic issues like excessive police violence, violence against women, land rights denials, and poverty (Moore, 2014).

The 2023 Referendum, which aimed to incorporate an "*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice*" within the Australian constitution, represents a significant milestone in the ongoing discourse.

The "*Indigenous Voice*" to the Australian Parliament was presented as an advisory body that the government could question on issues regarding the Aboriginals and especially issues that could impact them directly or indirectly. The body would not have had the power to veto the laws regarding these issues, but only a representative role during the discussions, in order to give a literal voice to the communities (SBS News, 2023).

However, on the 14th of October 2023, the referendum did not secure the required support for approval, voters rejected the proposal nationally and in the majority of the States.

On one side, the “*No*” votes reached a solid 60.06% majority and, on the other side, the “*Yes*” votes only registered 39.94% (AEC, 2023). These results underscore the intricate challenges inherent in Australia’s pursuit of Indigenous recognition and rights.

The rejection of the referendum proposal not only represents a setback in Australia's journey towards Indigenous recognition but also raises broader questions about the nation's engagement with its colonial past and Indigenous communities.

This rejection parallels similar dismissals of Indigenous proposals in the past, highlighting persistent challenges in addressing historical injustices and fostering meaningful reconciliation. Moreover, Australia's lack of formal recognition or treaty with its First Peoples underscores the urgency of understanding and addressing the physical and discursive barriers to reconciliation (AHRC, 2023).

The research target of the study proposed by my master’s thesis is to conduct an extensive and in-depth investigation into the discourse constructed around Indigenous identity in Australia within the context of the 2023 Referendum on the “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice”.

The thesis will focus on one central research question that is going to guide the research:

*How did the 'Yes' and 'No' campaigns for the Voice Referendum shape the representation of Indigenous identity?*

This study aims to investigate the narratives and discourse of both the "Yes" and "No" campaigns through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and specifically the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA). These approaches are well-suited to examine the ways in which language and concepts are employed within the context of the campaigns. Therefore, the research seeks to uncover the mechanism through which discursive power operates in shaping public discourse and influencing political outcomes with different Indigenous representation strategies.

Additionally, this research aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse surrounding reconciliation in Australia. Through unpacking the narratives surrounding Indigenous identity within the context of the referendum, the study has in view to offer insights into the complexities of Indigenous recognition in contemporary Australian society. This passage is essential to contribute to the present literature on the matter discussed and more broadly to

the discussion surrounding postcolonial theory.

In order to explore the complexities of postcolonial discourse in the context of the Australian referendum, it is crucial to establish a clear methodological framework and delineate the scope of the study. Postcolonial Theory and Foucauldian discourse offer a critical framework for understanding the complexities of historical processes and power dynamics that shape postcolonial societies. This theoretical perspective emphasises the enduring legacies of colonialism and imperialism, highlighting the ways in which colonial histories continue to impact contemporary social, political, and cultural landscapes (Kurti, 2022). In the context of Australia, Postcolonial Theory provides a lens through which to analyse the ongoing struggles for Indigenous recognition and rights, as well as the broader dynamics of power and inequality within Australian society.

To continue with the empirical data and analytical techniques, the research will primarily consist of campaign materials from both the "Yes" and "No" campaigns of the 2023 Referendum on the "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice." These materials consist of the official essays from the campaigns that make up the government's pamphlet or booklet dedicated to the referendum, called „*Your Official Referendum Booklet*“ (Australian Government, 2023).

It is crucial to focus on the booklet distributed by the Australian Government containing information about the referendum, which will be analysed, as it was endorsed by both campaigns and distributed widely among the population, through not only emails but also the national post system.

To conclude, before delving into this in-depth research, this thesis aims to contribute to the contemporary research on the discourse surrounding the Indigenous communities in Australia through the lenses of Critical Discourse Analysis and Postcolonial theory.

The fundamental point of this work is to illuminate the still contemporary consequences of Australian colonialism on society, that is creating concrete barriers towards an effective and inclusive reconciliation with their First Nation People.

# 1. Background

## 1.1 First Nation People and the Beginning of Colonisation

Aboriginals and Torres Islanders are estimated to have been in the continent for at least 40,000 or as many as 65,000 years before British colonisation (Richard, 2017).

Historians date back the communities to New Guinea and, presumably, they arrived in Australia when the sea levels were much lower and the landscape and islands in that area were still in formation. They are considered the first human population to arrive and explore the unknown and unfamiliar territory that even before had different types of animals than every other land, due to the millennia of geographical isolation that Australia experienced in its geological formation.

The Aboriginals started to first live along the coast, where the fauna and flora were more hospitable and then spread all over the island in around 10,000 years. The communities thrived and bloomed due to the new variety of plants and animals and when the British arrived, it is estimated that the total population of the Aboriginals could have reached 750,000 individuals. Furthermore, there was an interesting cultural diversity between the communities and roughly 260 distinct language groups and 500 dialects were spoken (Dudgeon et al., 2010).

For millennia, the communities lived as nomads in the vast territories and can be described mainly as hunters and gathers. Nevertheless, some communities cannot be described as just nomads, as there is also proof of communities living thanks to fishing and villages along the coasts and farming agricultural techniques were also developed, such as planting roots vegetables and fruits and even elaborate dams to water the crops. Moreover, many communities used controlled fire to generate new grass and tree growth (Richard, 2017).

Aboriginal communities have flourished within deeply social environments, where shared rituals and spirituality serve as vital bonds fostering community cohesion. Especially the rituals formed over thousands of years helped Aboriginals develop their own unique music, dances and painting styles, that are still preserved today (Richard, 2017). Furthermore, their cultural evolution is associated with their perceived role as guardians of nature, as they adapted harmoniously to the diverse climates and environments across the island.

To continue, the daily tasks carry profound religious significance, while communal ceremonies reinforce and nurture the community's connection with the land. Despite the simplicity of their technology, Aboriginal culture can be considered complex and sophisticated, thanks to the shreds of evidence in the intricacies of their mythology and the elaborate kinship systems.

It is crucial to mention the concept of “dreaming”, which holds pivotal significance for the unity and continuity of Aboriginal culture. It serves as a foundational and indispensable principle, intricately woven into the fabric of Aboriginal spiritual rituals and beliefs. The “dreaming” encompasses a complex and profound understanding of existence's spiritual and cosmological dimensions. The concept does not only explain the past and the ancestral wisdom for the community, but also embodies the present and the future, the creation of stories and myths, and the interconnectedness of all living beings (Britannica, 2023).

Through their artistic expressions, such as painting and sculpture, Aboriginal people not only showcase their aesthetic sensibilities but also perpetuate their cultural narratives. Each stroke of paint and chisel mark serves as a testament to their deep-rooted connection with the land and their profound cultural heritage (Richard, 2017).

After this period of isolation and proliferation, it seems that the first European inhabitants of Australia were the survivors of a wrecked Portuguese vessel in 1629, but still, some sources are unclear on their faith (Richard, 2017).

Following this singular episode, more professional explorers started to reach the new continent. How the communities viewed the occasional British explorations of Abel Tasman in 1642, William Dampier in 1688 and more famously when Captain Cook explored the coasts in 1770 is unclear and the explorers left almost no trace of them after leaving (Richard, 2017). It is known from Cook's memoirs that, contrarily from the previous captains, he had a romanticised vision of the Aboriginal communities, describing them in this way:

*“From what I have said of the Natives of New Holland they may appear to some to be the most wretched people upon the earth: but in reality, they are far more happier than we Europeans; being wholly unacquainted not only with the superfluous but the necessary.*

*Conveniencies so much sought after in Europe, they are happy in not knowing the use of them. They live in a Tranquillity which is not disturbed by the inequality of Condition: The Earth and sea of their own accord furnishes them with all things necessary for life”*

(Clark, 1957).

In January 1788 the faith of Aboriginals changed as the visitors from another world for the first time stayed (Richard, 2017). According to the plans of the British administration, the new island discovered by Cook would have been a perfect place of detention for British criminals. At the time, the country's crime and prison situation was alarming and Australia's vast and unexplored territories could offer a long-term solution to the problem of prison overcrowding.

From then onwards, the European settlement of Australia unfolded gradually, with settlers not only using the island as a prison but also claiming land primarily for economic gain. Thanks to the concept of *terra nullius*, the expansion of the pastoral industry in the mid-1800s saw a surge in British immigrants, prompting what historian Broome (1994) defined as the "*fantastic land grab*."

The *Terra Nullius* (vacant land) concept is one of the crucial aspects of the "Doctrine of Discovery" founded by European colonisers starting in the 1400s. The doctrine gave them the right to claim the territories that were not occupied by Christians beyond the European continent and power. The Doctrine of Discovery nullified the sovereignty of Indigenous lands, giving Christians the authority to exploit and take advantage of Indigenous Peoples' lands (Shah, 2024).

This concept profoundly influenced Australian history trajectory, shaping property ownership norms and institutional structures, including the government. With the British colonization, Indigenous Australians lost their sovereignty over the land, rendering them strangers and intruders in their own territory. This reality was starkly illustrated by measures like requiring Indigenous peoples to carry passports within their own lands, enforced since early governors. Failure to comply resulted in being treated as "*enemy aliens*". Importantly, these passports were contingent upon Indigenous Australians relinquishing their traditional hunting practices, their economic systems based in the bush, and severing ties with their families (McGrath, 2020).

## **1.2 The Colonization Period**

*"Australian history can be summarised as the story of how Aboriginal peoples lost a continent and how the invaders gained one"* (McGrath, 2020).

It was the growth of sheep numbers, with consequently the speculation about the possible development of wool as an export commodity that stimulated the appetite for

exploration. The wool industry was indeed an immediate success since the early Australian economy and soon the country became one of the major world exporters of wool (National Museum Australia, 2023). Furthermore, later the minerals and gold mining industry flourished and became a huge attraction for new Western workers in the country. The Goldrush can be dated to the 1840s and not only developed the mining industry but also further the enlargement of the agricultural and industrial economy (Australian Mining History Association, 2023).

Conflict ensued as Aboriginal groups resisted encroachment on their lands by taking livestock from European settlers. This led to reprisals and eventually escalated into full-scale warfare over land ownership. Europeans, armed with superior weapons and military organisation, ultimately prevailed (Dudgeon et al., 2010).

The colonisation process was often brutal, marked by massacres of Aboriginal warriors, women, and children. The British unintentionally and, intentionally with poisoned flour, spread diseases such as smallpox and malaria which led to devastating effects on Aboriginal populations (McGrath, 2020).

In numerous regions, illnesses primarily accounted for the deaths of Aboriginal people, yet their vulnerability was exacerbated by various factors. These included the trauma of being dispossessed, the progressive absence of traditional food and water sources, prohibitions on traditional weaponry, unsanitary conditions resulting from the imposition of European-style clothing, and the absence of immunity to new diseases introduced by European settlers. Additionally, alcohol and tobacco consumption further contributed to the detrimental effects experienced by Indigenous communities (McGrath, 2020).

Despite their limited warfare experience, the violence was not one-sided, Aboriginal people fought back with guerrilla tactics, although on a smaller scale (Broome, 1994). Historical accounts of Aboriginal resistance gained prominence only recently, with scholars like Broome (1994) and Reynolds (1987) shedding light on this aspect of Australian history. It is estimated that more than 3000 Europeans were killed in these rebellious gestures while attempting to impose their European rules on the natives (Reynolds, 1987).

Consequently, after European settlements expanded and the newly established economy grew, the Indigenous communities started to lose their self-sufficiency. Aboriginal people increasingly relied on European goods and food supplies, disrupting their traditional way of life. Attempts to exchange labour for goods were often misinterpreted by settlers, leading to further marginalization of Aboriginal communities.

Many Aboriginal groups were pushed to the fringes of white society, perceived as remnants clinging to their fading cultures. While some managed to adapt and carve out new lives amid colonization, government policies aimed to displace, "protect," disperse, and assimilate Aboriginal people over time (Dudgeon et al., 2010).

The Aboriginals who did not want to adapt to the new society were forced to move into reserves or isolate themselves in the desert areas without colonial interest. Consequently, thousands of Aboriginal families were moved or kept in segregated reserves, which could have been highly regimented sometimes, with strict controls on names, tribes, spouses, newborns, employment rates, medical history and police convictions (McGrath, 2020).

High mortality rates, low birth rates and the fading of their culture (McGrath, 2020) contributed to a drastic decline in the Aboriginal population by the turn of the 20th century, passing to a number of around 75,000 individuals (Broome, 1994).

Moreover, each state of the newly formed Australian Federation started to legislate a discriminatory framework towards the communities, with broad policies that aimed to be mainly punitive and restrictive measures towards the Aboriginals (Wilson, 2015). All these documents demonstrate how the racial beliefs towards the community started to become not only an ongoing narrative against them, but also a state legislation. Aboriginal people were considered less human, and the norms created were used to isolate them from the "civilised public" (Dudgeon et al., 2010).

The act that most enacts and symbolises the special conditions reserved for the Indigenous is the *Western Australia Aborigines Act 1905* (AIATSIS, 2008). This act created the figure of the Chief Protector of Aborigines who was entitled to be the legal guardian of every Aboriginal person and even mixed-race children, called "half-caste". State control and intervention in the lives of the community started to become "extreme" (Dudgeon et al., 2010). At the local level, law enforcement officers or pastoralists were appointed as Protectors of Aboriginals. To provide "alternatives for a better life", half-caste children were evacuated from their families and away from cultural Aboriginal environments. Later, these children will be called "Stolen Generations". Missions and reserves were formed. The Chief Protector had the authority to relocate Aboriginal individuals from one reserve or area to another and keep them there. Aboriginal people were not allowed to visit towns without permission, and cohabitation between Aboriginal women and non-Aboriginal men was illegal (Dudgeon et al., 2010). These laws, ostensibly enacted for the "*well-being of*



*Indigenous peoples*”, in reality, constituted a form of cultural genocide, resulting in the erosion of language, family fragmentation, and the suppression of cultural traditions (Haebich, 1988).

The Aboriginals saw the World Wars and enlisting in them as an opportunity to receive more equal pay and be treated on the same footing (McGrath, 2020). In fact, the movement for Indigenous rights gained momentum in the 1920s with the establishment of Aboriginal political organizations, such as the Australian Aborigines League and the Aborigines Progressive Association (Dudgeon et al., 2010). Gradually, these movements gave new momentum to the Aboriginal battle for recognition and rights, until the symbolic act of emancipation given by the 1967 Commonwealth Referendum.

The 1967 Commonwealth Referendum in Australia marked a significant milestone in the recognition of Indigenous rights, the population voted to finally grant full citizenship to Australian Aboriginal peoples (Thomas, 2017). However, challenges persisted for Aboriginal communities after 1967, with ongoing issues of racism and disadvantage. Key events, such as the Gurindji people's walk-off from the Wave Hill cattle station in 1966, catalysed the struggle for land rights and garnered national attention. The 1960s and 1970s witnessed significant achievements in the fight for Aboriginal rights, including the establishment of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy in Canberra and the creation of the Aboriginal flag by Harold Thomas in 1971 (ABC News, 2022).

### **1.3 The Stolen Generations**

A profound scar in the colonization process is the so-called “*Stolen Generations*”. This phenomenon could be considered the peak of extreme state control and intervention in the lives of the Aboriginals. The episodes of forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families started in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and continued even until 1980 (Dudgeon et al. 2010).

In the comprehensive analysis of the removal of Aboriginal children by the author Haebich (2000) it is described that it was not a series of single and isolated events, but a systematic process on some occasions, that was perpetuated as a form of “civilisation” towards the children. The victims were displaced from their original families into missions, reserves and institutions (Dudgeon et al., 2010).

This phenomenon was so widespread and generalised that most indigenous families

were affected by it and some families have even been affected for more than one time. The data can make us understand better this atrocity, it is estimated that as many as one out of three Aboriginal and mixed-race children have been taken away from their families between 1910 and 1970. In 2018, 17,150 Stolen Generations survivors were still alive. Approximately 33% of adult Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals are descendants of Stolen Generations survivors. In Western Australia, the proportion is as high as 46%. Moreover, many Aboriginals are still searching today for their stolen relatives or siblings (Healing Foundation, 2023).

The treatment was specially reserved for “*partly white*” children, and they were sent to institutions for education and training as menials, in order to then get to work in white families. In fact, children of especially lighter skin colour were classified as more adapt to be integrated into non-Indigenous communities. For instance, the institution called Sister Kate’s Home in Perth exemplifies this discriminatory practice, where children were admitted based on their lighter skin colour (Morgan, 2002).

Sissons (2005) suggests that aside from assimilation, the removal of Indigenous children aimed to destabilize Indigenous communities and alter their relationship with the environment. The effects are unquantifiable, the separated cultural, spiritual, and family links had an impact on the parents and children involved, as well as many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities throughout Australia. Oral language and customs, which could only be passed down from generation to generation perished, and many parents had to cope with the loss of their kids (Healing Foundation, 2023).

It is crucial to mention also the effects on the mental health of the communities. In the facilities dedicated to removed children or in their adopting families, the children often experienced neglect and abuse and consequently the development of depression, mental illnesses and low self-esteem (Healing Foundation, 2023).

They were also more likely to experience physical, psychological, and sexual abuse in state care, working, or when living with non-Indigenous families. According to research conducted by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2018), removed children were less likely to obtain a secondary education and three times more likely to have a police record. The same study reports that 1 in 7 current survivors live in a situation of disability and all of this is accentuated by the fact that it has been estimated that 33% of them have severe difficulties in accessing services and even a higher percentage of 66% of them live in under a low income status. Because these children did not grow up in a healthy family

environment, the repercussions of the Stolen Generations are still felt today when they begin their own families. This is known as Intergenerational Trauma (Healing Foundation, 2023).

A significant and milestone event that marked the recognition from the state of this tragic event is the “*formal Apology offered to Australia’s Indigenous People*” offered by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd on 13 February 2008 (National Museum Australia, 2023).

#### **1.4 The Contemporary Situation and the Institutional Racism Built in Australian Society**

To describe the nowadays Australian society and its relationship with Aboriginals, it is fundamental to mention the concept of institutional or systematic racism. Due to the colonial reflection in the dominant way of thinking of general Australian society and the history just described by the previous sections, today Aboriginals are still deeply discriminated against in political, social, legal, criminal and educational institutions (Charles, 2023). For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, this creates significant disadvantages. It often results in cycles of poverty and leads to poorer overall life outcomes.

Firstly, it is important to highlight that today more than half of the Aboriginal population resides in urban areas, often living in poor conditions on the fringes of these towns and facing high unemployment rates. Many Aboriginal people are employed as labourers on cattle ranches that have encroached on their traditional lands. Despite these challenges, some Aboriginal communities, particularly in the northern regions, have managed to hold onto their land and continue their traditional practices of hunting and gathering “*bush tucker*”(Survival, 2009).

After the violent persecution of Aboriginal people and the failed policies aimed at assimilation, Aboriginal Australians still contend with racism and sporadic violence, especially in interactions with law enforcement. The adverse living conditions faced by many Aboriginal people result in higher rates of infant mortality and suicide, lower life expectancy, and a disproportionate number of Aboriginal people in the prison system compared to the general population (Blakemore, 2023).

There is ample evidence of institutional racism within the criminal justice and law enforcement systems. The criminal courts are predominantly staffed by white decision-makers. Although Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up only 3.8 % of Australia's total population, they constitute 32 % of the prison population (Charles, 2023). This shows a sad record for the country, in fact, statistics show that Australia has the highest

rates of incarceration of its Indigenous people globally (McGlade, 2021).

Since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, over 500 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have died in custody, including the preventable death of Mootijah Shillingsworth in 2018 which caused a huge scandal for Australian police (Charles, 2023). This case particularly agitated protests and media coverage, as the Aboriginal man died of a simple and curable ear infection that was not treated when he was in custody, even though the disease was recorded on his prison profile (Swanston, 2022). This case demonstrated once again that police culture and attitudes are still actively discriminating against Aboriginal communities. Additionally, various police programs have been found to disproportionately target Aboriginal people, often using excessive force and violence or ignoring the health needs of the prisoners (Charles, 2023).

The health and hospital sector is another fundamental area where the institutions are built around colonial models. The systematic racism contributes to the health gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people (Henry et al., 2004). Many studies have underlined that there is an evident link between the health gap and colonialism beliefs, inter-generational traumas and incorrect health practices (Gatwiri et al., 2021).

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare monitors the health gap and publishes various reports about it. In the 2018-2019 period, the statistics of the prevalence of health risk factors among the Indigenous community remain still concerning. The obesity and overweight rates reach over 70% of the community, while the smoke daily consumption reaches 40% of the population and the risky alcohol consumption with lifetime risks can be measured in the 20% of all over 18+ Aboriginal population (AIHW, 2022). This significant data brings the life expectancy of Aboriginals way lower than the one of non-Indigenous. It has been calculated that Indigenous males can reach 71.9 years compared to non-Indigenous males can average 80.6, while for females Indigenous is 75.6 years, compared to 83.8 of non-Indigenous (Australia Bureau of Statistics, 2022).

It is crucial to draw attention also to the criticality of the education system. Attendance rates and school dropouts are different between Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Aboriginal students have a lower attendance rate of 82 % in 2018 than non-Indigenous students with 93% (Australian Government, 2019).

Institutional racism is embedded in society, and it can be hard to overcome. What we can understand from this situation is that there is a need for structural changes in the system, even though institutions and people can fail to recognise that they possess internal biases.

## 1.5 The Road to the Voice Referendum

Despite ongoing difficulties, Aboriginal Australians continue to strive to preserve their ancient culture and seek recognition and restitution from the government.

A significant legal breakthrough occurred in 1992 with the High Court's Mabo decision, which rejected the discriminatory “*terra nullius*” doctrine and acknowledged the concept of Aboriginal “*native title*” over extensive areas of rural Australia. This ruling has enabled several Aboriginal groups, like the Martu in Western Australia, to gain legal recognition of their ancestral lands. However, many groups still struggle with the numerous legal obstacles imposed by government land rights legislation (Survival, 2009).

Another fundamental document that tracked the road to more inclusive legislation is the Uluru Statement from the Heart. The statement can be considered a formal invitation to Parliament and the Australian people to recognise the Aboriginals in the Constitution. The document was created by an assembly of 250 Aboriginals and Torres Islander leaders on 26 May 2017 and contains three main reforms or invitations to propose to the Australian people (SBS, 2022).

The first reform nominated “*truth*” asks for more awareness and justice of the consequences of dispossession and colonialism for Indigenous history. The second main point of the statement is called “*treaty*”, as the main aim of it is to create a commission of First Nations representatives that would supervise an agreement between Indigenous and the Australian government.

The third proposed reform is considered the main element of the statement. The assembly exhorts the Australian government to create a “*voice*” of First Nations in the Parliament, therefore, it is the proposal of a body that would advise the legislative bodies on policy areas that concern Indigenous people. The reform especially demands the need for a national referendum on this proposal as it would finally guarantee a dedicated space for Aboriginals and Torres Islanders in the Australian Parliament (SBS, 2022).

The idea of an advisory body to tackle disparities between First Nations and the Australian population has been proposed to the Australian Parliament since the 1970s, this time, thanks to the statement and a broader activist advocate base, the proposal was personally embraced by the newly elected Prime Minister Anthony Albanese (Rirchie, 2023).

During his victory speech, as his first act as a Prime Minister, he committed to issuing

a referendum proposal “to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice” (Ritchie, 2023) and the Parliament approved it in June 2022 (Ritchie, 2023).

The referendum date was established on 14 October 2023 and the proposed Constitutional change was published as the following lines:

“Chapter IX Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples  
129 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice

In recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia:

1. There shall be a body, to be called the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice;
2. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice may make representations to the Parliament and the Executive Government of the Commonwealth on matters relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
3. The Parliament shall, subject to this Constitution, have power to make laws with respect to matters relating to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice, including its composition, functions, powers and procedures.” (Reconciliation Australia, 2023).

The campaign for the 2023 Australian Indigenous Voice referendum began in early 2023, with considerable initiatives by both the Yes and No sides to affect public opinion. The Yes movement, supported by personalities such as Noel Pearson, planned protests around the country, including a noteworthy gathering in Brisbane that drew over 20,000 people. Uphold and Recognise, a centre-right organisation created by lawyer Damien Freeman and led by Sean Gordon, supported the Yes campaign alongside other organisations such as the Uluru Dialogue, From the Heart, and Australians for Indigenous Constitutional Recognition. The third group, co-chaired by Business Council of Australia director Danny Gilbert and filmmaker Rachel Perkins, created the “Yes23” campaign (Allam and Butler, 2023).

The “Fair Australia” campaign, on the other hand, was led by famous personalities such as Jacinta Nampijinpa Price and Warren Mundine, both from Aboriginal origins, and organisations such as Advance, a conservative lobby group. Advance initiated a social media campaign pursuing the “progressive no” vote. This group received financial backing from numerous wealthy individuals and cooperated with fossil fuel businesses and right-wing

think tank groups. Australians for Unity, led by Warren Mundine and Price, joined two major previous initiatives, Recognise a Better Way and Fair Australia, to unify their efforts against the Voice (Allam and Butler, 2023).

Traditional media also played a crucial role. A study highlighted that while news reporting was generally unbiased, opinion pieces predominantly favoured the No vote, leading to an overall slant in coverage towards anti-Voice sentiments (Fielding, 2023).

Misinformation was commonly reported, especially among right-wing and far-right organisations, and was mostly conveyed via social media platforms such as Telegram and X. This resulted in increasing racial tensions and polarising public debate. Overall, the quality of public discourse was widely condemned as being divided and toxic, harming the mental health of activists on both sides and fostering racist hatred against Indigenous Australians (Ritchie, 2023b.).

It is crucial to underline that Australia is one of the 27 countries worldwide where the vote has been compulsory since 1915 (IDEA, n.d.). With the 89.92% participation rate (ABC News, 2023), we can clearly state that the voting results mirror the population's beliefs and preferences.

The result of the referendum manifestly showed the victory of the “No” over the Voice proposal, as a matter of fact, it received 60.06% of votes (9,45 million Australians) compared to the “Yes” that reached 39.89% of votes (6,29 million Australians). We can break down the votes by state/territory preferences to understand these results. All of Australia’s States expressed “No” as the main preference, the only state that had “Yes” as the main turnout was the Australian Capital Territory Canberra (ABC News, 2023).

Furthermore, the results indicate a political divide between urban and rural areas. The electorates that saw over 70% of votes supporting Yes were those centred around the central business districts of Melbourne, Sydney, and Canberra, as well as Prime Minister Albanese's inner Sydney electorate of Grayndler. In stark contrast, the five electorates with less than 20% of votes in favour of Yes — Maranoa, Flynn, Capricornia, Hinkler, and Dawson — were all rural regions located in southern and central Queensland (Roe, 2023).

Nonetheless, there are positive developments at the state level. While Australia remains the only country in the British Commonwealth without a treaty with its First Nations, some states are initiating their own processes. Victoria State has set up a framework for treaty negotiations and is expected to finalize an agreement that will acknowledge Aboriginal sovereignty, compensate for historical injustices, and include findings from a

truth-telling commission on the disparities faced by First Nations people. According to Aboriginal historian and author Jackie Huggins, this effort is an attempt to "*mend the very fabric of our society*" (Gillespie, 2022).

However, addressing the deep wounds of Australia's colonial past requires more than a treaty. Aboriginal Australians maintain that their sovereignty, as affirmed by the national convention that called for the referendum, "*has never been ceded or extinguished*," whether officially recognised by the nation or not (Blakemore, 2023).



## **2. Theoretical framework**

The thesis will be sustained by relevant theories and scholars that have significantly influenced the field of international relations, particularly concerning power dynamics within political systems. Their work highlights the crucial role of discourse as a political instrument for managing discrimination and power structures regarding Indigenous and colonisation.

The conceptual foundations of this thesis consider a vast range of critical theories, especially focusing on Foucauldian Discourse, Postcolonial Theory and Critical Race Theory (CRT). In this section, the thesis will delve into the fundamental concepts of these crucial ways of thinking, such as the power of discourse, the meaning of Orientalism and the concept of racialisation of others.

Not only I will focus on the more abstract structures and concepts of the theories enlisted but also the thesis will draw on theorists such as Michel Foucault, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Kimberlé Crenshaw.

Although postcolonial theory and CRT are new to nursing discourse, they provide a compelling analytical framework for evaluating the legacy of the colonial past and the neocolonial present as the context in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous can reconcile with their history. Therefore, these fundamental theories have the power to critically individuate the concepts and foundations behind the political campaigns for the Voice Referendum, as their concepts are embedded into Australian society, which is the result of centuries of colonisation and institutional discrimination.

### **2.1 Critical Theories**

Critical theory challenges positivist and neutral approaches in research, emphasizing reflexivity and critique to understand power dynamics in society. It aims to liberate individuals from oppressive structures and ideologies by critically examining how knowledge is produced and controlled (Ryoo and McLauren, 2010). Therefore, one of its main concepts is emancipation as it is the result of freeing discriminated groups of society from the modern economic system, the structure of the state or more generally society they are in (Ferreira, 2018).

Critical theory can be considered an “umbrella term” (Santos, 2006), as it includes

and encompasses various fields and its fundamental concepts can range from linguistics to philosophy, therefore making the theory a crucial base for the development of recent theories of international relations and the theories I am going to employ in this work.

Despite its recent development, critical theory encompasses concepts that date back to classical Greek philosophy, the ideas of Immanuel Kant, Karl Marx and the Frankfurt School. These paradigms and theorists can be considered the crucial foundations, as they enable the identification and analysis of the dynamics of domination and oppression within the context under study.

The historical context of critical theory traces back to classical philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. From Socrates which questioned how rhetoric could manufacture false truths, to Plato which emphasized the importance of language in critical thought, and Aristotle explored the power of language in persuasion. Centuries after, during the Enlightenment, Kant highlighted critique as essential for finding true knowledge, Hegel introduced dialectic reasoning to reach higher consciousness, and Marx's analysis of capitalism exposed how economic power controls ideology (Ryoo and McLauren, 2010).

Furthermore, founded in 1923, the Frankfurt School included key figures like Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, and Walter Benjamin. They critiqued Enlightenment rationality and positivism, advocating for a self-critical, dialectical approach to understanding society. They shifted focus from economic substructures to cultural superstructures, examining how culture industries perpetuate dominant ideologies. Adorno's work is especially known for highlighting the dehumanizing relationship between media culture and its consumers, while Marcuse and Horkheimer emphasized the role of critical theory in resisting oppressive ideologies (Ryoo and McLauren, 2010).

From this significant base, we can understand that the key concepts of critical theory include terms such as critical pedagogy, dialectic, domination and exploitation. Critical pedagogy integrates critical theory with educational practice to help students question and challenge dominant beliefs, fostering higher social consciousness. Originated in ancient classical philosophy, dialectic is a particular technique, which uses discussion and reasoning to expose false beliefs. Hegel is considered the philosopher who extended dialectic to a critical investigation of change. He discovered that by applying this method to social sciences, he could explore contradictions and synthesise new truths.

Critical theory also examines how power is exercised with supremacy over others, exploring the various forms of “domination”. Moreover, particular regard is taken to focus

on how others are unfairly used for one's advantage, making the concept of “exploitation” one of the theory’s core principles of analysis (Ryoo and McLauren, 2010).

In conclusion, a crucial perspective to highlight is that critical theory emphasizes individuals, rather than the state, as the central focus of attention and reflection. From this point of view, people, communities and globalized societies are active participants in the international arena. The theory firmly assesses that the identities, norms, and ideas of individuals are the actors that shape and drive global interactions and dynamics (Ferreira, 2018).

## **2.2 Foucauldian Discourse**

By challenging the traditional concepts of power and language, Michel Foucault is considered to delve further into the “*critical theory project*” (Wandel, 2001). Foucault’s notion of discourse is essential to comprehend the aim of this thesis that focuses on campaigns’ discourse, as the notion of discourse he theorises is deeply connected to the correspondence between language and power dynamics.

Foucauldian discourse analysis is deeply concerned with the explanation of power relations and their consequences and results in society. Unlike traditional views that often see power as mainly repressive and held by specific institutions or individuals, Michel Foucault's perspective is that power is omnipresent and productive. Foucault describes power as relational and diffuse, functioning through a network of relationships rather than being a property possessed by a single entity. This concept aligns with his theory of governmentality, where power operates through societal norms and institutions to regulate individuals' behaviour. This means power is not only about domination and suppression but also about the creation of knowledge, social practices, and norms that define and regulate behaviour, making the concept persuasive in all aspects of social life. Consequently, power shapes how individuals construct their identities and understand their place in society (Khan and MacEachen, 2021). Governmentality highlights how modern states exercise control by guiding and shaping the conduct of populations, thereby embedding power deeply within social practices and norms.

Foucault’s exploration of power and discourse shows significant influence from Antonio Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony, where dominant groups maintain power through ideological means rather than force. Both philosophers emphasize the role of

societal institutions in perpetuating power structures, with Foucault building on Gramsci's ideas to explore how discourses shape and are shaped by these institutions. Gramsci's insights into how consent is manufactured within society through cultural dominance inspired Foucault's analysis of governmentality and power relations (Viviani, 2023).

Another fundamental notion in Foucault's reasoning is the distinction between disciplinary power and bio-power. On one side, disciplinary power involves the regulation and surveillance of individuals through institutions like schools, prisons, and workplaces, focusing on correcting behaviour and enforcing norms. On the other side, bio-power pertains to the regulation of populations through policies and practices that manage life, health, and bodies. Consequently, Foucault considers bio-power as the strategy with modern states regulate citizens' bodies, making differentiations even in the biological processes everybody gets through, highlighting a form of regulation and normalisation of life itself. Both forms of power produce discursive practices and truths that establish norms and expectations for behaviour and representation (Khan and MacEachen, 2021).

Normalisation is a critical mechanism through which power operates. By setting standards of what is considered normal and acceptable, power influences individuals to conform to these norms. This normalisation process is integral to internalising societal expectations, and shaping individuals' identities and actions (Hamed et al., 2017).

Resistance is also a crucial aspect of Foucault's concept of power. Since power is diffused and relational, resistance is equally pervasive and embedded in everyday practices. Resistance may not always be revolutionary but often involves local, everyday struggles that challenge and negotiate power dynamics within institutions and social norms. This view highlights the dynamic nature of power and resistance that are mutually constitutive (Raby, 2005).

What the author wants to stress in his reasonings is that in modern societies, mechanisms of power often involve self-surveillance and self-regulation. Individuals monitor and regulate their own behaviour to align with societal norms, internalizing the expectations and standards set by power structures. This form of power is subtle yet deeply pervasive, operating through the internalization of norms and the regulation of behaviours from within the individual or society itself (Khan and MacEachen, 2021).

One concept that could be considered a central and fundamental element of this thesis is Foucault's idea of "*internal racism*" (Foucault, 2003a). This form of racism marks a significant departure from traditional ethnic or external forms of racism, which are typically

directed at different racial or ethnic groups. Instead, internal racism targets individuals within the same society, making distinctions based on norms of “*normality and abnormality*” (Sonu, 2022).

Internal racism starts from the legitimisation and association with medical and psychiatric fields, which historically shifted from focusing solely on treating illnesses to managing “*abnormalities*” (Sonu, 2022). Foucault takes the inspiration for his reasoning from the shift he saw in psychiatric practices, which passed from identifying abnormalities or predispositions to associating the abnormal with societal dangers. The response to these perceived dangers often involved extreme measures of social control (Foucault, 2003a), which can include incarceration and lost custody of children, as Aboriginals experienced over time and still today.

Foucault highlights that internal racism operates as a dispersed form of biopower or “*biopolitical strategy*” (Foucault, 2000), extending beyond individual bodies to encompass the population as a whole. Foucault explores the meaning behind biopower in his work “*The History of Sexuality*” and stresses the concept as exercised through various scales, instruments, and spaces, not replacing but coexisting with other forms of power. It is concerned with regulating the living conditions and biological characteristics of the population, emphasizing the distinction between those considered normal and those deemed deviant. The crucial element of internal racism is that this regulatory focus shifts racism from outward aggression against other ethnic groups to inward scrutiny and exclusion of certain members within society (Sonu, 2022).

Internal racism could be defined as a logic of exclusion that constantly defends societal norms by marginalizing and excluding those who do not conform. This process is deeply embedded in the governance of populations, utilizing disciplinary technologies to enforce conformity and maintain social order. It creates a system where the population is managed through the identification and exclusion of the abnormal, thereby perpetuating a hierarchical structure that justifies the marginalization of the resulting deviant individuals (Sonu, 2022).

Furthermore, Foucault's concept of internal racism highlights the role of knowledge production in this process (Foucault, 2003b). Racial categories and distinctions originate from the production of knowledge, working through various registers and processes to enforce meanings of normality. These constructions are tightly bound and operate across multiple levels, reinforcing racial consequences without necessarily making explicit

references to race (Sonu, 2022).

We can conclude that Foucault's internal racism is a sophisticated mechanism of social control that targets individuals within the same society based on their conformity to societal norms. It has various forms of legitimization, which can count on medical and psychiatric expertise too. Internal racism is embedded as a form of biopower and utilizes disciplinary technologies to manage and regulate the population. The “*fabric of society*” in which this form of racism is embedded perpetuates exclusion and marginalization through the enforcement of normality and the classification of deviants, who then could become discriminated against (Sonu, 2022).

Overall, these principles align completely with the historical marginalization and institutional racism experienced by Aboriginal communities. Foucauldian Discourse provides a framework for understanding how power relations shape discourse, knowledge, and social practices in all aspects of society. By focusing on the productive and relational aspects of power, the philosopher reveals how power operates through the creation and normalization of knowledge and behaviours, and how individuals and groups resist and negotiate these power dynamics in their everyday lives. Therefore, Foucault's concepts of discourse and power and internal racism can be considered a pivotal and fundamental core of my research, as they unveil the potential power structures behind the Voice referendum campaigns' symbolic and political argumentation choices.

## **2.3 Post-colonial theory**

Emerging in the 1980s, post-colonial theory was significantly influenced by scholars like Edward Said and Homi Bhabha who extended the critical tradition into the realm of colonial and postcolonial studies. Postcolonial theory analyses how Western colonialism maintained its hegemony through the control of knowledge and knowledge production, shaping ideologies that justify and perpetuate colonial dominance (Ryoo and McLauren, 2010). Therefore, looking at Australian society that was formed due to colonialism dynamics, this theory is fundamental to understanding the crucial mechanisms behind the Voice referendum.

One of the main authors can be considered Edward Said. His research and theories are considered the cornerstone of postcolonial studies, as they are crucial for understanding the ongoing influence of colonial narratives in contemporary global politics. In his work,

"*Orientalism*" (1978), Said depicts how the Western World constructs its knowledge of Eastern societies through the lens of preconceived notions that serve to justify their actions of colonialism and domination (Wilkins, 2017). At the base of his reasonings, the author constructs the argument of the dichotomy between "*Orient*" and "*Occident*" (Said, 1978). He contends that this divide is a construct that sustains the West in maintaining cultural and political superiority over the East. Drawing heavily on Michel Foucault's theory of discourse, Said illustrates how Western literature, art, and academic scholarship have historically produced and perpetuated stereotypes about the East, portraying it as exotic, backward, and uncivilized. The philosopher argues that these representations are not mere reflections of reality but are deeply entrenched in the power dynamics of colonialism, shaping perceptions and policies that reinforce Western dominance. Said's critique extends to the depiction of Eastern societies in Western media and academia, which often presents the colonised territories and populations in a static and monolithic manner, disregarding their diversity and dynamism (Wilkins, 2017).

The impact of "*Orientalism*" is vast and inspired further academics and authors to explore the relationships between colonisers and the colonised influencing notable theorists, like Homi Bhabha. While Bhabha builds on Said's ideas, he also critiques the rigid West-East dichotomy, emphasising the hybrid and fluid nature of colonial identities (Ryoo and McLauren, 2010). He constructs the idea of "*colonial identity*" (Bhabha, 1994), which is shaped through the interactions between coloniser and colonised but is not a unique and easily definable identity, but rather a heterogeneous and hybrid concept of identity that is shaped in social, political and economic interactions between the two groups. This "*hybridity*" has been seen as a form of cultural exchange that is not linear, but rather hierarchical and favours the colonizers. Thanks to hegemonic discourse, "*subalterns do have the agency to contest dominant structures, but the colonial subject has no ability to fully escape the colonial script*" (Wilkins, 2017). This process is denominated by the author as "*mimicry*" and essentially brings the subaltern subjects to mimic the colonialist norms, although this form of control is considered incomplete and is not able to take the other cultures in a complete state of subjugation (Wilkins, 2017).

Said's work *Orientalism* and Bhabha's notion of colonial identity could not be the same without the inspiration of anti-colonial and nationalist thinkers like Frantz Fanon and Albert Memmi, whose writings delve into the concept of "*othering*" (Nair, 2017). For instance, Fanon illustrates how race influences the interactions between the coloniser and

the colonised, depicting how individuals under colonial rule often internalised beliefs of racial difference, viewing themselves as inferior to white Europeans. Fanon elaborates that the “*black man*” is made to perceive himself as inferior to “*white colonisers*” through the psychological mechanisms of colonisation, which include the imposition of the coloniser’s language, culture, religion, and educational systems. These mechanisms of imposition lead the colonised to believe in their own cultural inferiority. Fanon and Memmi try to find an explanation of colonialism dynamics in this process of internalisation, which facilitated the colonisers' ability to justify and sustain their dominance (Nair, 2017).

After analysing the various concepts and authors that have created and shaped postcolonial theory, we can have a better understanding of the deep and subtle dynamics of colonialism. For centuries, its consequences brought the Indigenous communities to question and disrupt their traditions and relationships, with tragic implications that still affect today their history, culture and identity. Therefore, not only Indigenous have to acknowledge these results, but also the colonisers themselves and recognize their role in this disruptive system.

After analysing the various concepts and authors that have created and shaped post-colonial theory, we can have a better understanding of the deep and subtle dynamics of colonialism. For centuries, its consequences have led Indigenous communities to question and disrupt their traditions and relationships, with tragic implications that still affect their history, culture, and identity today. Compared to post-colonial theory, de-colonization theory focuses on the active process of dismantling colonial power structures and returning autonomy to colonized peoples. Therefore, not only do Indigenous people need to acknowledge these results, but the colonizers themselves must also recognize their role in this disruptive system (Bhambra, 2014). While de-colonization theory emphasizes the practical steps and struggles involved in achieving independence, this thesis will consider post-colonial theory as one of its main pillars, as it concerns itself more with the ongoing effects and narratives that persist after formal colonial rule has ended.

## **2.4 Critical Race Theory**

Critical Race Theory is a robust and dynamic framework grounded in critical theory that interrogates the pervasive impact of race and racism on social structures. The main authors and founders of CRT are Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, Cheryl Harris, Charles R. Lawrence III, Mari Matsuda, and Patricia J. Williams



(Ansell, 2008). At its core, CRT asserts that racism is endemic and deeply ingrained in the fabric of society, rather than an aberration or the result of individual prejudice. This theory challenges the conventional notions of meritocracy, objectivity, and colour blindness, arguing that these concepts are often employed to mask and perpetuate systemic inequalities (Lynn and Adams, 2002).

The notion that is considered one of the main pillars of CRT is intersectionality. The definition of this concept asserts that race and racism intersect with other forms of social stratification, such as class, gender, and sexuality, to produce complex and compounded forms of disadvantage. Kimberlé Crenshaw is the pioneer author of intersectionality. She drew attention to how intersectionality affects the lived experiences of individuals that are shaped by multiple, overlapping systems of oppression, therefore indicating that some communities are more discriminated against than others (Crenshaw, 1995). Intersectionality provides a framework for analysing how various social identities interact to create unique modes of discrimination and privilege. It emphasizes that social inequalities are not experienced in isolation but are interconnected and must be examined in relation to one another. This concept is crucial for my research as it highlights the multifaceted nature of discrimination, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of how power operates within different contexts and how some categories are more affected than others in dealing with their discriminated and racialised representation of identity.

Furthermore, CRT emphasizes the socially constructed nature of race, understanding it as a product of social, economic, and political forces rather than a biological fact (Lynn and Adams, 2002). Another key concept in CRT is the critique of liberalism and its reliance on incremental change. CRT scholars argue that the legal reforms advocated by traditional civil rights approaches are insufficient to address the deeply embedded nature of racial inequality. Instead, CRT calls for more radical, structural changes that confront the root causes of racism (Delgado and Stefancic, 2023).

Lastly, it is important to underline that CRT utilizes storytelling and counter-narratives as powerful tools to challenge the dominant discourse. By centring on the voices and experiences of marginalized groups, CRT exposes the limitations of mainstream narratives that often ignore or distort the realities of racial oppression (Lynn and Adams, 2002). These approaches that focus on marginalised and discriminated communities, not only can validate the knowledge and experiences of this category, in the case of this thesis the Aboriginals, but also serve to disrupt the status quo and inspire action for social justice.

### **3. Existing research**

#### **3.1 Neo-colonialism and institutional racism in Australia**

Existing literature consistently highlights how historical and systemic injustices have perpetuated socio-economic inequalities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, underlining the importance of examining this crucial phenomenon.

In this process, it is essential to consider the enduring impacts of neo-colonialism and institutional racism. In particular, the criminal justice system has been identified as one of the significant areas where these disparities manifest (Cunneen, 2020).

Research shows that framing contemporary policing practices within the neo-colonial context of Australia today can have as a result a detailed analysis of the effects on Aboriginal communities.

Research highlights how the neo-colonial context persists in Australia (Hart, 2018), emphasizing how different practices in the socio-economic area make it still evident that the impacts of colonialism on Aboriginals are still enduring.

Especially, modern policing practices are a continuation of colonial domination, in their form and perpetuation. Cunneen (2020) argues that these practices systematically exclude Indigenous people from socio-economic participation, thus maintaining their marginalized status. The data details the over-representation of Indigenous people, particularly youth, in the criminal justice system, and the author directly attributes this phenomenon to discriminatory policing and judicial practices.

The author provides empirical evidence showing significant disparities in arrest, sentencing, and incarceration rates, underscoring how these systemic biases disrupt Indigenous communities and hinder socio-economic progress. Moreover, it has been proven that the historical and contemporary roles of police forces have been perceived and portrayed as enforcers of state control rather than protectors of public safety within Indigenous communities.

Enforcement measures and restriction of liberty are key elements of the exercise of power towards Indigenous and minorities, as they are areas where generally people are overlooked and naturally judged with not only racism and classism but also a general sense of systemic bias and prejudice that perpetuate socio-economic inequalities. This reality is further compounded by policies and practices that prioritize punitive measures over rehabilitative or supportive interventions. These measures reinforce the exclusion and

marginalization of Indigenous communities, perpetuating a cycle of disadvantage that is deeply rooted in the neo-colonial and racist structures of the Australian state (Blagg et al., 2005).

The health sector is another crucial area where the effects of neo-colonialism and institutional racism manifest clearly, leading to profound and multifaceted disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Neo-colonialism influences health through social and structural determinants, such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of access to essential resources. Aboriginal communities face higher rates of poverty and unemployment, which directly correlate with poorer health outcomes. If compared with the data of non-Indigenous Australians, Aboriginal socio-economic conditions contribute to chronic diseases, malnutrition, and highly reduced life (Browne et al., 2005).

Additionally, mental health among Aboriginal people is significantly affected by the ongoing impacts of neo-colonialism. Various research shows that the legacy of colonization, including forced removal from lands and residential schools, has left deep psychological scars that continue to affect successive generations (Jorm, 2012; Ketheesan et al., 2020; Parker and Milroy, 2014). Contemporary experiences of systemic racism and social exclusion further contribute to high rates of mental health issues. The marginalization of Aboriginal people results in social isolation and a lack of social support, critical factors for mental well-being. Addressing these mental health disparities requires culturally appropriate services, community-based support systems, and policies that address the root causes of social and economic inequalities (Browne et al., 2005).

These countless disparities are evident across various sectors and institutions, and what is described now can be considered only a limited analysis of the entire situation. Addressing the impacts of neo-colonialism and institutional racism requires a comprehensive approach that advocates for transformative and profound change, as envisioned by many activists and Indigenous rights advocates during the Voice referendum.

### **3.2 International Indigenous rights in the neoliberal era**

The interplay between neoliberalism and Indigenous rights has become a pivotal area of study within the broader discourse of global human rights. One of the main elements of socio-economic transformation across the globe could be considered “neoliberalism,” as it

is characterized by market-driven policies in every aspect of society, progressively reducing the role of state intervention (Howard-Wagner et al., 2018). These transformations have not only reshaped economies but also had profound implications for social and political structures, including the recognition and exercise of Indigenous rights.

The neoliberal era has profoundly influenced the recognition and exercise of Indigenous rights, presenting a paradox of opportunities and constraints. At the heart of neoliberalism is a shift in how states recognize Indigenous peoples, often diminishing state support while simultaneously fostering "*recognition from below*" due to increased economic independence (Singh, 2014). This dual dynamic allows Indigenous communities to assert self-recognition and self-determination independent of state structures, navigating a landscape where traditional state-centric support systems are being eroded (Howard-Wagner et al., 2018).

It is fundamental to underline that economic integration and privatization are central pillars of neoliberal policies. These factors consequently urge Indigenous peoples into the global market, leading them to face the consequences of these liberal policies without state protection. For instance, in Canada, neoliberal reforms have encouraged the privatization of resources and services, compelling Indigenous communities to engage economically as a means of exercising their rights. This market-based approach, however, is fraught with conflict, particularly over resource extraction and its environmental repercussions (McKeen and Porter, 2003). The privatization of Indigenous lands and resources pits economic interests against the preservation of traditional ways of life, creating a complex balancing act for Indigenous communities (Howard-Wagner et al., 2018). Moreover, privatization leads to dispossession and territorial reorganization of Indigenous people. Aboriginal Australians are an unfortunate example of the results of land privatization and dispossession facilitated by neoliberal entrepreneurial principles prioritizing profit over territorial preservation (Moreton-Robinson, 2020).

In some Australian regions, neoliberal policies have led to a stark erosion of Indigenous rights. The abolition of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) in 2005 increased state intervention. Created in 1990, the Commission aimed to involve the First People community in government policy formulation. Initially successful in delivering better services and programs, a 2003 report recommended reforms for greater direct control by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, particularly at the regional level (Hannaford et al., 2003). This report was interpreted as a pretext to abolish the

Commission without creating an alternative, highlighting the contradictory nature of neoliberal governance: while professing to enhance Indigenous autonomy, these measures often result in greater state control and reduced self-determination (Howard-Wagner et al., 2018).

The impact of neoliberalism on Indigenous communities varies widely based on geography, history, and local circumstances. Some communities have successfully navigated these changes, leveraging new economic opportunities to their advantage. For example, the Māori in New Zealand have achieved significant economic integration through state neoliberal reforms. A case study on Māori commercial fisheries shows that neoliberal market reforms have made the traditional industry successful and advantageous for the Indigenous (O’Sullivan, 2018).

However, other Indigenous communities have faced significant adverse effects, including heightened state intervention and a loss of traditional autonomy (Howard-Wagner et al., 2018), as seen with Aboriginal Australians. This variability underscores the complexity of neoliberalism’s effects on Indigenous rights.

Despite these challenges, the neoliberal era has also seen formal international recognition of Indigenous rights, notably through the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). This international framework seeks to uphold the rights and dignities of Indigenous peoples globally. However, its implementation often aligns with neoliberal governance, emphasizing economic self-determination within a market framework over traditional ways of Indigenous life. Therefore, Indigenous communities continue to navigate this complex dichotomy, seeking to balance economic opportunities with the preservation of their cultural and social autonomy (Howard-Wagner et al., 2018).

### **3.3 Discourse Surrounding Indigenous Identity**

The discourse surrounding Indigenous identity in contemporary Australia is deeply embedded within a complex framework of historical, social, and political narratives that perpetuate a deficit model of representation (Aldrich et al., 2007, Fforde et al., 2013, Gorringe et al., 2011). This deficit discourse is a pervasive mode of language that consistently frames Aboriginal identity within a narrative of deficiency and inadequacy. This way of thinking is intertwined with the notion of “*authenticity*” (Gorringe et al., 2011,

Maddison, 2013) which is rooted in colonial constructs and continues to influence both non-Indigenous and Indigenous perspectives on Aboriginality. The authenticity debate is particularly destructive, as it dictates who is deemed a “*real Aboriginal person*” based on stereotypical and externally imposed criteria, often marginalising those who do not conform to these imposed identities (Fforde et al., 2013).

This deficit discourse does not exist in isolation but is part of a broader race paradigm that continues to shape representations of Aboriginality. The “*Race Paradigm*” (Fforde et al., 2013), with its roots in colonial and racial theories, sustains outdated views that frame Aboriginal people through a lens of biological determinism and racial purity. These views have historically positioned Aboriginality as a “problem to be solved” (Dodson, 1994), rather than a complex and dynamic identity. The persistence of these constructs in contemporary discourse means that Aboriginal identity is often portrayed in terms of what it lacks compared to a Eurocentric norm, thereby reinforcing negative stereotypes and perpetuating social and institutional racism.

Media and policy representations play a significant role in maintaining and disseminating this deficit discourse. In the case study of Lovell (2012), he analyses various policies dedicated to Aboriginal communities and the way they framed and emphasized the discourse around the Aboriginal communities that were targeted by the policy.

*“I develop an understanding of the discursive and rhetorical context in which these interventionist and authoritarian strategies came to be seen as essential to the protection of Aboriginal wellbeing” (Lovell, 2012).*

These representations not only shape public perception but also influence policy outcomes, often leading to solutions that fail to address the underlying issues and instead perpetuate the cycle of disadvantage. As noted by Fforde et al. (2013), such policies and representations exhibit characteristics of what Foucault termed a “*discursive formation*” where specific ways of thinking are reinforced across various sites of representation, policy, and expression. The impact of discourse formation on Aboriginals is not only influencing and challenging the possible success in terms of policies (Sullivan, 2011) but also impacting the vision that Aboriginals have of themselves and their relation to the state (Fforde et al., 2013).

The impact of deficit discourse extends beyond external perceptions and impacts the internal dynamics of Indigenous communities, manifesting in behaviours such as “*lateral violence*” (Fforde et al., 2018, Gorringe et al., 2011). Lateral violence refers to the

internalisation and enactment of oppressive behaviours by marginalised groups, directed towards peers that are part directly of the community or group. This phenomenon is particularly evident in the policing of “*authenticity*” within Aboriginal communities, where individuals may face accusations of not being “*black enough*” from both non-Indigenous and Indigenous people. Such internalised oppression stresses and creates further divisions within communities, with the consequence of further undermining collective efforts towards empowerment and self-determination (Moreton-Robinson, 2021).

Research indicates that the perpetuation of negative stereotypes through deficit discourse has tangible adverse effects on outcomes for Indigenous peoples, particularly in health and education. Negative stereotypes contribute to disengagement from mainstream systems and poorer performance, as individuals internalize the low expectations set by society. Armstrong et al. (2012) and Sarra (2011) have highlighted the need for educational programs that integrate cultural strengths and challenge deficit narratives, demonstrating that strength-based approaches can lead to better outcomes and empowerment for Aboriginal students.

After analysing these crucial pieces of research, we can conclude that the discourse surrounding Indigenous identity in Australia is marked by a persistent and damaging deficit model that frames Aboriginality in terms of deficiency and lack. This discourse is deeply rooted in colonial constructs of race and authenticity, and still today is perpetuated through media, and policy, and transmitted even in internal community dynamics. Therefore, there is a critical need to shift from deficit-based narratives to strength-based approaches that recognize and build upon the positive aspects of Indigenous cultures, in order to move towards a more equitable and empowering representation of Aboriginal identity.

### **3.4 The discourse surrounding Indigenous Rights Recognition and Reconciliation**

After a long period of difficult relations between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous, the discourse surrounding Indigenous rights recognition and reconciliation is a multifaceted and deeply complex issue that engages various perspectives and dynamics.

From an official and institutional context, reconciliation is defined as a series of policies of “*assimilation, integration, and self-determination*” (BurrIDGE, 2009). From this definition, the discourse surrounding the interpretations of reconciliation varies widely,

ranging from the simple creation of a peaceful and equal coexistence to a comprehensive vision of healing and forgiveness. Moreover, it is crucial to underline that Aboriginal communities and white Australians have different perspectives on the topic, shaped by the different experiences that the two different groups faced based on political ideologies and personal beliefs (Burridge, 2009).

In her study on the rhetoric and discourse behind reconciliation, Burridge (2009) discovers that the fundamental term is seen with different perspectives by three different and distinguished categories in Australian society.

In her analysis of formal speeches, the Aboriginals, especially activist leaders, called and defined reconciliation mainly with terms such as “*hard*”, “*genuine*”, “*true*”, “*compensation*” and “*land/sea rights*”, presenting a discourse that pretends that reconciliation is based on self-determination and new treaty rights for Aboriginals.

Facing the mainstream Australians and the general population, which is mainly white-based, the recurrent discourse connected to reconciliation is characterized by a “*symbolic approach*”, showing superficial rhetoric on the topic.

Lastly, the author finds that the discourse that more conservative policymakers and politicians associate with reconciliation is directly represented by a normative discourse connected to assimilation and equality policy (Pratt et al., 2000). The main aim that emerges from the speeches of politicians is to conform and homologise Aboriginals with the general mainstream culture and lifestyle. This type of assimilation discourse behind reconciliation directly reflects the resulting policy dedicated to the topic, creating a general feeling of disillusionment and frustration among the First People community.

*“Aboriginal people are still forced to hold much of their contact history with white people locked away inside of themselves. The best parallel which describes that hidden history is to say it that it has been trapped like a bunch of angry hornets inside a Pandora’s box.*

*There is a big lock on the outside of this box that white people have slapped a label on called “Reconciliation”.* (Wright, 1997)

We can discover further interpretations of the reconciliation discourse in the work of Short (2003). He discusses different models of reconciliation, highlighting the limitations of approaches that do not fully address the unique status and rights of Indigenous peoples.

He especially analysed the Indigenous right recognition discourse in the context of sovereignty. He starts the research from an episode that happened in 1999, where some Indigenous groups created the group “*Sovereign Union of Aboriginal Peoples of Australia*”.



The Union aimed to reject the authority of the Australian state, called the “*settler state*”, and demanded recognition of their unceded sovereignty as First People of Australia. They started to advocate for the need for nation-to-nation negotiations and demanded treaties that respected their status as sovereign entities. This episode challenged the prevailing national narratives and underscored a profound need for new frameworks that respect Indigenous autonomy and governance (Short, 2003).

From the previous section, we can recall the discourse around authenticity and whiteness as also critical factors that undermine and affect the reconciliation and right recognition discourse. Understanding and addressing the privileges associated with whiteness is crucial for meaningful anti-racism efforts. In Australia, it is well known that being identified as white confers unearned material and psychological privileges that are often invisible to the dominant group. These privileges perpetuate unequal power distributions and hinder genuine reconciliation (Green and Sonn, 2005).

This type of awareness reveals the importance of emphasising the necessity of engaging with Indigenous knowledge as part of further reconciliation negotiations and treaties with First People. Recognising that reconciliation requires more than superficial acknowledgements from a white perspective, demands a fundamental rethinking of power dynamics and historical narratives (Green and Sonn, 2005).

To conclude from an international point of view, the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples marked a significant milestone. Australia can take as a model how some liberal states, such as New Zealand, have overcomplicated with international treaties, integrating Indigenous rights into their national identities and legal systems (Byrd and Heyer, 2008). This phenomenon reconfigures traditional notions of state sovereignty and expands the discourse on human rights to more comprehensively include Indigenous perspectives into the normative state discourse, reflecting genuine engagement, systemic change, and the recognition of First People's sovereignty and knowledge.

Building upon this research, the thesis will undertake a Critical Discourse Analysis focusing on the role of the “Yes” and “No” campaigns in shaping the discourse surrounding the Aboriginals’ identity and reconciliation in the context of the Voice Referendum.

## 4. Methodology

This thesis will draw its conclusions based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and specifically will employ its research based on the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA).

CDA is a research paradigm within critical theory that studies discourse to uncover how language functions as a social practice. This method emerged in 1990 and merges linguistic analysis with a critique of social structures, focusing on how language perpetuates power dynamics and ideologies (Fairclough, 2013). The key feature of this approach is that by analysing semiotic data systematically and reproducibly, CDA has created a method that aims to demystify ideologies and expose power relations within societal contexts (Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

One of the key authors of this method, Teun van Dijk (2009) specifies that CDA operates on the premise that social and language practices are mutually constitutive. This means that while social practices shape language use, language also influences social practices, thereby reinforcing or challenging societal power structures. As a result, researchers in CDA investigate how language contributes to the maintenance and transformation of social inequalities in societies through discourse, making the Voice Referendum and representation of Aboriginals' identity an eligible source of study for the method.

It is fundamental to take into consideration that this thesis will draw its analysis of the research question using the Discourse-Historical Approach, developed by scholars such as Ruth Wodak, Micheal Meyer and Martin Reisigl. This critical approach is a specific method within CDA that integrates detailed historical analysis with discourse studies. DHA examines how language use contributes to social power dynamics, inequalities, and ideological constructions, with the particular contribution of contextualizing discourse historically (Forchtner, 2020).

The key authors of this methodology, Wodak and Meyer characterise DHA as the "*most linguistically oriented*" (Wodak and Meyer, 2009) approach in discourse analysis, focusing on the intersection of language, history, and social context. This method aims to connect fields of action (Wodak, 2006), genres, discourses, and texts to understand how they interact and influence each other (Wodak & Meyer, 2009), making this approach an interdisciplinary toolkit for analysing diverse forms of campaign materials of this thesis.

In order to understand DHA, it is crucial to draw some theoretical considerations regarding Teun van Dijk's socio-cognitive theory and approach. DHA has its basis founded on van Dijk's view of discourse as a structured form of knowledge and memory of social practice, making this concept the base of his socio-cognitive approach (van Dijk, 1998). The essential elements that Wodak and Meyer add to van Dijk's theoretical view are a strong emphasis on the historical context and a more subtle focus on social sciences (Wodak and Meyer, 2009).

This analytical approach emphasizes the importance of understanding context and historical background, situating discourse within its broader social and historical framework to reveal its full meaning and implications. It is particularly well-suited for analysing historical injustices and colonialist societies (Wodak, 2002), which continue to reflect their past in contemporary societies. Consequently, after reading the in-depth historical background research at the beginning of this thesis, we can understand that Australia is a prime and well-suited example of this context and further justify the decision of this method of analysis for the following research.

To continue, a crucial objective of DHA is that it is particularly suited for analysing political discourse, as it seeks to develop conceptual frameworks for understanding political narratives (Forchtner, 2020). Therefore, in the thesis context that specifically concerns referendum campaigns on Indigenous rights, DHA provides a comprehensive framework to examine how political discourses are constructed and propagated, and how they shape and are shaped by historical and social contexts. The analysis of such campaigns involves especially understanding how political actors use language to construct identities, justify positions, and generate narratives around Indigenous.

It is crucial to underline that regarding the theoretical concept of Identity construction, DHA can be considered an essential approach to investigating how it is constructed through discourse. This is particularly relevant in political discourse, where identity construction plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and policy. As various authors in this field mention, discourse shapes social identities and relationships, influencing how groups and individuals are perceived and how they perceive themselves (Wodak and Meyer, 2009). As a result, the thesis takes into consideration as one of its main pillars, the concept that Aboriginal identity representation is deeply shaped and influenced by political discourse, that is rooted in a colonialist perspective.

Furthermore, my methodology is deeply rooted in a post-colonialist perspective,

specifically drawing from Post-Colonial Critical Discourse Analysis (PCCDA). This method is instrumental in examining the intersections of language, power, and colonial history. It provides insights into how discourses shape and reflect post-colonial realities, offering tools to critique and transform these narratives (Williams and Chrisman, 2015). A key element of this perspective, shared with DHA, is the understanding of identity formation as multifaceted and dynamic in post-colonialist contexts. Scholars like Edward Said and Homi K. Bhabha illustrate how their identities and contributions to the field are influenced by their geographical and cultural transitions (Said, 1978; Bhabha, 1994), as further specified in the theoretical framework of this thesis.

Additionally, it aligns with DHA in emphasizing the vital concept of historical contextualization. This method interprets the historical context of colonialism and its enduring impact on modern societies, concentrating on deconstructing and challenging the representations and assumptions in texts that uphold colonial and post-colonial power dynamics (Williams and Chrisman, 2015). This approach provides valuable insights, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of my thesis.

The aim of the DHA in this thesis is to engage with the discursive strategies enlisted by the authors Reisigl and Wodak (2009) by choosing the crucial concepts, words, themes, signs and images to look for recurring narratives in the campaign materials. The research must follow several critical steps and methodologies that ensure a thorough examination of discourse. The DHA is predicated on answering essential questions that guide the analysis and uncover the nuances in discourse, that Reisigl and Wodak summarize in these five steps:

- “1. How are persons, objects, phenomena/events, processes and actions named and referred to linguistically?*
- 2. What characteristics, qualities and features are attributed to social actors, objects, phenomena/events and processes?*
- 3. What arguments are employed in the discourse in question?*
- 4. From what perspective are these nominations, attributions and arguments expressed?*
- 5. Are the respective utterances articulated overtly; are they intensified or mitigated?”*

(Reisigl and Wodak, 2009, p.93)

From these orientated questions, we can delve into the analysis of precise structure of the analysis of this approach, starting with the first step that involves examining *nominations*, which refer to the linguistic tools used to name and categorize social actors, events, and processes. By analysing who or what is named and how they are labelled,

researchers can understand the inclusion or exclusion of certain actors and the implications of these choices (Reisigl and Wodak, 2009). Therefore, the analysis of nominations helps identify the primary subjects of the discourse and the roles they are assigned, thereby setting the stage for further investigation.

Following *nominations*, the methodology delves into *predications*, which involve attributing qualities, characteristics, or actions to the named actors. Predications are crucial as they shape the audience's perception of these actors by attaching specific attributes to them. As a result, the predications not only define the actors but also establish a framework within which their actions and motivations are interpreted.

The next component is named *argumentation* and involves examining the arguments put forth in the discourse and the strategies used to persuade the audience. Argumentation analysis focuses on identifying the premises and conclusions of arguments, the logical structures employed, and the use of rhetorical devices such as *topoi* (commonplaces) and fallacies. As a consequence, the researcher must analyse how arguments are constructed to support specific claims or positions and how they seek to establish credibility and legitimacy.

*Perspectivization* is another critical element, referring to the ways in which speakers or writers position themselves and their audience within the discourse. This involves analysing how different perspectives are presented, the degree of involvement or distance expressed, and the ideological stances implied. Perspectivization reveals the subjectivity of the discourse and the various standpoints from which issues are approached. For instance, to understand this step we can depict an example from the Reisigl and Wodak (2009) case study described in their paper. They underline how a text about political campaigns on clean energies, on one side, might adopt a neoliberal perspective emphasizing economic growth, and on the other side, an environmentalist perspective focusing on ecological preservation. By examining *perspectivization*, researchers can uncover the underlying worldviews and interests that shape the discourse.

Lastly, the DHA considers *mitigations and intensifications*, which are strategies used to modify the force or intensity of statements. On one hand, *mitigation* involves downplaying or softening claims, often to reduce potential backlash or opposition, on the other hand, *intensification* emphasizes or strengthens claims to underscore their importance or urgency. These strategies affect how the audience perceives the seriousness or credibility of the discourse. By analysing these strategies, researchers can understand the rhetorical nuances and persuasive tactics employed in the discourse.

In sum, the DHA provides a structured approach to discourse analysis by addressing essential questions, examining *nominations*, *predications*, *argumentations*, *perspectivizations*, and the use of *mitigation and intensification* strategies. This comprehensive methodology allows researchers to uncover the complex layers of meaning and power relations embedded in discourse, providing a deeper understanding of how social issues are constructed and contested. By meticulously following these steps, as delineated by Reisigl and Wodak, this thesis can produce detailed and insightful analyses that contribute to the field of critical discourse studies.

Strategy	Objectives	Devices
nomination	discursive construction of social actors, objects/phenomena/ events and processes/ actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• membership categorization devices, deictics, anthroponyms, etc.</li> <li>• tropes such as metaphors, metonymies and synecdoches (<i>pars pro toto</i>, <i>totum pro parte</i>)</li> <li>• verbs and nouns used to denote processes and actions, etc.</li> </ul>
predication	discursive qualification of social actors, objects, phenomena, events/ processes and actions (more or less positively or negatively)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• stereotypical, evaluative attributions of negative or positive traits (e.g. in the form of adjectives, appositions, prepositional phrases, relative clauses, conjunctive clauses, infinitive clauses and participial clauses or groups)</li> <li>• explicit predicates or predicative nouns/adjectives/pronouns</li> <li>• collocations</li> <li>• explicit comparisons, similes, metaphors and other rhetorical figures (including metonymies, hyperboles, litotes, euphemisms)</li> <li>• allusions, evocations, and presuppositions/implicatures, etc.</li> </ul>
argumentation	justification and questioning of claims of truth and normative rightness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• topoi (formal or more content-related)</li> <li>• fallacies</li> </ul>
perspectivization, framing or discourse representation	positioning speaker's or writer's point of view and expressing involvement or distance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• deictics</li> <li>• direct, indirect or free indirect speech</li> <li>• quotation marks, discourse markers/ particles</li> <li>• metaphors</li> <li>• animating prosody, etc.</li> </ul>
intensification, mitigation	modifying (intensifying or mitigating) the illocutionary force and thus the epistemic or deontic status of utterances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• diminutives or augmentatives</li> <li>• (modal) particles, tag questions, subjunctive, hesitations, vague expressions, etc.</li> <li>• hyperboles, litotes</li> <li>• indirect speech acts (e.g. question instead of assertion)</li> <li>• verbs of saying, feeling, thinking, etc.</li> </ul>

Table from Wodak and Reisigl (2017, p. 95).

After explaining the methodology behind the overall thesis research, we can understand that is underpinned by a robust theoretical framework of critical tools that facilitate a thorough examination of discourse and its connection to socio-political structures and hegemonic narratives in Australia.

Lastly, this thesis will not seek to provide and prove any particular hypothesis as it aims to be an explanatory and interpretative research using DHA. Instead, the focus lies in examining the discourse surrounding the “Yes” and “No” campaigns and their role in constructing a narrative that could be racialized and discriminatory. The study aims to critically assess how discourse and political parties contribute to shaping the identity representation of Indigenous peoples in contemporary Australia, contributing to the broader goals of critical discourse analysis.

## 5. Data Selection

### 5.1 Data Selection Choice

The thesis will analyse the referendum booklet material from the “Yes” campaign called “Yes23” and the “No” campaign, referred to as the “*Fair Australia*” campaign, that was delivered by post to the Australian population. In Critical Discourse Analysis, a booklet is considered a written source, presenting insightful and crucial texts for analysing political discourse, precisely selected by the campaigns to depict a specific discourse and deliver a clear message.

The “Yes23” campaign, formerly started by the collective “*From the Heart*”, referring to the Uluru Statement from the Heart, was launched in February 2023 (Allam and Butler, 2023). For the referendum, this campaign transformed into the primary national programme for background and information about the referendum and the Yes movement (AMFVIC, 2023). The campaign, formed by the group “*Australians for Indigenous Constitutional Recognition*”, is co-chaired by Danny Gilbert, director of the Business Council of Australia, and Aboriginal filmmaker Rachel Perkins. Prominent board members include Noel Pearson, Tony Nutt, former principal adviser to Prime Minister John Howard, and author and Indigenous Maritime Union of Australia official Thomas Mayo (Yes23, 2023). The Yes23 campaign is supported by key groups advocating for Indigenous rights, such as The Uluru Dialogue and Uphold and Recognise (Allam and Butler, 2023).

The No campaign, created by the conservative lobby group “*Advance Australia*” and named “*Fair Australia*”, firstly aimed to target a younger demographic with a more “progressive no” vote. Advance Australia has been funded by millionaires such as Jet Courier's founder Brett Ralph, Kennards Self Storage head Sam Kennard, building materials scion Rodney O'Neil, health company chief Marcus Blackmore, and fund manager Simon Fenwick (Crowe, 2023). The faces and political leaders of the No campaign are the Indigenous Australian senators Warren Mundine and Jacinta Nampijinpa Price, the latter being one of the most influential figures of the initiative and No movement.

The Fair Australia campaign launched in January 2023 under the name “*The Voice No Case Committee*” but rebranded in February when Price merged the group “*Recognise a Better Way*” with the Committee to form and lead “*Fair Australia*” (Morse and Bouchier, 2023). The campaign also included the “*Black Sovereign Movement*” of Indigenous independent politician Lidia Thorpe (Canales, 2023).



The research analysis of this thesis is based on the nationally distributed booklet, an official government publication provided to all voters by national post. In Australia, the booklet distribution to every household is a tradition for every referendum, as voting is mandatory, and all citizens have the right to be informed by the state itself. The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) has composed the pamphlet in two main parts: one dedicated to the parties' arguments and one technical part dedicated to the voting procedure. The two campaigns had the opportunity to write an easily comparable document for the voters formed by two 2000-word essays detailing the parties' proposals. Before the national distribution, the essays had to be approved by parliamentarians and Yes and No supporters.

Moreover, one crucial element is that the content of the parties' pamphlets is not fact-checked and therefore not filtered by the government. Consequently, the voters are warned of the possibility of misinformation content (McHugh, 2023). Given its national distribution and authenticity, the booklet is a key document that likely influenced a broad audience, making it essential for understanding the public information landscape on Indigenous identity.

Lastly, these sources are widely accessible through the Internet and national distribution and allow for an in-depth analysis of the complex and multifaceted identity construction of Aboriginals. The aim is to show how the major parties involved in the referendum construct Indigenous identity and how this is influenced and intertwined with public ideas and the national colonial discourse in Australia.

## **5.2 Data Selection Process**

For this thesis, the materials selection process employs a qualitative approach to ensure a representative sample. The goal is to reconstruct the marginalized identities of Indigenous people that may not be fully represented in the campaign discourse. Consequently, a qualitative approach is fundamental for portraying study results that highlight specific discourse elements.

Focusing on content's representativeness and relevance ensures methodological rigour. The selected source allows for an in-depth analysis of the language, strategies, public discourse and rhetorical strategies employed in the discourse.

Using an institutional and government-approved source helps to enhance the academic integrity of this thesis. It demonstrates that the research is grounded in officially

accepted data and ensures that the information is referencing directly the campaign's objectives.

Given the manual nature of the discourse analysis, a focused selection of data is practical and manageable. The chosen booklet allows for a detailed and comprehensive analysis without overwhelming the research with excessive materials. Despite the limited number of sources, the selection is detailed and comprehensive in terms of covering the major perspectives and official information related to the referendum. This balance ensures that the study captures the essential elements of the public discourse.

Additionally, throughout this thesis, I will directly refer to the content of the booklet of the Voice referendum. All page numbers enlisted refer to this document directly unless otherwise stated.

In summary, the selection of the nationally distributed booklet is justified based on its representativeness, relevance, and ability to provide a balanced and comprehensive view of the discourse surrounding the Voice Referendum. Nonetheless, it is crucial to note that this thesis does not aim to encompass all diverse perspectives on the referendum but rather to achieve methodological rigour through widely distributed materials, drawing valuable qualitative findings on the topic.

## 6. Analysis and Results

### 6.1 Nominations

In the Reisigl and Wodak (2009) Historical-Discourse Analysis approach, there is the need to follow a precise structure for the analysis and research of the key elements. The first discourse strategy that is described by the authors is the nomination strategy. It refers to how persons, objects, phenomena/events, processes, and actions related to Indigenous identity are referred to linguistically (Reisigl and Wodak, 2009), and the thesis will delve into the specific language used to highlight and characterize these elements. The main aim of this section is to identify the terms, phrases and narratives employed to construct the representation of Indigenous identity from both the Yes and No campaign sections of the booklet.

Firstly, I will delve into the analysis of the Yes case. Then the thesis will proceed to analyse the No case, always with a focus on understanding the nominations connected to how Aboriginals are referred to, as the booklet also takes into consideration other actors, such as politicians, the general Australian population, the Australian constitution and the government and parliament. Still, for this analysis, they will be relevant only in connection to the representation of Indigenous identity context.

As a starting point, in the Yes campaign booklet, Indigenous Australians are the most mentioned social actors and are more frequently referred to as the "*First Peoples of Australia*" (P.12) and "*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*" (P.12). From a nomination strategy point of view, these terms underscore the primacy and historical significance of Indigenous, as they aim to acknowledge and empower their history. Additionally, terms like "*Indigenous Australians*" (P.13) and "*Indigenous communities*" (P.12) are used to emphasise their collective identity and the importance of their inclusion in the constitutional framework. The campaign also includes personal endorsements from notable Indigenous figures such as Senator Patrick Dodson, Johnathan Thurston, and Eddie Betts. All these figures are relevant to Indigenous rights advocates, due to their Aboriginal origins, but also their relevance in projects connected to reconciliation. The strategy behind naming these individuals is to leverage their credibility and respect within the community and Australian population, as in Australia these figures are well-known and respected, as politicians or renowned athletes.

Continuing with the strategies employed in the nominations of the campaign that

concern Indigenous identity, it is crucial to focus on how the referendum is mentioned and described, as it is the key object presented in the Yes campaign. The nominations of the referendum really frequently called the "*Voice in the Constitution*" (P. 15) or referred to as a "*committee of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*" (P.11) and "*give people a say on issues that affect them*" (P.16) emphasizing its representative nature for the Indigenous and their future role in it. The Voice is also described as a "*vehicle for practical change*" (P. 13) positioning it as an essential instrument for addressing the needs and rights of Indigenous Australians. These ways of interpreting the nomination of the referendum associate it as a vital way to ensure that the Indigenous identity is presented in the institutions of the country.

Another object that is highlighted in the booklet campaign is the Aboriginal culture which is nominated as "*65,000 years of history*" (P. 13) and "*the world's oldest living cultures*" (P. 13). We can interpret this use to highlight the rich cultural heritage of Indigenous peoples. From a post-colonialist perspective, these narratives are fundamental to understanding that the campaign acknowledges the importance of the rich Indigenous culture, at the point where it portrays their history as a key nomination strategy for the campaign.

To continue with the nomination of events connected to Indigenous identity, the campaign references the historical and ongoing institution and racial marginalization of Indigenous Australians as a critical phenomenon. These can be considered a crucial and essential narrative that deeply concerns a post-colonialist logic. Additionally, the referendum itself is framed as a significant event, described as an opportunity for "*recognition*" (P. 16) and "*reconciliation*" (P.13). The booklet portrays the Voice referendum as a crucial step towards healing and unity, a crucial event that can transform the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians thanks to a societal transformation that can overturn the colonialist structures of the country.

Reisigl and Wodak approach centres on analysing also the nominations of actions in the campaign related to Indigenous identity representation. During my analysis, I encountered several actions connected to Indigenous and especially the referendum actions, related in terms of positive outcomes and practical benefits. The campaign uses phrases like "*closing the gap*" (P. 14), "*improving health and education*" (P. 12) and "*ensuring better results*" (p.12) to describe the intended actions of the Voice. These actions are portrayed as necessary steps to address systemic inequalities and improve the lives of Indigenous Australians. The campaign also emphasizes the symbolic action of "*recognizing Indigenous*

*Australians in the Constitution*" (P.13) presenting it as a moral and just action that reflects the nation's commitment to equality and respect.

To summarise, the nomination strategy in the Yes campaign carefully refers to persons, objects and phenomena connected to Indigenous identity with positive and inclusive representations. By emphasising the historical significance, cultural richness, and contemporary contributions of Indigenous Australians, the campaign seeks to build a compelling case for the constitutional recognition of the Voice and Indigenous representation in the Parliament. From a post-colonialist approach, it is fundamental to underline that the campaign is referring to terms and concepts that acknowledge in its nominations the institutional and racial barriers that the Aboriginals have to face, fostering unity and reconciliation.

In contrast, the persons, objects and actions in the nomination strategy of the No campaign have the objective of emphasizing caution, risk, and scepticism regarding the proposed constitutional change, in order to convince the electorate to vote against the referendum. Moreover, it is crucial to underline the different perspectives of Indigenous identity representation in the campaign.

The representation of Aboriginal identity is frequently included in the campaign discourse together with the Australian national identity. From the research on nomination strategy and how many times Indigenous were referred to, I have noticed that the main population was the actual subject of the campaign and that Aboriginal participation was already implied in this category. Terms such as "*our ancestors*" (P. 20), "*only one group of Australians*"(P. 20), and "*one group of citizens*" (P.22) serve as examples of this statement. On one side, this acknowledgement can be connected to a symbolic unity of the country, on the other side, it emphasises a discourse that perpetuates the logic of assimilating Indigenous into the society. This nomination narrative is in contrast with the Yes campaign, which decides to portray them as a category in need that still is facing numerous barriers to integration.

This nomination strategy of inclusion of Indigenous identity as part of the Australian national identity can be double-sided and portrays the narrative of a united nation, where their uniqueness is integrated into the hegemonic identity. When in actual terms, Indigenous people face intersectional and racial issues that stop them from being completely integrated, and their inclusion reduces the visibility of these systemic problems, potentially leading to a superficial sense of unity while underlying inequalities remain unaddressed (O'Donnell,

2023).

This nomination strategy has the consequence of targeting the referendum as potentially dangerous not only for the Aboriginals but to the overall population. The Voice is referred to as a *"risky"* (P.23) and *"unknown body that has the full force of the Constitution behind it"* (P. 18) framing it as something that could introduce legal and social complications.

The campaign also emphasizes the permanency of the proposed constitutional change, using terms like *"permanent"* to underscore the irreversible nature of the amendment. This linguistic choice aims to invoke caution and hesitation among voters.

*"Enshrining a Voice in the Constitution for only one group of Australians means permanently dividing our country"* (P. 18) from this strong statement, we can understand the points above. For the No campaign, Aboriginals face a level of integration in the national identity, and the Voice referendum is seen as classist and fracturing the national identity itself in the Constitution. As a result, the fundamental document is used as a nomination parallel of social unity and collective identity. This transforms the simple narrative of changing the constitution to designing an advisory body for a certain community in need. Instead, it frames the change as altering the core concept of national identity to help only a certain category, and as a result, excluding the Aboriginals from the national unity and creating divisiveness among all Australians. From a post-colonialist point of view, this perspective can be seen as perpetuating the marginalization and disenfranchisement of Indigenous communities by framing their inclusion and recognition as a threat to national unity rather than a step towards rectifying historical injustices. This argument overlooks the systemic inequalities and historical context that necessitate such measures, instead portraying the move towards greater inclusion as divisive. By doing so, it implicitly supports the maintenance of a status quo that continues to marginalize Aboriginal people, rather than acknowledging their rightful place and voice within the national identity. The post-colonialist critique would highlight that true unity and collective identity can only be achieved through the recognition and inclusion of all groups, especially those who have been historically oppressed and that such constitutional changes are essential for genuine reconciliation and equity (Allam et al., 2023a).

Another key point of the campaign is focusing on the real necessity of measures. The No case often highlights that the Aboriginals can already benefit from the presence of numerous existing *"representative bodies"* (P. 20) suggesting that these groups already

adequately represent Indigenous interests. As a result, this framing implies that further changes may be unnecessary and potentially harmful to the Indigenous and Australian population as a whole.

From these analyses, we can conclude that the nomination strategy in the No campaign constructs a narrative that emphasises the risks and uncertainties associated with the proposed Voice. By highlighting existing recognition of Indigenous in the national identity and already present support structures, questioning the necessity and potential consequences of additional measures, and using cautionary language, the campaign aims to persuade voters to reject the constitutional amendment. This linguistic approach focuses on invoking caution and scepticism, emphasising the potential negative impacts on constitutional stability and social unity.

## **6.2 Predications**

In the context of the Discourse-Historical Approach, the predication strategy involves the discursive qualification of social actors, objects, phenomena, events, processes, and actions (Reisigl and Wodak, 2009). This strategy can be identified by analysing the attribution of specific qualities or characteristics to the representation of the Indigenous identity, either in a positive or negative light. Predication often involves the use of stereotypes, evaluative attributions, and various rhetorical figures such as metaphors, similes, and comparisons.

This part of the thesis research aims to identify the objectives behind the predication strategies and how they can alter and influence the audience's perception by attaching specific attributes to Aboriginal identity, thereby shaping the overall discourse in a way that supports the campaign's objective.

The Yes campaign's predication strategy in the referendum booklet focuses on highlighting the positive attributes, qualities, and features of the Indigenous identity and its significance to Australian society. This strategy is essential in constructing a narrative that portrays Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in a manner that fosters recognition, respect, and unity and emphasises the importance of the referendum.

The predications of Indigenous identity focus on portraying positive qualities, starting from identifying their cultural richness and resilience. By characterising them as having "*65,000 years of culture and tradition*" (P. 11), the campaign challenges colonial

narratives that render Indigenous histories invisible and empowers their role in the Australian formation and characterisation. This acknowledgement reclaims Indigenous Australians' place in history, underlining their agency and continuity despite colonisation practices and discourse. They are also portrayed as amplifying the nation with their "*culture and creativity, their knowledge of the land and waters, and their contribution to Australian life*" (P. 13), framing them as active and valuable contributors to the nation's cultural richness, promoting an appreciation of cultural diversity that counters "*monocultural colonial norms*" (Phoenix, 2002).

Additionally, the campaign addresses through the predications strategy the significant challenges faced by Indigenous Australians, such as shorter life expectancy and worse health outcomes, highlighting the ongoing impacts of colonialism while emphasizing resilience and the potential for positive change through the Voice, advocating for systemic reforms that address these inequities.

*"We can't solve all the challenges Indigenous Australians face overnight. We need action now, as well as planning for the long term"* (p.15).

From this statement, we can understand that the Voice proposal is not only a symbolic gesture but also a functional entity aimed at addressing institutional racism and injustice. It highlights that these issues need a substantial change that cannot be solved by short-term programmes, but only through long-term solutions. This pragmatic approach nominates Indigenous input as crucial for effective governance and problem-solving, thereby legitimizing their perspectives in the eyes of the broader community.

From a post-colonialist perspective, the predication strategy in the Yes campaign text actively works to dismantle colonial narratives and promote decolonized predications of Indigenous identity. By attributing qualities such as historical significance, cultural richness, knowledge, and societal contribution to Indigenous Australians, the campaign seeks to rectify historical injustices and affirm Indigenous agency and sovereignty. The framing of the referendum and the Voice initiative as inclusive, representative, and essential for achieving equitable outcomes challenges colonial legacies and promotes a future based on mutual respect and partnership. This approach not only builds a compelling predication strategy for constitutional recognition but also aligns with broader efforts to decolonize Australian society and recognize the rightful place of Indigenous peoples within it.

The predication strategy of the No campaign focusing on Indigenous identity and representation is characterised by emphasising the potential division and unknown



consequences of the Voice referendum and projecting these risks on the potential division of national identity.

*“This Voice will not unite us, it will divide us by race”* (P.20) from this statement we can understand how race is a central predication of the No campaign. From a post-colonialist perspective, this characterisation of the referendum and Indigenous identity can be seen as a continuation of colonial narratives that emphasize division and hierarchy based on race. This perspective critiques the way such arguments may serve to maintain existing power structures and resist efforts to address historical injustices faced by Indigenous peoples. By positioning the Voice as a source of racial division, the No campaign potentially obscures the systemic inequalities and historical context that necessitate such a body, reinforcing a colonial mindset that prioritizes a *“homogenized national identity”* (Ang and Stratton, 1998) over the recognition and empowerment of marginalized groups.

The predication strategy also addresses the practical benefits and representation of different Indigenous identities, by emphasising that Aboriginals themselves are divided into diverse communities and groups, and there are differences between regional and remote areas. The campaign argues that the already-in-place local entities and representative bodies are fulfilling their role effectively in enhancing these different identities. These bodies can cause redundancies and inefficiencies if associated with other representative bodies, not only for the representation of Indigenous themselves but also for adding new bureaucracy layers.

Furthermore, the No campaign also predicates the process leading up to the referendum as *“rushed and heavy-handed”* (P.23), lacking the thorough consideration and consensus-building typically associated with constitutional changes, as this statement stresses *“when previous changes to the Constitution have been proposed, there has been a Constitutional Convention to properly consider options and details”* (p. 23). This characterisation of the process as flawed and lacking legitimacy adds another layer of scepticism towards the Voice, framing it as a product of inadequate and rushed decision-making that can damage both Indigenous identity recognition and representation.

By emphasising negative attributes of the referendum, the No case frames it as negative also for the Indigenous identity representation, which can be already seen in many existing and functioning structures. As a result, the No campaign seeks to cast doubt on the necessity and desirability of the proposed constitutional amendment, urging voters to consider the potential negative consequences and vote against the Voice. This representation reflects a cautious and critical perspective on Indigenous identity and its place within the constitutional

framework, highlighting concerns about stability, unity, and effective governance.

### 6.3 Argumentation

In this chapter, we delve into the intricate argumentation strategies embedded within the Yes and No campaigns. This analysis aims to illuminate the nuanced mechanisms through which discursive strategies are shaped by modifying or assessing data or statements, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of the role of language in societal power dynamics through data manipulation. Reisigl and Wodak (2009) aim to uncover the justifications behind specific claims, particularly those concerning “*truth and normative rightness.*” This passage is crucial in determining whether the campaigns portray truthful materials and sources or if the claims are explicitly designed to reinforce their discourse strategies. These claims can be ideology-dependent and can spread contradictions among voters, as the referendum booklet was distributed to the entire Australian population. Moreover, as an argumentation strategy, the campaigns involve different experts on Indigenous representation to further stress their arguments. Additionally, as presented in the data selection chapter, the booklet materials were not fact-checked by the Parliament, maintaining their originality as they were not modified by any third intervention.

All these factors combined can lead to strategic discourse manipulation of the data on Indigenous identity and representation, making this part of the Discourse-Historical Approach essential to discovering how truthful the campaigns remain to reality for shaping their discourse.

In the Yes case section of the booklet, various statements and arguments are based on evidence of historical marginalisation and discrimination. Statements like, “*This idea came directly from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*” (P.12) and “*Accepting a proposal backed by over 80% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*” (P.12), demonstrate that the advisory body and the referendum are deeply connected with Aboriginal initiatives and interests, framing it as a necessary step towards reconciliation and empowerment of the community. By providing these facts, the campaign builds logical reasoning for the constitutional reform, supported by initiatives like the Uluru Statement from the Heart in 2017. Moreover, the statement about Indigenous support is valid, as different surveys have highlighted strong support from 80% to 83% in certain pools (Huntley, 2023). However, it is interesting to mention that an Ipsos survey conducted soon

before the referendum showed that only 40% of non-Indigenous Australians believed in the high support of the Voice from Aboriginals (Ipsos, 2023). This argumentation strategy shows that the factual support of the interested community in the referendum was not a game-changing strategy for the Yes campaign and underlines the distrust of the non-Indigenous towards Indigenous identity representation and their active political engagement.

From a post-colonialist perspective, the campaign's use of studies and reports to highlight institutional discrimination demonstrates a commitment to addressing historical injustices and valuing Indigenous voices. The distrust shown in the statistics from non-Indigenous Australians highlights deep-seated prejudice towards the community, showing the persistence of colonialist dynamics.

The Yes campaign draws on a wealth of studies and reports to support its stance on Indigenous representation and the referendum's objectives. Specifically, when discussing policies related to advisory bodies, the campaign cites research conducted by the Australian Parliament. Additionally, when addressing issues of institutional discrimination in education, health, and general opportunities, the Yes campaign refers to the annual "*Closing the Gap Reports*" presented to the Government. These reports are pivotal in highlighting and explaining the current statistics and outcomes of existing policies. By referencing such authoritative sources, the Yes campaign demonstrates a strong connection and understanding of Indigenous issues, reinforcing the credibility and relevance of its arguments. This strategic use of well-established reports and data underscores the campaign's commitment to addressing the systemic challenges faced by Indigenous communities and advancing their interests through the proposed constitutional reforms.

Consequently, referencing such documents helps the campaign present truthful and insightful arguments. It can also be seen as a sign of sincerity and authenticity towards the representation of Indigenous identity and situation. This strategy is fundamental not only for the Yes campaign but also for ensuring that Indigenous Australians feel valued and heard in national governance. Recognizing and amplifying Indigenous identity is a crucial step towards decolonizing national narratives and rectifying historical injustices. Indigenous representation in governance challenges the legacy of colonialism by affirming the sovereignty and agency of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, promoting a more inclusive and equitable society where Indigenous voices are integral to decision-making processes.

However, some perplexities remain in the argumentation strategy of the advisory

committee's composition. *“It will include Indigenous Australians from every state and territory, the Torres Strait Islands and representatives from the regions and remote communities”* (P. 11). This statement was highlighted by Allam et al. (2023b), as the government has not provided a draft of the Voice model and states that specific details, such as the number of members, the selection process, and the interaction with parliament, would have been determined through further consultation with Indigenous communities following the positive result of the referendum.

In conclusion, the Yes campaign's strategy in the Voice referendum emphasises Indigenous origin and support, framing the initiative as crucial for reconciliation and empowerment. However, the limited impact on non-Indigenous Australians' perceptions reveals a deep-seated distrust towards Indigenous representation. These argumentation strategies underscore the challenges of overcoming historical distrust and foregrounding the representation of Indigenous identity.

In contrast, the No section of the pamphlet contains several misleading and incorrect claims in crucial statements, especially concerning legal and racial assertions. Firstly, it is crucial to address the No campaign claims regarding the possible establishment of different classes of citizenship and racial separation issues if the referendum had been approved. Statements such as, *“It [the Voice] creates different classes of citizenship through an unknown body that has the full force of the Constitution behind it”* (P.18) and *“this Voice will not unite us, it will divide us by race”* (P.20) have been classified as misinformation by many authors (Allam et al., 2023a). Currently, the Australian constitution mentions race in sections 51 and 25 and already addresses the concept. In 1967, a referendum was held in which Australians voted to amend the way Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were referenced in the constitution, addressing issues such as race definition. The proposed Voice referendum aims to establish an Indigenous voice, comprising representatives from local, state, and regional bodies, to advise parliament on legislation to improve life outcomes for First Nations people (Allam et al., 2023a). Therefore, race and classifications are not involved in the law design, spreading potential false stances among Australians.

As a result, the issue of race is a misconception based on colonial concepts of race that lack scientific and legal credibility (Parliament of Australia, n.d., Chapter 3). The No campaign targets the concept of identifying a group as unique within society and phrases the discourse to its advantage. From a post-colonial perspective, the discourse argumentation strategy of the No campaign can be seen as dangerous because it perpetuates colonial

narratives that seek to maintain the status quo and prevent Indigenous empowerment (Hunter, 2023). By framing the Voice as a threat to national unity and invoking fears of racial division, the campaign taps into deep-seated colonial anxieties about Indigenous autonomy and representation. This strategy not only undermines the legitimate aspirations of Indigenous communities for self-determination and equitable participation in governance but also reinforces the marginalization and exclusion that have been hallmarks of colonial oppression.

The No campaign's claim that there is significant Indigenous opposition to the Voice is refuted with polling data showing substantial support within Indigenous communities. “*Many Indigenous Australians do not support this*” (P.18). This data undermines the argument that the Voice lacks legitimacy or widespread backing among those it is intended to represent. While considering the previous section dedicated to the argumentation strategy of the Yes campaign, various polls underline that 80-83% of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders were in favour of the Voice (Allam et al., 2023b). These opposite claims are separately supported, one by colonial prejudice and the other by factual data. From the statistics explained previously, the Australian population supported the idea that the Aboriginals were against racial separation and therefore the parallelism with the referendum itself.

The argumentation strategy centred on contradicting the principles of equal citizenship and unity continues by targeting other symbols of Australian traditions, “*many activists are campaigning to abolish Australia Day, change our flag and other institutions and symbols important to Australians*” (P.22). Australia National Day is celebrated on the 26th of January and marks a controversial date: the anniversary of the first European settlement in Australia (Britannica, 2024). The date recently became controversial, but for many Australians, it is considered a traditional celebration, and there are many debates on the topic. The prime minister has classified this information from the pamphlet as “*wrongful speculations*” (Allam et al., 2023a), as it is not a matter that concerns the referendum question. The argumentation strategy of the No campaign was to associate the approval of the advisory body with a broader approval of constitutional changes and symbolic issues for the national identity, which, after all the consideration of this thesis, we can understand is considered superior to Indigenous identity and past.

By highlighting legal and racial assertions, the No campaign's argumentation strategy attempts to instil fear and maintain existing hegemonic power structures. From all the

argumentation strategies considered, the research can assert that the campaign directly targets the factors behind Indigenous identity representation, directing it with colonialist logic and misleading information. Claims that the Voice would create different classes of citizenship and racial divisions are misleading and serve to perpetuate colonial and hegemonic narratives that historically marginalise Indigenous Australians. This approach contrasts with factual data indicating strong Indigenous support for the Voice, reflecting a desire for greater self-determination and equitable governance. By invoking fears about national unity and traditional symbols, the No campaign diverts attention from the core issue of Indigenous representation and empowerment, using mainly untruthful claims and false norms. Ultimately, this strategy underscores a reluctance to acknowledge and address the historical and ongoing impacts of colonialism, further marginalizing Indigenous voices and identities in the national discourse.

## 6.4 Perspectivations

By examining the perspective of political discourse, the thesis gains essential insights into how social actors crafted persuasive messages and discourse to maintain dominance and manipulate societal views. The next passage analysed and explained by Reisigl and Wodak (2009) is the perspectivization strategy of discourse. The authors describe this step of the Discourse-Historical Approach with synonyms such as “*framing or discourse representation*”. In this discourse strategy, the researcher aims to find the positioning of the speaker or writer and deeply delves into their point of view. Especially, the aim of finding the perspective of the discourse strategy is to position the readers themselves into the focus of the document analysed and find the expressions of involvement or distancing that characterise the political discourse.

Thanks to these objectives, we can have a deeper understanding of the aim of the discourse and, in this case, the strategies behind the representation of Indigenous identity and points of view. In order to proceed with the analysis, the thesis will delve into the perspective expressed in both campaigns and portray examples of these strategies.

In the Yes campaign, several strategies are used to highlight Indigenous perspectives in the discourse of the booklet. Their perspective is the most prominent revealed by the research. Starting from the historical acknowledgements that the booklet references, the Aboriginal's long history and culture are framed as integral and essential for the referendum

itself and as an essential contribution to the campaign's objective. Overall, the perspectives presented in the document prioritise the voices and interests of Indigenous communities and their supporters. Respected Indigenous leaders and figures are quoted, and these endorsements are used to lend credibility and emotional appeal to the argument.

*“Rachel Perkins, Filmmaker from Alice Springs, Arrernte/Kalkadoon woman: “Our people have spent decades campaigning for the opportunity of a better life. We’ve never been more determined or more united. The Voice is our best shot, let’s take it” (P. 14 - 15).*

By highlighting these voices, the discourse prioritizes the perspectives of well-respected community members who are seen as authentic representatives of Indigenous interests.

Furthermore, legal experts and academics are cited to lend an aura of legitimacy and authority to the proposal. This tactic frames the recognition of Indigenous identity as not only a social and moral imperative but also a legally sound and intellectually supported decision.

It is fundamental to underline that the perspectivization strategy of calling out experts and respected figures gives the Yes case a strong credibility endorsement, but it is also crucial to underline the perspectivation strategy that emerged from the various emotional and moral appeals.

*“Voting Yes is a chance for all Australians to celebrate the contribution Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have made to our country and to help the next generation chase their dreams. Let’s grab this moment with both hands” (P. 16).*

The Yes campaign frequently invokes themes of justice, equality, and historical redress, positioning the Voice as a crucial step toward correcting past injustices and promoting social equity. This framing aims to evoke an emotional response by aligning Indigenous identity with broader social justice and postcolonial movements.

As a result, the Yes case employs a strategic perspectivization approach to represent Indigenous identity positively and authoritatively and make them the centre of attention. By highlighting prominent Indigenous endorsements, acknowledging historical and cultural contexts, and invoking emotional and moral appeals, the discourse seeks to validate and honour Indigenous identity. As a result, the perspectives of Indigenous communities are the focus of the campaign and the main support of their reasonings.

While the Yes campaign takes the perspectives of Indigenous communities and positions them as the main focus and support of their reasonings, the No campaign

marginalizes their perspectives and focuses on framing the discourse around the general Australian point of view.

From statements, such as: *“This [the Voice] is a very important decision. Unfortunately, the legitimate questions and concerns of many Australians have been dismissed”* (P. 23) and *“It will be decided by every Australian. It affects every Australian”* (P. 23), we can understand the perspective strategy of directly calling out the population and appeal of their sense of unity and national identity.

Framing the referendum as an inquiry dedicated to dividing and separating Australian national identity and population, directly puts the voter into the perspective of preferring a united population and therefore favouring the No case.

*“We’re all Australians. And that’s the way it should end up. It shouldn’t be divided by this so-called Voice which is going to split this country right down the centre”* (P. 20).

The campaign frames the Voice as a potentially divisive mechanism that could create societal rifts rather than foster unity. By appealing to fears of social fragmentation and emphasizing national unity, the campaign argues that the Voice might undermine the collective identity of Australians, thereby appealing to a sense of national solidarity.

From this understanding, the No campaign carefully positions the voter’s perspective to convey scepticism and caution regarding the proposed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice. Thanks to the use of conditional language and highlighting the lack of specificity of the proposal, the reader is made believe to be prudent and thorough, as it is not only the Indigenous identity to potentially be damaged by the referendum but also the national one, as it is brought to believe that the plan could be endorsed without fully understanding its implications.

Moreover, the Yes and No campaigns have a similar perspectivization strategy of projecting the opinions of experts and authoritative figures. The campaign frequently cites legal and political experts who oppose the Voice, positioning these authorities as knowledgeable and credible. One crucial strategy that made the perspectivization strategy of the No campaign effective is that the leaders chosen are part of Aboriginal communities. The booklet cites in various sections their belonging and identification as Indigenous themselves, making the voter connect and believe that Aboriginals are against the referendum. The campaign portrays itself as speaking on behalf of all Australians, and Aboriginals are involved thanks to the leaders’ Indigenous identification, appealing to a sense of unity and reconciliation.



In conclusion, the No campaign strategically centres its perspectivization on the Australian population as a whole, emphasising themes of national unity and cohesion. By framing the Voice as a potential threat to the collective identity of Australians and citing experts to sustain the statements, the campaign appeals to voters' sense of solidarity and scepticism. The inclusion of Indigenous leaders who oppose the Voice further reinforces the notion that the campaign speaks for both Aboriginal communities and the broader Australian public, effectively aligning their message with a shared national identity.

## 6.5 Intensification and mitigation

The Discourse-Historical Approach is formed by five different types of analysis of discourse strategies. The analysis of the intensification and mitigation discourse strategies is the last element that composes the Reisigl and Wodak approach. The last section of this thesis research is dedicated to finding the objectives of these intensification and mitigation strategies that are employed by both campaigns. The authors explain this strategy as a way to identify the shapes and nuances of the tone in which the messages of the political campaigns are delivered.

Therefore, the intensification and mitigation strategy involves adjusting the strength or force of a statement to influence how it is understood or responded to by the voters. This strategy modifies the “*illocutionary force*”, which refers to the speaker's intention behind the statement, such as making a request or issuing a command. By intensifying the illocutionary force, the speaker can make the statement more forceful, whereas mitigation makes it gentler. Additionally, this strategy affects the “*epistemic status*”, which pertains to the level of certainty or confidence in the statement. An intensified epistemic status conveys greater certainty, while mitigation expresses doubt or speculation. Similarly, the “*deontic status*”, which relates to obligation or permission, can be intensified to stress urgency or necessity or mitigated to imply that something is less urgent or optional (Reisigl and Wodak, 2009). By employing these strategies, political discourse can guide how voters interpret and react to their campaign's statements, either encouraging actions through intensification or promoting caution and flexibility through mitigation.

Beginning with the Yes campaign for the Australian referendum booklet, the analysis of these discourse strategies has identified that it employs several techniques that involve both intensification and mitigation to communicate its message effectively.

One of the first intensification strategies analysed is how the campaign emphasises the critical need for more Aboriginal representation by pointing out the current challenges faced by Indigenous Australians, such as lower life expectancy, higher rates of disease, and limited educational opportunities. Using as an example, a statement such as “*Better Results: making practical progress in Indigenous health, education, employment and housing, so people have a better life. It’s a change only you can make happen*” (P.11), we can understand that by employing a strong illocutionary language about the severity of these issues, the campaign intensifies the necessity for immediate action and portraying voting Yes as a moral duty.

Another intensification strategy of the campaign is applying particularly emotional language to emphasize the importance of national unity and reconciliation. It appeals to a sense of shared history and identity, calling as an example the 1967 referendum, with the statement: “*At the 1967 referendum, 90% of Australians voted Yes to changing the Constitution, so Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people would be counted in the population in the same way as everyone else*” (P.14) and phrasing it as a “*unifying step forward*” (P. 14). Another example of this intensification strategy lies in the key statement: “*Let’s vote Yes to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live better lives with more opportunities for their children. In a spirit of unity, let’s vote Yes together*” (P.16). This deontic intensification wants to stress the urgency and the moral imperative to vote Yes, positioning it as a continuation of a historical journey towards equal Indigenous identity representation and justice.

On the other hand, the mitigation strategies identified mainly concern the referendum proposal and how its changes will be positive in the future, with the aim to address and reassure voters about the proposed change.

The campaign reassures voters by presenting the Voice as a manageable and straightforward change that is rooted in extensive consultation and development. This framing mitigates the perception of risk associated with constitutional amendments, encouraging voters to view the change as a positive evolution rather than a radical shift. Moreover, with the statement “*We can’t solve all the challenges Indigenous Australians face overnight. We need action now, as well as planning for the long term*” (P. 15), the campaign uses a strategy that mitigates unrealistic expectations and potential disappointment, presenting the Voice as part of a gradual process of change and improvement for Indigenous identity representation.

To summarise, the Yes campaign convincingly intensifies the illocutionary force of its discourse to stress the urgency and importance of voting Yes. This strategy is used to make sure that voters conceptualise how essential the advisory body will be for the future of Indigenous identity. The intensified tone in phrases concerning the new possibilities for the community can help in moving equality and justice sentiments into voters' behaviour. While employing mitigation strategies to address potential concerns in the actions of the referendum.

Shifting into the analysis of the No campaign section of the pamphlet, the discourse strategies are used to shape public opinion against the proposed Voice referendum. These intensification and mitigation strategies are carefully crafted to influence voter perception by stressing language and tones that recall uncertainty, fear of division, and scepticism, especially towards the representation of Indigenous identity.

Amplifying the fear of division is the main intensification discourse strategy found in the research. The No campaign intensifies concerns about the Voice by framing it as a divisive mechanism that could create societal rifts. This strategy amplifies tones of fear for national disunity and suggests that the Voice might undermine the collective identity of Australians, with statements such as: "*We're all Australians. And that's the way it should end up. It shouldn't be divided by this so-called Voice which is going to split this country right down the centre*" (P. 20) and "*this referendum is not about simply recognising Indigenous Australians in the Constitution. That can be achieved without tying it to a risky, unknown and permanent Voice*" (P. 23).

The campaign intensifies scepticism by questioning whether the Voice will genuinely benefit Indigenous Australians. It raises doubts by sharing many phrases containing the words "*we don't know...*" (p. 19) and they all emphasise the questions regarding the efficacy of a constitutionally enshrined body that could deliver real improvements to Indigenous lives. The following sequence of phrases elucidates this research point:

*"We don't know how it will help disadvantaged communities and close the gap.*

*We don't know how many members this Voice would have.*

*We don't know if they would be elected or chosen, or how this would occur.*

*We don't know how it would make representations or be held accountable"* (P. 19).

The No campaign uses epistemic uncertainty to sow doubt about the effectiveness and value of the proposed new body meant to support Indigenous identity within the Australian context of institutional discrimination. This strategy is crucial to understanding

the political discourse employed by the No campaign: it aims to convince the Australian population that these doubts are a legitimate means of defending and helping Aboriginals. By highlighting uncertainties, the campaign suggests that it is unclear how the referendum will benefit all Australians, implying that Aboriginals are already sufficiently included. While the No campaign intensifies these doubts and reassures voters that the current situation is favourable for everyone, it ultimately perpetuates a political discourse that seeks to maintain the status quo and uphold the hegemonic societal structure that preserves existing privileges.

Lastly, by citing Indigenous leaders who oppose the Voice, the campaign intensifies the perception that the proposal does not have unanimous support within Indigenous communities, contributing together with the perspectivization and argumentation strategies to portray an overall image of Indigenous opposition, when as a matter of fact, the statistics shown in the argumentation strategy support other data. This strategy serves to intensify the narrative that the Voice is not a universally accepted solution among Indigenous Australians, thus challenging the notion of a monolithic Indigenous identity that uniformly supports the Voice.

The mitigation strategy employed by the No campaign mainly centres on reducing the perceived risks of negative voting and downplaying the impact of it on Indigenous identity representation.

The No case argues that existing mechanisms and programs can address Indigenous issues without the need for a constitutionally enshrined Voice. This mitigates the perceived urgency and necessity of the Voice by implying that current systems are sufficient. In order to achieve this mitigation strategy, the campaign enlists already in-place institutions and especially their spending and weight on voters' taxes. This plan of showing that a current framework is already present and uses national funds serves to mitigate the necessity to further enhance the representation of Indigenous, presenting statements, like: "*This year, the Government has allocated \$4.3 billion for the National Indigenous Australians Agency, which has 1,400 staff*" (P. 23) and "*There is no suggestion this Voice will replace any of these [bodies for Aboriginals]. It will operate as one bureaucracy among many*" (P. 23).

To conclude, the No campaign's use of mitigation and intensification strategies is aimed at creating a language and tone that intensifies a type of illocutionary force that enhances caution, scepticism, and unity. By emphasizing the risks and uncertainties associated with the Voice, the campaign mitigates the potential negative consequences of

voting No. At the same time, it intensifies tones of fear of division and questions the effectiveness of the Voice, particularly in its representation of Indigenous identity. These strategies are designed to linguistically persuade the discourse that voters must reject the Voice, as the safer and more unifying choice for all Australians, including Indigenous communities.

## **6.6 Discussion of Results: Representation of Indigenous Identity**

The ideology and goals of specific parties often shape political campaigns. In contrast, referendums focus discourse on a binary decision, highlighting the importance of discourse as a tool for managing discrimination and power structures related to Indigenous peoples and colonisation. In the context of the Australian referendum, this dynamic can politicise Indigenous identity, influencing both voter behaviour and the self-perception of Indigenous communities.

The official referendum booklet allows campaigns to present a comprehensive outline of their views, allowing this thesis for an insightful analysis. This document highlights how both sides have politicised Indigenous identity to advance their agendas. By shaping identities to suit their campaigns, they impact not only voters' decisions but also how Indigenous people view themselves.

Analysing and discussing the results of the Discourse-Historical Approach in this context is crucial. It helps interpret the findings of this thesis by shedding light on how political discourse in the referendum reflects broader themes of identity, power, and colonisation. This analysis serves as a fundamental cornerstone for understanding the interplay between discourse and Indigenous identity in the referendum.

This thesis results discussion starts with the interpretation of the Yes campaign conclusions. Firstly, the Yes campaign creates a discourse around Indigenous identity that places a strong emphasis on acknowledging their historical and cultural significance. This is evident in several analyses, such as the nomination, predication and perspectivization strategies. The campaign frequently refers to Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders as the "*First Peoples*" (P.12) of Australia and emphasises the "*65,000 years of history*" (P.13), underscoring their primacy and unique status as the original inhabitants of the land. This acknowledgement serves as a foundational element of the campaign's narrative, highlighting the deep-rooted history and connection of Indigenous peoples to the land and celebrating

their cultural heritage as a vital component of Australian history, deserving recognition and respect after centuries of discrimination and colonisation. This narrative seeks to promote understanding and cooperation, highlighting the potential for societal healing through acknowledgement of past injustices.

As a result, by advocating for constitutional recognition, the Yes campaign seeks to empower Indigenous communities by formalizing their place within Australia's constitutional framework. Their argumentation, intensification and mitigation strategies are centred on reflecting a post-colonialist perspective, aiming to rectify historical marginalization and elevate Indigenous voices within national decision-making processes, where they can be heard and empowered.

Continuing the analysis of the results in the nomination and predication strategy, the Yes campaign constructs Indigenous identity through narratives of reconciliation and national unity, fostering a more inclusive society, where their identity is empowered and not only included in the society. Indigenous identity is portrayed as an integral part that can empower and strengthen the fabric of the Australian identity, with the campaign emphasizing "*recognition*" (P.16) and "*reconciliation*" (P. 13). This approach aligns with the idea of building a cohesive and unified society that respects and includes diverse voices and histories. This is a key factor for the discourse of the campaign, as in the argumentation strategy analysis, the referendum is depicted as an essential step to achieve this aim, one of the steps that Aboriginals themselves have drawn in the Uluru Statement. This is not only a symbolic progress, but the Voice is presented as a "*vehicle for practical change*" (P.13). This narrative of inclusion positions Indigenous peoples as active participants in shaping their future and the nation's future, a crucial post-colonial concept for the empowerment of the community.

In the nomination and predication sections, when advocating for constitutional recognition, the Yes campaign emphasizes the potential for Indigenous Australians to contribute to a more just and equitable society. In the discourse, the Yes case presents an acknowledgement of the current racism and institutional discrimination that Aboriginals have to face and characterises their current collective identity. As we can observe in the argumentation strategy analysis, the campaign presents proven data on the matter and highlights the importance of empowering Indigenous communities to play a central role in shaping how the government can deliver its help in closing the societal gap between Indigenous Australians and Non-Indigenous Australians. This focus on practical outcomes

underscores the campaign's commitment to addressing systemic disparities and promoting Indigenous well-being as a national priority, as we can notice especially in the argumentation and intensification discourse strategies.

After considering the various sections of the DHA analysis, the Yes campaign represents Indigenous identity as a cornerstone of Australia's heritage and future. By emphasizing historical acknowledgement, cultural celebration, and narratives of reconciliation, the campaign seeks to empower Indigenous communities and promote a more inclusive and equitable society. This representation aligns with a post-colonialist perspective, challenging existing power dynamics and advocating for systemic change that recognizes and empowers Indigenous voices within the national discourse. Their voices are not only a source of cultural pride for Australia, but also they can be a vital source for delivering their own help and developing their future, thanks to the referendum.

In comparison, the No campaign's representation of Indigenous identity is characterised by an emphasis on national unity and a tendency towards a degree of assimilation. This perspective is reflected in several key aspects, which are mainly delivered through the nomination and perspectivization discourse strategies.

In the analysis, we can frequently observe terms like "*our ancestors*" (P.20) and "*one group of Australians*" (P.20) to emphasise a unified national identity. This approach suggests that Indigenous Australians are already part of the broader national fabric, downplaying the need for specific constitutional recognition and treating Indigenous identity as a subset of a singular national identity.

Thanks to this discourse that frames Indigenous as already integrated within the national identity, the No campaign implies that additional recognition or separate constitutional status is unnecessary and even risky, as portrayed in the predication and intensification discourse strategies. This perspective reflects an assimilationist approach, where Indigenous identity is subsumed within the broader Australian identity without acknowledging unique historical or cultural contributions, which are essential concepts from a post-colonialist perspective.

Furthermore, the campaign expresses scepticism towards the proposed changes, suggesting that they could disrupt the existing national unity. This resistance to change reflects a deeper desire to maintain the existing hegemonic society and avoid altering established power structures, aligning with a colonial narrative that prioritizes a homogenous national identity over diversity.

Consequently, the campaign warns against the possibility of "*permanent division*" (P.18) by race, arguing that enshrining the Voice in the Constitution could fracture national identity and perpetuate colonial narratives. This discourse strategy emphasises potential racial divides, appealing to concerns about maintaining a unified national identity and suggesting that the Voice could create new tensions and traditions, especially in the predication and argumentation discourse strategies.

Lastly, the No campaign questions the necessity and effectiveness of the Voice, constructing Indigenous identity in a way that minimises the need for constitutional recognition. With predication and argumentative strategies that take into consideration the already-in-place Indigenous structure, minimising the visibility of systemic issues that the Voice aims to address. Moreover, by questioning the need for specific recognition, the No campaign diminishes the unique historical and cultural identity of Indigenous Australians. This approach challenges the notion that constitutional recognition is necessary for addressing past injustices and promoting Indigenous empowerment.

To sum up, the No campaign constructs Indigenous identity through the lens of national unity and casting doubts towards change. After the discourse analysis, this thesis can discuss that the discourse strategy that emerges is characterised by a conservative approach that transforms the colonialist and hegemonic narrative into a narrative of potential division for the national identity, masking the No case into a good cause.

To complete the discussion of the discourse analysis results, it is crucial to reflect on the contrasting ideological perspectives and political objectives of both campaigns. To start with, a fundamental comparison that deeply characterises the narratives on the Indigenous identity representation of the campaigns is how they are perceived in society.

On one side, the Yes campaign offers a discourse that promotes an inclusive vision that seeks to integrate Indigenous voices into the national framework through recognition, representation and empowerment. On the other side, the No campaign leans towards an assimilationist approach, suggesting that Indigenous identity is already present in the national identity and specific constitutional recognition is dividing society on the only base of race, contributing to a colonialist narrative.

Moreover, how the campaigns frame the political discourse around the referendum itself shows their ideological differences. The Yes campaign frames the Voice as an empowering tool for Indigenous communities, with a particular emphasis on its potential to address systemic inequalities and institutional discrimination. Meanwhile, the No campaign



highlights caution and potential risks due to the apparently unclear features of the advisory body, framing the Voice as a threat to national unity and stability. It is crucial to emphasise that the campaign employed ambiguous information in the booklet, which fuelled potentially misleading doubts among voters. Consequently, this strategy can be seen as one of the factors that influenced the population to vote against the referendum.

As a final consideration, in every discourse strategy analysed, the research confirms that the Yes case advocates for transformative change and societal progress through Indigenous rights recognition. It could be considered the convergence point and ultimate aim of the overall narrative of the campaign, spreading a strong message for positive reconciliation with Australians First People and changing the colonialist structures that persist in Australian society, more deeply than the population knows.

Conversely, the No campaign advocates for maintaining the status quo, which includes hegemonic and colonialist structures, while questioning the necessity and desirability of constitutional amendments specifically for Indigenous peoples. At its core, the strategy is to instil fear of the unknown, a simple tactic used against a community that has long questioned its future. These contrasting representations reflect profound and interdisciplinary debates on identity, power, and the future direction of Australian society.

**Table of Discourse-Historical Approach**

<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Yes Campaign</b>	<b>No Campaign</b>
Nomination	It portrays a positive Indigenous identity and inclusive representations, by emphasising the historical significance, cultural richness, and contemporary contributions of Indigenous Australians.	By highlighting existing recognition of Indigenous in the national identity, already present support structures, and using cautionary language, the campaign aims to persuade voters to reject the constitutional amendment.
Predication	Actively works to dismantle colonial narratives and promote decolonized predications of Indigenous identity. By attributing qualities such as historical significance, cultural richness, knowledge, and societal contribution to Indigenous Australians.	The representation reflects a cautious and critical perspective on Indigenous identity and its place within the constitutional framework, highlighting concerns about stability, unity, and effective governance.
Argumentation	It emphasises Indigenous origin of the proposed Voice and support, framing the initiative as crucial for reconciliation and empowerment.	By invoking fears about national unity and traditional symbols, it diverts attention from the core issue of Indigenous representation and empowerment, using mainly untruthful claims and false norms.
Perspectivization	The perspectives of Indigenous communities are the focus of the campaign and the main support of their reasonings.	The centre of its perspectivization is on the Australian population as a whole, emphasising themes of national unity and cohesion.
Intensification and Mitigation	It intensifies the illocutionary force of its discourse to stress the urgency and importance of voting Yes. While employing mitigation strategies to address potential concerns in the actions of the referendum.	The use of mitigation and intensification strategies is aimed at creating a language and tone that intensifies a type of illocutionary force that enhances caution, scepticism, and unity.

## Conclusion

Soon after the voting results presented the defeat of the referendum proposal, the Indigenous leaders who supported the Yes campaign called for a week of silence to grieve and revive their force. One statement among all the others highlighted the intense situation of defeat: *“That people who have only been on this continent for 235 years would refuse to recognise those whose home this land has been for 60,000 and more years is beyond reason”* (Curtis, 2023).

The thesis reveals that colonialist ideals and Indigenous identity representation narratives are mutually reinforcing concepts that uphold Australian hegemonic underpinnings. The results demonstrate that the No campaign represented an Indigenous identity that is contradictory and politicised. Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders are portrayed through a distorted lens that firstly looks at them as a figure to assimilate but then fears social fragmentation. This is the discourse that won at the referendum in 2023. This is the discourse that 60.06% of voters believed, illustrating once again the power of language construction in normalising power structures in society and political campaigns.

More than anything, their identity is barely constructed as the main aim of the No campaign was to demystify the referendum itself, leaving Indigenous identity as a tool to advance their agenda. As a result, this incomplete and disempowering identity construction, based on assimilation rather than integration, left little room for Indigenous communities to resist, as their voices went unheard in this instance.

This thesis begins with an in-depth historical analysis of Indigenous history in Australia, using the lens of postcolonial international relations to provide a critical framework for understanding the referendum's deeper implications and broader Indigenous issues in the country. The Discourse-Historical Approach is designed to account for this historical legacy, revealing how each campaign strategically crafted its messages to influence public perception and voter behaviour (Williams and Chrisman, 2015).

On one side, the Yes campaign aimed to challenge the dominant discourse for representing the Indigenous Voice. The research recognises that this campaign embodies a movement toward decolonization, advocating for a more inclusive governance model that empowers the sovereignty and rights of Australia's First Peoples.

On the other side, the No campaign reflects a reluctance to abandon the colonial

mindset, promoting the idea that national unity requires conformity to established norms. This perspective illustrates the challenges in changing deeply ingrained attitudes and highlights the necessity of developing a more nuanced understanding of unity that celebrates diversity and embraces the multiplicity of voices within the nation.

Ultimately, the analysis reveals that the misrepresentation of Indigenous people in discourse is not merely an oversight but a deliberate method of framing the issue to benefit dominant forces. Consequently, this research provides a more nuanced understanding of the issue, taking a step toward addressing gaps in international relations research, which is gradually beginning to incorporate these specific perspectives.

The struggle for the Voice transcends a simple battle over constitutional amendments: it is a profound reflection of Australia's journey toward acknowledging its past and embracing a future where every voice is valued and heard. Therefore, further research into how the construction of Indigenous identity in Australia and worldwide contributes to powerful forces is critical. Such research can develop a more cohesive framework for analysing the power relations involved in global Indigenous recognition and reconciliation, ultimately contributing to a more sustainable system that accounts for these differences and empowers Indigenous perspectives in international relations.

## Bibliography

ABC News (Australian Broadcasting Corporation). (2022). Who is Harold Thomas, the man who created the Aboriginal flag?. *ABC News*. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-01-25/aboriginal-flag-who-is-harold-thomas/100779922>

ABC News (Australian Broadcasting Corporation). (2023). Voice Referendum Live Results and Updates. *ABC News*. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/elections/referendum/2023/results?filter=all&sort=az&state=all&party=all>

AIATSIS (Australian Institute of Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Studies). (2008). To remove and protect: Laws that changed Aboriginal lives. <https://aiatsis.gov.au/collection/featured-collections/remove-and-protect>

Aldrich, R., Zwi, A. B., & Short, S. (2007). Advance Australia Fair: Social democratic and conservative politicians' discourses concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and their health 1972–2001. *Social Science & Medicine*, 64(1), 125-137.

Allam, L., Butler, J. (2023). Voice referendum: who's behind the yes and no campaigns and how do they plan to convince Australia?. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/feb/20/voice-referendum-whos-behind-the-yes-and-no-campaigns-and-how-do-they-plan-to-convince-australia>

Allam, L., Butler, J., Evershed, N., & Ball, A. (2023a.). The no pamphlet: campaign's voice to parliament referendum essay – annotated and fact-checked. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/ng-interactive/2023/jul/20/the-vote-no-pamphlet-referendum-voice-to-parliament-voting-essay-aec-published-read-in-full-annotated-fact-checked>

Allam, L., Butler, J., Evershed, N., & Ball, A. (2023b.). The Yes pamphlet: campaign's voice to parliament referendum essay – annotated and fact-checked. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/ng-interactive/2023/jul/20/the-vote-no-pamphlet-referendum-voice-to-parliament-voting-essay-aec-published-read-in-full-annotated-fact-checked>

Ang, I., & Stratton, J. (1998). Multiculturalism in crisis: The new politics of race and national identity in Australia. *TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies*, 2, 22-41.

ANMFVIC (Australian Nursing & Midwifery Federation Victorian Branch). Union for Yes. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to the Parliament Referendum. <https://www.anmfvic.asn.au/yestovoice23>

Ansell, A. (2008). Critical race theory. *Encyclopedia of race, ethnicity, and society*, 1, 344-346.

Armstrong, S., Buckley, S., Lonsdale, M., Milgate, G., Kneebone, L. B., Cook, L., & Skelton, F. (2012). Starting school: a strengths-based approach towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Australian Council for Educational Research. [https://research.acer.edu.au/indigenous\\_education/27/](https://research.acer.edu.au/indigenous_education/27/)

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021, June 30). Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. ABS. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/estimates-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-australians/30-june-2021>.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2022). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life expectancy. ABS. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-life-expectancy/latest-release>

Australian Electoral Commission (2023). 2023 federal referendum data. AEC. <https://www.aec.gov.au/Elections/referendums/2023.htm>

Australians for Unity (2023). Fair Australia. *Australians for unity*. <https://australiansforunity.com.au/>

Australian Government (2019). Closing the Gap. Report 2019. <https://www.niaa.gov.au/sites/default/files/reports/closing-the-gap-2019/index.html>

Australian Government (2023). Your official referendum booklet. *Australian Government*.

Australian Human Rights Commission. (2023). Voice Referendum: understanding the referendum from a human rights perspective. <https://policycommons.net/artifacts/10786555/voice-referendum/11663982/>

- AIHW. (2018). New report shows long-term disadvantage for Australia's Stolen Generations. AIHW media releases. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/news-media/media-releases/2018/august/new-report-shows-long-term-disadvantage-for-austra>
- AIHW. (2022). Determinants of health for Indigenous Australians. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-health/social-determinants-and-indigenous-health#Health%20risk%20factors>
- Australian Mining History. (2023). Australian Mining History. <https://www.mininghistory.asn.au/mining-history/>
- Beresford, Q., & Beresford, M. (2006). Race and reconciliation: the Australian experience in international context. *Contemporary politics*, 12(1), 65-78.
- Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. London: Routledge.
- Bhabra, G. K. (2014). Postcolonial and decolonial dialogues. *Postcolonial studies*, 17(2), 115-121.
- Blagg, H., Morgan, N., Cunneen, C., & Ferrante, A. (2005). Systemic racism as a factor in the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in the Victorian criminal justice system. *Report to the Equal Opportunity Commission of Victoria*.
- Blakemore, E. (2023). Why Aboriginals Australians are still fighting for recognition. *National Geographic*. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/aboriginal-australians>
- Britannica. (2023). The Dreaming, Australian Aboriginal Mythology. *History and Society*. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/the-Dreaming-Australian-Aboriginal-mythology>
- Britannica, (2024). Australian Day. History and Society. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Australia-Day>
- Broome, R. (1994). *Aboriginal Australians* (2nd Ed.). Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Browne, A. J., Smye, V. L., & Varcoe, C. (2005). The relevance of postcolonial theoretical perspectives to research in Aboriginal health. *Canadian Journal of Nursing Research Archive*, 16-37.

- Burridge, N. (2009). Perspectives on reconciliation and Indigenous rights. *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 1(2), 111-128.
- Byrd, J. A., & Heyer, K. C. (2008). Introduction: International discourses of indigenous rights and responsibilities. *Alternatives*, 33(1), 1-5.
- Canales, S. B. (2023). Lidia Thorpe says voice referendum should be called off and attacks 'powerless advisory body'. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/aug/16/lidia-thorpe-calls-for-referendum-called-off-indigenous-voice-to-parliament-no-campaign>
- Charles, B. (2023). Institutional racism is at work in Australia. How does it affect Indigenous people?. NITV. <https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/institutional-racism-is-at-work-in-australia-how-does-it-affect-indigenous-people/ds4mvd3ft>
- Clark, C. M. H., (1957), Sources of Australian History. Diversity Council Australia/Jumbunna Institute ((Brown, C., D'Almada-Remedios, R., Gilbert, J. O'Leary, J. and Young, N.) & Yala G. (2020). Centring the Work Experiences of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Australians. *Diversity Council Australia/Jumbunna Institute*. Sydney. <https://www.respectatwork.gov.au/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander>
- Crenshaw, K. (1995). Critical Race Theory: The Key Documents That Shaped the Movement.
- Crowe, D. (2023). Revealed: The elite money behind the No Campaign. The Sydney Morning Herald. <https://web.archive.org/web/20230929003039/https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/revealed-the-elite-money-behind-the-no-campaign-20230913-p5e4eh.html>
- Cunneen, C. (2020). *Conflict, politics and crime: Aboriginal communities and the police*. Routledge.
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2023). *Critical race theory: An introduction* (Vol. 87). NyU press.
- Denzin, N. K., Lincoln, Y. S., & Smith, L. T. (Eds.). (2008). *Handbook of critical and indigenous methodologies*. Sage.



- Dodson, M. (1994). The wentworth lecture the end in the beginning: Re (de) finding aboriginality. *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, (1), 2-13.
- Dudgeon, P., Wright, M., Paradies, Y., Garvey, D., & Walker, I. (2010). The social, cultural and historical context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. *Working together: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and wellbeing principles and practice*, 25-42.
- Fairclough, N. (2013). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. Routledge.
- Ferreira, M. F. (2018). Introducing critical theory in international relations. *E-International Relations*, 1995, 1-5.
- Fielding, V. (2023). How the Murdoch Press is campaigning against the Voice Parliament. Murdoch Referendum Accountability Project. University of Adelaide Report. <https://murdochroyalcommission.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Poisoning-the-Debate-Interim-Report.pdf>
- Finlayson, N. (2023). 2023 IPSOS Indigenous Issues. Australian's perceptions of First Nation Peoples. Ipsos. (pp. 1-26). <https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/202308/2023%20Ipsos%20Indigenous%20Issues%20Report%20v6.pdf>
- Forchtner, B. (2020). Critique, Habermas and narrative (genre): the discourse-historical approach in critical discourse studies. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 18(3), 314–331. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2020.1803093>
- Foucault, M. (2000). *Power: Essential works of Foucault, Vol. 3*. The New Press.
- Foucault, M. (2003a). *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France 1974-1975*. Picador.
- Foucault, M. (2003b). "Society must be defended": *Lectures at the Collège de France 1975-1976*. Picador.
- Gatwiri, K., Rotumah, D., & Rix, E. (2021). BlackLivesMatter in healthcare: racism and implications for health inequity among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(9), 4399.

- Gillespie, E. (2022). Queensland to unveil Indigenous truth-telling inquiry as part of path to treaty. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/aug/16/queensland-to-unveil-indigenous-truth-telling-inquiry-as-part-of-path-to-treaty>
- Gorringe, S., Ross, J., & Fforde, C. (2011). ‘Will the Real Aborigine Please Stand Up?’: Strategies for breaking the stereotypes and changing the conversation.
- Green, M. J., & Sonn, C. C. (2005). Examining discourses of whiteness and the potential for reconciliation. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 15(6), 478-492.
- Hamed, S., Ahlberg, B.-M., & Trenholm, J. (2017). Powerlessness, normalization, and resistance: A Foucauldian discourse analysis of Women’s narratives on obstetric fistula in eastern Sudan. *Qualitative Health Research*, 27(12), 1828–1841.
- Hannaford, J., Huggins, J., & Collins, B. (2003). In the Hands of the Regions—A New ATSIC Report of the Review of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission. *Australian Indigenous Law Reporter*, 8(3), 105-112.
- Hart, C. (2018). Neocolonialism: the true intention behind the Northern Territory intervention. *NEW: Emerging Scholars In Australian Indigenous Studies*, 4(1), 76-82.
- Heabich, A. (1988). For their own good: Aborigines and government in the southwest of Western Australia. Perth: University of Western Australia Press.
- Haebich, A. (2000). Broken circles: Fragmenting Indigenous families 1800–2000. Perth: Fremantle Arts Centre Press.
- Healing Foundation. (2023). Who are the Stolen Generation?. <https://healingfoundation.org.au/resources/who-are-the-stolen-generations/>
- Henry, B. R., Houston, S., & Mooney, G. H. (2004). Institutional racism in Australian healthcare: a plea for decency. *Medical Journal of Australia*, 180(10), 517-520.
- Howard-Wagner, D., Bargh, M., & Altamirano-Jiménez, I. (2018). *The neoliberal state, recognition and indigenous rights: New paternalism to new imaginings*. ANU Press.
- Hunter, F. (2023, May 29). Nationals leader says claim Voice will ‘re-racialise’ Australia should not be in referendum pamphlet. *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/nationals-leader-says-claim-voice-will-re-racialise-australia-should-not-be-in-referendum-pamphlet-20230529-p5dc25.html>

Huntley, R. (2023). A majority of First Nations people support the voice. Why don't non-Indigenous Australians believe this?. *The Guardian*.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/apr/27/a-majority-of-first-nations-people-support-the-voice-why-dont-non-indigenous-australians-believe-this>

International Institute for Democratic and Electoral Assistance (IDEA). (n.d.).  
<https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/voter-turnout-database/compulsory-voting>

Johnston, E., 1991a, *National Report, 5 Vols*, Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, AGPS, Canberra.

Jorm, A. F., Bourchier, S. J., Cvetkovski, S., & Stewart, G. (2012). Mental health of Indigenous Australians: a review of findings from community surveys. *Medical Journal of Australia*, 196(2), 118-121.

Ketheesan, S., Rinaudo, M., Berger, M., Wenitong, M., Juster, R. P., McEwen, B. S., & Sarnyai, Z. (2020). Stress, allostatic load and mental health in Indigenous Australians. *Stress*, 23(5), 509-518.

Khan, T. H., & MacEachen, E. (2021). Foucauldian discourse analysis: Moving beyond a social constructionist analytic. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 20, 16094069211018009.

Kurti, P. (2022). Raging against the past: Guilt, justice, and the postcolonial reformation. *The Center for Independent Studies*. <https://www.cis.org.au/publication/raging-against-the-past-guilt-justice-and-the-postcolonial-reformation/>

Lennon C. (2023). First Person: Aboriginal Australians suffer from “violent history” and ongoing “institutional racism”. *UN News*. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/04/1135827>

Lynn, M., & Adams, M. (2002). Introductory overview to the special issue critical race theory and education: Recent developments in the field. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 35(2), 87-92.

Lovell, M. E. (2012). Liberalism, settler colonialism, and the Northern Territory intervention.

- Maddison, S. (2013). Indigenous identity, 'authenticity' and the structural violence of settler colonialism. *Identities*, 20(3), 288–303. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289X.2013.806267>
- McGlade, H. (2021). What We can do to Stop Indigenous Deaths in Custody. *The Sydney Morning Herald*. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/what-we-can-do-to-stop-indigenous-deaths-in-custody-20210405-p57gnq.html>
- McGrath, A. (2020). *Contested ground: Australian Aborigines under the British crown*. Routledge.
- McHugh, F. (2023). What do they say? Can they be trusted? The Voice pamphlets hitting letterboxes, explained. SBS News. <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/what-do-they-say-can-they-be-trusted-the-voice-pamphlets-hitting-letterboxes-explained/6vnxlovgc>
- McKeen W & Porter A (2003). Politics and transformation: Welfare state restructuring in Canada. In Clement W & Vosko S (eds), *Changing Canada: Political economy as transformation*, McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Moore, T. C. (2014). Aboriginal agency and marginalisation in Australian society.
- Moreton-Robinson, A. (2020). "Our story is in the land": Why the Indigenous sense of belonging unsettles white Australia. *Opinion*. Australian Broadcasting Company. <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/our-story-is-in-the-land-indigenous-sense-of-belonging/11159992>
- Moreton-Robinson, A. (2021). The white possessive: Identity matters in becoming Native, Black and Aboriginal. *Borderlands Journal*, 20(2), 4-29.
- Morse, D. and Bouchier, D. (2023). Key 'No' camps merge to form Australians for Unity to strengthen referendum campaign. ABC News. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-05-11/key-no-camps-merge-to-strengthen-referendum-campaign/102329478>
- Morgan, S. (2002). *Echoes of the past: Sister Kate's home revisited*. Perth: Centre for Indigenous History and the Arts, University of Western Australia.
- Nair, S. (2017). Introducing Postcolonialism in International Relations Theory. *E-International Relations Theory*. Available at: <https://www.e-ir.info/2017/12/08/postcolonialism-in-international-relations-theory/>

National Museum of Australia. (2023). Merino sheep introduced. [https://www.google.com/search?q=the+sheep+industry+in+australia+in+the+colonization+period&rlz=1C1GCEA\\_enIT1052IT1052&oq=the+sheep+industry+in+australia+in+the+colonization+period&gs\\_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUyBggAEEUYOTIHCAEQIRigATIHCAIQIRigAdIBCTEwNDQ4ajBqN6gCALACAA&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8#ip=1](https://www.google.com/search?q=the+sheep+industry+in+australia+in+the+colonization+period&rlz=1C1GCEA_enIT1052IT1052&oq=the+sheep+industry+in+australia+in+the+colonization+period&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUyBggAEEUYOTIHCAEQIRigATIHCAIQIRigAdIBCTEwNDQ4ajBqN6gCALACAA&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8#ip=1)

National Museum of Australia. (2023). National Apology. <https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/national-apology>

O'Donnell, J. (2023). Is Australia a cohesive nation? How social and economic inequalities are undermining our multicultural success. ABC. <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/social-cohesion-australia-diversity-inequality-threats/103133458>

O'Sullivan, D. (2018). Māori, the state and self-determination in the neoliberal age. *The Neoliberal State, Recognition and Indigenous Rights*, 241.

Parker, R., & Milroy, H. (2014). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health: an overview. *Working together: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and wellbeing principles and practice*, 2, 25-38.

Parliament of Australia. (n.d.). Chapter 3 - The Wording. In *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice Referendum Report*. Retrieved July 19, 2024, from [https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Joint/Former\\_Committees/Aboriginal\\_and\\_Torres\\_Strait\\_Islander\\_Voice\\_Referendum/VoiceReferendum/Report/Chapter\\_3\\_-\\_The\\_Wording](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Former_Committees/Aboriginal_and_Torres_Strait_Islander_Voice_Referendum/VoiceReferendum/Report/Chapter_3_-_The_Wording)

Phoenix, A. (2002). A monocultural nation in a multi-cultural society? British continuities and discontinuities in the racialised and gendered nation. In *Crossing Borders and Shifting Boundaries: Vol. II: Gender, Identities and Networks* (pp. 75-92). Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Pratt, A., Elder, C., & Ellis, C. (2000, December). Reconciliation: origins, policy, practice, representations, meanings, futures. In *Diversity Conference—Imagining Ourselves: Reconciliation in the National Imagination*.

Raby, R. (2005). What is resistance? *Journal of Youth Studies*, 8(2),151–171.

Reconciliation Australia. (2023). Voice to Parliament. <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/reconciliation/support-a-voice-to-parliament/>

- Reisigl, M. (2017). The Discourse-Historical Approach. In J. Flowerdew, & J. E. Richardson (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Critical Discourse Studies* (pp.44- 59). Routledge. <http://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315739342.ch3>
- Reisigl., M., & Wodak., R. (2009). Methods of critical discourse analysis. *The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)*, (pp. 87 – 121). Sage Publications Ltd. [https://www.academia.edu/49859175/The\\_discourse\\_historical\\_approach\\_DHA](https://www.academia.edu/49859175/The_discourse_historical_approach_DHA)
- Reynolds, H. (1987). *Frontier: Aborigines, settlers and land*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Reynolds, H. (1987). *The Law of the Land*. *Frost Historical Studies*. vol.19. no.77.
- Rickard, J. (2017). *Australia: A cultural history*. Monash University Publishing.
- Ritchie, H. (2023). Voice referendum: Indigenous rights vote is a reckoning for Australia. BBC News. Sydney. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-66944609>
- Ritchie, H. (2023b.). Voice Referendum: Lies Fuel Racism ahead of Australia’s Indigenous vote. BBC News. Sydney. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-66470376>
- Ryoo, J. J., & McLaren, P. (2010). Critical theory. Elsevier, 348-353.
- Roe, I. (2023). The No victory in Voice to Parliament referendum reveals more than a divide between urban and regional Australia. *ABC News*. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-10-15/nsw-votes-no-indigenous-voice-referendum-demographics-result/102976968>
- Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon.
- Salma, N. F. (2018). Exploring Van Dijk: Critical Discourse Analysis’s Aims.
- Santos, T. (2006). The Politics of Teaching. *Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics* (Second Edition). *Elsevier*, 719-728.
- Sarra, C. (2014). *Strong and smart-towards a pedagogy for emancipation: Education for first peoples*. Routledge.
- SBS News. (2022). The journey to the Uluru Statement from the Heart. <https://www.sbs.com.au/language/english/en/article/the-journey-to-the-uluu-statement-from-the-heart/vkgmybdyp>

- SBS News. (2023). Australia's Indigenous Voice to Parliament referendum 2023: Your questions answered. <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/voice-to-parliament-explained-everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-referendum/vt912lzxo>
- Shah S. (2024). The Doctrine of Discovery and the Terra Nullius. *The Indigenous Foundation*. <https://www.theindigenousfoundation.org/articles/the-doctrine-of-discovery-and-terra-nullius>
- Short, D. (2003). Reconciliation, assimilation, and the indigenous peoples of Australia. *International Political Science Review*, 24(4), 491-513.
- Singh J (2014). Recognition and self-determination approaches from above and below. In Eisenberg A, Webber J, Coulthard G & Boiselle A (eds), *Recognition vs self-determination: Dilemmas of emancipatory politics*, UBC Press, Toronto, Vancouver.
- Sissons, J. (2005). *First peoples: Indigenous cultures and their futures*. London: Reaktion Books.
- Sonu, D. (2022). Making a racial difference: A Foucauldian analysis of school memories told by undergraduates of color in the United States. *Critical Studies in Education*, 63(3), 340-354.
- Wandel, T. (2001). The power of discourse: Michel Foucault and critical theory. *Journal for Cultural Research*, 5(3), 368-382.
- Sullivan, P. J. (2011). *Belonging together: Dealing with the politics of disenchantment in Australian Indigenous affairs policy*. Aboriginal Studies Press.
- Survival (2009). Aboriginal Peoples. <https://survivalinternational.org/tribes/aboriginals>
- Swanston, T. (2022). Douglas 'Mootijah' Shillingsworth's death from ear infection while in custody was preventable, inquest finds. ABC News. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-07-22/douglas-mootijah-shillingsworth-death-preventable-inquest/101260532>
- Thomas, M. (2017). The 1967 Referendum. *Parliament of Australia*. [https://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/FlagPost/2017/May/The\\_1967\\_Referendum](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/FlagPost/2017/May/The_1967_Referendum)
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2009). *Critical discourse studies: A sociocognitive approach* (pp. 62-86). na.

Viviani, R. (2023). The productivity of power: An interweaving of Gramscian ideology and Foucauldian truth. *Notebooks: The Journal for Studies on Power*, 3(2), 148-175.

Yes 23 (2023). YES makes it possible. *Yes*, 23. <https://www.yes23.com.au/>

Williams, P., & Chrisman, L. (2015). Colonial discourse and post-colonial theory: An introduction. In *Colonial discourse and post-colonial theory* (pp. 1-20). Routledge.

Wilson, D. M. (2015). *Different White People: Radical Activism for Aboriginal Rights 1946-1972*. Apollo Books.

Wodak, R. (2006). Linguistic analyses in language policies. *An introduction to language policy: Theory and method*, 10(3), 170-193.

Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (2009). Critical discourse analysis: History, agenda, theory and methodology. *Methods of critical discourse analysis*, 2(1), 1-33.

Wright, A. (1997). *Grog War*, Broome, Magabala Books.