Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to develop and test the link between third-phase mediatisation of politics and political accountability. It investigates the extent and implications of mediatisation’s influence on political accountability in the controversial political issue of seeking asylum in Australia between 2001 and 2014. A theoretical framework is produced that combines approaches from mediatisation, networked governance and accountability theory. This framework is first tested in a quantitative regression analysis of 2860 newspaper articles using the computational text analysis software, Diction. A grounded-theory qualitative framing analysis of 18 articles is then used to test the framework and determine mediatisation’s impact on the framing of accountability issues.

The analyses show that mediatisation’s influence on political accountability is significant and that organisational incentives lead to the creation of stable moral and practical frames. Each of these frames promotes a different kind of accountability, but only the moral frame can produce accountability for process, the kind of accountability that governs moral questions. Worryingly, the moral frame is more rare, depends on scandals and is not aligned with organisational incentives of profit, efficiency and independence that are prioritised during mediatisation’s third phase. This finding severely undermines the press’ role as a public watchdog and suggests limits to the press’ power to enforce accountable outcomes, suggesting that a normative reading of mediatisation is necessary to understand its impacts on accountability processes.

Keywords: Accountability, mediatisation, politics, immigration, Australia, seeking asylum, framing, scandal.
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Chapter 1: Introduction and outline

1.1. Introduction

This is a study of mediatisation’s influence on political accountability. The thesis examines how the institutional effects of mediatisation at the level of linguistic choices and article framing change accountability processes and outcomes. This study develops the conceptual link between mediatisation and accountability. In particular, it examines the consequences of the mediatisation of the press’ fourth estate function – the media’s power to hold elected officials to account. This thesis develops a theoretical model that is later used in an empirical analysis of the mediatisation of accountability for a political issue in Australia. The issue chosen is seeking asylum as it has remained a salient issue in Australian politics through several electoral cycles (Boulus, Dowding, and Pietsch 2013). Through computer-aided quantitative analysis of 2860 newspaper articles, and a qualitative analysis of the media frames concerning these policy matters in 18 articles, this study considers mediatisation’s influence on accountability performances. Connecting mediatisation to accountability enables a normative critique of mediatisation processes and gives governments, policy-makers, and media professionals an opportunity to review the importance of accountability and the potential threats posed by mediatisation. This connection is under-developed in the existing mediatisation literature, and the accountability literature is yet to incorporate the meta-theoretical implications of processes such as mediatisation.

It is obvious that media has and is undergoing significant structural changes that destabilise traditional formats and force the emergence of a new media sphere. In addition, it is obvious that politicians have adapted the way that politics is conducted in digital late modernity to new economic, security and technological challenges. A part of these challenges is adapting political communication to changing practices and priorities of media organisations. On the surface – and according to much of the mediatisation literature – this relationship is unproblematic: the press exist to convey information and to ferret out the truth. Yet the changing economics of media production mean incentives are aligned to cover the sensational and the scandalous, to the detriment of longstanding
issues that may be more important to the functioning of democratic systems (Skovsgaard and van Dalen 2012, 382). In Australia, a country with bipartisan immigration politics but a voraciously polarised press, this scenario is fertile ground for the press’ watchdog function to operate; yet it fails dismally in its attempts to censure these policy failures. For these reasons – and the health of our democracies – we consider both scandal and the banal and their relationships to accountability as something very valuable, and potentially under threat.

1.2. Purpose and research questions

The purpose of this thesis is to assess the extent that media performances of accountability are affected by mediatisation. The secondary purpose of this thesis is to critically assess mediatisation’s implications on the effectiveness of the press’ ability to effectively demand accountability, i.e.: the press’ role as the fourth estate. These questions are crucial to understanding the relationship between politics and the media in networked digital late modernity. Weakening accountability undermines core conceptions of democratic legitimacy that the press’ independence is designed to protect. This paper seeks answers to whether mediatisation influences the press’ ability to ensure accountable political outcomes.

From this purpose, the following two research questions have been drawn:

- **RQ1:** To what extent are media performances of accountability susceptible to mediatisation’s influences?
- **RQ2:** What are the implications of mediatisation’s influence on the media’s performances of accountability?

These research questions address the effect of mediatisation on a media performance. Performance refers to the specific ways that media products (e.g.: newspaper articles) are written. This encompasses the issue selection, framing, language choices, and quote selection of the article. The overall performance can be weak or strong, depending on how central the concept of accountability is to the article. By analysing mediatisation’s influence on the strength of these performances, this thesis draws a link between media’s
double articulation – both as a product of the world (the media text) and a definer of that world (the normative arguments the text conveys). As is shown in the theoretical section of this paper, the question of who is responsible to whom for what is political. It is a contest of power. Media power indicates the relative strength of the press’ capacity to influence or define who is accountable. Studying the ways that mediatisation affects this process is crucial to understanding democratic legitimacy in digital late modernity (Deuze 2012).

This study pursues these questions in two ways. Firstly, an empirical measure of political accountability is gathered from a sample of newspaper articles drawn from the three elections in the period 2001 to 2013, the years (in the recent era) in which the immigration issue has been at the forefront of Australian politics. This quantitative data is used to determine the extent of mediatisation’s influence on political accountability, answering Research Question 1. The data is divided into periods that are pre- and post-election coverage, each of approximately six months worth of data. Given increased media power before an election, it is predicted that mediatisation and accountability effects will be most evident in the periods before elections (Strömbäck and Dimitrova 2011). Dividing the samples into pre-election and post-election periods enables the study of the press when it is both most and least able to influence election results (directly before and after an election, respectively). Research question two, the implications of mediatisation’s influences on accountability is addressed through the qualitative study. In the qualitative study frames are examined in a grounded theory approach that uses iterative sampling drawn across the study period. This case allows for dissection of the data from multiple perspectives and considers the complexity of media ownership, political bias and time as confounding factors.

1.3. Relevance and contribution

This thesis is relevant because it theoretically develops our understanding of mediatisation, particularly with respect to mediatisation’s influence on accountability. This can have significant impacts on the functioning of a democracy and strikes at core issues of responsiveness and trust. It is relevant for us to consider our moral and legal obligations to those who have no voice in our press, and who are subject to our worst criticisms with little platform for their defence. The contribution of this paper is the
understanding that as a metaprocess, mediatisation seeps into our social institutions and alters their practices, both mundane and spectacular. This study joins the growing chorus of work that challenges the uniformity of assumptions behind mediatisation and looks at how mediatisation, in conjunction with specific local factors, can have unforeseen and unwanted consequences (Gorka 2014).

Furthermore, this paper joins with Hepp, Hjarvard and Lundby in their call for a greater degree of empirical testing of mediatisation, to determine how it operates in particular contexts and to what effect (Hepp, Hjarvard, and Lundby 2010). In addition, the method employed, particularly the use of computer-assisted quantitative analysis, is a further contribution to techniques available to researchers for the study of mediatisation. Slavin (2011) states that when we are confronted with large amounts of data we don’t understand, ‘we pull them out, pin them to the wall like butterflies, and give them a name and story’. This paper is one part of drawing mediatisation out from the complex changes in digital late modernity, and, it is hoped, a part of writing a better story of how mediatisation affects our political lives.

1.4. Epistemological position

This thesis adopts a post-positivist position as the basis of its epistemological assumptions. This holds that we are able to study a reality that exists outside of the subjectivities of agents (Trochim 2006). Within this framework, the position of critical realism is endorsed as providing the best account of the phenomena in question. I posit that the data analysed here reflects an accurate depiction of how the phenomena occurs in society and that we can use this knowledge to make meaningful statements about the world beyond our individual perspectives on it. This position assumes that data may be fallible, and the research design of this paper uses triangulation of methods to attempt to build a more complete picture, one that is less prone to the errors in a single perspective of the data. Hence, while the view studied here is recognised as partial, it is partial to a whole that we all share. The study proceeds from these grounds and with the assumption that it can be used to inform debate and policy measures that affect the world as it is experienced by others, above and beyond their subjective experiences.

Having labelled the epistemological position as such, this accepts that all observations
are theory-laden and partial but this does not prevent the production of meaningful knowledge about the world and does not collapse the project into relativism.

1.5. Normative position

Adopting a post-positivist epistemological position necessitates the labelling of the researcher’s biases. In this study there are several key normative assumptions that guide my research and the analysis presented. In particular, and as will be seen, there is a strong focus on the moral and humanitarian implications of the field of study. This normative position guides the research that is presented in the rest of this thesis, particularly the assumptions for the implications of the research presented in the discussion (Chapter 7). I state, unashamedly, that I believe in the importance of maintaining the dignity of human lives and that the nation-state cannot be granted the power or authority to deny this dignity (Honneth 1992). I hold deep and abiding concerns for the continuation and efficacy of democratic processes, particularly in relation to their theoretical and moral assumptions. These assumptions are stringently tied to authority, accountability and the proper exercise of power in a civil society (Larmore 1990). In this regard, democratic power is contractual and can be associated with Rawls’ ethical precepts, to which I also prescribe (Rawls 2006). I do not associate my normative position with the inflexibility of a deontological approach, but suggest instead that these values are virtues that should be encouraged and promoted in a well-functioning human society. To this regard, these values can be considered virtue ethics. I respect that differences exist on exactly which values should be elevated to the highest of virtues. I similarly find it uncontroversial to suggest, as did Aristotle, that tolerance, nonmalfeasance and a duty to view people as moral equals are values worth promoting as virtues (Aristotle 2015). I vehemently reject the utilitarian calculus that governs Australia’s immigration policy, that justifies means on the basis of their ends and that devalues individuals precisely by how much they cost the state.

1.6. Thesis outline

This paper is structured in eight chapters. Following this (chapter one) introduction, chapter two provides historical and other relevant background that enables the reader to
understand both the context to the study and the normative reasons for pursuing this topic. This chapter also provides clear justifications for implications of the study. Chapter three presents the relevant literature for both mediatisation and accountability and identifies the research gap that this project fills. Chapter four introduces the theoretical model used to combine mediatisation with political accountability theories in late-modern democratic governance. Chapter five explains the method employed, involving a statistical analysis of large-scale quantitative data drawn from Australian newspapers and a qualitative framing analysis from a grounded theory approach. The analysis is performed in chapter six. Chapter seven summarises the key implications of this study and discusses how these findings have bearing on contemporary media practice in late modernity and under conditions of mediatisation. Finally, chapter eight summarises the project as a whole and signposts avenues for future research.
Chapter 2: Background and case context

This section provides the context of the study, while the specific literature employed is presented in chapter 3. This background characterises the data that is used and describes key events during the three years in the period of study. In addition, it provides a partial explanation of the long history of various institutions and policies in Australian society. This information is critical to the study as it provides the local contexts and the specificity that makes an empirical study possible. Without this level of understanding, our knowledge would be abstracted and would fit poorly with the human experiences we are attempting to describe. In the interests of brevity, however, the following four areas of contextual information are succinct and the reader is directed to more complete accounts that have already been published on the respective topics if they wish to learn more about a particular aspect of Australian society. The important point is that the following information characterises the playing-field on which mediatisation operates in the Australian context, and it is from this basis that this study proceeds.

2.1. The Australian media scape

Australia is identified by Hallin et al. (2004) as a North Atlantic/Liberal model, typified by market forces, pluralistic journalism and professionalisation and non-institutionalised self-regulation where publically funded broadcasters operate in the same market as commercial enterprises. This is very similar to Humphreys’ analysis of the United Kingdom media system, notably due to similarities between the BBC and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) (Humphreys 2009). Regulations in Australia prevent the ownership of multiple media forms in the same location. This means, for instance, that a media proprietor cannot own all three of a television station, radio channel and newspaper that services the same city. Despite these regulations, media empires have emerged that serve (in varying combinations) across different geographic contexts. This study is restricted to the analysis of newspapers only, yet is important to recognise that these newspapers operate as one patch of a complex quilt of media organisations that covers the country.
The two largest and most diversified of these media empires are those owned by Fairfax Holdings and News Ltd. Fairfax owns popular radio stations in the major cities and has a stable of broadsheet newspapers that serve the largest and most populous cities. News Ltd. is a division of Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation and has a series of tabloid newspapers and the influential national broadsheet publication *The Australian*. Whereas Fairfax supplements its media reach with a series of radio stations (including talkback stations 2UE and 3AW), News Ltd. has a partial stake in the subscription television service Foxtel, a joint partnership with Australia’s largest telecommunications provider (and former government monopoly), Telstra (Media 2015; Foxtel 2015). Both of these organisations have a national reach and syndicate their content between properties and to online formats, with each of the newspapers in this study also maintaining a web presence.

The for-profit media in Australia has been particularly affected by several changes in the media landscape in recent years. The convergence review commenced in 2010 has questioned the wisdom of retaining regulations preventing multiple media ownership in an era of digital journalism and the multimedia capacities of the Internet (Boreham 2012). Secondly, the entry, through online platforms, of international competitors such as Al Jazeera English and The Guardian Australia has further destabilised the existing audiences and market relationships for media in Australia. Much of the progressive readership of the Fairfax papers has shifted to reading online the Australian edition of The Guardian as their primary source of news. The Australian companies (News Ltd. and Fairfax) maintain a paywall for visitors to their sites. In this instance, there is an asymmetry in the financial structure of news provision, with The Guardian (and others) able to freely generate revenue from advertising impressions on its sites, while News Ltd. and Fairfax are hampered by the decision to maintain a paywall. The declining revenues at both have led to significant outsourcing of capacity and an increased reliance on wire services (such as Australian Associate Press and Reuters) and press releases. In 2011 Fairfax retrenched 82 sub-editors and has instead employed the services of the sub-editing service Pagemasters and had planned redundancy costs of 25 million Australian dollars, further indicating that a business-as-usual approach is not working (AAP 2011). Each of these developments points to the impact of shifting economic fundamentals in the market for news and journalism, to which Australia is not immune.
The public broadcasters (The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and the Specialist Broadcasting Service (SBS)) are not included in this study, but they do provide broadcasting of public-interest radio and television formats. As public broadcasters whose budgets are defined by government statute and not market forces, they are less subject to the mediatisation processes studied here. In addition, whereas they do not maintain a newspaper property in Australia, interviews and commentary conducted on the ABC and SBS is a crucial part of news framing and agenda setting for all media organisations. Much of the reportage in the News Ltd. and Fairfax papers is commentary on ministerial performance in interviews on the ABC, particularly after the weekly screening of the political panel show Q&A (Questions and Answers) which often involves a minister and shadow minister from Australia’s major political parties (see Grattan 2015 for a recent example).

As shown, newspapers in Australia are but one component of a much larger and vibrant media environment. Taken together, Fairfax and News Ltd. account for 90 per cent of newspaper publishing in Australia (Papandrea 2013). In particular, the geographic spread of newspapers in Australia – and syndication between properties – means that the majority of Australians have a consistent set of news available to them, regardless of whether they live on the populous East coast or the less populated Western coast. In addition to their flagship publications in each city, Fairfax and News Ltd. also maintain a series of local and independent newspapers. While the coverage of these newspapers is significant, the scope of the topics they cover relate to local issues and are not well suited to the analysis of Federal politics, a topic often reserved for the larger, state-based publications. For this reason, the Independent, and Leader papers are excluded from this study. Similarly, newspapers outside of the duopoly between Fairfax and News Ltd. (such as the Marxist-leaning Echo Times) are excluded due to low circulation and providing a non-indicative presentation of mainstream media in Australia.

The papers chosen for this study can be grouped by proprietor. The Fairfax papers are the nation-wide Australian Financial Review (AFR), the NSW-based Sydney Morning Herald, the Melbourne based The Age and The Sunday Age (which is published only on Sundays to the same subscribers as The Age) and the Canberra based Canberra Times. The News Ltd. papers are the Adelaide based The Advertiser, the Brisbane based Courier Mail, the Sydney based Daily Telegraph, the Hobart based Hobart Mercury and the national newspaper, The
Australian. This means that in the present study, Fairfax holds a monopoly over the cities of Canberra and Melbourne, while News Ltd. holds a monopoly over the cities of Hobart, Brisbane and Adelaide. In this study, competition between the newspaper proprietors is evident in Sydney, as well as the competing national newspapers (AFR and The Australian).

2.2. Immigration policies in Australia

Australia has had a chequered history with immigration. Erroneously claimed ‘terra nullius’ by European settlers at the time of colonial settlement, the first experiences with immigration ignored a civilisation that had lived nomadically on the continent for an estimated 60,000 years (Australian Government 2015). Subsequent formal policies made by the colonial powers were directed at protecting the European heritage of the Australian colonies, culminating in the Immigration Restriction Act (or more commonly known as the White Australia Policy) of the newly federated nation in 1901 (Parliament of Australia 1901).

The Immigration Restriction Act 1901 dictated the terms of migration to Australia. In 1901, Australian industry was predominantly agricultural, but the country had experienced a gold boom that had attracted both prospectors and migrant labour from the neighbouring Oceanic and South-East Asian region. Concerned with protecting domestic employment, the Immigration Restriction Act sought to eliminate immigration options for low-skilled and low-paid migrant labour, particularly to the Queensland sugar farms. The policy gave preference to European citizens, particularly those from Great Britain or other parts of the Commonwealth. A particularly restrictive measure was the Dictation Test (active between 1901 and 1958), where the applicant was required to write out 50 words in any European language dictated by an immigration official; ‘as the language used was at the discretion of the officer, it was easy to ensure failure if the applicant was thought to be “undesirable”’ (Australian Government 2015). This policy would survive in various forms for the next four decades, giving absolute preference to British migrants over all others.
In 1925, Prime Minister Stanley Bruce foreshadowed many of Australia’s continued issues with responding to immigration when he stated, ‘We intend to keep this country white and not allow its people to be faced with the problems that at present are practically insoluble in many parts of the world’ (Bruce (1925) in Chiro 2011). The determination to keep Australia white has also led to the overwhelming dominance of Christianity as the major religion in Australia, despite a total of 6.5 million migrants settling in Australia in the post-war decades (Australian Government 2007).

Dismantling of the policy began following the Second World War. Non-European refugees were permitted to stay in 1949, and the government commenced an educational program with Asia, dubbed the Colombo Plan, in 1950 (National Museum of Australia 2015). The Whitlam Government passed the Racial Discrimination Act that disallowed the use of race for any criteria in 1975, following successive policies that liberalised the migration scheme, and an increased demand for migrant labour in Australian agricultural industries (Australia 1975).

Australia’s current immigration policy consists of two streams: skilled migration and humanitarian (refugee) intakes. The skilled migration program assigns point values to prospective migrants on the basis of their academic qualifications, financial means, health and family criteria. Those with higher points are awarded priority for migration to Australia. Conversely, as a signatory to the United Nations Convention on Refugees and Stateless Persons, Australia is obligated to accept those that seek asylum. It is the controversies surrounding the humanitarian intake since 2001 that is the focus of this paper and the site of our examination of mediatisation’s influence on accountability.

2.2.1. Australia’s humanitarian / refugee program

Australia’s Humanitarian Refugee program is governed by the Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons 1954 (United Nations 1954a). This establishes that the parliament has the power to determine a quota for how many refugees Australia will resettle through this formal program, drawn from a global pool of refugees and administered by the United Nations. In addition, Australia is obligated as a signatory to this convention to identify and process asylum seekers that make in-country claims for asylum. As Australia is an island continent, the definition of in-country includes all
coastal and maritime borders, overseas territories and embassies. The humanitarian programs permit the government to investigate and determine the validity of an asylum seeker's claim for asylum and if found valid they are granted a refugee visa to stay in the country on terms proximally equivalent with an Australian citizen.

Despite this, since 2001 successive governments have created artificial distinctions in the humanitarian program that now differentiate between asylum seekers relocated from United Nations-run programs and those that make direct applications after arriving in Australia. Of the latter category, those applications made in Australia, a further distinction has emerged between those asylum seekers that arrive in Australia by plane and those that are intercepted by the Australian Navy in the territorial waters off the coast of the Australian mainland. These latter, pejoratively termed ‘boat people’ are the catalyst for what has, since 2001, been an increasingly acrimonious debate on seeking asylum and has resulted in harsher penalties and detention for making an asylum claim in this manner. The term ‘boat people’ refers to the first wave of government-supported non-white immigration to Australia, in 1976, when then Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser supported 200,000 refugee resettlements from Malaysia, Hong Kong and Thailand following the arrival of 2000 Vietnamese refugees by boat (National Archives of Australia 2015).

As a measure of policy instruments to deter the arrival of modern boat people, Australia has relied on a series of mandatory incarceration policies, starting with the infamous onshore detention facilities in Woomera, a remote location that is nearby to a munitions testing site. In addition to the physical incarceration of asylum-seekers while their claims are being processed, the government has introduced a series of temporary protection visas, which grant a limited-term refugee status to the individual who, upon resumption of safe environment in their home country, will be forced to return home. Appendix I demonstrates the comparison between a permanent protection visa (similar to refugee status in many countries) and the more limited scope of the temporary protection visas. Such policies have been criticised as preventing refugees from integrating into the Australian community, a criticism also voiced in many other countries (Pugliese 2004). These temporary protection visas do not allow for family reunification. The government has also passed legislation making it a crime for anyone to advise on immigration matters without training by the Office of the Migration Agents Registration Authority (Synch1
The MARA prohibits the issuing of advice from within Australia, and while it has no jurisdiction overseas, it maintains offices in immigrant source countries to inform potential applicants for asylum on the process in Australia. This means that the government maintains an executive right to prosecute refugees who attempt to provide immigration advice to their families or others seeking to flee persecution. Further and specific developments in immigration policies are addressed in the three periods of study explained in the next sub-section, which discusses Australian elections and their relevant immigration policies.

2.3. A selection of elections

This study covers the period 2001 to 2013, during which Australia had elections in the years 2001, 2004, 2007, 2010 and 2013. While there were five elections, only three have been included in the present study. The elections chosen (2001, 2007 and 2013) are the elections in which the political parties promised significant change to immigration policies in the lead-up to the election. In each of the summaries below, I present the major political issues of that election and discuss the immigration policy as it stood and as was proposed by the two political parties. By considering the changes to policy brought about by these elections, we can begin to grasp the banality of institutional actions and the lack of accountability that this draws.

2.3.1. The 2001 election and the Tampa Affair

In August 2001, Australia and Norway entered into a diplomatic spat over the MV Tampa. The Tampa was a Norwegian freight vessel that had intercepted and rescued 438 refugees from a sinking vessel. The Australian government refused to allow the Tampa to enter Australian territorial waters, although it did provide medical supplies and food for the people on-board. Eventually, the Norwegian crew declared a state of emergency on-board and entered Australian waters, triggering the deployment of the Australian Special Air Service Regiment elite troops to the vessel who commanded that the ship be returned to international waters. The crew refused, and Australia attempted to convince foreign governments – including Indonesia and Norway – to accept the asylum seekers. Both refused, and Norway reported Australia to the United Nations (Willheim 2003). These refugees were eventually diverted to Nauru, and became the first people moved
under the newly formed Pacific Solution, introduced after the incumbent conservative Prime Minister John Howard and the Australian Liberal Party was returned to office in the election in November 2001.

Many commentators suggest this was because of the shifting security environment and the movement to restrict immigration after the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States of America (Willheim 2003). Despite long-standing opposition from the Australian Labor Party over the mandatory, indefinite detention carried out at facilities such as Woomera, the Liberal Party was re-elected on a platform that promised an even tighter restriction on immigration. Howard famously stated at the launch of his election campaign that ‘We will decide who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come’ (Karlsen and Phillips 2010). This announcement heralded the beginning of the Pacific Solution through the amendment of the Commonwealth Migration Act (1958) (Commonwealth of Australia 1958). The policy required any maritime arrivals in Australia seeking refugee status to be processed in third countries, and to provide disincentives to travel to Australia on perilous boat journeys because of the low probability of a successful asylum claim (after a prolonged period of mandatory detention). In addition, the Royal Australian Navy was deployed to patrol Australia’s maritime borders and to intercept and return vessels travelling to Australia, so called Suspected Irregular Entry Vehicles (SIEVs) (Australian Customs Service 2008). With this policy in place, processing centres were established in Nauru and Papua New Guinea and the mainland detention centres of Woomera, Baxter and Curtin were closed.

The policy continued until the 2007 election and the defeat of Howard and the Liberal Party. The policy was criticised by Amnesty International Australia (2006) who stated that the bill ‘punishes genuine asylum seekers and potentially places Australia in breach of its international legal obligations’. Amnesty also found that ‘it is highly probable that persons affected by this legislation will be those fleeing persecution from the neighbouring Papua province of Indonesia’ and that ‘to detain these people so close to the source of their fear is especially inhumane’ (Amnesty International Australia 2006).

2.3.2. The 2007 election
During the 2007 election, immigration issues were not a key focus of the election campaigns. Instead, the worsening state of the economy and the need for action on
climate change were the major political issues (Bean and Gow 2007). The Liberal Party was defeated at the election and Kevin Rudd of the Australian Labor Party became Prime Minister. In 2008, Rudd closed the immigration detention centres at Manus Island and in Nauru, but opened and maintained a centre on Christmas Island. The government continued the policy of turning back boats to Indonesia and relying on temporary protection visas as a means for providing a disincentive for seeking asylum in Australia. During this time, global migration of refugees continued to increase and a corresponding increase was detected in the numbers reaching Australia and subsequently applying for asylum. This was interpreted in the domestic political context as Labor being weak on immigration and undoing the successful work of the previous Liberal government (Garnier and Cox 2012). The issue remained contentious for several years but there was no formal change to policy until 2012, when then Labor Prime Minister Julia Gillard reopened the detention facilities at Manus Island, Papua New Guinea and on Nauru. The Gillard government also considered the idea of a processing swap with Malaysia, where Australia’s unprocessed arrivals would be swapped for 4,000 persons in Malaysia already determined to be genuine refugees. The High Court of Australia invalidated this arrangement (High Court of Australia 2011). With the embarrassment of this failed policy, and fearing electoral wipe-out, the Labor party replaced Gillard with Kevin Rudd as its (once-and-now-again) leader, and he subsequently announced that:

“From now on, any asylum seeker who arrives in Australia by boat will have no chance of being settled in Australia as refugees. … If they are found to be genuine refugees they will be resettled in Papua New Guinea … If they are found not to be genuine refugees they may be repatriated to their country of origin or be sent to a safe third country other than Australia” (Parliament of Australia 2013).

Detainees are already subject to significant discrimination and violence in Papua New Guinea. Gary Zuffa, governor of the Oro Province in PNG has stated that ‘the decision to settle refugees in Papua New Guinea could be very divisive’ and that the ‘asylum seeker plan will create hostility and add to the problems in the developing country’ (ABC 2013). The UNHCR stated that the ‘sustainable integration of non-Melanesian refugees in the socio-economic and cultural life of PNG will raise formidable challenges and protection questions’ finding that the PNG centres ‘lack a national capacity and expertise
in processing, … [have] poor physical conditions …[and] open-ended, mandatory and arbitrary detention settings… [that] can be harmful to the psycho-social wellbeing of transferees, particularly families and children’ (Fleming 2013).

At this time there was bipartisan political support for the policy and practice of offshore mandatory detention of maritime arrivals seeking asylum in Australia. Ironically, when Rudd was replaced by Gillard in 2010, he stated that he feared a ‘lurch to the right’ on immigration politics under a Gillard government, only to return to office and announce a policy nearly identical to that of the Liberal Party (McCann 2014). Despite the similarity in policy positions, the impending election in September following Rudd’s announcement subsequently elected then opposition leader Tony Abbott of the Australian Liberal Party, who campaigned on the slogan of ‘Stop the Boats’, as the Prime Minister of Australia.

2.3.3. The 2013 election – Operation Sovereign Borders
The Abbott Government came to power after a period of dysfunctional infighting and factional coups from the Labor party, in addition to a minority parliament, a historical rarity in Australian politics. The overwhelming strength of their victory in 2013 was adopted as an endorsement of their key election issue, stopping the boats, despite not announcing any policy alternatives until the week of the election. The Government moved quickly to commence Operation Sovereign Borders, where control over immigration matters was handled jointly by the Department of Immigration and the Department of Defence under the command of a three-star general (Australian Customs and Border Protection Service 2013). New protocols were put in place for the restriction of access to immigration detention facilities and military officers were prevented from commenting on ‘operational’ or ‘on-water’ matters. In addition, restrictions were made to access for the Human Rights Commissioner (HRC) to the detention facilities, under the claim that the Australian HRC has no jurisdiction on facilities run by Australia but in another country (B. Hall 2013). A series of boat turn-backs commenced that has involved a maritime incursion into Indonesia’s territorial waters, the handing of a boat laden with refugees from Sri Lanka to the Sri Lankan authorities and the continued incarceration of children and families indefinitely in immigration detention facilities.

Operation Sovereign Borders has been a source of irritation for media agencies that have
been unable to access timely and credible information on what is happening in the detention facilities. The Minister responsible for the policy had accused the public broadcaster of fabricating stories that defamed the department and the operation and called for a public apology from the public broadcaster (Liddy 2014). In addition to media criticisms, specific legal concerns have been raised by the legal community in the press, with 53 scholars signing and publishing a joint statement on how the policy breaches the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Watson 2014).

Deaths have occurred in the custody of the Australian government, particularly the case of Reza Berati who was killed when Papua New Guinean police broke into Australia’s facility in that country and assaulted the detainees (The Senate 2014). No ministerial accountability has been taken for the breakdown of order at the Manus Island facility, or for the ‘appalling conditions’ in which Australia is keeping detainees (Amnesty International Australia 2013). Graeme McGregor, coordinator for Amnesty International Australia’s refugee campaigns said that ‘the new plans … show not only a complete disregard for asylum seekers but absolute contempt for legal and moral obligations’ and that ‘the Prime Minister has shown his willingness to pay any financial cost to bypass humanitarian obligations’ (ibid.). The only scandal in the combination of abuses and transgressions that are carried out daily in Australia’s immigration processing policies are precisely how seemingly mundane and normalised they have become.

2.3.4. Summary - elections

What is noticeable about these particular changes in Australia’s immigration policies and schemes to detain arrivals is that there have been no ministerial resignations or censures of any kind. Each of the successive immigration ministers has been able to move on to other roles in government and act with impunity, with their governments being re-elected (in 2004 and 2010) even in the face of such policies. Given the publication of critical reports by the United Nations, Amnesty International, the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, the lack of ministerial accountability and an effective censure suggest that something is broken in the way accountability is performed in the modern Australian state. As will be shown in
the rest of this study, mediatisation’s influence on accountability performances explains at least part of this lack of ministerial accountability for process.

2.4. Chapter summary - background

This chapter has provided an overview of the context from which the source articles have been drawn. The role of two major newspaper proprietors has been considered in light of Australia’s complex media landscape. Similarly, the country’s past with immigration policies has been described. Three key changes to immigration policy in the last 15 years have signified a further movement away from Australia’s obligations under international law. These immigration policies have been broadly supported by the public, with opinion poll data from 2012 indicating that 60 per cent of respondents felt the government was ‘too soft’ on refugees (Markus 2012). Despite this popular support for restricting immigration, these policies pursued to achieve this are questionable (and are now being questioned) for their human rights impacts. While outside of the period of study (which ends on 6 March 2014), it should be noted that these issues are unresolved at the time of writing. In March 2015, the UNHRC reported that the government has ‘violated the right of asylum seekers, including children, to be free from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment’ (Mendez 2015). Clearly, these issues are ongoing and no domestic accountability has been taken. Prime Minister Abbott’s response to these findings of torture are that ‘Australians are sick of being lectured to by the United Nations’ (Doherty and Hurst 2015). I posit that something is significantly wrong with accountability performances when a national leader disregards the United Nations’ concerns so callously. This background section has provided a comprehensive (if not exhaustive) examination of the situation in Australia with respect to ministerial accountability for immigration matters and the relationship between the press and Australian politics. The next chapter discusses the existing literature on mediatisation of political accountability.
Chapter 3: Literature review

3.1. Introduction to the literature review

This chapter locates this thesis within the existing literature on the link between mediatisation and accountability. The focus is on how previous studies have tied the concepts of accountability and mediatisation together and have pursued theoretical and empirical work in this field. These combined perspectives from media and political science have given rise to a body of literature that emphasises content analyses and framing analysis, and identifies distinct research gaps with regards to non-election periods and events that are not scandals. This literature review also includes an examination of previous studies on the Australian media and how political accountability has been performed and studied in that context.

3.2. Reviewing accountability: perspectives from media and political science

Political scientists consider accountability a fundamental necessity for the healthy functioning of democracy. Hajer (2010a, 26) states that this is because ‘administrators are accountable to representative democratic councils that act as an imagined whip at their back’ and that ‘administrators know that politicians might lash out to regain control of the situation if this is required’. In addition to the type of accountability that politicians exert over bureaucracies, accountability is found in the relationship between politicians and the media. This is the watchdog or fourth-estate function of the press, a social relationship best typified by Djerf-Pierre et al. (2013, 963):

‘When public accountability is defined as a social relationship it allows for the inclusion not only of formal accountability regimes but also of other institutionalise practices where accountability claims are articulated in a public forum, that is, journalistic practices. … It also makes it possible to study accountability as a process, where the final outcome (who is held to account for what) depends on how responsibilities are defined, perceived and managed by actors within the specific public forum’
Accepting Djerf-Pierre et al.’s proposition that journalistic practices and public forums influence accountability suggests that accountability operates at different and contesting levels throughout media. These levels comprise of the actors involved in a network of policy delivery. Hajer’s (2010a, p.36) review of accountability systems contends that ‘network governance involves a continuous back and forth between improvised settings of negotiation and established settings of accountability, in which all actors must be able to show how they addressed their shared goals and their distinct ends’. This means that the traditional notion of a direct-line accountability from Minister to head of department, down through the bureaucracy and eventually to front-line staff is poorly adapted to this era of networked governance (Castells 2000a). This does not suggest that networked governance is inferior to line-accountability; networked governance ‘can bring together the coalition of actors needed to really address a particular problem, cutting across jurisdictions, backgrounds and hierarchy’ (Hajer 2010b, 171). The problem, identified in the literature, is that this form of networked governance means that media ‘possibly act as… [an] accountability forum’ (Maggetti 2012, 402) where ‘the media discourse is … a critical site not only for accountability interrogation but also for deciding who should be held to account in the first place’ (Djerf-Pierre, Ekstrom, and Johansson 2013, 965). Indeed, Djerf-Pierre et al. find that ‘this is particularly the case in situations of disputable and negotiable accountability relationships’ such as those under networked governance (Djerf-Pierre, Ekstrom, and Johansson 2013, 965).

This suggests that both networked governance and mediatisation have significant effects on how accountability relationships are constructed by the media as a site where ‘normative expectations are reproduced but also negotiated’ (Djerf-Pierre, Ekstrom, and Johansson 2013, 964). Given that ‘countries like Australia, Great Britain, Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden have all witnessed similar, ideologically driven, shifts towards marketization of public sector services’ (Djerf-Pierre, Ekstrom, and Johansson 2013, 961), it is important that we investigate exactly how accountability functions ‘when policy-making takes place behind closed doors and scarce democratic responsiveness exists’ (Maggetti 2012, 388).

The locus of how to study mediatisation of accountability is contested in the literature. While ‘editorials and commentaries are particularly important in shaping the symbolic
environment, although they are unfortunately quite neglected in media coverage studies (Maggetti 2012, 394). Previous studies have examined the role of framing and agenda setting as proxies of the way that media perform accountability by adopting ‘conscious political strategies, selecting and framing issues for maximum political impact, politicising abuses in dramatic ways, exposing discrepancies between government rhetoric and practice’ (Joyce 2010, 517–518). Maggetti (2012) finds that different forms of media exert different levels of influence over the way accountability is constructed, with ‘quality newspapers … considered crucial because they influence other media, thus directly or indirectly impacting the public’ (Maggetti 2012, 394). This is because ‘elite press reaches a much larger segment of the public by determining issues and perspectives for the news coverage of all types of media (Maggetti 2012, 394). Yet this overshadows ‘the need for further research to help establish more specific information on the factors influencing political coverage in different media types’ (Mellado and Rafter 2014). Indeed, ‘leaders tend to reveal even major initiatives on television or in newspaper interviews rather than in parliament’ (Helms 2012, 663).

Previous studies of the mediatisation of political accountability have focused near exclusively on the role of elections and scandals. Djerf-Pierre et al.’s analysis of elderly care accountability in Sweden found that ‘the problems were constructed as moral scandal instead of a policy failure’ (Djerf-Pierre, Ekstrom, and Johansson 2013, 460). Similarly, ‘most studies on political news … are interested in electoral processes’ (Mellado and Rafter 2014, 545) and ‘most [studies] relate to politics immediately prior to election time … [and] their representativeness to political coverage more generally is questionable’ (Cushion, Rodger and Lewis 2014, 444). Understanding the role of mediatisation in the absence of scandal and elections is crucial to accountability relationships as they occur everyday, not just when something newsworthy happens. This thesis is committed to understanding how accountability is performed in these everyday occurrences. The study has this design to encompass both election and non-election periods (see Chapter 5 on Method).

Framing analyses show that this decline in sanctioning power is tied to how mediatisation has put ‘managerial and professional accountability, not political accountability… at the forefront of the news’ (Djerf-Pierre et al. 2014, 967). Hjarvard concurs, finding that ‘[political] institutions have lost some of their former authority and
the media have to some extent taken over their role as providers of information and moral orientation, at the same time as the media have become society’s most important storyteller about society itself’ (Hjarvard (2008) in Litschka and Karmasin 2012, 223). This speaks to the double articulation of the ‘media’s role as both the object of regulation and as an influence on international society’ (Joyce 2010, 509). In this sense, questions of how to regulate media activity that is commercially orientated is a question of norms and values and has strong bearing on the way accountability is constructed in a democracy.

Attempts to understand the mechanism of how journalists and media organisations perform accountability work have focused on ‘evaluating the comparative degree of mediatisation in political news involves analysing how far journalists – as opposed to politicians – appear, shape and interpret political coverage’ (Cushion, Rodger and Lewis 2014, 444). To analyse this mechanism, Cushion et al. propose that ‘form, structure and style of journalism should be understood more carefully by scholars when making sense of how far news is mediatized’ (Cushion, Rodger and Lewis 2014). The contextual influences of media as an enterprise must also be factored into any analysis of mediatisation and accountability. Cushion et al. state that news media ‘is made up of three constituents: professional, technological and commercial aspects’ and that ‘commercial influence … [is a] market-driven force that has “pushed news organisations further away from the world of politics but more towards the world of business”’ (Cushion, Rodger and Lewis 2014). Helms (2012, 652) finds that ‘the commercial media are more independent from the political class than the public media and generally have considerably stronger interest in focusing on what ‘sells’ than in merely providing citizens with balanced information’. Indeed, Litschka and Karmasin (2012, 224) conclude that ‘the output of media companies … Is moving towards trade (teleshopping, e-commerce, merchandising) and services (consulting, financial services, distance learning, logistics etc.’. This poses democratic problems as media organisations, through their accountability functions, have moral interests that compete with their financial incentives. Indeed, Joyce (2010, 515) argues that ‘the media is given a central role in an “information society” and this is said to come with ethical and professional responsibilities regarding the treatment of information’. This is in stark contrast with the empirical findings of Litschka and Karmasin (2012, 225) that ‘through concentration and
mediatisation, the power of enterprises grows and is misused, that incentives for unethical behaviour rise and the possibilities to sanction such behaviour decline’.

Hajer draws these strands together in a pessimistic conclusion:

‘our new mediatized politics … does not only imply a growing sensitivity to forms of political spin (McNair 2003). It also leads to a preoccupation with personalities, with style and with events that make for colourful presentation in the media’ (Hajer 2010a, 15);

and further contends that mediatisation removes normative and moral questions from the domain of politics as ‘theatricality, personification and suggestive power of image distracts from is/ought questions and that market logic replaces knowledge with entertainment’ (Hajer 2010a, 38). A similar concern is echoed in Joyce, who concludes that ‘the demand for publicity and the effects of communicative capitalism can oversimplify complex human rights issues …[and can] lead to de-politicisation of human rights concepts and even to their co-option by commercial enterprises’ (Joyce 2010, 525). But this pessimism is tempered by Cushion et al.’s assertion that ‘greater mediatisation of political reporting can reflect a public service goal to better inform citizens by challenging rather than accepting what political elites say, as well as asking journalists to supply more context and background to a story’ (Cushion, Rodger and Lewis 2014, 460).

Understanding the role mediatisation plays in our democracies and how we might best adapt to its influence in political life may depend on which of these perspectives is dominant in our policy assumptions. This underscores the need for studies such as this thesis.

Helms argues that additional empirical work is necessary to understand the relationship between democracies and accountability: ‘democratic regimes strongly differ with regard to their institutional arrangements, their political structure as well as their cultural features. And leaders, who may have good or bad intentions, have to take into account these contextual parameters if they want to pursue their agendas successfully’ (Helms 2012, 654). These same contextual factors must be considered in studies of mediatisation of accountability, where ‘the role of the media in holding ministers to account, and in dismissals and resignations, remains unclear … but more and comparative research is needed to make any valid assessments of the media’s role in defining ministerial
This thesis’ primary contribution is to meet this call for further theoretical and empirical work on the mediatisation of accountability.

### 3.3. The lay of the land – studies of Australian media

Australian media tends towards two camps, each with different political affinities. The main focus of this paper in terms of media influence is the split between the Fairfax Newspapers group and the News Ltd. group, a division of Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation. As this study focuses exclusively on newspaper reports, the discussion of media bias is restricted to the main newspapers employed as a source of data for the study. I acknowledge that cross-media ownership laws such as the ‘No more than Two’ law (which allows owning two types of media enterprises out of television, radio and newspapers in the same city) allow for bias to be spread across proprietors, geography and across media types (Australia 1992). Whereas this study does not consider the impacts of cross-media bias it does investigate the impact of proprietor influence. Despite – or perhaps because of these cross ownership provisions – consistent influence across organisations is apparent where the same organisation can operate a newspaper masthead in each major city without breaching the regulations.

As explained in the background to the study (Chapter 2), Australian newspapers are predominantly categorised as belonging to the News Ltd. or Fairfax media empires. Similarly, Australian politics is dominated by a two-party system between the Australian Labor Party and the Coalition Liberal/National Parties. The News Ltd. papers most often support the actions of the Liberal Party and criticise the actions of the Labor Party, while Fairfax does the reverse. Both of these proprietors maintain online presences and duplicate their printed coverage onto the Internet, where trolling of the opposing side is a common (and popular) feature in the comments sections. Attempts to discredit opposing views often rely on claims of bias, particularly in politically charged debates. Articles appearing in Australian journals, such as the conservative, liberal-party aligned Institute of Public Affairs journal make these accusations painfully obvious with titles such as ‘The Age and Bias’ (Gooding 2002). Tiffen (1999) states that there has been a ‘steady escalation in the use of personal attacks for political advantage and a desire by both sides to not just picture opponents as disastrously mistaken but as embodiments of evil’. The entrenchment of this bias stretches back a long way where ‘journalists from the
other … companies established their virtue by making unfavourable references to News Ltd’ (R Tiffen 1987, 335). More recent studies show the need for media organisations to appear to broad audiences has resulted in less overt ties to political leadership (Dowding and Lewis 2012, 240).

However, while this bias between media organisations is evident, including the links to political parties, the political cleavages in Australia are not large. There is a large degree of consensus on many policy issues, particularly in relation to immigration and Foreign Affairs. Gans and Leigh (2012) find ‘only one of the nine newspapers is distinguishable from a centrist position’, reflecting how the international spectrum of political opinions is not reflected in the Australian debate, where parties and media revolve around a centre-core. Their study did find, however, that media bias in editorial stances is greatly affected by elections, finding that ‘the pattern of editorial election endorsements is strongly skewed’. This result suggests that the Australian media is partisan within the Australian context, but occupies a centrist position in international contexts (Gans and Leigh 2012, 141). This position of consensus national politics that does not reflect the breadth of international political expression is a point of contention in Australia’s accountability to its citizens and its international obligations, as was discussed in the background (Chapter 2).

Numerous studies of Australian media have shown a consistent negative out-group bias toward immigrants, particularly those of Islamic faith, but also towards the country’s indigenous inhabitants (Imtoual 2005; Simmons and Lecouteur 2008). Kabir (2007) notes that one of the ways that this is done is by focusing on the out-group’s religion rather than their nationality. Kabir (2007) uses the example of Englishmen being referred to as ‘Poms’ whereas individuals from a wide variety of Islamic countries are only referred to as ‘Muslims’. Kabir states that at times this representation is ‘savage’ and there has been no censure from media even when the leader of the Christian Democratic Party called for an immediate moratorium on Islamic immigration (Kabir 2008; Debien 2007). I contend that a similar type of bias is exhibited when refugees are referred to as a general boat people (and often as Islamic boat people). These forms of bias suggest that while there is a polarisation between media proprietors, media outlets are united in their criticism of out-groups. As suggested by the background and Australia’s bipartisanship, these biases complicate the reporting of asylum policy and Australia’s international
obligations, despite differences in the extent to which media organisations exhibit this bias.

### 3.4. Accountability and the Australian parliament

Australia’s liberal democratic majoritarian representative electoral system means that regular elections are held to determine the members of the parliament, the largest grouping of whom form the government. As a bicameral (upper- and lower-housed) parliament, the government sits in the lower house (The House of Representatives) while the upper house (The Australian Senate) operates as a house of review over government legislation. A bill must pass successfully through both houses before it is enacted into law. Very few studies have looked at how accountability functions in the Australian parliament, the most significant of which are Brenton (2014) and Dowding and Lewis (2012). As a tradition of government, Australia falls into the Westminster system, that ‘relies heavily on conventions and unwritten parts of the constitution, which are based on precedent’ (Brenton 2014, 467). A code of conduct was issued under Prime Minister John Howard in 1996 after an election campaign that focused heavily on ministerial propriety (Brenton 2014, 473). In line with Rhodes et al. (2009) and Brenton (2012), Dowding and Lewis’ 2012 study of newspaper reporting on ministerial scandal in Australia finds that it is increasingly uncommon for ministers to resign in all but the most serious of circumstances. Brenton states that ‘dismissal by Prime Minister is the ultimate sanction’ under a Westminster system, and according to Dowding and Lewis’ empirical data, it is a sanction seldom used (Brenton 2014; Dowding and Lewis 2012). Dowding and Lewis state that ‘the constitutional principle that ministers should be held accountable for the failings of their policies or administration has been seriously undermined. No matter how grave their failings may be, ministers no longer resign’ (Dowding and Lewis 2012, 237).

Dowding and Lewis also find that ‘extensive media coverage … demonstrates a greater willingness than before to expose ministers who have mislead parliament’ and that ‘other, non parliament players [are] less accepting of ministerial statements’ (Dowding and Lewis 2012, 243). Both of these statements are taken to mean that trust in ministerial honesty and propriety is low for both Australian media organisations and organisations in the policy delivery network. In particular, they have identified that
particular types of accountability performances in Australian media have gained prominence (Dowding and Lewis 2012; Brenton 2012). These types of accountability include conflict of interest, travel rorts and abuse of office charges. Noticeably lacking from this list is accountability for process – the substance of why political power is delegated to office bearers. They find that ‘Ministerial actions that would have once brought little or no comment in the media are now disapprovingly reported upon’ (Dowding and Lewis 2012, 249) and, crucially, that ‘modern scandals show that ministers are today more accountable when the propriety of their decision is thoroughly examined and questioned by the media’. From Dowding and Lewis’ study, there is strong evidence to consider Australia from the perspective of the third phase of mediatisation (see section 4.2.). The conflict between media organisations that criticise governments and a government that retains sufficient independence to reject the media’s direct calls for ministerial accountability for process suggests that politics continues to operate according to political and not media logics, despite the increase accountability for conflict of interest, travel rorts and abuse of office charges.

The critical point to make is that Dowding and Lewis’ examination is premised on the study of scandal, a particular form of media commentary that follows its own media dramaturgies. While in it appears that ministerial accountability is improving in instances of scandal, it suggests nothing about accountability for the mundane evils conducted in the public’s name (Arendt 1963). This accords with Djerf-Pierre et al. (2008) who found that problems are constructed as moral scandal instead of mundane policy failures. This means that the way that a particular issue is framed – as scandalous or mundane – has a great bearing on the way that accountability is practiced. In these mundane instances that lack the scandal frame, Dowding and Lewis’ study provides few indicators of improving accountability. Indeed, they state that while ‘civil rights and minority issues (including immigration and asylum issues gained new prominence)’ they remain intractable issues in Australian society and ‘not all serious calls for ministers to resign result in appropriate action’. In a subsequent list of where this action has not occurred, three out of the four examples given by Dowding and Lewis relate to immigration matters: the children overboard saga, the deportation of Australian citizens and the crack-down on illegal immigration (2012, 248-249). While there may be benefits of media scrutiny on accountability issues, they do not fall evenly over policy areas or types of ministerial conduct. It is in these silent cases – the non-scandals and routines of government – that
This study is situated.

It is important to note that scandal is not a fixed quality of events. Instead, it is a category constructed according to the way that events are represented in media and framed by decision-making biases (see section 4.4.2.). Jacobsson and Lofmarck (2008, 204) state that political scandals are understood as a ‘confrontation between various systems of norms’. As is shown in the theoretical framework (section 4.5.), it is increasingly the role of media to define and regulate these norms. Jacobsson and Lofmarck (2008, 207) state that scandal ‘takes a ritual form’ and that these rituals ‘communicate messages about social relationships’. This means that scandal intrinsically tied to processes of communication, reinforcing its relationship with mass-media. Poiana (2010, 28) agrees, stating that scandal’s relationship with language ‘fully conveys its human significance’ and that scandal must be actively ‘named’. Each of these perspectives reinforces the idea of scandal as a ritualistic and selective process of construction in media.

3.5. Summary – Australia’s failure to account

This chapter has contextualised this thesis within the relevant debates on mediatisation and accountability studies and shown the critical need for understanding the relationship between accountability and mediatisation. The literature review has shown good support for using newspapers as a form of data for such studies and answers a call from the academy for improved empirical work on mediatisation outside of election periods. Further, the literature review has analysed the particular failures of the Australian media’s ability to hold politicians to account and the influence of framing on this process. This literature has been supplemented by an analysis of how framing works in Australia with respect to the particular case in this thesis, asylum seeking. These insights are developed into a theoretical model in the next chapter.
Chapter 4: Theoretical framework

Building on the gaps identified in the literature review, this chapter provides the theoretical framework used to understand the way that mediatisation changes values and priorities for media organisations. This is subsequently linked to how mediatisation changes the content, form and style of this performance of accountability. This theoretical bridge between media studies and political science enables a comprehensive, cross-disciplinary review of the way that democratic accountability is affected by mediatisation. Finally, the chapter is summarised and prepares the reader for chapter 5 on the thesis’s research design.

4.1. Mediatisation – key assumptions

Altheide and Snow (1979) first used the term media logic to describe the ‘formatting power’ of media that underpins a particular media text in its selection, framing, representation and transmission (D. Altheide and Snow 1979; c.f.: Couldry 2008). This media logic underpins mediatisation; the adaptation of other actors to the formatting power of media logic as non-media actors produce content suited to the media’s demands (for a critical view, see Couldry and Hepp, 2013, 196). This approach focuses on the structural and institutional changes to the media’s discursive power to define social reality (D. Altheide and Snow 1991, 10) and builds on Halls’ understanding that media is produced according to specific patterns (S. Hall 1975; Lule 2001) that include simplification, polarisation, intensification, personalisation, visualisation and stereotypisation (Asp 2014; Strömbäck 2008). These patterns give rise to specific adaptations inside other social institutions, including the way politics works. These adaptations are namely: extension (projecting communicative capacity into new contexts), substitution (replacing or modifying existing social practices to take advantage of new mediated technologies), amalgamation (the increasing loosening of boundaries between media and non-media, and the increasing frequency in which media becomes a central component of social activities) and accommodation (conscious decisions to change behaviour due to media influence or perceived media effects) (Schulz 2004, 88–90). Such adaptations change the priorities of both journalists writing about politicians, and the types of policies that politicians believe will gain traction (and votes) in the electorate.
When taken together, these adaptations mean that nearly all social institutions are influenced by the media’s values and this expands the horizons for mediated political communication across all domains of media activity. This approach considers the role of media as being double articulated – both as a product of the world and as a producer of defining discourses about the world. We live ‘in media’, and it is a politically saturated media-world (Deuze 2012).

Mediatisation occurs at ‘different levels of analysis and should be considered a multidimensional concept’ (Stromback 2008: 425). One of these dimensions is the social-cultural approach that is best referred to as ‘mediation’ and is advanced most ardently by Couldry (2008). Couldry states that mediation refers to the way in which meaning is symbolically encoded into texts for transmission through media and that this encoding process is independent of an overarching media logic, instead being based on a view of communication as a social process (Couldry 2008, 397). Mediation is therefore centrally concerned with the way that meaning is constructed inside a world that is increasingly mediatised (that is, increasingly accommodating to media logics, as discussed above). This distinction, and a lack of precision in the early literature, has led to significant areas of conceptual overlap, slippage and a general lack of clarity in how a particular scholar uses the term in a particular study. Unlike Couldry, the present study departs with a primary focus on mediatisation and does not problematize the processes of mediation that may have changed during this time. This means that the present study engages directly with mediatisation defined as mediattisation and not mediation in Couldry’s terms. This is because mediatisation research from the perspective of media logics enables us to study changes at the aggregate level across multiple forms of media whereas studies of mediation would necessitate a study of how users engage with particular media forms. This is because ‘different media share highly similar norms’ (Strömbäck and Dimitrova 2011, 33) and Schrott’s contention that ‘mediatisation involve[s]…supra-individual effects that cannot be traced back to individual media content but are caused by the existence and the meaning of the media’ (A. Schrott 2007, 42; Couldry 2004). The sources used for this study are, under this understanding, therefore indicative of changes evident in other media.

4.2. The mediatisation of politics – four stages
The mediatisation of politics is an area with a short but extensive pedigree in mediatisation research (Strömbäck 2008; Strömbäck and Dimitrova 2011; Djerf-Pierre et al. 2014). Strömbäck’s (2008) *Four Phases of Mediatisation* anticipates that media pursues four increasing stages of emancipation from other social logics (e.g.: political or economic). The four stages of the mediatisation of politics presented by Strömbäck are:

1. The degree to which media constitute the most important or dominant source of information on politics and society.
2. The degree to which media are independent from political institutions in terms of media governance.
3. The degree to which media content is governed by media logics or political logics.
4. The degree to which political actors are governed by media logics or by political logics. (Stromback 2008: 234).

While Strömbäck (2008) has presented the above as a dichotomous relationship between media logics and political logics, it must be remembered that media content can consist of an amalgam of both of these. Indeed, they are more compatible than the above formulation would suggest. The way such combined logics continue to serve the interests of mediatised actors is discussed in section 4.3 and its subsections. Regardless of the strength of this mix of logics, Stromback (2008) and Djerf-Pierre et al. (2014) argue that accountability will be increasingly important to political actors in the third stage of the mediatisation process. In this stage, political actors recognise the importance of adapting their behaviour to compete for attention from media (Strömbäck 2008). Politics becomes increasingly professionalised and follows the priorities of media and commercial enterprises, reflecting Schulz’s (2004) concept of accommodation. Communication strategies are revised to be both more engaged with media, but also to be increasingly media friendly in terms of content and formatting – soundbites instead of speeches, public announcements at visually engaging locations instead of telephone calls, etc. In doing so, political actors contribute to both amalgamation and accommodation in Schultz’s (2004) terms. This moves the reportage of politics away from substantive issues of policy and instead begins to operate on the values of media logic described above, changing the substance of media content. The mediatisation of politics is predicated on the move away from substantive discussions of policy and the movement to commentary and the attribution of responsibility and blame. Djerf-Pierre et al. (2014,
326) propose that these changes involve changes in *style* (commentary rather than reportage), *sentiment* (negativity over positive accounts) and *polarity* (divisiveness over collectiveness). Combined with issue selection and framing, these stylistic content decisions determine how media performs accountability. This is addressed in the next section.

This thesis is most concerned with mediatisation’s third stage heralding changes in media incentives that in turn influences the media’s watchdog function. These changes may have impacts on the other stages of mediatisation but such linkages have not been theoretically developed here. This remains a task for future research that specifies how other stages of mediatisation may influence the assumptions and foundations of this study of the third stage of mediatisation of politics.

### 4.3. Media performances and changing priorities in the third phase of mediatisation

Media performances refer to the particular dramaturgy of media coverage: ‘the analysis of selective presentation of symbols or of symbolic action having a persuasive effect’ (Manning 1996). In this thesis the article or media text that is produced constitutes the performance, which carries with it the context of its economic conditions, values and assumptions (Hepp 2013). This view considers media as cultural commodities whose production is motivated by a series of values and constrained by economic and organisational limits, creating a tension between moral and practical concerns. In order to understand how commercial media organisations reporting on politics negotiate their social roles in the third stage of mediatisation, this section presents three critical components to understanding how and why media performances take the forms and formats they do. These components are profit, efficiency and independence. These considerations explain how third-stage mediatisation gives rise to the type of performances studied in this paper and how such performances undermine accountability processes.

### 4.3.1. Profit
The overwhelming majority of professional media organisations are operated as profit-seeking organisations (Ostini and Fung 2002). Even in countries with a strong tradition of state-backed broadcasting (of which Australia is one (Hallin, Mancini, and Bennet 2004)) such organisations are under pressure to maximise value out of each dollar spent on its operations. Economic disruptions to media have significant impacts on the types of issues covered and how they are covered. This view considers that media organisations operate on multiple axes, one of which is the economic viability of the media product they offer. Due to their fiduciary obligations to investors, media organisations must attract the greatest possible share of the market at the lowest attainable cost. A game-theoretic approach to market behaviour suggests that in a polarised media environment, media proprietors will differentiate their products as much as possible in order to maximise their share of the spectrum of political opinion (Andina-Diaz 2009; Mullainathan and Shleifer 2012). This profit motive drives polarised media coverage that may influence voter behaviour (Bernhardt, Krasa, and Polborn 2008). Similar logic guides the positioning of adversarial two-party democratic systems such as is seen in the American and Australian cases and can partially explain claims of increasing polarisation in media performances.

### 4.3.2. Efficiency

Media organisations are doubly affected by the twin impacts of technological development. In particular, while they may reach broader audiences, they are exposed to additional competition and financial challenge from competing services (particularly the unlinking of news reporting from classifieds brought about by the eruption of online news services (Castells 2000a; Castells 2009). This shift in media economics is particularly acute for newspapers and print media, especially those catering to a general audience such as metropolitan and regional daily newspapers (Bermejo 2009). The lack of resources for news-gathering and investigation has led to an overreliance on official sources and ‘assembly line production with little room for professional initiative and an increased reliance on agency wires and press release material (Hjarvard 2013, loc. 1398). Efficiency dividends from pooling media resources, in combination with the relaxation of cross-media ownership laws, has resulted in large media conglomerates with considerable economic and political influence due to the scale of their operations (Castells 2000b). While this also relates to profit, it affects the reach and centralisation of
media organisations. An inefficient organisational structure will hamper the organisation’s goals of making profit or pursuing independence. This has significant impacts on the way that media organisations relate to political discussions, both as a semi-independent political institution and as a corporation with economic interests affected by government policy. This increases the use of well-established frames and the repacking of material for further reproduction in later news stories.

4.3.3. Independence

A key element of mediatisation is the increasing independence of the media from other social institutions (e.g.: the second stage of Strömbäck’s model). The mass media enjoys a long history of calls for its independence, not least from Alexis de Tocqueville. His 1831 *Liberty of the Press in The United States* outlines that freedom of the press is ‘the only guarantee of their liberty and their security which the citizens possess’ against a tyrant or despot (de Tocqueville 1831). The press’ capacity to sway public opinion guarantees a popular mandate and the ability to recall and punish elected officials, to expose wrongdoing where it is done and to operate a constant threat of censure that makes those in public life disinclined to abuse their station. The freedom of the press, enshrining its authority as the fourth estate, is a concept that the press should be free from political interference and immune to prosecution. De Tocqueville highlights the decentralisation of American media as a source of the great independence and liberty assuring capacities of the press in this function; ironically it is highly centralised today. So too is the media scape in Australia, as discussed in the Background (Chapter 2).

In some impressive foreshadowing, de Tocqueville notes that power is proportional to its centrality and that a centralised press ‘is an enemy with which a Government may sign an occasional truce, but which is difficult to resist for any length of time’ (de Tocqueville 1831). This passage is particularly enlightening – it suggests that the media industry’s interests can align to the desires of political parties, at least temporarily. This occurs to the detriment of the press’ role as a watchdog able to enforce accountability. It follows that the most probable time for media strongarming of government is when the press hold the most power to influence public opinion (during elections) and in which political agents are able to offer new policy directions (also during elections). This means
that while media maintain a watchdog function over political agents, the legal and financial constraints of operating a media organisation means that media organisations are susceptible to self-interested financial and operational decisions. These decisions may involve long-term considerations of what legislative frameworks a hostile political system may impose on media freedoms. This undermines, but does not make irrelevant, the popular conception of the press as the defenders of public liberties; it merely suggests that readers should be aware that ‘journalists are not free agents’ and that ‘they are constrained by a complex set of institutional arrangements that lead them to reproduce day after day the opinions and views of establishment figures’ (Schudson 2008, 61). The alignment of government and media interests orients journalists to receive institutionalised wisdom rather than propose radical alternatives, diminishing their capacity to act as outsiders and rogue agents that threaten entrenched power relations (Schudson 2008, 60). Media organisations are likely to accept a compromise between accountability and their financial and organisational interests, operating within a legislative framework that is especially volatile during elections, indicating that political agents maintain influence over the press, even when independence is high.

Despite this, the level of independence a media organisation enjoys means that politicians must ‘adopt media logics’ in order to increase chances of being covered in media and makes ‘media considerations an increasingly important part of the policy process’ (Strömbäck 2008, 238). This process contributes to the creation of a mediated world where information is based not on first-hand experience but on mediated accounts reported in media. In these environments, the ‘real world’ is deprioritised in its political importance to that represented by media and mediatised actors (Strömbäck 2008, Lippmann 1997). This process increases both the definitional and disciplining power of media accounts, as their performances are attributed greater roles in the construction of social realities, a reinforcing loop with the first stage of mediatisation (Strömbäck 2008; Strömbäck and Dimitrova 2011). This gives the media greater power to be critical of elites and to develop a more negative, commentary-driven style of product (Djerf-Pierre et al. 2014). This is because in the third stage media ‘formats, content, grammar and rhythm … have become so pervasive that basically no social actors requiring interaction with the public or influence public opinion can ignore the media’ (Strömbäck 2008, 238). This means that accountability must be increasingly negotiated through mediated forums, using frames that are most conducive to pursing
the media’s financial, efficiency and independence goals while also carefully negotiating their relationship with political agents.

### 4.4. Issue selection and framing – political news according to third stage values

#### 4.4.1. Issue selection versus agenda setting

The changing incentives for media organisations driven by profit, efficiency and independence influence which issues are chosen and presented on the media’s agenda for democratic debate. This process is referred to as issue selection and framing. I have used the term issue selection rather than agenda setting. This is because agenda setting refers to the interplay between media agencies and political actors, while issue selection is a precursor to this by media agencies. The distinction is that an agenda is contested, where as media organisations have a free hand to select issues that meet their priorities of profit, efficiency and independence. This freedom does not mean it will become the political agenda, as political actors have their own motivations and priorities. As this thesis examines the influences on media, it is more appropriate to consider the role of non-contested issue selection than contested agenda-setting, as agenda setting would require an examination of political actors more suited to an analysis of the fourth phase of mediatisation.

Issue selection refers to the hierarchy of values that determines which issues are represented in media, while framing denotes how that coverage is constructed. These concepts therefore cover the normative (issue selection) and the practical (framing) dimensions of media production decisions. McCullagh (2002, 22) states that the source of media power stems from ‘the ability to be selective about what it tells us about the world’. This gives the media the ability to ‘shape or to set limits to [our] social knowledge and to the images that [we] can construct of the world in which we live’ (ibid. loc. cit.). Issue selection often occurs in relation to journalistic news values, a form of political non-partisanship in selecting media that ‘becomes an important factor in the construction of political agendas’ (Hjarvard 2013, loc. 1371). Empirical studies of news values suggest they are a stable set of values organised hierarchically and observed across
different geographic and cultural contexts, indicating that they form an inherent component of the exercise of producing media (Hayes and Guardino 2010). These news values often operate in dualities such as domestic and international, personal and public, power and powerless. The more extreme an issue is on a particular value spectrum, the more likely its inclusion as news. This type of issue selection contributes to media’s power to influence the political agenda, a particular function where media attention drives which debates are considered salient in public deliberations (Thesen 2012). The mass media’s agenda ‘works as the transmission point between the agendas of politicians and the general public’ and this means that wider circulation of political ideas is ‘dependent on the media’s attention to and framing of these ideas’ (Hjarvard 2013, loc. 1480). This means that in the Australian context, the selection and framing of immigration issues in the news is subjected to these tests of newsworthiness.

4.4.2. Framing

Framing differs from issue selection as it enables media organisations to ‘diagnose problems… make moral judgements and suggest remedies’ (Goffman 1974, 52). It is a selective process of how representations are built – whose voices and accounts are validated and whose are excluded from the media product. Framing, as a process of simplification, is a necessary component of encoding phenomena into a form that can be communicated through media, but necessarily involves the elimination of information. Entman (1993, 52) provides the seminal definition: ‘to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in communicating a text’. Framing is achieved through the patterning of both content and sentiment decisions made by media producers (Slater 2007). For this reason, content and sentiment are key variables in this study. De Vreese (2003) has identified distinct sub-types of frames termed generic and issue frames. Whereas an issue frame is restricted to a specific issue, a generic frame is employed over the course of several related issues. This supports Chang et al. (2012) who found that frames are durable and persistent across areas of reporting and are activated differently depending on ‘information already at the recipient’s disposal’ (Lecheler and de Vreese 2012, 187). This means that while a frame makes salient only particular pieces of information, the effect of this framing is partially contingent on the receiver’s knowledge of the issue framed, which in turn may also be dependant on previous framing exercises. This suggests that framing becomes more powerful and
disciplining for issues about which the receiver is knowledgeable, or which have been occurring across time, strengthening a generic frame.

Entman (2010) has presented a model for how media framing biases are converted into political biases in their reporting. Discussing the 2008 presidential election in the United States of America, he argues that the generic and issue specific frames that emerge at the time of elections undermine the core journalistic value of objectivity. In particular, his study finds that ‘unbalanced news does not arise from the … personal ideologies of journalists’ but is derived instead from institutional imperatives to construct news frames in a particular way (R. M. Entman 2010, 389). These media biases can be categorised into content biases and decision-making biases. Content bias is if is ‘consistently slanted framing… promotes the success of a specific interest, party or ideology in competitions to control government power’ (R. M. Entman 2010, 393), the type of influence seen in The Australian’s endorsement of the Australian Liberal Party (Gooding 2002). Conversely, Entman characterises decision-making biases as heuristics or ‘short-cut decision rules’ rather than the presentation of personal ideology (R. M. Entman 2010, 393). The slant of media is ‘normally subject to competition between two major political parties’ and slanted news is produced when ‘one of the two parties more skilfully exploits the media’s decision heuristics’ (R. M. Entman 2010, 393) by more successfully adapting to media logics and organisational incentives. This results in several stable patterns of media coverage, what Entman (2010, 394) terms watchdog biases: journalists ‘favour politicians and candidates … that they perceive as popular and powerful’ and are ‘less likely to report negatively on a candidate that holds sway with popular opinion’. On the other hand, a weak candidate reviled by the population will face increasingly negative media performances. This can ‘set off a downward spiral whereby negative slant feeds perceptions of weakness and unpopularity’ (R. M. Entman 2010, 394). This means that the media’s watchdog biases are poorly suited to criticising strong leaders doing undesirable things.

4.4.3. Political accountability and media performances

Given the incentives described above for media organisations to produce media content that protects their financial interests and independence, the question remains how compatible these changes are with the conception of accountability that is desirable in a
democracy. This section first addresses defining accountability, and subsequent sections address the way that networked governance reinforces the role of the media in determining the nature of accountability. This makes accountability particularly susceptible to changes in media organisation’s priorities such as those experienced during the third phase of mediatisation. In particular, it draws into question the ways that mediatisation influences how we determine who is responsible for what and how this is achieved in media content.

4.5. Accountability - definitions and relationship to the network society

Accountability’s origins lie in the numerical capacity to reconcile figures, making clear its association with the modern profession of ‘accounting’ (Behn 2000a, 7). However, the concept of accountability has come to represent the faithful execution of duties or the taking of appropriate and authorised action on the behalf of another (Dahl 1971). Accountability in this context is an outcome from delegation; ‘endowing another party with the discretion to act’ (Brandsma and Schillemans 2013, 953). It involves ‘a special social relationship or mechanism that involves an obligation to explain and justify’ actions (ibid. 955).

Accountability is a measurement of the degree to which someone can be ‘held to account’ for their actions or the actions of another party over whom they have influence or control (Lindberg 2013; Behn 2000a). As Moncrieffe (1998) states, ‘to be accountable is to be answerable for select actions and policies’. To hold someone or an organisation to account is to question the legitimacy of actions they have performed or of the honesty of their dealings (Behn 2000a). Someone is highly accountable if this process is clear, easy to conduct and that they are subject to reprimand and censure when at fault. Low accountability is when organisations either cannot be investigated for their misdeeds or are not able to be punished when misdeeds are uncovered (Lindberg 2013). This makes accountability critical to a functioning democracy that is responsive to its people.

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<th>Source of Control</th>
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Lindberg (2013) reviews the recent literature on accountability and finds over 100 sub-
types of accountability that can be divided into 12 core types presented in Table 1. The
External source of control is divided into high and low. High sources of control exert
legally enforceable control over the behaviour of others. Low sources of external control
are not legally enforceable, but derive their power from perceptions and media
representations. This thesis is restricted to the examination of the external, low-control
forms of accountability societal, political and reputational (Lindberg 2013, 213). These are
most susceptible to media influences as they rely on mass communication to operate.
*Societal accountability* represents ‘actions taken by civil society and media aimed at forcing
political, bureaucratic and legal decision makers to give information on, and justifications
for, their actions’ while *political accountability* represents downwardly directed vertical
control over external actions, such as those taken by the bureaucracy (Lindberg 2013,
216). *Reputational accountability* is highly dependent on ‘informal norms among
participants’, and is a ‘diffuse’ form of accountability that threatens an agent’s reputation
amongst peers if they act contrary to these norms (Lindberg 2013, 216). These
dimensions address the (issue) selective, practical and moral influences of media on
accountability processes.

Accountability is a mechanism that regulates reputations and this enables trust within
networks (van Dijk 2006). Trust indicates that we believe that agents are and will
faithfully execute their duties and do not require additional oversight. What is required in
both instances are expectations of what constitutes appropriate behaviours (Lindberg
2013, 211; Schedler 1999). In the present study these expectations are moral obligations
owed to instruments such as The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United
Nations 1948), The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (United Nations
1966), The Convention on the Status of Refugees (United Nations 1954a), and the
Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons (United Nations 1954b). In
upholding these moral obligations a central actor is accountable to many stakeholders, who may themselves be accountable for various parts of performance delivery. This means that a simple principle-agent model is not well suited to the recursive forms of accountability that are found in networked governance arrangements (Hanberger 2009, 10). The marketization of the public sector has ‘made accountability complex and negotiable’ and ‘the question of who is to be held to account for policy failures is increasingly a subject of struggle within the media’ (Djerf-Pierre, Ekstrom, and Johansson 2013, 960). This opens the door to mediatisation’s influence on accountability processes.

4.5.1. Network governance’s reliance on media for accountability

Most studies of accountability rely on a principal-agent model where the citizen is the principal and accountability serves to limit the freedom of action of the agent and ensure that it performs the functions expected by the principal (Hanberger 2009, 7). However, this model is inadequate for consideration of complex network structures of accountability where ‘various accountability relationships have been established at various points in time with the effect that even single institutions have multiple layers of various types of accountability’ (Lindberg 2013, 219). It is this model of accountability that is adapted to a networked society that I contend is the most relevant to the study of mediatisation (Castells 2000a).

Accountability in a networked era is not a strict relationship of formal delegation and responsiveness based on known and established goals. Instead, accountability in networked arrangements involves a significant political struggle between actors (and media organisations themselves) to determine the degree to which they and other parties are accountable for actual or perceived performance failures (Hanberger 2006, 6). When the media claim that someone is responsible for something, this is a form of laying accountability at others’ feet. If sufficiently powerful within a network, or with support of other actors, such claims of accountability become true. Hence, the media’s role in accountability is doubly articulated: first in the way that it attributes responsibility and constructs who is accountable to whom, and secondly through its scrutiny of the actions
of others in systematic and public reviews of performance. The actual power of the media stems from its influence over popular opinion given that networked forms of accountability require ‘large-scale collective action … to exercise accountability effectively’ (Lindberg 2013, 215). Mass communication is one such means, indeed the primary means, of gaining the scale necessary for accountability claims to be effective. This gives significant power to media organisations driven by mediatised incentives of profit, efficiency and independence to pursue their own agenda through accountability performances.

4.5.2. Accountability and responsibility - a note on language

In this study, I have used responsibility and accountability as analogues of each other. The reason for this is two-fold: firstly, media performances tend to focus on who is responsible for an action rather than who is accountable. This is often because the relationships in formal accountability structures are complex and indirect (particularly in networked environments, as discussed) but also because common usage of responsible approaches something closer to the accountability for performance meaning of the term accountable than the financial or policy meanings. Citizens want elected officials to be responsible (i.e.: able to be held to account for) the decisions they make on our behalf (Behn 2000b). I therefore agree with Hanberger (2006) that ‘responsibility has to do with defining proper conduct, accountability with enforcing it’ but contend that media accounts of responsibility are, in themselves, a way of enforcing accountability. This means that I use accountability as an etic concept that explains emic uses, which in the articles corresponds to the usage of responsibility.

4.6. Summary – accountability in media performances during mediatisation’s third stage

This chapter has demonstrated the connection between mediatisation and political accountability. It opened with a presentation of mediatisation and how this affects politics in four stages. The third stage of this process is the locus of this thesis. During this stage, the specific incentives of media organisations to improve profit, efficiency and independence leads to changing news values that develops specific frames for how political news is presented. This also affects what issues are selected as political news,
and the way that articles are written – together these decisions and the article form the
media performance. The chapter has subsequently outlined how these media
performances are, in contests of accountability, a part of the process of determining who
is accountable for whom for what. This is particularly crucial given the move to
networked governance and the information society, where accountability pathways are
not clear. This undermines the press’ function to operate effectively as the fourth estate
as accountability becomes contested and subject to organisational and not ethical
incentives. These theoretical considerations form the model that guides the research
method and data selected for this thesis, presented in the next chapter.
Chapter 5: Methods and data

5.1. Introduction and research design

This chapter presents the methods and data used in the study. I detail the assumptions, contexts and instruments that make this research possible and discuss the link between the theoretical framework in the previous chapter with the method presented here. Departing from a post-positivist epistemological position, the research design emphasises triangulation and consists of a quantitative analysis and a qualitative analysis.

The quantitative analysis comprises the larger part of the research and involves the statistical analysis of 2860 newspaper articles related to asylum and responsibility issues from Australia during the years 2001, 2007 and 2013. This statistical analysis encompasses 17 variables produced by the main instrument of the quantitative analysis, the computational linguistic software tool, Diction 7.0. After describing Diction, I present the regression model and motivate the variables used in the analysis. The model will be used to test the strength, direction and significance of the relationship between a key indicator variable of accountability – Blame – and the changes in style and content predicted by the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 4. The results of this regression analysis are reserved for the analysis (Chapter 6).

The qualitative analysis provides a significant contribution that is not made possible through statistical or computerised analysis, reducing errors that may result from relying on only one form of data. Strategically selected, iterative samples are drawn and a grounded theory approach is used to determine the dominant frames used in the media coverage. One of the samples acts as a counterfactual to this thesis’ focus on non-scandalous events, enhancing the validity of the study through its inclusion. Overall, the qualitative analysis provides additional insights on how media framing interacts with accountability, an approach that is not possible through the statistical technique employed in the quantitative analysis.

In the latter part of this chapter, the data collection and testing processes are described. This chapter draws towards its close with a discussion of ethical considerations and the
limits of the project as it has been designed here. Finally, the chapter is summarised in preparation for the analysis performed in Chapter 6.

5.2. Appropriateness of the research design

This research design has been constructed to provide a comprehensive empirical analysis of media performances during three periods in Australian politics. The data has been strategically limited in its scope to provide the best conditions for empirical testing (Hancké 2009). Case selection is limited to one context (Australia), during a particular period (federal elections) and in regards to a single issue (asylum-seeking). This similarity between cases is in accordance with Hancké’s (2009) recommendation that case studies should control for as many variables as possible and have identifiable boundaries in scope and time. Time is further limited to the periods 180 days before and 180 days after the election date in each of the years of 2001, 2007 and 2013, which are also years in which asylum-seeking was particularly politically relevant to government policy due to election campaigns. The years 2004 and 2009, also election years, were excluded from the study as no change to immigration policy occurred following the election, as explained in the Background (Chapter 2).

The data analysis is limited to textual data drawn from a division of the Australian media duopoly, an attempt to control for media bias between progressive and conservative media outlets. In addition, data analysis is limited to textual data from printed newspapers to ensure completeness of the population, a prospect that is made increasingly more difficult with the impermanent, malleable and constantly updated nature of digital texts (Hjarvard 2013, loc. 3491). Given Schrott’s claim that mediatisation occurs both within and across media types, it is taken as given that the analysis here provides a faithful indicator of mediatisation effects in other media, particularly online newspapers (A. Schrott 2007; Strömbäck and Dimitrova 2011). The combination of quantitative statistical analysis and a qualitative reading is provided to draw the distinction between media content and its framing. This enables mediatisation to be studied both as a process occurring throughout time and at the level of its effects on individual media formats (Schulz 2004). This type of research design aims at the double articulation of mediatisation; found in both the content and the format of media texts.
5.3. Data

The study uses the same sample of texts but analyses this sample from two different analytical traditions. As such, two datasets are produced: a quantitative statistical summary of the content in each newspaper article and a qualitative reading of narratives occurring across the articles. Each type of data and a brief characterisation of its data is presented in the following subsections. While the present thesis is limited to newspaper-based data, this is due to limited access to other sources of data, though it is anticipated that large digital databases of historical video content will enable the study of televisual and other media in the future and open new avenues for research.

5.3.1. Quantitative data

Quantitative data is provided through the statistical analysis of newspaper articles. The articles selected are drawn from 10 Australian newspapers and are divided into six periods. Each period represents a period of 180 days. These six periods cover approximately six months before and after the election in each of the years of 2001, 2007 and 2013, where each election can be considered a case. The ten newspapers selected are an even split of articles from the Australian newspaper duopoly between the progressive Fairfax Media and the conservative News Ltd newspapers. Throughout the study, I will refer to data according to its Period (1-6) or its Case (1: Election 2001; 2: Election 2007; 3: Election 2013). Where data is discussed in terms of periods, it suggests there is a significant effect on whether the data is from before an election (Periods 1, 3 and 5) or after an election (Periods 2, 4 and 6). All articles (n=2860) are analysed using the research instruments (see Section 5.4.) and represent the complete population of articles as limited by the selection criteria (see Section 5.8.1.).

5.3.2. Qualitative data

The key purpose of the qualitative analysis is to assess the role of framing as a journalistic practice on the accountability performance. While the quantitative data makes use of the entire population of relevant articles, the qualitative data makes use three iterative samples, the first is random and the subsequent two are strategic. This approach uses Grounded Theory that emphasises sampling based on the idea the researcher is seeking to investigate (Corbin and Strauss 1990). This model is chosen because it is theoretically sensitised at the point of data collection, a key limitation in the
Glaserian approach of Grounded Theory (Piko 2014, 54). Whereas the Glaserian approach is optimal when the researcher has no prior theoretical knowledge, the Straussian model is better suited to this thesis, where the researcher has already lived in and is familiar with the society under investigation (Corbin and Strauss 1990). This also makes the method more focused on a systematic analysis that accords with the post-positivist epistemological approach taken in this thesis. Grounded theory emerges from pragmatism and involves an acceptance of change that is compatible with the teleological assumptions of the mediatisation this thesis examines (Corbin and Strauss 1990; Dewey 1925).

Data collection and analysis is done simultaneously throughout the Grounded Theory process (Corbin and Strauss 1990; Piko 2014). For this thesis, the second and third samples were only commenced when the first sample had already been analysed and its themes operationalized with respect to this thesis’ theoretical framework. The repetition of this sampling and coding process enables the emergence of themes across the samples that capture the phenomena under study, in this case the framing of accountability in the articles.

The categories and concepts used for analysis emerge from the texts but are theoretically motivated. The samples used in this qualitative analysis vary in size and purpose. The first sample consists of five articles drawn at random from across the entirely of the period of study. This enabled an analysis of frames that have occurred diachronically across the 13-year span under investigation. Using these frames, a second sample of five articles was drawn to capture a period with no scandalous event, taken from the start of the period of study. The motivation for this sample is to investigate how the frames identified in the first sample operate in the absence of scandal and the impact this has on accountability performances. In the third and final sample, 8 articles were selected to follow a single scandalous event across multiple days. The event chosen was the death in custody of the Iranian asylum-seeker Reza Berati. The context to this case was provided in the background (Chapter 2). The sample provides a counterfactual to the thesis’ focus on non-scandalous events. Inclusion of this counterfactual allows the qualitative analysis to demonstrate the clear differences between scandalous and non-scandalous events, how scandal interacts with framing and how it ultimately impacts on accountability.
Appendix II shows the newspapers, authors, dates and titles of these articles that are analysed in Chapter 6.

5.4. Operationalisation

Instrumentation is the critical component of the research design that connects the preceding theoretical model with the data discussed above. The instrument used is tied to the type data under analysis. For the quantitative analysis, this involves the use of a linguistic analysis software tool named Diction 7.0 that converts words into numerical ‘scores’ and an eventual statistical analysis in a computerised statistical tool, SPSS. The qualitative data is analysed using an interpretive analysis focusing on actors, attribution of accountability and emotional sentiment and is evidenced through close reading of selected passages from the strategic sample of articles.

5.4.1. Diction textual analysis software

Diction 7 is the latest iteration of the ‘computer assisted text analysis’ program developed by Roderick Hart and Craig Carroll. Hart’s background is in political language, and holds the Shivers Chair in Communication and Government at the University of Texas at Austin (Hart and Carroll 2014a). Carroll is a mainframe programmer and editor of The Handbook of Communication and Corporate Reputation (2013) and is Visiting Research Scholar at New York University Stern School of Business. All credit for the design and functionality of the software must be given to Hart and Carroll for this significant undertaking and achievement.

The software’s website describes that it ‘uses a series of dictionaries to search a passage for five semantic features – Activity, Optimism, Certainty, Realism and Commonality’ and performs this analysis using 35 variables (Digitext Inc 2015). 17 of these variables are included in the present study and are described in the next sub-section and afterwards motivated in relation to key hypotheses of the mediatisation literature (commencing in section 5.6.). A list of all 35 variables is provided in Appendix III. The software uses a ‘power-mode’ feature to analyse over 1,000 files at a time and producing results in a comma separated values (csv) spreadsheet file that is readable by the statistical analysis software, SPSS. The analysis is performed by comparing the files to a set of normalised data drawn from Diction’s built-in database of 50,000 articles drawn
across a variety of media types and 35 dictionary lists of words identified as relating a specific variable (Digitext Inc 2015).

Diction produces scores for each variable by parsing a text. Variables are denoted in this text with capitalisation and italics, e.g.: *Blame*. When the software encounters a word that is listed in one of its variable-specific dictionaries, it adds one point to the score for that variable. This means that while diction is able to quantify linguistic usages, it is not able to account for context. Recognising these limitations and using the post-positivist method of triangulation, the qualitative analysis is employed to investigate the dominant frames that govern the context of linguistic usage, reducing the potential for false positives from the quantitative analysis. The software provides a simple method of gaining a statistical overview of which linguistic choices are prevalent in particular texts. Section 5.6 and its subsections provide the motivations for how these variable scores are related to key hypotheses of Strömbäck’s model of mediatisation of politics and how the scores can be used as indicators to test these hypotheses (Strömbäck 2008).

Diction’s scores are set to unsegmented averages. This computes a score for the whole text and normalises that score to a ‘per 500-word score’ (Hart and Carroll 2014a). This enables the comparison of texts of various lengths and discounts the most extreme outliers from substantially longer articles. Diction has been used in similar studies, particularly in the study of intergroup conflict in regional US newspapers (Stewart, Pitts, and Osborne 2011).

5.4.2. **Statistical analysis software (IBM SPSS Statistics)**

SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) is one of the most recognised statistical software programs used in academia and is one of the most common software packages for the analysis and presentation of qualitative data. The software was acquired by IBM in 2009 and is currently on Version 20. SPSS offers extensive support for various statistical techniques and has been widely used for the analysis of quantitative data. The use of statistical analysis packages for the social sciences – particularly regression analyses – is endorsed by John (2002) and Scarbough and Tanenbaum (1998).
5.5. The regression model

The quantitative analysis involves hypothesis testing based on the following regression model:

\[
\text{Blame} = \beta_0 \text{Embellishment} + \beta_1 \text{Certainty} + \beta_2 \text{Concreteness} \\
+ \beta_3 \text{Satisfaction} + \beta_4 \text{Praise} + \beta_5 \text{Aggression} + \beta_6 \text{Denial} \\
+ \beta_7 \text{Commonality} + \beta_8 \text{Collectives} + \beta_9 \text{Exclusion} \\
+ \beta_{10} \text{Ambivalence} + \beta_{11} \text{LevellingTerms} + \beta_{12} \text{Period} \\
+ \beta_{13} \text{Election} + \beta_{14} \text{Competition} + \beta_{15} \text{Proprietor} + \text{Constant}
\]

Equation 1. Regression model for Blame showing all variables

The large number of variables is because of the complexity of an indicator that aims at accountability and this number of terms aims at capturing this phenomenon comprehensively. Attempts to remove variables lowered the fit ($R^2$) of the model, which may, understate the effect mediatisation has on accountability. Accountability performances in media occur in many different ways and through many different linguistic choices. This range of variables captures this diversity and bring it together into a theoretically integrated whole. To assist the reader with the large number of variables, I have grouped the variables into four thematic categories that correspond to the particular expectations provided by the mediatisation theory. These thematic categories involve changes in style, sentiment, polarity and the effect of contextual factors. Commencing in section 5.6. these themes are tied to one or more hypothesis about the significance of the variables on the dependant variable, Blame. The hypothesis is rejected if no significant relationship is observed between Blame and the independent variables of that group. This means that divergent results are possible, where multiple variables are significant but move in different directions.

5.5.1. The dependent variable: Blame

Blame is a score derived from the Diction software, as explained in section 5.5.1. It measures everything from social inappropriateness to ‘downright evil’ (Hart and Carroll 2014b). The Blame variable incorporates attributions of responsibility and normative
statements about proper conduct (Behn 2000a, p.69). This allows us to use the Blame value as an indicator of how willing a journalist is to use language that pursues accountability outcomes. As such, we use the blame variable as the most direct linguistic measure of accountability (Behn 2000b, 69). By specifying exactly how Blame is associated with different components of mediatisation’s effects on article style and content, this model is able to investigate mediatisation’s association and influence on accountability performances. This relationship is tested in several hypotheses that relate to the changes in media content and style discussed in the theoretical framework (Chapter 4).

5.6. Hypotheses of mediatisation’s influence on accountability performances

The follow three hypotheses address article style, influence and polarity respectively. It is predicted that mediatisation’s influence on these three key aspects of a media text will influence the strength of the accountability performance in the articles. When a significant relationship is observed, it confirms that mediatisation’s influence on style, sentiment or polarity does affect the strength of the accountability performance in the articles. Each hypothesis is assessed using several variables that are motivated in the subsections below.

5.6.1. Hypothesis 1: Article style influences media performances of accountability

Hypothesis 1 measures the amount of variation in Blame that is explained by variation in Embellishment, Certainty and Concreteness. These three variables are related to predicted changes in article style in the third stage of mediatisation. Each of these variables is motivated below.

These measures gauge the style of media content that contributes most to the Blame score. Mazzoleni and Schulz (1999, p.257) contend that the movement from a factual reporting style to a sensationalist, commentary style is an outcome of mediatisation. The development of this commentary sphere interacts with issue selection and the framing of political issues (Turner 2009). This is, according to the preceding theoretical discussion,
an act of holding the relevant parties to account. These variables provide three different measures with which we can assess the style of the articles analysed.

*Embellishment* measures how sentence construction de-emphasises human action (Hart and Carroll 2014a). It is calculated by a ratio of adjectives to verbs, where a high score directs the reader to the sentiment of the writing rather than to its content. As such, a high *Embellishment* score indicates commentary and normative writing rather than factual reporting. *Certainty* is a measure of the stridency of an article, where a high score indicates an unwillingness to engage in complex explanations. In this regard, all claims made in an article with high certainty scores will be less contested, aligning with Djerf-Pierre et al’s fifth hypothesis that mediatisation makes criticisms more evident within articles (Djerf-Pierre et al. 2014). The variable *Concreteness* refers to terms that hold no thematic unity other than tangibility and materiality (Hart and Carroll 2014a). Commentary frequently involves abstract conceptualisations on values and norms, moving away from factual, object-based reporting. A high *Concreteness* score would indicate a more factual style of reporting, while a low concreteness score indicates a commentary style of writing. Each of these variables is continuous and is a numeric score generated from the quantitative content analysis performed by Diction7.

5.6.2. Hypothesis 2: Article sentiment influences media performances of accountability

Hypothesis 2 measures the amount of variation in *Blame* that is explained by variation in *Satisfaction, Praise, Aggression and Denial*. These four variables are related to predicted changes in article sentiment in the third stage of mediatisation. Each of these variables is motivated below.

*Satisfaction, Praise* and *Aggression* are different measures of presenting blame in an article. This draws from the understanding that accountability occurs where a party has not met expectations – leading to blame performances that can be expressed as dissatisfaction, criticism or aggressive rejection of that party. These measures indicate the degree to which the article’s author demonstrates criticism and resistance to an action or an individual. These understandings align with Djerf-Pierre et al.’s (2014) fourth hypothesis
that changes to ‘media dramaturgy’ during the third stage of mediatisation result in a more personalised and negative tone.

*Satisfaction* and *Praise* are both direct indicators of sentiment, where a high score in each of these variables indicates a favourable response from the author. Low scores indicate the withholding of praise and the withholding of expressions of satisfaction; sharpening criticisms and exerting influence over the reader to be negatively disposed towards the actors in the articles. *Aggression* is included as a variable because it measures human competition and forceful action, both of which deny a cooperative, peaceful strategy. As a positive outcome would lie in cooperation and compromise, *Aggression*’s focus on social domination and resistance means this variable measures negative tone. In particular, these variables capture negative sentiment because a combination of commonality and aggression points to a lack of cooperation. *Denial* is a dictionary of negative contractions, reflecting the author’s framing of issues as shouldn’t instead of should, or can’t instead of could. It also reflects null sets (e.g.: nothing, no-one, none). These terms, as measures of negatively presented concepts rather than their positive counterparts, contribute to a negative tone.

Each of these variables is numeric, continuous and is a score derived from the Diction software for the analysed articles.

### 5.6.3. Hypothesis 3: Article polarity influences media performances of accountability

Hypothesis 3 measures the amount of variation in *Blame* that is explained by variation in *Commonality, Collectives, Exclusion, Ambivalence*, and *Levelling Terms*. These four variables are related to predicted changes in article polarity in the third stage of mediatisation. Each of these variables is motivated below.

Polarity is a key feature of articles anticipated by mediatisation (Korthagen and Klijn 2014, 8; Thesen 2012, 22). This collection of variables is sensitive to the gulf between the author, their subject and between subjects. Because of the restriction of data to just articles mentioning the Minister, this means that the author takes a position on a near-far spectrum from associating with the Minister or the actions of the department.
extent of this distance is the degree of polarity in the article. Commonality is a measure of the agreed values of a group and the rejection of idiosyncratic modes of engagement. Low Commonality scores represent the author distancing him or herself from the content they are writing about. This distancing is interpreted as a form of criticism; that to not be seen as a part of the phenomena is a rejection of those phenomena. Collectives is a measure of the use of ‘singular pronouns connoting plurality that function to decrease specificity’ and ‘reflect a dependence on categorical modes of thought’ (Hart and Carroll 2014a). This measure indicates the extent to which the author has written in terms of black-and-white distinctions between groups, reducing the capacity to stand in a middle ground, increasing polarisation. Exclusion is a measure sensitive to the sources and effects of social isolation and focuses on the actions of lone agents, whether they are framed positively or negatively (e.g.: both ‘self-sufficient’ and ‘outlaw’ would register on this variable). High Exclusion scores indicate a focus on individuals as independent agents rather than as embedded in larger collective processes. This increases the distance between individuals and between an individual and a group, increasing polarity and reflecting the predicted mediatisation effect of personalisation (Djerf-Pierre et al. 2014).

Ambivalence indicates an author’s tendency to ‘hedge’ their language with words such as ‘allegedly, perhaps or might’ (Hart and Carroll 2014a). These words indicate possible other causes and relationships that the article does not explain, weakening the ‘call to account’ method of accountability and providing a sympathetic or, at least, less critical exposition of events. Inversely, Levelling Terms is included here because, unlike Ambivalence, it is sensitised to ‘words used to ignore individual differences’ and to ‘build a sense of completeness and assurance’ (Hart and Carroll 2014a). This variable influences polarity through the framing of issues as one-side-or-the-other issues.

These variables relate to accountability to the extent that the Blame score can be explained in terms of a widening polarity between teams and the denial of middle-ground or compromise solutions. The variables are numeric and continuous and are scores derived from the Diction software.
5.7. Hypotheses 4-7: Contextual influences on accountability

The variables presented above are all numeric and scores drawn from the Diction software and are continuous variables. However, not all of the relevant data about the Blame variable is captured from the content of the articles themselves. The variables Period, Election, Competition and Proprietor explain variation in the Blame score with reference to these contextual factors. The following four hypotheses address contextual influences on accountability, controlling for mediatisation’s effects and explaining the influence of economic and political incentives on accountability performances.

5.7.1. Hypothesis 4: Time influences media performances of accountability

Departing from Hepp’s assumption that mediatisation ‘is a cumulative process in the variety of media with different institutionalisations and reifications that increase over time’, Period captures the (unequal) passage of time between the periods (Hepp 2013). Period is an ordinal variable with the scores 1-6, corresponding to each of the periods being tested and described earlier in this chapter. By tracking Period we can investigate what happens to Blame scores over time.

5.7.2. Hypothesis 5: Elections influence media performances of accountability

Election is a measure that is included due to the theoretically supported differences in media and political power before and after elections. Election is a dummy variable with values of 1 and 0. A score of 1 is registered if the data has been drawn from periods 1, 3 or 5, all of which are periods that occurred immediately prior to an election. This variable measures whether there is a significant difference in the value of Blame when media power increases before elections.

5.7.3. Hypothesis 6: Media competition influences media performances of accountability
Competition is a variable that controls for whether the newspaper from which the article is drawn has a competing newspaper with the same geographic distribution included in the study. Newspapers compete in Sydney (the Fairfax Sydney Morning Herald and the News Ltd. Daily Telegraph) and on the national level (the AFR and The Australian). Each of the competing newspapers is accorded a score of 1, while newspapers that have no competing newspapers included in the study are recorded with a score of 0. A significant result indicates that media competition influences media performances of accountability.

5.7.4. Hypothesis 7: Proprietors influence media performances of accountability

Proprietor is a measure that explains the impact, if any, of Australia’s duopoly of newspapers. The measure is a dummy variable with values of 1 and 0. A score of 1 is registered for all News Ltd newspapers while all Fairfax newspapers are accorded a score of 0. If the variable is significant, it demonstrates the independent effect of media proprietor on their newspapers’ accountability performances.

5.8. Procedure

5.8.1. Data collection
The data was collected during the week of 1 February to 7 February 2015. Factiva, a media database, was accessed and a keyword search was performed for articles that contained the words asylum seeker, boat people, responsible, and Minister. The words asylum seeker and boat people are synonyms for each other in Australia, where boat people refers negatively to the specific form of seeking asylum through boat arrivals on the Australian mainland and surrounding island territories. To limit the scope of the data collection to articles related to accountability, the word responsible was used. A test was performed for the words accountable or accountability but too few results were returned for meaningful analysis across the periods. This is because accountability is often performed indirectly through other concepts, such as obligations, duties and responsibilities (Lindberg 2013). For this reason, the word ‘responsible’ was used to limit articles to those that related to accountability as it provided the broadest sample of articles and is most closely tied to the discussion of accountability (see Chapter 3). The word Minister
was included to limit the results to political actors and to investigate political accountability.

Two-word phrases, such as *asylum seeker*, were entered in quotation marks search for them as a string. This returns results that contain these words in sequential order only. Limitations were imposed on the search: the region was restricted to Australia, identical articles (caused by syndication of newspaper properties) were excluded, content type was restricted to editorials, commentaries or routine news, while subjects were restricted to the Factiva-suggested ‘Asylum/Immigration’ category. The language was restricted to English. Sources (i.e.: newspapers) selected were the state-based and national newspapers, comprising the newspaper duopoly between Fairfax and News Ltd. i.e.: the dominant print environment in Australia. The Fairfax papers are *The Age, The Age on Sundays, The Sydney Morning Herald, The Canberra Times* and *The Australian Financial Review*. The News Ltd. papers are *The Advertiser, The Courier Mail, The Daily Telegraph, The Hobart Mercury* and *The Australian*. The search process was repeated for each newspaper in each time period. The number of articles gathered is presented in Figure 1 in Chapter 6, Analysis.

The qualitative data was obtained through a three strategic samples of articles to examine the emergence, durability and role of frames. The process and motivations behind this grounded-theory approach is described in section 5.3.2. above. A list of all articles selected is provided in Appendix II.

### 5.8.2. Data processing

The Factiva database offers the affordance of batch exporting. This enables researchers to select multiple search results and export them as a single file for later review. Up to 100 articles can be collated in this way. In periods with greater than 100 articles, such exports were performed and the resulting .rtf was later combined. Data processing occurred through the export function of the Factiva database. Each .rtf A Microsoft Word macro was used to split the collated files into individual articles, using the hard page-breaks in the exported document as the anchor for separation. The resulting .rtf files were grouped according to period and newspaper and batch renamed to indicate their source and period. All files were eventually stored in a series of digital folders with a file structure similar to the following: /Period1/Fairfax/SMH/C1P1_SMH_Art1.doc.
This refers to the first article from the Sydney Morning Herald analysed in the first *Period*. This folder structure means that Diction is capable of retaining some meta-data about the files such as general time *Period*, which *Publication* in addition to which *Proprietor* is associated with the article.

The entire directory of files was imported into Diction 7, and the software’s *power analysis* feature was used to analyse all 2860 articles. Diction was set to normalise scores for each 500-word segment, enabling comparisons between articles. The results of the analysis were output to a .csv file that was imported into Microsoft Excel. Additional columns were added to the database to include the variables *Period, Competition, Proprietor and Newspaper*. Finally, the Excel file was imported into SPSS Statistics and the analysis presented in Chapter 6 was performed.

The qualitative articles were processed according to their strategic sampling technique, a process that is described in qualitative analysis in Chapter 6.

### 5.9 Ethical considerations

Ethics in research is normally considered in regards to six key areas: integrity, consent, confidentiality, voluntarism, harm and independence (Boddy et al. 2015). The research integrity is ensured through the research design explained above and by following a systematic treatment of the data. Consent is not a requirement in this case as all texts are available through databases and were published to the public realm at the time of their creation. It was professional journalists who wrote these articles, and through their profession and training are aware of the potential ramifications of their publication. Confidentiality and anonymity are similarly not relevant concerns to the present project as it deals with texts and not individuals and the texts are already in the public domain. In order to enhance anonymity, individual authors are not referred to during the analysis presented here. This only provides partial anonymity as the articles are accessible through database services that reveal this information. Harm may befall the authors of articles as a result of the analysis and subsequent publication of this thesis; however, this harm would only be incidental to any harm that would occur at the original publication of the articles. This addresses the first five of the six criteria.

Research independence, the sixth criteria, is harder to emphatically state. As a researcher,
particularly one engaging in a qualitative study, I am guided by my own values and assumptions, and have indeed stated in the introduction to this thesis my normative position. I disagree with the direction and policy on immigration taken by successive governments in Australia, and this is in part what has motivated me to pursue this study. However, this position does not disqualify me from producing valuable knowledge about these phenomena. Using triangulated methods well suited to a post-positivist epistemology, I draw on data that may be analysed by others of different persuasions. I am confident that the rigour of the research design and my own standards as a researcher provides a measure of independence in analysis performed and the reporting of the results and that there will be a common ground between my analysis and that of someone with different political stripes.

5.10. Validity

5.10.1. Internal validity

Internal validity provides a measure of how much of the variation in the dependent variable can be explained through the variables studied (Burnham et al. 2008). While important, for the present study the significance, strength and direction of the relationships are the important results, not the overall amount of data explained. This is because of the inherent difficulties of operationalizing complex social phenomena into quantitative terms, and the fact that this overall level of variability will change depending on the context of the texts produced. The relationships between the variables, however, should be durable and tell us something meaningful about the theoretical model that motivates their inclusion in the model. Where possible I have controlled for history by focusing on one geographic and cultural context on a particular issue. I have also designed the research before conducting the analysis, ensuring that there are no instrumentation or statistical regression biases. As this is a study of texts and not subjects, the validity concerns for maturation, testing and experimental mortality are not a concern: the text cannot change in response to the research design. Selection validity has been made in line with Hancke’s recommendation for constructing good case studies, and sampling technique for the quantitative analysis is the most accurate available: the entire collection of articles (Hancke 2009). The sampling technique for the
qualitative analysis is also well justified on the basis of the iterative approach that typifies
grounded theory research (Corbin and Strauss 1990).

5.10.2 External validity

External validity is a measure of how applicable the results of the study are to other
contexts. As this thesis is an explorative study in line with Djerf-Pierre et al. 2014, it
captures the uniqueness of the Australian experience during particular points in time.
While the changes to media formats studied may be generalised across national and
temporal contexts (A. Schrott 2007), a large portion of the variation can only be
explained through the specifics of the local case. Despite this lack of generalizability, the
methodology allows for repeatability that may find the generalizable conclusions that
scholars predict, although this study would form only a part of such a larger empirical
project (Strömbäck and Dimitrova 2011). In addition, following Schrott’s (2007) claims
for the impact of mediatisation across and within media formats, mediatisation effects
observed in one form of media are generalizable across media formats. In particular, this
thesis’ use of newspaper data is assisted in its external validity from the established
frame-leading role that newspapers play in the development of news cycles, where
mediatisation effects in their framing will be observed in other media.

5.11. Summary

This chapter has explained the data and methods employed in the study. In sum, media
coverage of asylum issues in Australia are analysed with respect to the accountability of
government ministers in the periods six months before and six months after three
Australian elections held in 2001, 2007 and 2013. This media coverage is first analysed
statistically using quantitative textual analysis software and how accountability
performances can be explained using three key assumptions of mediatisation – changes
to media style, sentiment and polarity (Strömbäck 2008; Djerf-Pierre et al. 2014). A
qualitative analysis uses a grounded theory approach to analyse the frames used in the
presentation of asylum issues and to reveal how framing theory interacts with both
mediatisation and accountability in the Australian context. The next chapter presents the
analysis of data using the method detailed in this chapter.
Chapter 6: Analysis

This chapter analyses the data drawn from the quantitative content analysis and presents the result of the grounded theory approach to the qualitative sources. The chapter begins by statistically describing the newspaper articles from which both sets of data are drawn. Following this, the regression model presented in Chapter 5 is calculated and the significance, strength and directions of the coefficients explained. In the final section we turn away from statistical methods and engage in a close reading of a strategic set of articles. This section encompasses three samples – individual articles, a shorter continuous narrative and a longer continuous narrative. Each of these samples is analysed in turn and comparisons and insights are drawn from across the samples. Finally, this chapter makes clear the empirical basis for the implications and conclusions presented in Chapters 7 and 8.

6.1. Contextualising the data

The following subsections detail the analysis of the data for two contextual variables: *Period* and *Proprietor*. The remaining variables are addressed in the regression analysis performed in Section 6.2. For all variables, the dataset consists of 2860 articles drawn over six time periods from 10 Australian newspapers. These newspapers are grouped by the two major publishers in Australia, Fairfax media (left of centre, progressively targeted) and News Ltd., a division of Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation (right of centre, conservatively targeted).

6.1.1. Period

This section analyses how many articles were published in each of the six periods of the study by each proprietor and in which newspapers. A breakdown of the number of articles per newspaper per period is presented in Figure 1.
The trend-lines for all newspapers show that the number of articles is higher in the periods prior to an election, periods 1, 3 and 5. In addition, while reporting on asylum issues appears to disappear almost entirely during periods 3 and 4, it returns with gusto in periods 5 and 6. This may be because of the lack of a specific incident during periods 3 and 4 that would drive media coverage, as compared with the Tampa incident in period 1 and decision that no maritime arrivals would be granted refugee status in Australia in period 5.

This suggests that periods 3 and 4 would be excellent candidate periods for understanding the banality of political accountability as it relates to mediatisation, as they lack a particular scandalous event that would drive media coverage. We can also see that coverage levels are similar amongst the various newspapers, with most publishing less than 100 articles per 180 day period and that they move together, with all papers reporting their highest periods before elections, and with significant amounts of publishing activity in periods 1 and 5. The parabolic nature of the article count may be part of a cyclical trend, but to discover such a trend is beyond the scope of this analysis.
6.1.2. Proprietor

The proprietor variable investigates the role of who owns the media organisation and what political allegiances their organisation is known to have. Given the explicit headlines of “Kick this Mob Out” we know that News Ltd favours the conservative Australian Liberal Party, while Fairfax is traditionally aligned with the centre-progressive Australian Labor Party (Greenslade 2013). Figure 2 shows the spread of reporting from each proprietor during each of the five periods. I remind the reader that it was the Liberal Party who won the election in 2001 and 2013, and the Labor party who won office in 2007.

![Figure 2](image_url)

**Figure 2. Percentage share of articles published by each proprietor per period.**

Figure 2 shows that there is a roughly even spread of reporting between proprietors across all periods, but significant variation at the level of each period. Further, the period-level data shows little relationship between who wins an election and media coverage in the period prior to the election. The unexpectedly low share of reporting by News Ltd. in Period 5, prior to the Liberal Party’s overwhelming election victory suggests that this issue is not influential on electoral outcomes. We can therefore conclude that issues of accountability are not influential on who wins the election.
6.1.3. The dependent variable: *Blame*

As described in the methods and data (Chapter 4), *Blame* is used as the indicator variable for performances of calling to account in the media analysed. This is based on the theoretical link between *Blame* as a measure of the centrality of expectations and identifying someone as accountable (Lindberg 2013). This section presents the descriptive statistics for the *Blame* variable and presents summary statistics with respect to the contextual variables of period, proprietor, election and competition.

Total *Blame* occurrences (n=2860) averaged 2.07 (s=2.21) across all articles. The range of the variable is considerable (min = 0, max = 18.7). This suggests that *Blame* is highly variable across the sample of articles. A high degree of variability is favourable to this study: explaining the causes for this variability, and particularly what amount of this variation can be attributed to mediatisation, will allow for a stronger understanding of the relationship between media performances and accountability. The role of the regression analysis (in the next section, 6.2) is to account for this variation in the *Blame* variable and to make explicit the links to the mediatisation literature.

![Mean Blame score per period](image)

*Figure 3. Mean Blame score per period.*

Figure 3 shows *Blame* categorised by *Period*. We see that the average blame scores are consistently lower in the period after an election (i.e.: compare means in period 1 (2.36) with period 2 (2.05); period 3 (2.00) with periods 4 (1.72); and period 5 (2.00) with
period 6 (1.80)). Standard deviation also appears to be variable across period (Period 1 \(s=2.41\); Period 3 \(s=1.633\)), suggesting that the volatility of *Blame* data shares some relationship with the period in which it was collected. The regression model will demonstrate this relationship, but this already supports the theorised link between *Election* and *Blame* according to Schudson (2002, 264).

This relationship is supported by Figure 4, which shows the average blame levels across pre- and post-election periods. As is evident from Figure 4, the pre-election period has a higher average *Blame* score of 2.18 (s=0.06) compared with an average of 1.92 (s=0.06) in non-election periods. This is a difference of 13.5 per cent and is significantly different (independent samples t-test, \(p<0.05\)). This finding supports the theorised link between changed media performances in response to increased media power prior to elections.

![Figure 4. Mean *Blame* before and after elections.](image)

Describing *Blame* with respect to proprietor (Figure 5), it shows that News Ltd (right of centre) has a slightly higher mean *Blame* score of 2.13 when compared with Fairfax’s (left of centre) mean blame score of 2.02. This is a difference of 5.4 per cent and is not significantly different (independent samples t-test, \(p<0.1\)). This does not support the theorised relationship between media proprietor influence and media outcomes, particularly in respect to the documented close association between news media and political parties in Australia.
The relationship between *Blame* and *Competition* is portrayed by Figure 6. Figure 6 shows that newspapers with competition in their area of distribution have a mean blame score of 2.05 ($\sigma=0.06$), while newspapers with no competition have a slightly higher score of 2.10 ($\sigma=0.06$). This is a difference of 2.4 per cent and the difference is not significant (independent samples t-test, $p<0.1$). The lack of significance can be explained through the fact that competition to a newspaper does not only come in the form of other newspapers; the more complete media-scape of radio, television and digital media products may also provide competition similar to a competing newspaper. This means that the data collected and recorded as having no competing newspaper may have already adapted its content to account for competition from other media forms. Additional research would be required to investigate this phenomenon.
6.2. The regression analysis

This section presents the results of the regression analysis described in Section 5.5. of the Methods and Data chapter. The regression model is presented with its beta-coefficients and error terms. Following an analysis of the model’s explanation of the data, the variables are analysed by their respective groupings of style, sentiment, polarity and structure.

6.2.1. Results of the regression model

SPSS was used to produce a simple linear regression model of blame with respect to the 17 variables motivated in the Methods and Data chapter. The regression coefficients are given by Table 2 (next page).
Table 2. Regression coefficients and significance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Unstandardised coefficient</th>
<th>Unstandardised standard error</th>
<th>Standardised coefficient</th>
<th>T-value</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>3.544</td>
<td>1.278</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.772</td>
<td>.006**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embellishment</td>
<td>.621</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td>.293</td>
<td>15.721</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certainty</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.088</td>
<td>4.424</td>
<td>.000***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concreteness</td>
<td>-.025</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>-.104</td>
<td>-5.241</td>
<td>.000***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td>2.686</td>
<td>.007**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praise</td>
<td>-.008</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>-.009</td>
<td>-.442</td>
<td>.658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td>.047</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>.070</td>
<td>3.955</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial</td>
<td>.091</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.125</td>
<td>6.501</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonality</td>
<td>-.090</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>-.107</td>
<td>-3.983</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collectives</td>
<td>-.019</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>-.039</td>
<td>-1.962</td>
<td>.050*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusion</td>
<td>-.028</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>-.057</td>
<td>-2.069</td>
<td>.039*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambivalence</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.035</td>
<td>1.885</td>
<td>.059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leveling Terms</td>
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<td>.005</td>
<td>-.130</td>
<td>-6.373</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period</td>
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<td>.020</td>
<td>-.043</td>
<td>-2.339</td>
<td>.019*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election</td>
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<td>.054</td>
<td>3.010</td>
<td>.003**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
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<td>.076</td>
<td>-.017</td>
<td>-.982</td>
<td>.326</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proprietor</td>
<td>.214</td>
<td>.079</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>2.699</td>
<td>.007**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Table 3. Model summary and regression fit (\(R^2\))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.400*</td>
<td>.160</td>
<td>.155</td>
<td>2.0257</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As is shown in Table 2, several variables are not significant to the regression analysis. For this reason, the variables *Praise, Ambivalence* and *Competition* are recognised as not being significant to the model. However, as this model aims at an interpretation of causality and not at prediction, the variables are retained in the model. This is because a model that aims at understanding causality is theoretically obligated to retain variables that are found to be insignificant. In this regard, we can still consider a non-significant
relationship that is unanticipated by the theory as an important finding. Retaining all
variables and using the standardised coefficients to enable comparison between
variables, the regression model is stated as follows:

\[
\text{Blame} = 0.293\text{Embellishment} + 0.088\text{Certainty} - 0.104\text{Concreteness} + \\
0.048\text{Satisfaction} - 0.009\text{Praise} + 0.070\text{Aggression} + 0.125\text{Denial} - \\
0.107\text{Commonality} - 0.039\text{Collectives} - 0.057\text{Exclusion} + \\
0.035\text{Ambivalence} - 0.130\text{LevellingTerms} - 0.043\text{Period} + 0.054\text{Election} - \\
0.017\text{Competition} + 0.049\text{Proprietor} + 3.544
\]

Equation 2. Regression equation for dependent variable Blame.

Overall, the model explains 15.5 per cent of the variation in Blame scores (adjusted R-
squared=0.155). While 15.5 per cent may sound as a disappointingly low figure of
variance explained, the more important consideration is the number of significant
variables (Minitab Software 2013). The model is not a good model for predicting future
blame scores on the basis of its variables, but the significance of the relationship
between the variables means that we have good reason to accept the model as explaining
the direction of the relationships between these variables, if not the strength of the
overall relationship (Minitab Software 2013). This result directly quantifies the extent of
mediatisation’s influence on accountability performances to be 15.5 per cent of the
blame score. This answers Research Question 1. Having established the extent of
mediatisation’s influence on accountability performance, the thesis now explains how
interaction between variables can be used to explain the way that mediatisation processes
influence the blame score.

6.3. Hypotheses 1-3 results: Mediatisation’s influence on article style, 
    sentiment and polarity

The following three sets of results explain the relationship between accountability
performances and the three key impacts of mediatisation on style, sentiment and polarity
on the accountability performances measured by the quantitative analysis.
6.3.1. Hypothesis 1: Article style influences media performances of accountability

Equation 2 shows (in strong typeface) the variables that are related to the style of the articles. This shows that blame has a positive relationship with embellishment and certainty and a negative relationship with concreteness.

\[ \text{Blame} = 0.293 \times \text{Embellishment} + 0.088 \times \text{Certainty} - 0.104 \times \text{Concreteness} \]

\[ + 0.048 \times \text{Satisfaction} - 0.009 \times \text{Praise} + 0.070 \times \text{Aggression} \\
+ 0.125 \times \text{Denial} - 0.107 \times \text{Commonality} - 0.039 \times \text{Collectives} \\
- 0.057 \times \text{Exclusion} + 0.035 \times \text{Ambivalence} - 0.130 \times \text{Leveling Terms} \\
- 0.043 \times \text{Period} + 0.054 \times \text{Election} - 0.017 \times \text{Competition} \\
+ 0.049 \times \text{Proprietor} + 3.544 \]

Equation 3. Regression equation for dependent variable blame with measures of style highlighted.

Embellishment is positively related to blame, indicating that an increase in embellishment is associated with a weak increase in blame. The relationship between blame and embellishment is significant at the level p<0.001, indicating that this relationship is highly significant. As discussed in the methods and data section, a high embellishment score is associated with commentary forms of writing, and this supports the argument made by Djerf-Pierre et al. (2014) that commentary is more effective than reportage for holding others to account.

Certainty is also significant at the level p<0.001 level, indicting a high relevance for the present study. However, the effect of certainty on blame is less pronounced than for embellishment. This suggests that the stridency of the article and the unwillingness to engage in complex discussion does have an effect on blame, but that contribution from a commentary style of writing exceeds the directness from a similar level of certain writing.

Concreteness shares a similar strength relationship as certainty but is negatively associated. As presented in the methods chapter, the direction of this relationship is as expected by the theory – a low concreteness score indicates a commentary style of writing and this encourages the accountability function of the press. The relationship is significant at the level p<0.001.

Taking this collection of variables as whole, each of the relationships for the measures of
style is significant and in the directions anticipated by the model. This supports Hypothesis 1 – mediatisation of article style does indeed influence accountability in media performances.

6.3.2. Hypothesis 2: article sentiment influences media performances accountability

Equation 3 shows the components of the regression model relevant to the analysis of sentiment in bold typeface, presented with their standardised coefficients. Each is discussed in turn.

\[
\text{Blame} = 0.293\text{Embellishment} + 0.088\text{Certainty} - 0.104\text{Concreteness} \\
+ 0.048\text{Satisfaction} - 0.009\text{Praise} + 0.070\text{Aggression} \\
+ 0.125\text{Denial} - 0.107\text{Commonality} - 0.039\text{Collectives} \\
- 0.057\text{Exclusion} + 0.035\text{Ambivalence} - 0.130\text{LevellingTerms} \\
- 0.043\text{Period} + 0.054\text{Election} - 0.017\text{Competition} \\
+ 0.049\text{Proprietor} + 3.544
\]

Equation 4. Regression equation for dependent variable \textit{Blame} with measures of sentiment highlighted.

\textit{Satisfaction} is positively associated with \textit{Blame} and the relationship is significant at the \(p<0.05\) level. However, the relationship is in the opposite direction than predicted by the theory. The regression model shows that as \textit{Blame} increases, \textit{Satisfaction} also increases (albeit at a much slower rate). The theory anticipates that low \textit{Satisfaction} sharpens criticisms and disposes readers negatively towards the actors reported on. From the data, Diction’s dictionaries and the theoretical model, I am unable to account for this unexpected relationship and it suggests that a theoretical revision of the mediatisation thesis can be justified, or at least further specificity in that relationship to account for the role of \textit{Satisfaction}.

The relationship between \textit{Blame} and \textit{Aggression} is significant and in the expected direction (\(p<0.001\)). This suggests that more aggression in articles is associated with an increased degree of \textit{Blame}. This indicates that aggression tends to be targeted towards particular actors, represented by the higher \textit{Blame} scores. This supports the theoretical role of aggression as a marker of competition and negative tone; the more \textit{Blame}, the more
aggressively that *Blame* is pursued (Djerf-Pierre et al. 2014).

*Denial* is a further measure of sentiment that encompasses the author’s choice to use negatively phrased statements (shouldn’t, can’t, not) instead of positively phrased statements (should, can, is). The relationship is in the direction expected by the theoretical model (positive), and supports the theory that accountability performances involve negative sentiment. The relationship is significant at the p<0.001 level and the coefficient is the third largest predictor of the overall *Blame* scores.

As the relationship between *Blame* and *Praise* is not significant, even at the p<0.10 level, it is not correct to interpret its regression correlations. On the whole, the measures of sentiment provide a moderate level of support for Hypothesis 2. In particular, while *Aggression* and *Denial* are significant and as predicted by the model, the significant but unexpected relationship for *Satisfaction* and the lack of the predicted significant negative relationship for *Praise* suggests a divergent result. This means that while mediatisation of article sentiment influences accountability performances, not all ways of achieving this are significant and the directions are also unanticipated. Possible further research could investigate the breakdown of sentiment more closely as this quantitative analysis has not fully supported the existing literature and calls into question the methods used to gauge sentiment in other studies that have not found similar divergent results (e.g.: Djerf-Pierre et al. 2014; Strömbäck and Dimitrova 2011).

### 6.3.3. Hypothesis 3: Article polarity influences media performances of accountability

Equation 4 highlights the components of the regression analysis that are relevant to the measures for polarity. The mediatisation theory advanced by Strömbäck (2008) predicts that polarisation will be evident and that this polarisation drives competitive reporting. In the context of political contests, this would mean indicating the failures of others. These variables indicate the relationship between different types of polarity and the way it can be expressed in media performances.
**Blame** = 0.293Embellishment + 0.088Certainty − 0.104Concreteness
+ 0.048Satisfaction − 0.009Praise + 0.070Aggression
+ 0.125Denial − 0.107Commonality − 0.039Collectives
− 0.057Exclusion + 0.035Ambivalence
− 0.130LevellingTerms − 0.043Period + 0.054Election
− 0.017Competition + 0.049Proprietor + 3.544

Equation 5. Regression equation for dependent variable **Blame** with measures of polarity highlighted.

**Commonality** is significant at the p<0.001 level and the relationship is in the direction anticipated by the theory. As **Commonality** increases (thus decreasing polarity) **Blame** decreases. This suggests that divisiveness is a component of accountability, drawing a clear distinction between the one at fault and blameless others. This first variable gives support to the theoretical assumptions and supports the concept of mediatisation affecting polarisation. Polarisation heightens media bias which is a problem because ‘even if citizens are completely rational and take media bias into account, they cannot recover all of the missing information which can lead to the election of the wrong candidate’ (Bernhardt, Krasa and Polborn 2008; Adachi and Hizen 2014).

In a similar finding to **Commonality**, **Collectives** also shares a negative relationship and is significant with respect to **Blame** (p<0.05). Lower **Collectives** scores indicate a more personalised style of language, supporting Djerf-Pierre et al.’s hypothesis that media coverage for accountability involves the personalisation of language (Djerf-Pierre et al. 2014). While the relationship is not as strong as that for **Commonality** and is only significant at the less stringent p<0.05 level, the **Collectives** score also supports the existing theoretical work on polarisation, and suggests that not using collective nouns is a weak component of how this polarisation is performed in media.

**Exclusion** is a measure of the social isolation of agents and is an inverse measure to **Commonality**. Despite its inverse nature to **Commonality**, it retains a negative relationship to **Blame**, challenging the theorised model. The variable is significant at the p<0.05 level. High **Exclusion** scores reduce **Blame**, something that the theoretical model is unable to account for given that exclusion as a measure of increased polarity. It suggests, at the least, that extreme personalisation is not conducive to accountability functions. This is counter to the hypothesis that personalisation becomes increasingly important to media.
accounts (Djerf-Pierre et al. 2014, 326). This may be because *Exclusion* positions the individual as aberrant and excused from others’ expectations due to their uniqueness. *Exclusion*’s focus on individuals as lone-agents being negatively associated with the accountability measure in this study is an area for further research as the literature predicts greater scrutiny of individuals (Djerf-Pierre et al. 2014).

*Levelling Terms* are significantly related to *Blame* at the *p*<0.001 level. It measures the tendency to collapse individual differences and to create clear groups. The negative relationship between the variables suggests that the more homogenous the groups presented, the less *Blame* is recorded. This finding supports the mediatisation theory’s claim that polarisation is a part of media performances of accountability.

*Ambivalence* is not significant at the *p*<0.05 level and it is therefore inappropriate to interpret its regression coefficient. However, it is worth noting that *Ambivalence* is likely to be a confused variable. *Ambivalence* measures the author’s tendency to hedge their bets and suggests the author is less certain in his/her criticism. However, there is strong reason to suspect that *Ambivalence* is artificially increased due to the legal implications of defamation and the necessity of protecting journalists and media outlets from litigation. Use of terms such as ‘allegedly’ enable journalists to convey their criticisms without exposing themselves to significant risk. Hence, while not significant in this analysis, it is worth being aware of the impacts of financial practices on the way media performances are constructed – indeed, it is a key concept for this paper.

Taken together, the measures of polarity have presented divergent evidence for Hypothesis 3. This suggests that for the mediatisation effects on accountability as proposed by Strömbäck (2008), Strömbäck and Dimitrova (2011) and Djerf-Pierre et al. (2014) may oversimplify the role of polarisation in their claims on political accountability. While *Commonality*, *Collectives*, and *Levelling Terms* all lend support to the existing theoretical model, the role of *Exclusion* – highly significant but in the unexpected direction – cannot be overlooked. In summary, we can say that polarisation has a divergent effect on media performances of accountability and provides limited support for Hypothesis 3.
6.4. Hypotheses 4-7 results: Mediatisation, structure and accountability performances

The variables Period, Election, Competition and Proprietor are collectively the measures of time and structure. These variables investigate the effect of context and external factors to the decisions of the individual authors writing the articles analysed. They have already been analysed as descriptive variables with respect to Blame in section 6.1.3. This section focuses on their relative contributions, direction and significance to the regression model, as shown the equation below:

\[
Blame = 0.293\text{Embellishment} + 0.088\text{Certainty} - 0.104\text{Concreteness} \\
+ 0.048\text{Satisfaction} - 0.009\text{Praise} + 0.070\text{Aggression} \\
+ 0.125\text{Denial} - 0.107\text{Commonality} - 0.039\text{Collectives} \\
- 0.057\text{Exclusion} + 0.035\text{Ambivalence} - 0.130\text{LevellingTerms} \\
- 0.043\text{Period} + 0.054\text{Election} - 0.017\text{Competition} \\
+ 0.049\text{Proprietor} + 3.544
\]

Equation 6. Regression equation for dependent variable Blame with measures of time and structure highlighted.

6.4.1. Hypothesis 4: Time influences performances of media accountability

Period is significantly related to Blame (p<0.05) and the relationship is negative in direction. This runs against the anticipated result, which predicts stronger mediatisation effects in later periods, and therefore greater performances of accountability. The direction of this relationship challenges the existing mediatisation literature, but does give support to the concept of mediatisation as a non-linear and non-uniform process (Landerer 2013, 241). A possible explanation is that that while the elements of mediatisation that support changes in polarisation, sentiment and style occur in response to catalysts not yet included in the mediatisation literature. Additional research is required to explain the incongruence between this result and the existing literature on mediatisation.
6.4.2. Hypothesis 5: Elections influence media performances of accountability

A significant relationship (p<0.01) is evident between *Blame* and the variable *Election*. As predicted by the theoretical model, accountability actions are most evident during the periods preceding elections and they are muted after elections. This reflects the shifting nature of media power over the political cycle. This supports the mediatisation and accountability theories used to build this model and suggests that the accountability function is most evident during the limited opportunities for media to censure politicians during their weakest moments – when they stand for re-election. On average, an election adds 0.054 to the *Blame* score that would not otherwise be present. Given the average level of *Blame* recorded across all periods (see Figure 3), this amounts to approximately 2.7 per cent extra *Blame*.

6.4.3. Hypothesis 6: Media competition influences media performances of accountability

The variable *Competition* is not statistically significant at the (p<0.05) level and it is not appropriate to analyse its coefficient. Hypothesis 6 is therefore rejected and media competition does not influence media performances of accountability.

6.4.4. Hypothesis 7: Proprietors influence media performances of accountability

The relationship between *Proprietor* and *Blame* is significant (p<0.001), supports the theoretical model and we conclude that it supports Hypothesis 7. All other things equal, the level of *Blame* in the News Ltd. newspapers is 0.049 units higher than for Fairfax newspapers, suggesting that conservative media is more likely to pursue accountability functions than progressive media on the basis of proprietor influence alone. This is also true independently of which side of Australian politics is in government. This represents an additional 2.5 per cent over the mean *Blame* level for Fairfax papers, a not insignificant quantity. Despite this, the Fairfax papers demonstrated a higher overall mean *Blame* even accounting for this effect, but the level of this *Blame* cannot be tied to the influence of a proprietor.
6.5. Summary: Hypothesis tests

When considered as a group, the measures of time and structure provide mixed support for the mediatisation literature, primarily due to the unexpected result for the variable Period. In addition, the significant differences between Election and Proprietor suggest that there are marked effects of context on the way that accountability is performed, giving great strength to the concept of media power as governed by the election cycle and the proprietor’s ideology. These findings have helped to specify the relationship between contextual variables local to the Australian case and the broader mediatisation theory developed internationally.

6.6. Multicollinearity: correlation between explanatory variables

This section considers the relationship between variables but independently of Blame. Given that Blame has already been analysed in the regression model, it is not analysed again here. However, this section shows significant correlations between variables that may indicate how the variables ‘move together’ in the regression analysis, affecting how much of the variance in the Blame score they explain. Understanding this link can add further specificity and possibly account for interaction effects in the regression model. This specificity is advantageous as it sharpens the clarity of the present analysis and shows how variables may have been confounded in previous mediatisation studies.

Table 4 (next page) shows the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) of the explanatory variables in this model. This value measures how much of the variance in one variable is explained by variance in another variable. This provides a measure of how variables may influence each other within the model. A VIF value of more than 10 means that multicollinearity is present, while a value greater than 5 is a cause for concern over possible multicollinearity. As is shown in Table 4, neither of these scenarios is met by the data. This gives strong reason to accept the values of the coefficients and discounts the possibility of confounding effects between variables. It also suggests that while the model only explains 15.5 per cent of the data, it explains that 15.5 per cent accurately.
Table 4. Analysis of Multicollinearity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Collinearity Statistics</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tolerance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>3.544</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>-6.373</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election</td>
<td>.243</td>
<td>.081</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>3.010</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>-.075</td>
<td>.076</td>
<td>-.017</td>
<td>-.982</td>
<td>.326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proprietor</td>
<td>.214</td>
<td>.079</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>2.699</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n.b.: dependent variable: Blame
6.7. Qualitative analysis

This qualitative study has used strategic sampling and grounded theory to build an analysis of accountability performances in media. Three samples were taken of the articles, the first random and the subsequent two strategic. In the first sample, five articles were drawn at random from across the entire collection of articles downloaded from the Factiva database. A random number generator from Random.org was used to select the articles 618, 861, 372, 878 and 2789 from the entire listing of 2860 articles (Random.org 2015). These five articles were selected at random – rather than in sequence – in order to break any minor frames that may occur around particular issues at a specific point in time. This is to investigate the persistence of frames without an incident that binds them together. All articles in the qualitative study are referred to by the publishing newspaper and the date as the focus is on the institutional decisions of what to publish, rather than on the journalist who wrote the story.

The second part of the qualitative analysis is an analysis of 5 articles drawn from the start of the entire period of study. In order to avoid the specifics of the Tampa crisis and the 2001 election, the articles were drawn from a time after both of these events, in late December 2001. The justification for doing so is to avoid the focus on scandal and instead to consider the frames that are used in the everyday reporting of accountability for immigration and asylum issues in the Australian newspaper press.

The third phase operates as a counterfactual. Unlike the second phase, this final phase engages directly with the frames that are used during coverage of a specific incident. The event chosen was the death of Iranian asylum-seeker Reza Berati on the 17th February 2014. The eight articles analysed are one each from each of the newspapers included in the study on the closest sequential days, with the newspaper order determined randomly. Random ordering meant that the Adelaide Advertiser was excluded as it had no articles on this incident after the 24th February 2015. The intent is to investigate how a frame develops over time and the bearing this has on subsequent reporting of a specific incident. The Age on Sundays was excluded, as its inclusion would result in the double representation of The Age’s articles.

### 6.7.1. Sample 1: Analysis of five articles

The grounded theoretical approach first involved analysis of the articles to look for similarities. These similarities were then grouped into themes that emerged. The themes were centred on the actors (politicians, countries, parliaments, international organisations), legal instruments (policies, charters, agreements) and a judgement code. These themes are closely linked to the elements necessary for accountability performances — actors are defined, expectations are explained (legal instruments) and an assessment is made (judgement code). This is what I take to be the accountability frame, where the judgement code is dependent on the actors and expectations. This frame appears to be persistent across the time interval. Compare the following three statements and the times they were published.

“*They had fled their war-torn countries but found Australia would not abide by its international obligations towards asylum seekers.*” (Article 372, December 2007)

“A spokesman for Greens Senator Bob Brown said there was a prima facie case that Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock and Defence Minister Peter Reith had misled the public and the Parliament over claims that asylum-seekers had thrown children into the water.” (Article 618, November 2001).

“The developments come just days after Jakarta jolted the bi-lateral relationship by refusing an Australian request to land asylum seekers rescued at sea in the Indonesian search and rescue zone, in accordance with a understanding between the two countries and established international law.” (Article 878, November 2013).
Each of these articles meets the requirement for the accountability frame, but the level of the analysis differs. The first citation refers to ‘Australia’ as an actor and ‘international obligations’ as the expectations unit. The second citation refers to the individual responsibilities of ministers to be honest in their dealing with the parliament, making the actors the individual politicians and the expectations parliamentary conduct. In the third citation we have returned to the inter-country level of analysis and a focus on international law. What does not change between these citations and the levels of analyses is the passivity of the asylum seekers: there is no actively phrased statement that makes the asylum seekers into an actor. The accountability framework in these representations operates entirely on the relationship of other actors (countries, politicians) and the accountability frameworks that govern them (parliaments, international obligations). There is no discussion of a personal accountability to the asylum seekers themselves, the people most threatened by a failure to follow ‘established international law’. In response to this passivity, media representations do not engage in a call to action. Article 2789 states that ‘Death and loss usually transcend political colour. Not so, given some of those impassioned complaints’. Such statements are descriptive and fail to engage in the type of normative critique that is necessary for an accountability frame to operate: a judgement must be made on whether expectations have been met.

These types of representations prevent the airing of grievances by the aggrieved. It is a type of accountability by proxy, where those to whom accountability is owed (asylum-seekers) are unable to exercise any censure on the responsible party. Indeed, the lack of voice and the passivity in representations of asylum seekers ensures that they cannot be an actor. Not being identified as an actor, asylum seekers cannot take part in the accountability framework discussed in Chapter 4. This suggests that accountability occurs around asylum seekers but not for them. The issue of asylum seeking is abstracted in media representations from those who have legitimate expectations for others’ behaviour. This severely undermines the ability for media accounts to focus on accountability for the welfare of asylum seekers. Instead, the discussion shifts to a discussion of accountability of ministerial propriety. Ministerial propriety is an accountability relationship between the parliament and the people of Australia – by definition those non-citizens seeking asylum are excluded from this discussion.

This brief analysis of five articles drawn across the whole of the sample has given
evidence of a passive accountability frame and the key role of actors and expectations. It has found that while framing of the issue results in asylum seekers remaining passive (asylum seekers are never the actor), the frame of analysis can shift from individual responsibility (as in the case for ministers) to collective responsibility (as shown by discussions of national actions). Similarly, the expectations that govern the accountability relationship shift in response to which level of analysis is appropriate for the given actors. These frames are taken into the following analysis of five articles at the start of the study period.

6.7.2. Sample 2: Five articles drawn from the start of the study period

These five articles depart from the accountability frames that had been discovered from the five random articles sampled above. During this analysis, two additional concepts emerged. The first of these is a preoccupation with quantification. This is addressed explicitly in the article ‘Refugees and Others’ (Sydney Morning Herald, 28 December 2001) which states that ‘Underlying the public debate on boat people is a concern about numbers’ and proceeds to discuss how ‘the defence budget faced a potential blowout of hundreds of millions of dollars because of the war against terrorism and the naval blockade against boat people’. These excerpts highlight how quantification is performed in two ways: firstly in terms of the numbers of asylum seekers that are being processed by the then active Pacific Solution, and secondly in terms of the cost and efficiency of that system. The second focus on numbers – the financial cost – plays directly into the traditional notion of accountability for outcomes discussed by Behn (2001). This preoccupation with numbers is reinforced by the opening sentences of another article in the sample, ‘5000 Boat People in Year of Pacific Solution’ (Sydney Morning Herald, 27 December 2001) which opens with ‘the number of boat people arriving in Australia or caught up in the Government’s Pacific Solution has passed the 5000 mark this year, more than 100 above the previous record year of 1999’. A comment left in the Adelaide Advertiser (‘Misdirected money’, Adelaide Advertiser, 31 December 2001) states that:

“Money in this state seems to go everywhere except to where it is needed – from new bus interchanges for football-crazed families at Football Park, to millions of dollars on ungrateful boat people at Woomera.”
See also the following statement that discusses the issue in purely quantitative terms, where the ‘problem’ is only assessed on the basis of budget expectations:

“The Government had budgeted, pre-Tampa, for 5500 boat arrivals this financial year, estimating in May that the boat people problem was not as serious as it had anticipated. The previous financial year it had budgeted for more than 8000 arrivals.” *(Sydney Morning Herald, 27 December 2001).*

This excerpt clearly shows that the severity of the problem is considered in relation to its quantitative elements. There is little engagement with the moral dimension of how processing works, despite claims that ‘for many people, the moral argument is that Australia has begun to treat the weak and vulnerable, especially children, in ways that are simply wrong’ *(Sydney Morning Herald, 28 December 2001).* This suggests that whether the issue is framed as moral or practical has a strong implication on what types of statements are made and how accountability performances are expected to work.

This preoccupation with quantification reinforces the existing accountability frame and focuses on the accountability for outcomes while ignoring the accountability for process. Within the context of these articles, the voices of asylum seekers remain passive and the findings from the analysis of the randomly drawn articles hold. Quantitative accountability undermines the accountability for process that we expect of our political representatives.

Moral accountability fares little better. Two articles break the passive framing of the asylum seekers. The first ‘Asylum Seeker Faced ‘Dumping’ in Africa’ *(Sydney Morning Herald, 31 December 2001)*, focuses on the experiences of an Angolan man who was almost returned by Australia to the wrong country. While the article predominantly presents the actors as the Department of Immigration and Amnesty International, the claims examined are specifically regarding what accountability measures are in place for the grievances of ‘someone being dumped in a country that is not his country of nationality, especially a country such as the DRC, which, at the time, was experiencing ongoing civil war’ *(ibid).* In these specific instances there is a debate over which series of expectations is the relevant series of expectations to the accountability performance – a
conflict arises in the networked structure of accountability. In particular, Amnesty International argued that Australia was in breach of international expectations, while the Immigration Minister contended that ‘under Australian law it did not matter where a failed asylum seeker ended up once he or she left Australia’.

The final article ‘Refugee Aims for Degree of Security’ presents Carla Chung, an East Timorese woman studying in Australia under a temporary protection visa who may have been forced to return to East Timor. While the article frames her as an active voice with clear expectations, there is no judgement component from the reporter, and the specific issue of her individual case is quickly conflated to the more complex level of international relations, even broadening to talk about the unrelated government decision to ‘suspend Afghan applications for asylum after the Taliban regime crumbling’ (The Age, 31 December 2001). Broadening the issue frame and presenting different levels of analysis (e.g.: local, global) makes it unclear which expectations are applicable for the accountability performance. This lack of clarity prevents the judgement code necessary for holding an actor to account. While these representations recognise the grievances of asylum seekers they do not hold the same capacity for accountability as the process-based, quantifiable theme discussed earlier. In short, media representations of asylum seekers’ moral expectations are framed as part of a multi-tiered issue, resulting in less moral accountability.

6.7.3. Sample 3 and counterfactual: The death of Reza Berati in immigration detention

This part of the qualitative study operates as a counter-factual to the preceding components. The intent with this part of the qualitative analysis is to specifically examine an instance of scandal and to investigate whether the frame established earlier – the accountability frame with passive asylum seekers and multi-layered issue selection – is maintained during reporting on scandal. The reading of these articles suggests that scandal has a strong effect that changes the frame.

The reporting opens with explicit demands for accountability. Compare the following calls for transparency and accountability with the earlier passivity frame:
“Tony Abbott should immediately suspend transfers to Manus Island until a credible and comprehensive inquiry determines what caused the chain of events that led to the death of one asylum seeker…” (The Age, 19 February 2014).

“Mr Morrison has been under heavy fire for saying a week ago that 23-year old Iranian asylum seeker Reza Berati was killed outside the troubled Manus Island detention centre in PNG. On Saturday night he retracted that, saying that most of the violence, including the attack on Mr Berati, had likely happened inside the centre” (Hobart Mercury, 25 February 2014).

“A young man came to our doorstep seeking our help and we killed him. That is what happened on Tony Abbott’s watch and Tony Abbott now needs to show some principle and sack Scott Morrison…” (The Daily Telegraph, 26 February 2014).

These citations show that the specificity of Berati’s death operates as a catalyst for clear calls for accountability. This is because a death, particularly one in the custody of a national government, contains all of the elements of the accountability performance. The expectations are of safety, the actors are the government and the judgement mechanism is safely assumed to be that we oppose needless deaths. The issue is not initially broadened because of the high degree of specificity of the incident and this leads to a very clear accountability performance in the media.

In addition to the clarity of the accountability function, the specificity of the event also breaks down the passivity in reporting on asylum issues. The Sydney Morning Herald (19 February 2014) includes the voices of detainees in quotes such as:

“They are injuring us … please if you are the office for asylum seekers please contact someone, or the media or anyone”

and;
“The PNG [Papua New Guinea] guys, they attacked us before they switched off the electricity and then they attacked us with stones … they are armed”.

These voices were silent in the earlier samples. Despite this newfound voice, however, the focus on morals and numbers remains. The *Sydney Morning Herald* (19 February 2014) reminds readers of the locations and numbers of detainees, stating that there are 4589 detainees in immigration detention centres. The *Daily Telegraph* focuses on the scale of the issue, attempting to explain away the significance of Berati’s death by reference to a broader issue:

“Now we can see that it was the ‘humanitarian policies’ of Labor and the Greens that were the sole cause of those 1200 deaths at sea, of detention centres bulging at the seams with unhappy people, including 1000 children” (*Daily Telegraph*, 26 February 2014).

“The security situation on Manus Island was deficient and … over the last five months we have been dealing with a $1.2 billion black hole of inadequate funding and support for an under resourced, understaffed centre” (*Australian Financial Review*, 26 February 2014).

These citations demonstrate that although the calls for accountability are much more explicit and clearer in instances of scandal, the issue is still framed as either moral or practical. In addition, the numbers-based/practical frame emerges more strongly the later the article is written after the incident (compare the above citations on the 26th of February with the earlier citations from the 19th of February). The everyday framing of an incident as practical reasserts its strength the further time moves from the specific incident. This suggests that accountability performances are most direct and effective immediately after an incident and that the media’s power to influence accountability for process declines over time from specific incidents. Everyday failures of policy or trust are therefore unable to draw on media power as a means of seeking accountability or restitution from the offending party.
The return to the moral/practical frame involves the presentation of asylum policies as a political issue, when the News Ltd *Courier Mail* (28 February 2014) opens an attack on Labor for ‘scrapping John Howard’s Pacific Solution – against the advice of the federal police and officials’ and giving ‘people smugglers the green light they were anticipating’. This frame is reiterated by *The Daily Telegraph*, which states:

‘… if anyone is to blame for the death of the 23 year old asylum seeker Reza Berati during a violent riot at Manus Island it is those very people who persuaded Kevin Rudd to dismantle the Howard government’s hard-won border protection’ (*Daily Telegraph*, 26 February 2014).

And also in the *Hobart Mercury* (25 February 2014):

‘We are not going to be intimidated by the weakness of the Greens or the double-mindedness and hypocrisy of the Labor Party’ (Immigration Minister Scott Morrison).

The nature of accountability in these quotes is politically contested, indicating the types of negotiation over accountability that is produced in networked relationships (Hanberger 2006; Hanberger 2009). The return of the moral/practical frame means that values can be contested in the political arena. The confusion over these values impedes the ability to judge whether conduct went against expectations. As discussed, this prevents accountability from occurring. In the absence of a clear value on which a judgement can be made, the censure function of the media is unable to operate. This diminishes media power to hold actors accountable.

An interesting emotional frame develops in the final article (*Canberra Times*, 1 March 2014). The frame shifts from the focus on the government’s response to the emotional aftermath of the incident. The *Canberra Times* reports from Berati’s wake in Tehran that the dead asylum seeker ‘graduated as an architect but like more than 20 per cent of his countrymen … had been unable to find work in Iran’s sanction-strapped economy’ and that he was ‘strong, but never aggressive, humble’. The emotional frame is personalised and is not seen in the other samples. Its emergence in this final sample suggests that it is dependent on the specificity of the initial incident. This accords with
mediatisation theories of personalisation as an important news value, as the personalisation of an asylum seeker’s death to the death of a known man, Reza Berati, enables further reporting. Worryingly, this indicates that a lack of personalisation prevents this emotional frame from developing. Without these emotional frames it is more difficult to understand the moral frame and to use it as a basis for passing judgement and demanding accountability. Hence, the focus on a scandalous event makes the moral frame to be the most relevant frame for accountability performances. In sum, this means that a lack of a damaging, scandalous event prevents the moral frame from becoming relevant. This suggests that the practical frame – the numbers, costs and efficiency frame – is the most likely frame to be used in the everyday instances that this study has investigated.

This counterfactual analysis has shown that the frames discovered in samples 1 and 2 structure the coverage of specific, scandalous incidents. While the sample for a specific incident accords more highly with the mediatisation literature’s predicted calls for transparency, accountability and the personalisation, this counterfactual has reinforced the lack of these same elements in instances that are not scandalous (Skovsgaard and van Dalen 2012). This establishes a worrying conclusion that the media’s power to hold elected officials to account depends strongly on scandalous events and that everyday, institutionalised breaches of expectations and trust are near immune to media calls for accountability. To compound this negative conclusion, the increasing mediatisation of media performances is anticipated to increase the media’s reliance on these instances of scandal, further weakening the power of the media to operate as a Fourth Estate.

6.7.4. Summary – qualitative analysis

The qualitative analysis has shown that passive representation of asylum seekers is damaging to calls for accountability on immigration issues. The second sample has shown the emergence of two primary frames for the discussion of immigration in Australian newspaper press. The first is a moral frame that is more prevalent in the Fairfax papers and considers the humanitarian impact of the government’s policies. The second is a practical frame that considers the effectiveness, cost and scale of the system of immigration detention. In all three samples, the moral frame is subordinate to the practical frame. There is strong support for the concept of accountability being
dependent on which of these frames is dominant. In particular, when the practical frame is dominant, there is less accountability to the asylum seekers themselves as this frame instead considers the relationship between the government and the Australian citizen as tax-payer.

The qualitative sample supports the claims of mediatisation calling for increased transparency, personalisation and polarisation. However, the counterfactual third sample shows that this only occurs in specific, scandalous incidents. This suggests that the effect of mediatisation on media power for accountability is dependent on the degree of specificity of the incident examined. Systemic, institutionalised or routinised failures are unlikely to produce similar media performances, decreasing accountability and media power. An emotional frame emerges subsequent to these scandalous events and assists the moral frame to dominate the practical frame. This emotional frame is dependent on a specific event. This means that media calls for accountability for process are still dependant on a scandalous event, despite the new, emotional frame. The counterfactual has demonstrated this paper’s thesis: mediatisation influences accountability performances, in particular by giving dominance to scandal-frames and weakening other frames.

6.8. Chapter summary - analysis

This chapter has presented quantitative and qualitative analyses to support the claim that mediatisation influences accountability performances. The regression analysis demonstrated how three major components of third-stage mediatisation of article content – style, sentiment and polarisation comprise a significant (15.5 per cent) component of how media perform accountability. The model suggests that the mediatisation literature correctly describes the relationship between many of the selected variables. This means that mediatisation, and the institutional decisions that guide its principles, has a powerful impact on how accountability is performed and contested in media.

The qualitative analysis has shown how these mediatised principles have resulted in the emergence of durable frames that discipline the coverage of asylum issues in Australia. This disciplining focus results in a suboptimal arrangement of issue selection and framing. This arrangement is suboptimal because it diminishes the types of media power
necessary for robust accountability performances, as predicted by the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 4. This suggests that mediatisation’s role in determining the relevance of frames undermines the media’s Fourth Estate function. This carries a caveat – these conditions only apply when events are not scandalous. The implications of this are addressed in the next chapter, Discussion and Implications.
Chapter 7: Discussion and implications

This section addresses the results of this study and their impact on the academy, media practitioners and political practice. I discuss the results in regards to the two research questions established in Chapter 1 and repeated at the beginning of each subsection below.

7.1. RQ1: To what extent are media performances of accountability susceptible to mediatisation’s influences?

Answering this research question involves determining the strength of mediatisation’s influence on accountability performances, and what form those performances take. Each of these points is addressed in the following sub-sections.

7.1.1. The strength of mediatisation’s influence on accountability performances

The study has shown that mediatisation is closely linked with accountability performances. The regression analysis indicates that 15.5 per cent of the press’ fourth estate function is susceptible to mediatisation processes measured in terms of article style, sentiment and polarity. In addition to these group-level influences, this thesis has shown with great specificity exactly how accountability is performed in each group. The theoretically motivated variables chosen for quantitative analysis have demonstrated that language choices influence the overall intensity of accountability within a media performance. The regression analysis makes a direct comparison of the relative strengths of these performances possible. In this way, this method provides a finer degree of understanding than previous content analyses, many of which have focused only on a reader’s subjective interpretation.

Blame, as a measure of accountability, is influenced by the independent variables to varying extents. For instance, the effect of a Levelling Term is more than twice as influential on the overall level of Blame than an Exclusion term. This finer level of understanding has shown that not all choices are equal and that accountability is most
affected by specific practices – in particular those journalistic practices that endorse *Denial, Levelling Terms* and *Embellishment*. As key variables predicted by the theoretical framework, this gives strong support to the relationship between mediatisation and accountability. While the hypothesis tests showed divergent results in the direction of mediatisation’s influence on accountability performances, it is only in the case of hypothesis 6 that no relationship was observed. These results strongly support the link between mediatisation and accountability performances.

A strong association between mediatisation and accountability is not surprising. Transparency plays a key role in the setting of expectations endorsed by both mediatisation and accountability theories (Andrea Schrott and Spranger 2006; Reunanen, Kunelius and Noppari 2010). Yet, despite significant relationships between mediatisation and accountability, organisational incentives of profit, efficiency and independence produce frames that undermine the press’ watchdog function. Due to a lack of multicollinearity between variables, we can be confident that the quantitative analysis has sufficiently addressed interaction effects. This means that mediatisation’s effects on accountability can be reliably identified through a regression-based content analysis such as this.

These results clarify the complex way that accountability is performed during third stage mediatisation. The academy, media professionals and politicians must take the implications of these findings seriously. Failing to question and respond to this important connection between mediatisation and accountability may have substantial repercussions in the way media practices influence democratic outcomes.

### 7.1.2. The form of mediatisation’s influence on accountability performances

Mediatisation’s primary influence on accountability performances is the development of distinct practical and moral frames. This thesis has found strong evidence to support the existing theoretical categorisations of accountability as provided by Lindberg (2013) and has found that they are expressed in these two frames. While the study has restricted itself to an examination of the politically diffuse forms of accountability (societal, political, and reputational), the competing binary distinction between the practical and moral frames found in the qualitative analysis encapsulates the core dichotomy between accountability for process and accountability for outcomes (Behn 2000a). These forms of
accountability are evident in the articles’ use of specific frames that have been found to be durable over the 13-year period of study.

The practical frame dominates the articles in the qualitative analysis. In this frame, the journalist focuses on quantifying the dimensions of the issue in numerical and economic terms. The focus is on numbers, efficiency, cost and outcomes. According to the normative assumptions of this paper, this practical frame presents significant problems for accountability performances. A focus on efficiency examines how many outputs are produced for a given input. It does not consider whether the outputs should be produced at all. This does not provide the type of process accountability demanded by human rights groups, the United Nations and refugee advocates (Amnesty International Australia 2006; Mendez 2015).

This thesis suggests that the dominance of the practical frame can be explained with reference to the increasing role of economics in the production and dissemination of media. This is compounded by the increasing dominance of new public management and network governance in liberal democracies. This is because it is easier to write articles within the practical frame than within the moral frame (discussed below). Practical frame articles do not need to gain access to asylum seekers, to interview them or to give them a voice, in order to write about them. It is sufficient to discuss the entirety of the issue in relation to other points of reference – e.g.: budgets, prison holding capacities, processing times. Moreover, information regarding these points is made easily accessible (often published by the government or other agencies). Citizens are media consumers and have a direct interest in how government money is spent. In this way, the accountability performances that focus on the practical frame engage in Behn’s (2000) first version of accountability: accountability for outcomes. Hence, while the media may be writing about the issue of seeking asylum and making calls for accountability, they are not engaging in the type of accountability performance that is well suited to using media power for accountability for process.

Conversely, the moral frame engages with these issues directly but occurs infrequently. Indeed, the moral frame emerges most strongly only after a specific, scandalous event that acts as a catalyst for its emergence. Engaging with these issues is difficult – they are contested and do not conform neatly to the organisational incentives of profit and
efficiency. In addition to this, there are practical restrictions that make it more difficult to write about moral issues, including, not least, the government’s restrictions for journalistic access to the detention centres, indicating insufficient media independence. The moral frame involves actors, obligations and judgement on the basis of the moral content of a decision. This frame is well suited to the accountability framework and the way it relates to media power and censure (Dowding and Lewis 2012). Worryingly, the mobilisation of media resources to generate this frame relies on a scandalous event. The result is that the moral dimension of the issue – the dimension that is political in nature and to which accountability relates – is left silent. This is a serious criticism of mediatisation and the role of framing in a democratic society.

This has two implications: firstly, it may lead to media behaviour that is incentivised to generate scandal and produce conflict where it does not exist, and secondly, as an issue loses timeliness and declines in news value, the media may move on to focus on new, fresher scandals. Scandal-seeking diverts journalistic resources from persistent social issues and instead focuses on the new. The role of the press to inform the polity, particularly before democratic events such as elections (de Tocqueville 1831). This function is poorly served by an economic and editorial system that routinises the practical frame, and prioritises the moral frame only in events of scandal. Both of these implications are damaging to the concept of the media as the fourth estate, which should be both tenacious in its pursuit of government abuses and restrained in its own excesses lest it undermine its own position.

7.2. RQ2: What are the implications of mediatisation’s influence on the media’s performances of accountability?

7.2.1. Mediatisation’s impact on accountability performances

The analysis has shown twin implications that weaken the media’s power to operate as a fourth estate. The more mediatisation emphasises the practical frame, the less effective media are at pursuing accountability for process. The exception to this rule is when a specific incident has occurred – a scandal such as Reza Berati’s death – and during these times the accountability performances are indeed stronger. But scandals are, by definition, rare. The everyday, banal forms of accountability that we expect from our media are undermined as mediatisation influences the style, sentiment and polarity in our
Disconcertingly, the qualitative analysis shows that the practical frame is most used by the conservative News Ltd papers, which also record a significantly higher blame score. This suggests that the role of the media proprietor is doubly articulated – both in selecting the frame and in the performances produced within those frames. Future mediatisation research will no longer be able to assume that these effects occur across all media forms in uniform ways; large media organisations (such as News Corporation, News Ltd.’s parent corporation) are able to independently affect how accountability is performed. This has particularly significant implications in societies in the third and fourth phases of mediatisation due to these proprietors’ capacity to influence political values through determining the media professions’ priorities. Increasingly, these values are profit, efficiency and independence. This supports de Tocqueville’s claim that a virtuous public media is varied and decentralised – the inverse of the economic realities that govern cross-platform, global media networks (de Tocqueville 1831).

While this study is only indicative of newspapers, the theoretical link between media formats advanced by Altheide and Snow (1979) combined with newspapers’ recognised influence as a determiner of frames for other media means that these influences are likely to be seen in other media (A. Schrott 2007). Accepting this view, we can assume that media performances of accountability are likely to be consistent across media forms. This suggests that the problems for political accountability produced through the passive presentation of asylum seekers and the moral/practical frame binary would be adopted by other media formats, and that the influence of mediatisation can be expected in other media types. The increasing standardisation of media formats is indeed a part of the mediatisation theory examined. This suggests that newspaper’s role in leading issue selection and the durability of their frames will have a similarly disciplining effect on other media, reducing their capacity to act as the fourth estate.

7.2.2. Mediatisation of accountability performances: implications in the Australian context

The results of this study, combined with Australia’s highly centralised media ownership and centrist political/ideological spectrum, indicate that the accountability mechanism
for normative and moral questions is not operating as it should. The continued operation of Australia’s immigration detention centres and a lack of ministerial censure and blame suggest that accountability performances in Australian media are insufficient to determine the accountability relationship necessary in networked contexts. According to democratic theory, accountability is centralised in the responsible Minister (Brenton 2014; Schedler 1999). This is particularly problematic given the diffuse nature of service delivery in networked governance where accountability is contested. This indicates a weakness of media power to hold politicians to account and to produce outcomes that would be expected in a system with functioning accountability for process. This is not because journalists are morally at fault, or are incompetent. It is because the institutional incentives of profit, efficiency and independence do not support journalists with the resources required to produce strong accountability performances in networked contexts. Therefore the press’ capacity to define who is at fault is limited, a severe weakening of media power.

This suggests that the Australian media is, due to mediatisation, in a weakened position to address normative questions and to define values. The dominance of the practical frame weakens accountability procedures, and undermines the press’ ability to discipline behaviour on moral grounds. The practical frame is best described as accountability for outcomes, or a transactional, customer-type interaction (Behn 2000a). In this sense, the voter is a customer of government services and the government is accountable for whether or not those services are delivered. Conversely, the moral frame encourages an accountability mechanism that emphasises the voter as a citizen and engages directly with the moral values, norms and expectations that citizens have of their governments. In the most alarmist cases, the dominance of the practical frame could result in the depoliticisation of political issues into ‘operational matters’, where the polity is only able to judge the delivery of government programs and is unable to effectively object to unwanted and damaging policies.

The variables Proprietor, Election, Competition and Period provide context for the Australian case. The analysis of these variables indicates that Australia is located in the third phase of mediatisation, where media content is governed by media logics. This is because Election is a significant variable. This suggests that elections change media performances, indicating that at other times politics is not performed according to media logics. Media
power increases prior to an election because voters look to the media to help them inform their voting. Politicians are more heavily mediatised during these periods because they operate according to media logics to assist them to be re-elected, subordinating their political principles temporarily. This means that the results of this study are applicable only to relationships during the third phase of mediatisation. However, the study does suggest something of the relationship during the fourth phase. Increased media power prior to an election indicates that moving to the fourth phase of mediatisation in Australia will contribute to increased intensity of accountability performances, a factor that will increase media power. While this suggests stronger media performances, these will only occur in the practical frame, unless a scandal occurs.

The combination of mediatisation effects and the Australian context has framed asylum issues in a way that hampers the media’s power to demand accountability for process. The longer an issue continues, the less salience it holds in terms of its news values, suggesting that media performances for moral accountability become increasingly dependent on scandal. This is damaging to democratic outcomes as it both normalises the practical frame that permits continued process failures and may, in instances of improved practical efficiency, increase the severity of those failures (for instance, a criticism that a detention facility is overcrowded may result in the enlargement of the facility, not the release of the detainees). Australian media practitioners, politicians and the public must consider the implications of these frames and how institutional and journalistic resources are allocated to the investigation and reporting of accountability issues. In particular, the academy must consider the role that mediatisation has in accountability practices in the banal, everyday case and not be tempted by the salaciousness of scandals.

This study has necessarily included an examination of the particulars of the Australian political and media landscape. While any such case study is limited to its historical and geographic context, there are compelling reasons to assume that data drawn from this study may have bearing in other societies. Australia is an economically developed liberal democratic country with a North Atlantic media model (Hallin, Mancini, and Bennet 2004). Given the preponderance for studies from the United Kingdom and the United States to be applied wholesale to the Australian context, I suggest that some of the Australian data can be used to explain similarities in (at least) her North Atlantic cousins.
Chapter 8: Summary and conclusions

This thesis has examined the extent and nature of mediatisation’s interaction with political accountability. The theoretical framework ties media performances – the publication of articles with particular linguistic choices and frames – to the core concepts in the study of accountability, and locates these performances as the site of mediatisation. In particular, the thesis has looked at the least theorised area of mediatisation and accountability: those instances without scandal. This has been operationalised through a close study of newspaper data from Australia and with regard to the specific political issue of seeking asylum. This study has been normatively grounded in the assumptions that human dignity is worth preserving and that robust accountability frameworks should reinforce these values. The study has found, through its examination of mediatisation’s role in Australian media performances for accountability, that mediatisation hinders political debate that upholds human dignity and rights.

The study confirms some of the pessimistic cases about mediatisation’s involvement in the breakdown of democratic processes (Gorka 2014). Despite this pessimism, the implications of its results are limited only to those societies (or issues) that, like Australia, are in the third phase of mediatisation predicted by Strömbäck (2008). The study demonstrates that the emergence of a practical frame of reporting diminishes media capacities to engage in the forms of censure that are required for robust public accountability. The practical frame of reporting is reinforced by the institutional contexts in which media is produced, including the increasing pressures on profit, efficiency and independence. These pressures result in the double articulation of mediatisation, both at the level of the article and at the level of the media system. As this occurs, the moral frame that is most tied to accountability process measures is deprioritised and public debate suffers as a result.

This carries severe implications for both media practitioners and political operatives, and every citizen in a democratic society should be concerned by these outcomes. The legitimacy of public power rests on the observance of a contractual relationship between voter and government. Voters rely on media and media independence as a form of power to secure accountability from politicians. The threat of criticism from the media, and the threat this criticism poses to a politician’s chances of re-election, means that
media organisations hold great power and responsibility to pursue these issues of accountability. This thesis has demonstrated how, under conditions of centralised media control, competition, and a lack of difference in political ideology, media power is diminished and demands for accountability for process are undermined.

This paper has identified mediatisation with the increasing networked governance of public arrangements. The decentralisation of authority from governments and into networked service providers means that clear accountability is both harder and more important to achieve. The accountability relationship is less direct when there are multiple actors. This does not diminish its importance. Particularly in the shift to networked forms of policy delivery, media play a pivotal role in defining who is or should be accountable. Media are crucial in determining which set of expectations are the relevant expectations necessary for accountability to take place. Sadly, the dominance of the practical frame suggests that moral issues are seldom the basis of these accountability relationships. The decline in media power associated with mediatisation for accountability purposes is worrying: it may enable elites within a network to shift blame and to avoid criticism.

The exception is the most sensational, newsworthy events that occur – scandals. This thesis’ results suggest that scandals operate as a circuit breaker in the framing of asylum issues and allow a brief space where the moral frame is ascendant. During these episodes of scandal, the accountability performances are much higher suggesting that media power is similarly heightened by scandal. This can result in the media both generating scandals where none exist, and in moving away from substantive issues in order to pursue the next scandal. This incentivises media practices that diminish the media’s power to hold officials to account as institutional resources are diverted to new scandals, or are wasted on low-hanging fruit. The recentness of the scandal is relevant, and institutionalised failures of accountability that occur for years – such as Australia’s immigration detention facilities – are not addressed due to this reliance on scandal.

This thesis provides further evidence that mediatisation must be considered from a normative perspective and as a non-neutral force in the reshaping of our political and democratic systems (Djerf-Pierre et al. 2014; Gorka 2014). The evidence suggests that mediatisation during the third phase is damaging to democratic accountability processes.
This study is limited to only the third phase of mediatisation: this implies a silence on mediatisation’s role during the fourth phase. In the fourth phase, media logics are adopted instead of political logics and this may result in better accountability performances. However, extrapolating from this study, it may be the case that increased economic and institutional pressures further reduce the effectiveness of media performances for accountability. The results of this study from the third phase of mediatisation do not suggest any practical means of reframing existing issues in the fourth phase. Given the disciplining role of the practical frame, a movement to the fourth phase of mediatisation is not predicted to provide additional benefit to accountability performances in media.

Lindberg states that ‘societal accountability is characterised by actions taken by civil society and media aimed at forcing political, bureaucratic, business and legal decision makers to give information on, and justifications for, their actions’. He argues that ‘an electorate putting a high premium on an honourable and well-monitored executive will impact positively on … accountability’ (Lindberg 2013, 219). Mediatisation, as a process that hampers the institutional capacity for journalists and media organisations to perform this function without a scandal, undermines this type of societal accountability. This has, in part, explained the continued operation of facilities by the government of Australia that involve the denigration of the most vulnerable and engage in the use of torture, and the lack of sanction, censure or reproach in effective accountability processes.

**8.1. Further research**

This study provides multiple directions for further study. While it joins a limited number of studies on the role of mediatisation on political accountability, it also opens avenues to several new, untheorised links between mediatisation and democratic outcomes. Firstly, it has suggested that a normative reading of mediatisation is compatible with the normativity that guides much democratic and political thought. This suggests that the academy is not bound to consider mediatisation as a neutral phenomenon and can engage in a normative critique of its processes and outcomes. Secondly, it has shown how a deeper understanding the mediatisation of a specific issue can explain the complex relationship between the media and political agents, particularly with respect to censure for political malfeasance. This relationship could be confirmed by similar studies in other
geographic contexts, particularly in other North Atlantic liberal media models such as those in the United Kingdom and the United States of America (Hallin, Mancini and Bennet 2004). The study also enables the understanding of the extent to which different political issues (and the accountability for them) are mediatised within a given society. This could be achieved through studying multiple issues and drawing comparisons on the overall strength of the accountability relationship determined by the regression technique. Improvements in the analysis of texts, including software that can analyse context as well as word choices, may provide an even more developed understanding of how accountability is performed in media coverage. Further research may refine the theoretical model used, drawing greater specificity on exactly which institutional processes (e.g.: competition, proprietor influence, institutional values of objectivity and newsworthiness) contribute most to the accountability performance. Finally, further research can develop a more explicit normative critique of mediatisation and its effect on democratic outcomes, particularly with a view to understanding – and defending against - the moral implications of mediatisation across each of its four stages.
## Appendix I

### Comparison between Permanent Protection Visas and Temporary Protection Visas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Permanent Protection Visa (PPV)</th>
<th>Temporary Protection Visa (TPV)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social security</strong></td>
<td>Immediate access to the full range of social security benefits.</td>
<td>Ineligible for New Start, Youth Allowance, Sickness Allowance, Parenting Payment, Austudy and a range of other benefits. May access Special Benefit, which is means tested and reviewed every 13 weeks. Formal activity testing has been proposed. Eligible for Family Tax Benefit, Child Care Benefit, Maternity Allowance, Maternity Immunisation Allowance and Double Orphan Pension. Can access Medicare.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td>Same access to education as any other permanent resident.</td>
<td>Access to school education subject to state policy. Effective preclusion from tertiary education due to imposition of full fees. As temporary residents, TPV holders are not eligible for HECS. <em>Note:</em> TPV holders 18 or over who are engaged in full time education (including vocational courses) cannot receive Special Benefit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Settlement support</strong></td>
<td>Access to full range of DIMIA settlement support services including the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS). Receive 13 weeks initial accommodation and bond assistance. Eligible for rent assistance.</td>
<td>Not eligible for most DIMIA funded services such as Migrant Resource Centres and ethno-specific community welfare agencies. Can use Early Health Assessment and Intervention Programs. Limited access (12 sessions) to torture and trauma counselling. Eligible for rent assistance. No initial accommodation offered or bond assistance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family reunion</strong></td>
<td>Able to apply to bring members of immediate family (spouse and children) to Australia.</td>
<td>Not eligible for family reunion (including reunion with spouse and children) except at the discretion of the Minister for Immigration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work rights</strong></td>
<td>Permission to work and receive employment assistance.</td>
<td>Permission to work but ability to find employment influenced by temporary nature of visa and poor English skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language training</strong></td>
<td>Access to 510 hours of English language training through the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) or the Advanced English for Migrants Program (AEMP). Eligible for Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS).</td>
<td>Not eligible for the federally funded English language programs AMEP and AEMP. Not eligible for TIS. TPV minors are eligible for English as a Second Language New Arrivals Program in schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Travel</strong></td>
<td>Will be able to leave the country and return without jeopardising their visa.</td>
<td>No automatic right of return</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix II

List of articles in the qualitative analysis.

Sample 1: Articles drawn at random


Kenny, Mark and Michael Bachelard. “Indonesia to change the rules,” *Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney, Australia), Nov. 14, 2013.


Sample 2: Articles drawn from start of study period


Sample 3: Counterfactual scandalous event:


Courier Mail. “Conroy must apologise for outrageous attack (Editorial),” Courier Mail (Brisbane, Australia), 28 February 2014.


Whyte, Sarah. “Desperate call for help as rioters claim they were attacked by locals,” Sydney Morning Herald (Sydney, Australia), Feb. 19, 2014.
Appendix III
List of Variables in Diction 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Master Variables</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Formula</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certainty</td>
<td>Language indicating resoluteness, inflexibility, and completeness and a tendency to speak ex cathedra.</td>
<td>[Tenacity + Leveling + Collectives + Insistence] – [Numerical Terms + Ambivalence + Self Reference + Variety]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimism</td>
<td>Language endorsing some person, group, concept or event or highlighting their positive entailments.</td>
<td>[Praise + Satisfaction + Inspiration] – [Blame + Hardship + Denial]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Language featuring movement, change, the implementation of ideas and the avoidance of inertia.</td>
<td>[Aggression + accomplishment + Communication + Motion] – [Cognitive Terms + Passivity + Embellishment]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realism</td>
<td>Language describing tangible, immediate, recognizable matters that affect people’s everyday lives.</td>
<td>[Familiarity + Spatial Awareness + Temporal Awareness + Present Concern + Human Interest + Concreteness] – [Past Concern + Complexity]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonality</td>
<td>Language highlighting the agreed-upon values of a group and rejecting idiosyncratic modes of engagement.</td>
<td>[Centrality + Cooperation + Rapport] – [Diversity + Exclusion + Liberation]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Hart and Carroll (2014a).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Variables</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tenacity</td>
<td>All uses of the verb to be (is, am, will, shall), three definitive verb forms (has, must, do) and their variants, as well as all associated contraction’s (he’ll, they’ve, ain’t). These verbs connote confidence and totality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leveling Terms</td>
<td>Words used to ignore individual differences and to build a sense of completeness and assurance. Included are totalizing terms (everybody, anyone, each, fully), adverbs of permanence (always, completely, inevitably, consistently), and resolute adjectives (unconditional, consummate, absolute, open-and-shut).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collectives</td>
<td>Singular nouns connoting plurality that function to decrease specificity. These words reflect a dependence on categorical modes of thought. Included are social groupings (crowd, choir, team, humanity), task groups (army, congress, legislature, staff) and geographical entities (county, world, kingdom, republic).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Insistence</td>
<td>This is a measure of code-restriction and semantic contentedness. The assumption is that</td>
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<td></td>
<td>repetition of key terms indicates a preference for a limited, ordered world.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Numerical Terms</td>
<td>Any sum, date, or product specifying the facts in a given case. This dictionary treats each</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>isolated integer as a single word and each separate group of integers as a single word. In</td>
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<td></td>
<td>addition, the dictionary contains common numbers in lexical format (<em>one</em>, <em>tenfold</em>,</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>hundred</em>, <em>zero</em>) as well as terms indicating numerical operations (<em>subtract</em>, <em>divide</em>, <em>multiply</em>,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>percentage</em>) and quantitative topics (<em>digitize</em>, <em>tally</em>, <em>mathematics</em>). The presumption is that</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Numerical Terms</em> hyper-specify a claim, thus detracting from its universality.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ambivalence</td>
<td>Words expressing hesitation or uncertainty, implying a speaker’s inability or unwillingness to</td>
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<td></td>
<td>commit to the verbalization being made. Included are hedges (<em>allegedly</em>, <em>perhaps</em>, <em>might</em>),</td>
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<td></td>
<td>statements of inexactness (<em>almost</em>, <em>approximate</em>, <em>vague</em>, <em>somewhere</em>) and confusion</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(<em>baffled</em>, <em>puzzling</em>, <em>hesitate</em>). Also included are words of restrained possibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(<em>could</em>, <em>would</em>, <em>he’d</em>) and mystery (<em>dilemma</em>, <em>guess</em>, <em>suppose</em>, <em>seems</em>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Reference</td>
<td>All first-person references, including <em>I</em>, <em>I’d</em>, <em>I’ll</em>, <em>I’m</em>, <em>I’ve</em>, <em>me</em>, <em>mine</em>, <em>my</em>,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>myself</em>. Self-references are treated as acts of indexing whereby the locus of action appears</td>
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<td></td>
<td>to reside in the speaker and not in the world at large thereby implicitly acknowledging the</td>
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<td></td>
<td>speaker’s limited vision.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Variety</td>
<td>This measure conforms to Wendell Johnson’s (1946) Type-Token Ratio which divides the number of</td>
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<td></td>
<td>different words in a passage by the passage’s total words. A high score indicates a speaker’s</td>
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<td></td>
<td>avoidance of overstatement and a preference for precise, molecular statements.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Praise</td>
<td>Affirmations of some person, group, or abstract entity. Included are terms isolating</td>
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<td></td>
<td>important social qualities (<em>dear</em>, <em>delightful</em>, <em>witty</em>), physical qualities (<em>mighty</em>,</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>handsome</em>, <em>beautiful</em>), intellectual qualities (<em>shrewd</em>, <em>bright</em>, <em>vigilant</em>, <em>reasonable</em>),</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>entrepreneurial qualities (<em>successful</em>, <em>conscientious</em>, <em>renowned</em>), and moral qualities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(<em>faithful</em>, <em>good</em>, <em>noble</em>). All terms in this dictionary are adjectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>Terms associated with positive affective states (<em>cheerful</em>, <em>passionate</em>, <em>happiness</em>), with</td>
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<td></td>
<td>moments of undiminished joy (<em>thanks</em>, <em>smile</em>, <em>welcome</em>) and pleasurable diversion (<em>excited</em>,</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>fun</em>, <em>lucky</em>), or with moments of triumph (<em>celebrating</em>, <em>pride</em>, <em>auspicious</em>). Also</td>
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<td></td>
<td>included are words of nurturance: <em>healing</em>, <em>encourage</em>, <em>secure</em>, <em>relieved</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inspiration</td>
<td>Abstract virtues deserving of universal respect. Most of the terms in this dictionary are</td>
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<td></td>
<td>nouns isolating desirable moral qualities (<em>faith</em>, <em>honesty</em>, <em>self-sacrifice</em>, <em>virtue</em>) as</td>
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<td></td>
<td>well as attractive personal qualities (<em>courage</em>, <em>dedication</em>, <em>wisdom</em>, <em>mercy</em>). Social and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>political ideals are also included: <em>patriotism</em>, <em>success</em>, <em>education</em>, <em>justice</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blame</td>
<td>Terms designating social inappropriateness (<em>mean</em>, <em>naive</em>, <em>sloppy</em>, <em>stupid</em>) as well as</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>downright evil (<em>fascist</em>, <em>blood-thirsty</em>, <em>repugnant</em>, <em>malicious</em>) compose this dictionary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In addition, adjectives describing unfortunate circumstances (<em>bankrupt</em>, <em>rash</em>, <em>morbid</em>,</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>embarrassing</em>) or unplanned vicissitudes (<em>weary</em>, <em>nervous</em>, <em>painful</em>, <em>detrimental</em>) are</td>
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<td></td>
<td>included. The dictionary also contains outright denigrations: <em>cruel</em>, <em>illegitimate</em>, <em>offensive</em>,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>miserly</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hardship</td>
<td>This dictionary contains natural disasters (<em>earthquake, starvation, tornado, pollution</em>), hostile actions (<em>killers, bankruptcy, enemies, vices</em>) and censurable human behavior (<em>infidelity, despots, betrayal</em>). It also includes unsavory political outcomes (<em>injustice, slavery, exploitation, rebellion</em>) as well as normal human fears (<em>grief, unemployment, died, apprehension</em>) and in capacities (<em>error, cop-outs, weakness</em>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial</td>
<td>A dictionary consisting of standard negative contractions (<em>aren’t, shouldn’t, don’t</em>), negative functions words (<em>nor, not, nay</em>), and terms designating null sets (<em>nothing, nobody, none</em>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td>A dictionary embracing human competition and forceful action. Its terms connote physical energy (<em>blast, crash, explode, collide</em>), social domination (<em>conquest, attacking, dictatorships, violation</em>), and goal-directedness (<em>crusade, commanded, challenging, overcome</em>). In addition, words associated with personal triumph (<em>mastered, rambunctious, pushy</em>), excess human energy (<em>prod, poke, pound, shove</em>), disassembly (<em>dismantle, demolish, overturn, veto</em>) and resistance (<em>prevent, reduce, defend, curbed</em>) are included.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accomplishment</td>
<td>Words expressing task-completion (<em>establish, finish, influence, proceed</em>) and organized human behavior (<em>motivated, influence, leader, manage</em>). Includes capitalistic terms (<em>buy, produce, employees, sell</em>), modes of expansion (<em>grow, increase, generate, construction</em>) and general functionality (<em>handling, strengthen, succeed, outputs</em>). Also included is programmatic language: <em>agenda, enacted, working, leadership</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Terms referring to social interaction, both face-to-face (<em>listen, interview, read, speak</em>) and mediated (<em>film, videotape, telephone, e-mail</em>). The dictionary includes both modes of intercourse (<em>translate, quote, scripts, broadcast</em>) and moods of intercourse (<em>chat, declare, flatter, demand</em>). Other terms refer to social actors (<em>reporter, spokesperson, advocates, preacher</em>) and a variety of social purposes (<em>hint, rebuke, respond, persuade</em>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motion</td>
<td>Terms connoting human movement (<em>bustle, job, lurch, leap</em>), physical processes (<em>circulate, momentum, revolve, twist</em>), journeys (<em>barnstorm, jaunt, wandering, travels</em>), speed (<em>lickety-split, nimble, zip, whistle-stop</em>), and modes of transit (<em>ride, fly, glide, swim</em>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Terms</td>
<td>Words referring to cerebral processes, both functional and imaginative. Included are modes of discovery (<em>learn, deliberate, consider, compare</em>) and domains of study (<em>biology, psychology, logic, economics</em>). The dictionary includes mental challenges (<em>question, forget, re-examine, paradoxes</em>), institutional learning practices (<em>graduation, teaching, classrooms</em>), as well as three forms of intellection: intuitional (<em>invent, perceive, speculate, interpret</em>), rationalistic (<em>estimate, examine, reasonable, strategies</em>), and calculative (<em>diagnose, analyze, software, fact-finding</em>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passivity</td>
<td>Words ranging from neutrality to inactivity. Includes terms of compliance (<em>allow, tame, appeasement</em>), docility (<em>submit, contented, sluggish</em>), and cessation (<em>arrested, capitulate, refrain, yielding</em>). Also contains tokens of inertness (<em>backward, immobile, silence, inhibit</em>) and disinterest (<em>unconcerned, nonchalant, stoic</em>), as well as tranquility (<em>quietly, sleepy, vacation</em>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Embellishment        | A selective ratio of adjectives to verbs based on David Boder’s (1940) conception that heavy modification slows down a verbal passage by de-emphasizing human and material action. Embellishment is calculated according to the following formula: \[
\frac{\text{Praise} + \text{Blame} + 1}{\text{Present Concern} + \text{Past Concern} + 1}.
\] |
| Familiarity          | Consists of a selected number of C.K. Ogden’s (1968) operation words which he calculates to be the most common words in the English language. Included are common prepositions (across, over, through), demonstrative pronouns (this, that) and interrogative pronouns (who, what), and a variety of particles, conjunctions and connectives (a, for, so). |
| Spatial awareness    | Terms referring to geographical entities, physical distances, and modes of measurement. Included are general geographical terms (abroad, elbow-room, locale, outdoors) as well as specific ones (Ceylon, Kuwait, Poland). Also included are politically defined locations (county, fatherland, municipality, ward), points on the compass (east, southwest) and the globe (latitude, coastal, border, snowbelt), as well as terms of scale (kilometer, map, spacious), quality (vacant, out-of-the-way, disoriented) and change (pilgrimage, migrated, frontier). |
| Temporal Awareness   | Terms that fix a person, idea, or event within a specific time-interval, thereby signaling a concern for concrete and practical matters. The dictionary designates literal time (century, instant, mid-morning) as well as metaphorical designations (lingering, seniority, nowadays). Also included are calendrical terms (autumn, year-round, weekend), elliptical terms (spontaneously, postpone, transitional), and judgmental terms (premature, obsolete, punctual). |
| Present Concern      | A selective list of present-tense verbs extrapolated from C. K. Ogden’s list of general and picturable terms, all of which occur with great frequency in standard American English. The dictionary is not topic-specific but points instead to general physical activity (cough, taste, sing, take), social operations (canvass, touch, govern, meet), and task-performance (make, cook, print, paint). |
| Human Interest       | An adaptation of Rudolf Flesch’s notion that concentrating on people and their activities gives discourse a life-like quality. Included are standard personal pronouns (he, his, ourselves, them), family members and relations (cousin, wife, grandchild, uncle), and generic terms (friend, baby, human, persons). |
| Concreteness         | A large dictionary possessing no thematic unity other than tangibility and materiality. Included are sociological units (peasants, African-Americans, Catholics), occupational groups (carpenter, manufacturer, policewoman), and political alignments (Communists, congressman, Europeans). Also incorporated are physical structures (courthouse, temple, store), forms of diversion (television, football, CD-ROM), terms of accountancy (mortgage, wages, finances), and modes of transportation (airplane, ship, bicycle). In addition, the dictionary includes body parts (stomach, eyes, lips), articles of clothing (slacks, pants, shirt), household animals (cat, insects, horse) and foodstuffs (wine, grain, sugar), and general elements of nature (oil, silk, sand). |
| **Past Concern** | The past-tense forms of the verbs contained in the Present Concern dictionary. |
| **Complexity** | A simple measure of the average number of characters-per-word in a given input file. Borrows Rudolph Flesch’s (1951) notion that convoluted phrasings make a text’s ideas abstract and its implications unclear. |
| **Centrality** | Terms denoting institutional regularities and/or substantive agreement on core values. Included are indigenous terms (native, basic, innate) and designations of legitimacy (orthodox, decorum, constitutional, ratified), systematicity (paradigm, bureaucratic, ritualistic), and typicality (standardized, matter-of-fact, regularity). Also included are terms of congruence (conformity, mandate, unanimous), predictability (expected, continuity, reliable), and universality (womankind, perennial, landmarks). |
| **Cooperation** | Terms designating behavioral interactions among people that often result in a group product. Included are designations of formal work relations (unions, schoolmates, caucus) and informal associations (chum, partner, cronies) to more intimate interactions (sisterhood, friendship, comrade). Also included are neutral interactions (consolidate, mediate, alignment), job-related tasks (network, detente, exchange), personal involvement (teamwork, sharing, contribute), and self-denial (public-spirited, care-taking, self-sacrifice). |
| **Rapport** | This dictionary describes attitudinal similarities among groups of people. Included are terms of affinity (congenial, camaraderie, companion), assent (approve, vouched, warrants), deference (tolerant, willing, permission), and identity (equivalent, resemble, consensus). |
| **Diversity** | Words describing individuals or groups of individuals differing from the norm. Such distinctiveness may be comparatively neutral (inconsistent, contrasting, non-conformist) but it can also be positive (exceptional, unique, individualistic) and negative (illegitimate, rabble-rouser, extremist). Functionally, heterogeneity may be an asset (far-flung, dispersed, diffuse) or a liability (factionalism, deviancy, quirky) as can its characterizations: rare vs. queer, variety vs. jumble, distinctive vs. disobedient. |
| **Exclusion** | A dictionary describing the sources and effects of social isolation. Such seclusion can be phrased passively (displaced, sequestered) as well as positively (self-contained, self-sufficient) and negatively (outlaws, repudiated). Moreover, it can result from voluntary forces (secede, privacy) and involuntary forces (ostracize, forsake, discriminate) and from both personality factors (small-mindedness, loneliness) and political factors (right-wingers, nihilism). Exclusion is often a dialectical concept: hermit vs. derelict, refugee vs. pariah, discard vs. spurn). |
Liberation

Terms describing the maximizing of individual choice (autonomous, open-minded, options) and the rejection of social conventions (unencumbered, radical, released). Liberation is motivated by both personality factors (eccentric, impetuous, flighty) and political forces (suffrage, liberty, freedom, emancipation) and may produce dramatic outcomes (exodus, riotous, deliverance) or subdued effects (loosen, disentangle, outpouring). Liberatory terms also admit to rival characterizations: exemption vs. loophole, elope vs. abscond, uninhibited vs. outlandish.

Adapted from Hart & Carroll (2014a).
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