

# Media representations of Sudanese people in Australia: An initial analysis

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## Abstract

*Existing research suggests that media representations influence how migrants experience rights in terms both of how they are viewed by other members of society, and the degree to which they feel empowered to exercise their right to communicate. A critical element of this process concerns the ways in which migrants are represented in the media. To engage with this issue, and related debates around race and multiculturalism, this paper asks: how does the Australian print media represent Sudanese people? To answer this question we conducted a content analysis of articles from The Australian, The Age, and the Herald Sun. 207 articles were collected from 1 September 2007 through 30 April 2008, the eight months surrounding the 2007 Australian federal election. A quantitative content analysis of the articles uncovered four themes: difficulties in Sudan; violence; human interest/new beginnings; and nationhood. Combined, we argue that these themes tend to reproduce and reinforce notions of a White Australian “we” and a non-White “other”. While media representations of Sudanese people are not overtly racist, by locating them within a few critical areas of human experience, a particular image emerges which raises critical questions around belonging and inclusion. Our research also shows the importance of locating everyday media coverage within broader analytic frameworks which understand race, multiculturalism, migration and media as social, political and historical processes.*

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## Introduction

In March 2009, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) (from August 2009 the Australian Human Rights Commission) produced a discussion paper proposing to examine issues relating to African-Australians’ experiences of rights and access to key services in Australia. The paper noted:

There have been debates in the media about the numbers, “integration potential” and settlement needs of African Australians. Unfortunately, the media usually focuses on crime or on political commentary about African Australians—and has often been negative or critical, and sometimes misleading. This has contributed to general community confusion or concern

about African Australians, and has caused distress to many (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2009, p. 5).

As this quote suggests, media representations can influence how migrants experience rights in terms both of how they are viewed and treated by other members of society, and the degree to which migrants feel empowered to exercise their right to communicate about their needs. In this regard, the right to freely communicate and to achieve representation in the public sphere are central to African-Australians' experiences of rights. Such forms of treatment are, equally, crucial for the wider Australian community (including government, media and citizens) to gain an awareness of the experiences of African-Australians, and what action may be required to ensure their rights are both respected and facilitated.

Engaging with these issues requires a significant range of research and policy initiatives. A critical first step is to analyse the ways in which African-Australians are represented in the media. While there is an emerging body of research on this issue (see, for example, Due, 2008; Reporting Diversity Project, 2010; Windle, 2008), there is still a significant need for further research in this area. To this end, the central empirical issue engaged with in this paper is the question of how African-Australians are represented in mainstream media in Australia. More specifically, within this paper, we focus our analysis by engaging with print media representations of Sudanese people, the largest African migrant group to have resettled under the Australian Humanitarian Program. Indeed, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data shows that for the ten-year period from 30 June 1997 to 30 June 2007, Sudanese people made up more than half (54%, 22,445 out of a total of 42,489) of all African Humanitarian Program arrivals, more than any other African country by almost ten-fold (ABS, 2008). At a broader level, people born in Sudan were the fourth largest group of arrivals under the Humanitarian Program in 2007–2008, comprising 9 per cent (820 out of 9570 people) of the total arrivals in that category, behind only Burma, Iraq and Afghanistan (ABS, 2008).

In this context, our research question for this paper is:

- How does the Australian print media represent Sudanese people?

Before engaging with this question through our empirical analysis of newspaper content, in the following section, we briefly discuss race, multiculturalism and media coverage of Sudanese people in Australia.

## **Race, multiculturalism and the media**

To begin, it is important to clarify how we understand the terms “race” and “racialisation”. As Howard Winant has written:

[R]ace can be defined as a concept that signifies and symbolizes sociopolitical conflicts and interests in reference to different types of human bodies. (Winant, 2000, p. 172)

Winant goes on to argue that race has no grounding in biology, and that the selection of “particular human features for purposes of racial signification is always and necessarily a social and historical process” (Winant, 2000, p. 172). While notions of “race” grounded in biological conceptualisations are today widely discredited, frameworks that employ racial logics to discuss social relations remain persistent. “Racialisation” refers to the process whereby situations come to be understood in racial terms (Murji & Solomos, 2005). In a useful formulation for understanding “racialisation”, Omi and Winant (1994) have used the term “racial formation” to identify how racial discourse, while subject to

very different articulations in different historical and social contexts, retains certain identifiable characteristics. These include explanatory frameworks for social hierarchies based on assumedly essential differences between groups and the use of such essentialisms as a grounds for maintaining relations of racial inequality, such as targeting of particular groups as a “problem” in immigration policies, and the targeting of groups on the basis of what is assumed as an embodied disposition to commit violent and criminal acts.

Issues of race and racialisation become central to media discourses when, on 26 September 2007, 19-year old Sudanese student Liep Gony was bashed at the train station in the Melbourne suburb of Noble Park. In the days following this event, responding to questions about whether better settlement services were needed for new migrants, then Immigration Minister Kevin Andrews stated:

I have been concerned that some groups don't seem to be settling and adjusting into the Australian way of life as quickly as we would hope and therefore it makes sense to put the extra money in to provide extra resources, but also to slow down the rate of intake from countries such as Sudan. (cited in Farouque, Petrie, & Miletic, 2007, p.2)

Ironically, on the very day that Andrews made this announcement, it was announced that Gony's attackers were not African, as had previously been suggested in reports that framed the incident as a product of ethnic gang warfare.

While much discussion followed around whether Andrews' comments were justifiable, there can be no doubt that these comments involved a process of racialisation. Andrews positioned Sudanese people as unable to “adjust” to the “Australian way of life” as a consequence of an apparently incompatible difference. Andrews' comments assume that any difficulties faced by Sudanese people in Australia are consequent to this problematic difference, disavowing any possibility that such difficulties are consequent to their treatment by others. On these grounds, a targeted “reduction” of African immigration was rationalised as the solution to the embodied problem of Sudanese people themselves. Such statements are significant not only because they serve to reiterate frameworks within which Sudanese youth came to be racially targeted as potential suspects in public spaces (Windle, 2008, p. 556), but also because they have the potential to influence how Sudanese people come to be seen and treated by other Australians. Further, Andrews' statement in this case was consistent with what had become a persistent element of the rhetoric deployed by the Howard government, as it sought to position itself as both representative of and a protector an Australian “mainstream”, and its “way of life”, that was presented as threatened by minority groups, “divisive” policies of multiculturalism, any challenge to a traditionalist and triumphalist national narrative and, in the context of the war on terror, particular ethnic groups (Greenfield & Williams, 2001; Markus, 2001).

Locating these events in a broader context, in Australia, racial thinking has provided a key historical influence on the establishment and maintenance of racial hierarchy since colonisation, whose foundation on the legal fiction of terra nullius was premised on the racist assertion that the Australian territory was devoid of civilisation, and thereby available for appropriation by White settlers (Hollinsworth, 2006). Following Federation, ideas that racial identity constituted a basis for insurmountable and threatening cultural difference provided the basis for the establishment of the White Australia policy, and the subsequent development of assimilationist policies. While immigration policy and the institutional definition and treatment of “non-White”

migrants shifted over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as a consequence of both the need to import migrant labour and the effects of political contestation, the idea and policy ideal of Australia as racially and culturally “White” persisted until the establishment of multiculturalism in the early 1970s (Castles, Cope & Kalantzis, 1992; Jupp, 2002).

This policy shift in the 1970s towards multiculturalism can be seen as the culmination of substantial social and political transformations both in Australia and internationally (Stratton, 1998). Conceptually, multiculturalism embodies the idea that to conceive of Australia as a monoculture is not accurate, desirable or achievable. In addition, as a policy framework, multiculturalism has supported the establishment of numerous important initiatives and programs to promote increased public understanding of, and engagement with, different cultural traditions and identities characteristic of Australian society. However, as Stratton (1998) suggests, multiculturalism retains a commitment to a division between a “core” culture, which usually remains unmarked as “Australian”, and those “hyphenated” cultures marked as “ethnic”. From this critical perspective, multiculturalism is seen to maintain crucial continuities with older perspectives that viewed the maintenance of a core “White” identity as paramount (Hage, 1998).

In engaging with such perspectives, our concern is not simply to provide a critique of multiculturalism for its reproduction of forms of cultural hierarchy that are continuous with previous policies that have sustained forms of racial hierarchy in Australia. Stuart Cunningham and John Sinclair have argued that, while multiculturalism can be criticised for its requirement of “acquiescence to the dominant (British-Irish) cultural formation”, a qualified defence of it might yet acknowledge that “its basic assumptions are distinctly better than other policy frameworks which could be conceivably won politically in the climate of our times” (2000, p. 30). In light of the marked retreat from multiculturalism in policy and practice during the Howard years, alongside that government’s embrace of neo-assimilationism, this is an important point. The point we are concerned to highlight, however, is what is shared by these positions. Multiculturalism, at least in its policy iterations, did not mark either a complete departure from racial logic or an abandonment of racial anxiety. Rather, following the logic of the “new racism” (Balibar, 1991), the requirement of maintaining the predominance of a core racial identity, regarded as inherently superior to “others” from which it must be insulated, is transferred to culture. As a governmental strategy, multicultural policy regards the maintenance of cultural tradition, within clearly defined limits, as the surest avenue to securing the continued dominance of the core culture. Indeed, Ghassan Hage (1998) has suggested that the assumption of the “national governmental right to ‘worry’ about the nation” is a defining principle of “White” culture in Australia (p. 17). Here, “Whiteness” refers not directly to skin colour, but rather to an aspirational “unmarked” position that defines what is essential to national space and what must be secured against its “others”. Whiteness, that is, represents a position regarded as naturally inherent, definitive and unproblematic, which is defined in contradistinction to those positions of “otherness” that are marked as problematic as a consequence of their embodied or inherited difference, and which thereby become the target of practices whose aim is to reproduce continued control over national space.

In Joel Windle’s analysis of media discourse in newspaper coverage of the Liep Gony bashing and its aftermath (Windle, 2008), this distinction between marked and unmarked subjects is literally evident in the coverage, in which “a density of epithets relating to racial, age, migration, collective and migration attributes” mark Sudanese people by their difference (p. 556). Windle notes in particular a strong focus on the

physical attributes of the “problem group” compared to the references to local residents who, implicitly White, are never described in this way. This racialised frame, which becomes the basis for an explanation for a social phenomenon, is strongly influenced by the use of police sources, who identify the problem as one of ethnic gang warfare. As a problem linked to violence and crime, ethnic gangs thus become a means by which particular “ethnic” groups become identified as problematic, as police sources link the problems of violence as a “cultural thing” stemming from the situations of war in Africa. As Windle suggests, however:

It is more comforting in the present to see Africans as inherently prone to conflict than appreciating conflicts in Africa and the Middle East as consequences of colonial territorial division and post-colonial trade in influence and resource control . . . This amounts to a denial of the colonial legacies and neo-colonial relations which tie “civilised” nations like Australia to the corruption, conflict and political instability which characterises the global economic system. (2008, p. 558)

This is a double disavowal, in the sense that it also involves a disavowal of Australia as a violent space. While this is clearly questionable in light of both Gony’s racist murder and Australia’s own violent colonial history, such a disavowal nevertheless sustains an image of national space as unproblematic. This also provides the discursive space in which Andrews’ diagnosis of the “problem” as one of a culturally determined incapacity to integrate to the Australian way of life becomes comprehensible, and substantially forms the parameters for the “race debate” that followed. As a consequence, as Windle suggests, even stories that challenged Andrews’ position by presenting examples of successful integration implicitly accept “integration” to “the Australian way of life” as an unquestioned goal for collective life (Windle 2008, p. 561).

More generally in the Australian context, researchers engaging with media representations of race, migration, refugees and asylum seekers have shown that much coverage is highly problematic. In particular, while overt forms of racism are now less common in mainstream media, racist discourse is more “typically accomplished in terms of subtler, flexibly managed and locally contingent discussion of problems associated with minority groups” (Simmons & Lecouteur, 2008, p. 667). Building on these insights, in their analysis of media texts in Australia from the period 1996–2001, O’Doherty and Lecouteur (2007) found that specific social and political categories, including “refugee”, “asylum seekers”, “boat people”, and “illegal immigrants”, were often used interchangeably, even in the same article, and that such slippage was used a discursive device to “transfer associations from one category to another” (2007, p. 10). According to O’Doherty and Lecouteur’s analysis, this has resulted in the encouragement of racially-based marginalising practices to manage and contain a diverse group of people who have come to be grouped under a common label. Further, Peter Gale has argued that much media coverage in Australia in the context of refugees and asylum seekers contributes to a context of fear. In his analysis of the 2001 federal election, for example, he argues that a populist politics emerged, with the media playing an important role in creating representations of national identity which involved understandings of Australia as a White nation, and the creation of a context of a fear of a non-White other (Gale, 2004; see also Klocher & Dunn, 2003, Slattery, 2003).

In the more specific context of research involving Sudanese in Australia, an important body of literature is emerging around different aspects of the migration process for Sudanese people (see, for example, Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2008). Within this general context, however, to date very little work has focused on media treatment of Sudanese

migrants in Australia (but see, Reporting Diversity, 2010; Windle, 2008). One study concerned with the specific context of Sudanese people in Australia, undertaken by Clemence Due (2008), analysed a small number of newspaper articles published after the murder of Liep Gony. Due found that issues of belonging and exclusion were central to the media coverage, and were represented in such a way that Australia was constructed as a White nation, thereby “simultaneously overlook[ing] the needs of refugees and den[ying] Australia’s Indigenous heritage” (Due, 2008, p. 12). In other words, the research that does exist on media coverage in Australia of Sudanese people indicates that it continues long-standing media practices involving processes of problematising the non-White “other” in relation to an unquestioned White “we”.

At the same time, it is important to recognise that oppositional and alternative voices do exist in the media. This has been identified both in the mainstream media (Lynn & Lea, 2003), and also in alternative media forms such as that identified as niche media by Budarick and King (2008) and in Dreher’s (2010) analysis of the role of community radio in the context of debates around immigration. In other words, while existing research suggests that mainstream media discussions around race and immigration tend to produce dominant discourses that, in the Australian context privilege Whiteness as a “we” in contrast with a non-White “other”, alternative representations are possible. What such research also suggests is that the media is a critical site of investigation for analysing discourses around race, immigration and multiculturalism, and it is to these issues that we now turn in our empirical analysis.

## Methods

Our research question is: how does the Australian print media represent Sudanese people? To answer this question we conducted a content analysis of articles in the three main newspapers read in Victoria: *The Australian*, *The Age*, and the *Herald Sun*. *The Age* and the *Herald Sun* are Victorian newspapers, while *The Australian* is a national newspaper. Items were collected from 1 September 2007 through 30 April 2008, the eight months surrounding the 2007 Australian federal election held on 24 November 2007. Using the database Factiva, which has a comprehensive collection of these newspapers for this time period, all articles that included the words Sudan or Sudanese were included. We focused on the time surrounding the 2007 election because the issues of refugees and multiculturalism have historically been important election issues.

The goal of the research was to examine the contexts in which Sudanese people were portrayed in Australian newspapers at that time and whether different newspapers portrayed them differently. 207 articles were identified in the three newspapers, including their daily and weekend editions. Content analysis is appropriate for examining the ways in which a group of people are portrayed (Neuman, 2006). It involves coding all items according to a coding system and counting occurrences of each code (Neuman, 2006). In order to develop our coding system, we carefully read all articles and developed codes grounded in the data.

After all articles were coded, four broad themes emerged. The themes were: difficulties in Sudan; violence; human interest/new beginnings; and nationhood. “Difficulties in Sudan” encompassed discussions about the difficulties of life in Sudan, including the ongoing war and its consequences. “Violence” included discussions of violence committed in Australia by or against Sudanese people. “Human interest/new beginnings” stories were about new beginnings in Australia and were often positive

stories about Sudanese migrants overcoming adversity. Finally, “nationhood” articles included those that discussed migration policy, citizenship and the integration of Sudanese people into Australian society.

Outcomes were tabulated, using frequencies and percentages, meaning that the analysis for this paper is based on quantitative content analysis. It should also be noted that, in many cases, articles contained discussion of more than one theme. In such cases, the article was coded as having several themes, meaning that the total number of codes is larger than the total number of articles.

## Results

The first two tables provide contextual information for the analysis that follows. Table 1 shows the numbers of articles on Sudan or Sudanese people by newspaper.

*Table 1 Articles by newspaper*

Newspaper	Number of articles (%)
The Age	89 (43)
The Australian	44 (21)
The Herald Sun	74 (36)
<b>Total</b>	<b>207 (100)</b>

The two Victorian newspapers published 79 per cent of the articles on Sudanese people, many more than the nationally published *The Australian* newspaper. This is not surprising as a large number of the articles prior to the federal election focused on so-called Sudanese gang violence in Melbourne.

Table 2 shows the breakdown of articles by theme and newspaper. If an article was coded in at least one sub-theme it was included as an article in the broader theme. Table 2 indicates that the two most frequent context for discussions of Sudanese were nationhood and violence, although this differed by newspaper.

*Table 2 Themes by newspaper*

Theme	<i>The Age</i> (%)	<i>The Australian</i> (%)	<i>Herald Sun</i> (%)
Nationhood	52 (58)	26 (59)	34 (43)
Violence	36 (40)	23 (52)	49 (62)
Difficulties in Sudan	38 (43)	15 (34)	16 (20)
Human interest/new beginnings	21 (24)	4 (9)	12 (16)
<b>Total articles in paper</b>	<b>89 (100)</b>	<b>44 (100)</b>	<b>74 (100)</b>

Note: percentages are of the total articles published on Sudanese in each newspaper. Articles can have more than one theme therefore percentages do not total 100.

In the next four tables we more closely analyse each individual theme through its sub-themes.

## Nationhood

The most common theme present in articles on Sudanese people was that of nationhood. Table 3 shows the published items on nationhood. It indicates that the

broader issues of nationhood, particularly what it means to be Australian and Australian migration policy, were all frequently discussed in the context of Sudanese people. Between one-third (34%, *Herald Sun*) and over one-half (55%, *The Australian*) of articles mentioned or discussed Australian migration policy, and between almost one-quarter (22%, *Herald Sun*) and one-half (50%, *The Australian*) of the articles mentioned concerns over the ability of Sudanese migrants to adapt to Australian culture. A smaller proportion of articles (ranging from 14% in the *Herald Sun* to 31% in *The Age*) challenged these concerns. Discussions of migration policy and concerns over Sudanese adaptation to Australian culture were most frequent in articles in *The Australian*.

Other issues that were raised in the context of nationhood included Australia's obligation to take in refugees, cultural adaptation to the "Australian lifestyle", and loyalty to Australia. Generally, articles that discussed Sudanese people in the context of nationhood and citizenship did so with a sense of concern over migration policy, cultural integration, and loyalty. There were counter-discourses that challenged these concerns but, for the most part, concerns about Sudanese people and their place in Australian society were a key context in which Sudanese people were discussed.

*Table 3 Nationhood by sub-theme and newspaper*

Sub-theme	<i>The Age</i> (%)	<i>The Australian</i> (%)	<i>Herald Sun</i> (%)
Discusses/mentions Australian migration policy	36 (40)	24 (55)	25 (34)
Discusses/mentions concerns over Sudanese integrating/adapting to Australian culture	35 (39)	22 (50)	16 (22)
Some mention of Australia's obligation to take in/help Sudanese refugees	20 (22)	14 (32)	13 (18)
Includes challenge to claims that Sudanese don't/won't integrate well.	28 (31)	8 (18)	10 (14)
Phrase "Australian way of life" or "Australian lifestyle" is used	10 (11)	10 (23)	3 (4)
Considers questions of citizenship and loyalty to Australia	5 (6)	4 (9)	2 (3)
<b>Total articles in paper</b>	<b>89 (100)</b>	<b>44 (100)</b>	<b>74 (100)</b>

Note: percentages are of the total articles published about Sudanese in each newspaper. Articles can have more than one sub-theme therefore percentages do not total 100.

## Violence

Table 4 focuses on violence. Violence was the second most common context in which Sudanese people were discussed. We break down violence into articles that (1) discuss violence committed by Sudanese people, (2) violence committed against Sudanese people, (3) articles that explained the Sudanese violence as a consequence of violence in Sudan, (4) articles that challenge the belief that Sudanese people are violent, and (5) articles that frame Sudanese violence as a type of youth violence.

For all three newspapers, the most common framing of Sudanese people in the context of violence was as victims of violence (item 2). *The Australian* and the *Herald Sun* discussed Sudanese people as the perpetrators of violence next most frequently, so Sudanese people were often portrayed as both perpetrators and victims of violence.



Articles that challenged the idea that Sudanese people were especially violent were also common, with each of the newspapers using this frame in between 22 per cent and 24 per cent of their articles on Sudanese people.

*Table 4 Violence by sub-theme and newspaper*

<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b><i>The Age</i> (%)</b>	<b><i>The Australian</i> (%)</b>	<b><i>Herald Sun</i> (%)</b>
(1) Discusses/mentions violence committed by Sudanese people	14 (16)	14 (32)	23 (31)
(2) Discusses/mentions violence against Sudanese people	22 (25)	18 (41)	26 (35)
(3) Citing violence in Sudan as an explanation for violence in Australia	2 (2)	6 (14)	5 (7)
(4) claims that challenge the belief that Sudanese people are especially violent/a problem	21 (24)	11 (25)	16 (22)
(5) Frames violence by Sudanese youths as youth violence (at some point in the article)	4 (5)	3 (7)	11 (15)
<b>Total articles in paper</b>	<b>89 (100)</b>	<b>44 (100)</b>	<b>74 (100)</b>

Note: percentages are of the total articles published on Sudanese in each newspaper. Articles can have more than one sub-theme therefore percentages do not total 100.

### **Difficulties in Sudan**

A number of articles focused on the theme of difficulties in Sudan. These articles discuss Sudanese people in the context of civil war, refugee camps, genocide, and the impact of these on Sudanese people. Fewer articles discussed difficulties in Sudan than discussed either nationhood or violence, but those that did described poor conditions there. The numbers of articles in each of the sub-themes by newspaper is reported in Table 5. Again, the newspapers covered difficulties in Sudan differently, with *The Age* publishing more stories than the other two newspapers. *The Australian* mentioned the civil war in a greater proportion of its articles on Sudanese people than the other two newspapers. Difficulties in Sudan were not a major feature of the *Herald Sun's* coverage of Sudanese people.

*Table 5: Difficulties in Sudan by sub-theme and newspaper*

<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b><i>The Age</i> (%)</b>	<b><i>The Australian</i> (%)</b>	<b><i>Herald Sun</i> (%)</b>
Discusses/mentions the difficulties of living in Sudan (violence, health care, prisons, etc.)	25 (28)	7 (16)	10 (14)
Discusses/mentions (civil) war	14 (16)	11 (25)	8 (11)
Discusses/mentions refugee camps	15 (17)	4 (1)	4 (5)
Discusses/mentions child soldiers/youth in militia groups	4 (5)	2 (5)	0 (0)
Discusses/mentions lost boys	3 (3)	0 (0)	1 (1)
Discusses/mentions genocide	1 (1)	0 (0)	1 (1)
<b>Total articles in paper</b>	<b>89 (100)</b>	<b>44 (100)</b>	<b>74 (100)</b>

Note: percentages are of the total articles published on Sudanese in each newspaper. Articles can have more than one sub-theme therefore percentages do not total 100.

### **Human interest/new beginnings**

The final theme that emerged from our content analysis was that of human interest/new beginnings. These articles largely focused on the experiences of Sudanese migrants in Australia and how they have managed to overcome adversity and settle. All three newspapers included stories of this type, but *The Age* and the *Herald Sun* ran more than *The Australian*. Table 6 shows the percentage of articles in each newspaper that were published on this type of story.

*Table 6: Human interest/new beginnings by sub-theme and newspaper*

<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b><i>The Age</i> (%)</b>	<b><i>The Australian</i> (%)</b>	<b><i>Herald Sun</i> (%)</b>
Discusses/mentions “new beginnings” in Australia (safety, education, career development, etc.)	8 (9)	1 (2)	8 (11)
Battling adversity	7 (8)	1 (2)	4 (5)
Story about (or that discuss the experiences of) an individual Sudanese migrant(s)/family	17 (19)	4 (9)	7 (9)
<b>Total articles in paper</b>	<b>89 (100)</b>	<b>44 (100)</b>	<b>19 (74)</b>

Note: percentages are of the total articles published on Sudanese in each newspaper. Articles can have more than one sub-theme therefore percentages do not total 100.

### **Discussion and conclusion**

Our research found that newspaper coverage of Sudanese people placed them within four main contexts: difficulties in Sudan; violence; nationhood; and human interest/new beginnings. Of these contexts, the one used least often was human interest/new beginnings, which was the only one that was largely positive. The most frequent context, nationhood, questioned whether Sudanese people should be allowed to come to Australia, whether they would be able to adapt to Australia, and whether they would be loyal to Australia. These negative framings were particularly prevalent prior to the

2007 Australian federal election, placing the broader question of African migration at the centre of election politics.

The second most frequent context was violence and placed Sudanese people as either perpetrators or, more typically, as victims of violence. Either way, Sudanese people were associated with violence in a large number of articles, supporting Windle's (2008) argument that African youth have been constructed as a problem group, even when they are the victims of violence. Coverage that constantly claims that Sudanese people are involved in violence invokes negative stereotypes of non-Whites as a violent "other".

The "difficulties in Sudan" theme also placed Sudanese people in the context of violence through discussions of war, genocide, and child soldiers. Discussions of Sudanese people in the context of difficulties in Sudan position them as potentially damaged by their experiences prior to relocation. A powerful message that emerges from such coverage is that these negative experiences might make it difficult for Sudanese people to adapt to Australian culture and integrate into Australian society. In this way, discourses of nation and violence intersected and raised questions about whether we (implicitly White) Australians should encourage Sudanese (implicitly Black) migrants to come here. In this regard, the combined coverage of issues around nation, violence and life in Sudan, and the dominance of such coverage in the time period analysed, creates a particular representation of Sudanese people that portrays them as "different" and as the "outsider other" in contrast to the "normalised" White majority who "belong" in this national space. In this way, and without being overtly racist, the "subtler, flexibly managed and locally contingent discussion of problems" (Simmons & Lecouteur, 2008, p. 667) that is evident in media representations of Sudanese people serves to create an ongoing concern around protection of the national space. Further, and resonating with the arguments of Winant (2000), Hage (1998) and much of the previous media research discussed earlier in this paper, such representations thereby also situate Sudanese people as an undifferentiated group who are unlikely to integrate and who thereby become a "problem" for the project of multiculturalism (Due, 2008; Stratton, 1998; Windle, 2010).

More positively and supporting previous research (Dreher, 2010; Budarick & King, 2008; Lynn & Lea, 2003), there were competing discourses present in the articles that challenged concerns that Sudanese people would be unable to integrate. There were also challenges to assertions that Sudanese people were violent. Articles in the human interest/new beginnings theme also represented Sudanese people as resilient and able to overcome diversity.

Building on this research, and as further steps to engage with the challenges identified in the HREOC report that we opened our paper with, future research that further unpacks the discourses underneath each of these themes would help to further our understanding of racialised media processes, while future research could also engage with a wider sample of newspapers and time frames to investigate whether the themes that we found are typical.

In conclusion, and returning to our research question, this paper has shown that the contexts for media coverage of Sudanese people tend to reinforce a White Australian "we" and a non-White "other" who is not genuinely Australian. While media representations of Sudanese people are not overtly racist, by locating them within a few critical areas of human experience, a particular image emerges which is at odds with the image of the dominant White group in Australia. Our research also shows the

importance of locating everyday media coverage within broader analytic frameworks around race, multiculturalism, migration and media. In particular, such frameworks highlight the importance of considering media representations as part of broader social and political processes around a continuous and ongoing anxiety around otherness and a related concern to reproduce the dominance of a core “White culture”, clearly revealing the importance of analysing race as a social, political and historical construction.

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