Abstract:

Australian-based news media platforms have published a series of articles that can be examined for recurring narratives. To examine the nation’s subject representation of Aboriginal Australians, the most vulnerable community to the impacts of hydraulic fracturing (fracking) in Australia’s Northern Territory (NT), I analyzed coverage patterns by subject counts of keyword associations and journalistic narrative threads subsequent to the 2018 lift of the fracking moratorium in the region. Utilizing research database ProQuest Central, this research presents results yielded from both a quantitative and media content analysis of 81 articles in four Australian newspapers covering fracking and the Northern Territory between February 2018 and February 2022. The majority of articles covered topics with two recurring narratives: the economic incentive of fracking in the NT and the NT fracking exploration’s prospective contribution to national greenhouse gas emissions. Within the ~21% of the articles that included the subject of Aboriginal Australians, the majority framed a call for the Aboriginal community’s involvement and support in the oil and gas industry for optimal economic growth. Only 1 article out of the sample size included a quote from an Aboriginal voice. The quote was an unnamed voice and local to Sydney, not the NT.