

**CONTESTED IDENTITY:**

The media and independence in New Caledonia  
during the 1980s

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I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree in the same or other form to any other University.

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses the discursive struggle in the New Caledonian media over the question of independence during the period of most acute conflict during the 1980s. It seeks to demonstrate that the discursive struggle was central to the political struggle, particularly in its emphasis on the development of discourses on identity which authorised particular forms of political engagement. Colonial discourses in New Caledonia provided a well tested armory of identifications of the territory's indigenous people which were mobilised in the anti-independence media, particularly the territory's monopoly daily newspaper *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*. The thesis attempts to demonstrate how these identifications connoted, in effect, the non-existence of Kanaks through a denial of a 'Kanak' identity: Melanesians who identified themselves as Kanaks and took a pro-independence stance were not recognised within the colonial identity constructions of 'Caledonian' and 'Melanesian', and their claims to constitute a 'people' were vociferously denied. They existed within colonial discourses as a human absence, and were therefore considered to have no rightful claim on Caledonian political life. In the face of such identifications, the pro-independence movement articulated in its media notions of 'Kanakness' and the 'Kanak people' which sought to hyper-valorise their identity as human and rightful.

It is argued that an analysis of media discourses requires consideration of the type of institutional constraints operating within the media institutions from within which these discourses emerge. The thesis therefore analyses the major constraints operating within *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes* and the two major pro-independence media organisations, 'Kanak's first newspaper' *Bwenando* and 'Kanak's first radio station' Radio Djiido.

As an overarching concern, the thesis attempts to work through and apply different theoretical approaches relevant to the analysis of media reporting in situations of heightened political contestation, negotiating through aspects of neo-Marxist and post-structuralist approaches. It assesses the relevance of the notion of 'ideological effect' as an analytical tool in assessing the effects of power produced by particular discourse, concluding that some theoretical notion concerned with elucidating the differential effects of power is required.

## GLOSSARY

<i>Broussards</i>	White settlers living in the interior
DOM-TOM	<i>Département d’Outre-mer; Territoire d’Outre-mer</i>
EDIPOP	<i>Les éditions populaires</i>
FI	<i>Front Indépendantiste</i> (Independence Front)
FLNKS	<i>Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste</i> (Kanak and Socialist National Liberation Front)
FN(NC)	<i>Front National (Nouvelle-Calédonie)</i> (National Front - New Caledonia)
FNSC	<i>Fédération pour une nouvelle société calédonienne</i> (Federation for a New Caledonian Society)
FR3	<i>France régions 3</i>
LKS	<i>Libération Kanake Socialiste</i> (Kanak Socialist Liberation)
Matignon and Oudinot accords	Political settlement reached between the French Socialist government, the FLNKS and the RPCR in August 1988
<i>métis</i>	mixed race
ORTF	<i>Office de Radiodiffusion-Télévision de France</i>
PALIKA	<i>Parti de Libération Kanake</i> (Kanak Liberation Party)
PNC	<i>Parti National Calédonien</i> (Caledonian National Party)
PSK	<i>Parti Socialiste Kanak</i> (Kanak Socialist Party)
PS-NC	<i>Parti Socialiste - Nouvelle-Calédonie</i> (Socialist Party - New Caledonia)
RFO	<i>Radio France Outre-mer</i>
RPCR	<i>Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la</i> <i>République</i> (Assembly for Caledonia within the French Republic)
RPR	<i>Rassemblement pour la République</i> (Assembly for the French Republic)
RRB	<i>Radio Rhythme Bleu</i>
SLN	<i>Société Le Nickel</i>
UC	<i>Union Calédonienne</i> (Caledonian Union)
UPM	<i>Union Progressiste Multiraciale/Mélanésienne</i> (Progressive Multiracial/Melanesian Union)
USTKE	<i>Union des Syndicats des Travailleurs Kanaks et</i> <i>Exploités</i> (United Union of Kanak and Exploited Workers)

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