May Hanrahan
Professor Ron Krebs/Spring 2023 UROP
24 April 2023

Tracking Militarism Through Australian Speeches

Introduction

Professor Ronald Krebs is writing a book on the continuing spread of militarism through recent years and the effects it carries on different societies and politics. He contends that, despite widespread belief and expectations of tapering militarism trends in the post-World War I and II period, we live in an age of sustained militarism and soldiering. In this book, Professor Krebs intends to track the changing and developing ideas of militarism, while evaluating and revealing the dangers of these practices for democracy, foreign policy, and soldiers. For the purposes of the book, the notion of soldiering centers around a romanticized depiction of service members as the most noble and patriotic of citizens, sacrificing their lives for the state. Soldiers are not characterized as professionals, but often are exemplars of good citizenship and the bravest of heroes.

Professor Krebs argues that this picture of an ideal soldier reaches beyond the United States, into the international arena, and manifests itself in many public discourses and forums. My Spring 2023 UROP project began with a broad question about the current state of militarism, seeking to understand how discourses around soldiering and armies have changed in the post-modern period in Australia, France, and the United Kingdom. The research for this project would evaluate speeches given in these countries on national holidays related to militarism and soldiering, including ANZAC Day and Australia Day for Australia, Remembrance Day for France, and Remembrance Day for the United Kingdom. I had hoped that, by evaluating speeches given by key public figures, some of these trends and themes relating to militarism and soldiering would become more apparent.

Project Methods and Process

I began my UROP by determining which national holidays would be central to themes of soldiering and militarism in the allotted countries, such as those listed above. Once I determined that I would focus on ANZAC Day, Australia Day, and Remembrance Day (respective to France and the United Kingdom), I began to look for speeches given by leading figures in these countries, including the Prime Minister or President from the most immediate post-war decades. While there were occasional, individual speeches posted on certain online spaces, such as websites dedicated to single Prime Ministers or individuals, I could not locate a database that included a collection of speeches related to a certain day or topic, which would be pertinent to the research process in order to systematically trace the changes in discourse about soldiering over time. Professor Krebs and I discussed the importance of locating one, or multiple, databases for a country that held these speeches, and I decided to contact the National Archives of the three countries with hopes that they would provide insight on where to look.

After receiving a few different recommendations on where to search for these speeches, I began to explore a variety of international databases, of which the most promising was the Australian Government's *Transcripts from the Prime Ministers of Australia*. The forum that I had been directed to for France, entitled *Collection des discours publics,* also yielded a number of speeches, but inconsistently and all in French. The various United Kingdom websites I explored also retained inconsistent collections, most of which were not digitized and, therefore, inaccessible. Professor Krebs and I then decided that, given the prospects of the Australian database, I should emphasize these speeches in my upcoming research tasks.

The Australian speeches for ANZAC Day were mostly available starting in 1989 and continuing up until 2022, with a few random speeches in the previous decades. Australia Day

maintained a more thorough assemblage of speeches, beginning in 1961 and continuing for almost every year after that, with a few minor gaps. I combed through the speeches for both holidays and compiled them into a spreadsheet, and then selected two speeches from each decade, including all of the pre-1989 speeches, to review with Professor Krebs and begin evaluating for important themes that would relate to significant trends of militarism. Professor Krebs and I then created a set of "codes," which were key concepts or ideas that depicted the ways in which soldiers were discussed and remembered following the Wars. After reviewing my preliminary codes and refining the boundaries of what themes to identify, I began the content-analysis stage of the process.

To begin the more thorough coding process, I gained access to Nvivo, a qualitative content-analysis program, and uploaded the speeches into different projects within the system. I used online tutorials and instructions from NVivo to teach myself the relevant parts of the software, and tested the different functions of coding and sorting that would be beneficial or assist in deciphering the Australian speeches. Then, using the different imported previous codes for ANZAC Day and Australia Day, I closely read all of my collected speeches, and coded certain sentences or short phrases to their respective theme as reflected in NVivo. Once each speech had been fully coded, I created charts that represented the percentage of a specific speech that was covered by one code, so that Professor Krebs and I could review any evident changes or trends in discourse around soldiering and militarism. Additionally, using the percentage bar charts, Professor Krebs and I were able to combine certain codes to identify any correlations or related changes in specific themes within these speeches, which may be effects of the changing nature of Australian society or political affairs. In viewing the graphs, it is important to note that

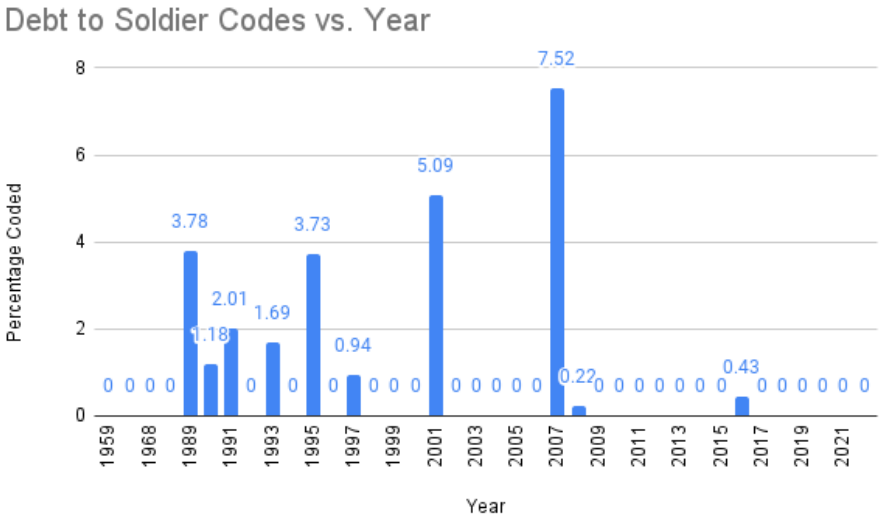
some speeches are much longer or shorter than others, so outlier data or speeches do not necessarily reflect a drastic increase in percentages of coding.

Australian Speech Findings

Generally, I found that the ANZAC Day speeches were more relevant to my proposed research question, as ANZAC Day revolves around honoring and memorializing soldiers and veterans. The speeches are often quite long, and many share similar phrases or sentiments from the previous years. ANZAC Day speeches, for example, each contain elements that discuss the bravery and courage of the original ANZACs, as well as those serving today. There is typically some sort of acknowledgement of those who died in service, as well as an acknowledgement of the Gallipoli campaign in 1915. A few of the codes that Professor Krebs and I had previously noted as important and certainly pertain to my findings relate to differing pictures of heroism (narrower and broad), discussion of individual soldiers, and the varying notions of modern attitudes towards soldiers, including feelings of owing and feelings of gratitude. Within these speeches, soldiers are typically described as heroic. In the first and broader sense, the collective Australian force is brave, courageous, and resilient. The second form of heroism is more narrow, depicting individuals or specific acts in battle that are significant to war memorials. The discussion of individual soldiers is expressed through narrations of specific events or the lives of key figures, and honoring them by retelling their achievements. The codes for feelings of debt and gratitude encompass any sentiments towards soldiers that suggest society owes these citizens, or is grateful to them. There are, naturally, certain codes that dominate a great deal of the speeches, as they fit into the "genre" of ANZAC Day speeches by the Prime Minister. While some of my findings were not necessarily shocking, such as the consistency of discourse around soldiers who had died, or the general idea of collective values, there were a few striking features

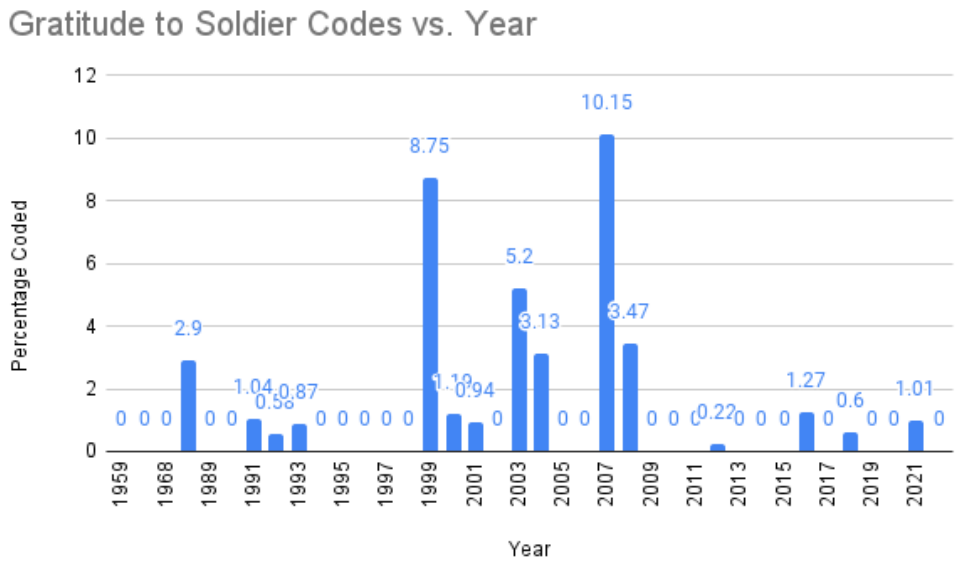
of the graphs that could be evaluated to potentially explain certain aspects of Australian soldiering.

One of the most striking and evident features of the findings for this research was the coding results from topics and phrases related to feelings of debt to soldiers and feelings of gratitude to soldiers. By "debt to soldier," I mean that there is outward discussion within the speech about what society owes soldiers, or that there is a sentiment that society must repay soldiers who have served the country. The code, "debt to soldier" was not frequent within my coding of the speech database, as I was coding in a very literal sense. Overall, there were only 16 references related to "debt to soldier" spread over only 10 speeches. Compared to other codes and other speeches, these numbers are very low. Alternatively, the charts represent the percentage of a code for the speeches, and not the amount of references. When reviewing the chart, more is revealed about the nature of debt to veterans in soldiers.

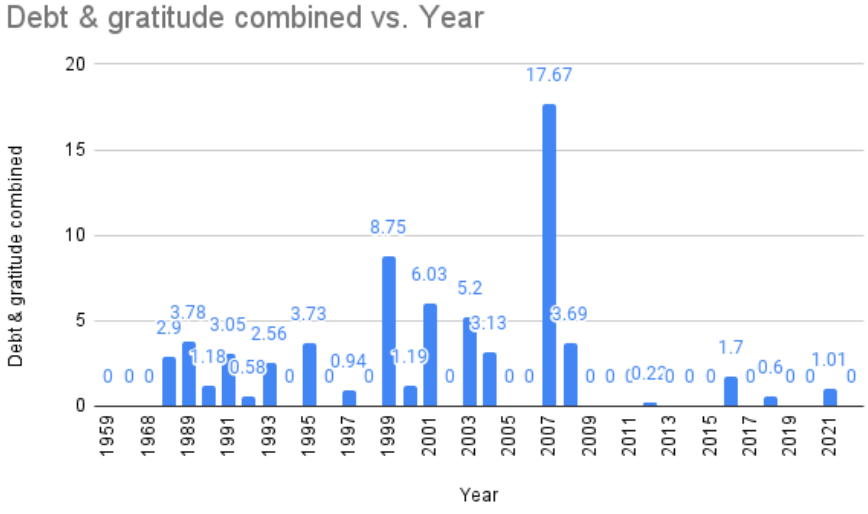


The references are very apparent in the decades leading up to the 2000s, with a few codes in the years following, but very minimal. The intense dropoff of discourse is clear, and is further

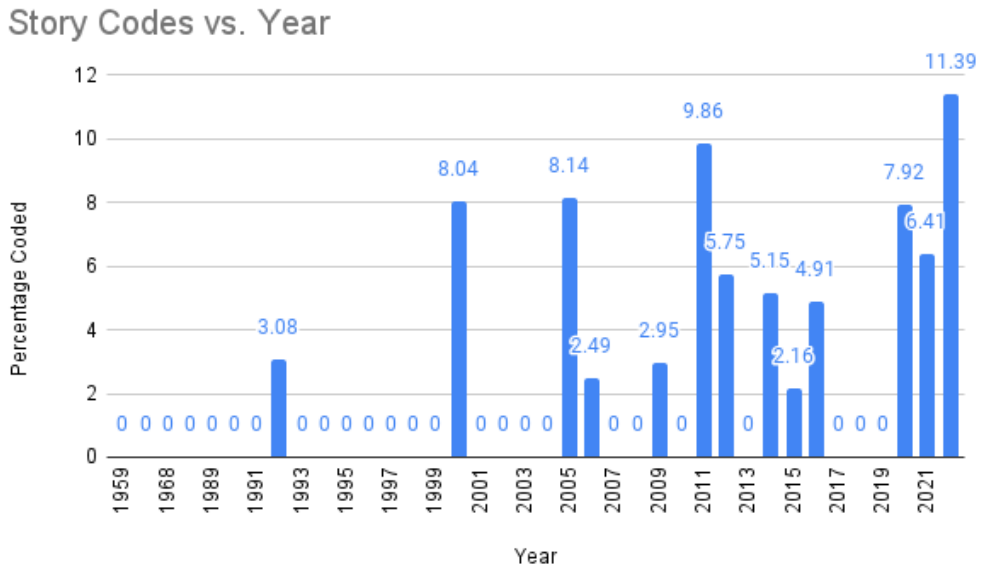
exemplified by the data regarding discussion of gratitude to soldiers. The code "gratitude to soldier" involves sentences and brief phrases that reflect the idea of being grateful for soldiers' service, or enduring thankfulness for the sacrifices they made. Again, I interpreted this code very literally, just as with the "debt to soldier" code. The "gratitude to soldier" retains 23 references, spread over 15 speeches. While these numbers are slightly higher than those of "debt to soldier," the bar chart represents the same trend.



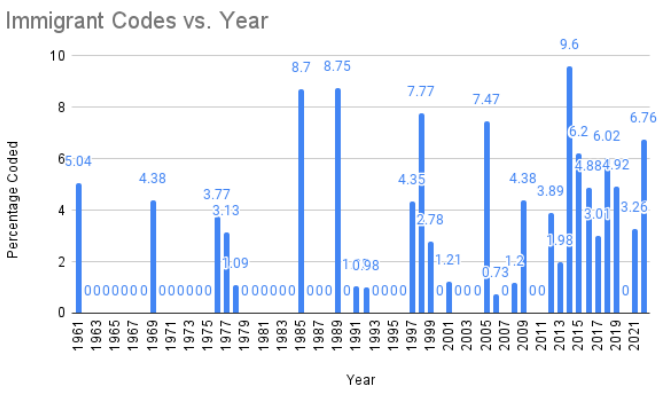
When the "debt to soldier" and "gratitude to soldier" codes are combined, the sudden decrease in discourse becomes even more obvious, reflecting the condensed references mostly before 2008, with extremely few in the most recent decades.

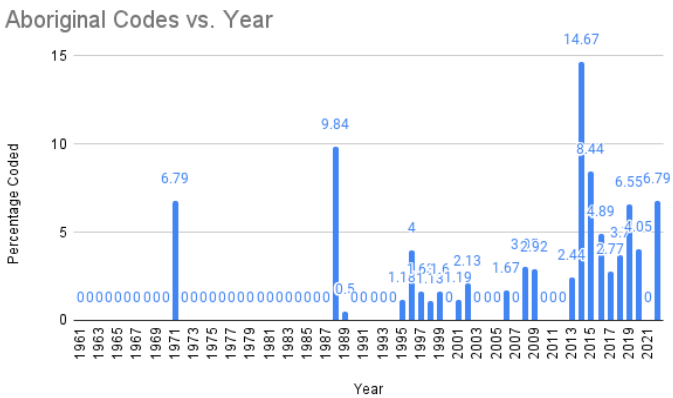


When reviewing the results of these graphs, it seemed logical to me that, as time passes from some of the most detrimental events in modern history and younger generations who may not remember the effects of the World Wars fill the Australian population, themes that dealt immediately with remembering, thanking, and owing soldiers may decrease. This also may be true because of the shift from recruited soldiers to a voluntary-based military. Paired with this idea, it also then makes sense that there could be more intense efforts to incorporate remembrance into the more modern speeches, through story-telling of individual soldiers or veterans who remain. My coding for the theme of individual stories, entitled "story" for my project, reflects quite the opposite data trend as those for the "debt to soldier" and "gratitude to soldier" codes. This code encompasses the retellings in speeches of the lives of specific, individual soldiers who held some significance for the Australian war effort, typically the Gallipoli campaign. The "story" code has 49 references, spread over 13 speeches, due to the length of the individual stories told compared to the length of the speeches. The individuals featured are often remembered for their bravery, or some unique way in which they contributed to Australia's forces.



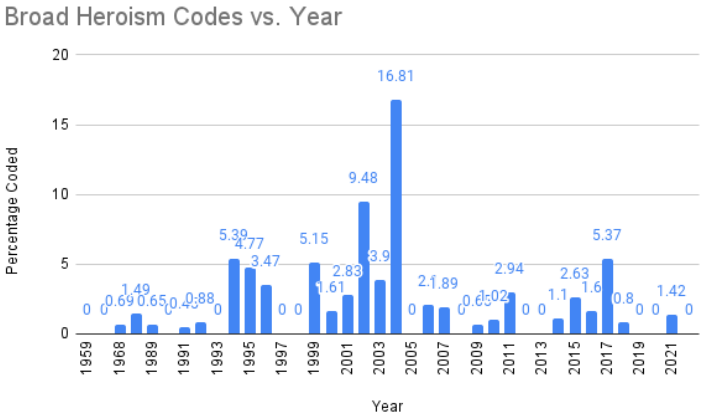
The inverted pattern in this chart demonstrates how, as themes that were significant to honoring veterans and soldiers in the immediate decades following the Wars decreased, those that attempted to memorialize and honor soldiers with broader and more accessible means to newer generations of Australians increased. Telling the individual stories of soldiers allows contemporary generations to recount the sacrifices of those before them, even though there is a distant relationship between the two groups. When reviewing the speeches closely and examining my dataset of codes, I did note that there are important differences in which individual soldiers are being emphasized in these speeches, which may also prove relevant for understanding Australian militarism. This tendency is shown also in a variety of the Australia Day speeches, which heavily focus on recognizing Australian individuals as part of a collective. The Australia Day speeches hold very few references to soldiers, a majority of which follow a similar guideline that recognizes the bravery and courage of Australian forces. Other notions in these speeches discuss the differing types of Australian citizens, including Aboriginal people and immigrants, which trend upwards significantly in the last three decades. In both cases, references for "Aboriginal" and "immigrants" increased steadily in the late 1990s, though "immigrants" contained a few previous references.

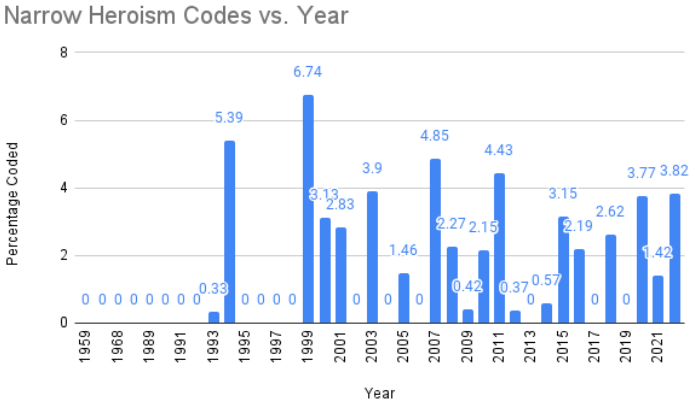




It is interesting that the discussion of individuals in ANZAC Day speeches correlates with an increase of discussion of individuals in Australia Day speeches. Additionally, in a number of the ANZAC Day speeches from the most recent decades, there were a multitude of years that were notably devoted to matters other than soldiering and were more heavily politicized, which is, by nature, revealing in the context of examining these changes in discourse.

The concepts of "broad heroism" and "narrow heroism" also fit nicely into this idea, and reflect the shift to the narration of individual stories. The code for "broad heroism" centers around general terms of bravery and courage, while "narrow heroism" emphasizes specific events or actions that are recounted as heroic. The data reflects that, as trends of "broad heroism" decreased in the early 2000s, themes of "narrow heroism," which may relate to individual stories or events, steadily increased, following with the "story" code.





Research Process Reflections

While I was frustrated with the initial difficulties in locating these speeches, the most challenging aspect of this research project was attempting to teach myself an entirely new and unfamiliar content analysis software, which is something that I have never been exposed to before. While NVivo is widely used, and many guides exist to aid in learning the program,

becoming versed in the different functions of the system naturally takes time, and was difficult for me to become accustomed to. Learning how to navigate the different stages of coding and then visualizing the data findings proved to be especially more difficult than I had predicted, given my lack of content analysis and coding experience. I spent a great deal of time exploring and experimenting in NVivo, while trying different methods and utilizing the different functions for the purposes of my research. Additionally, I overcame these challenges by contacting an NVivo associate, who assisted me in troubleshooting the aspects of NVivo that I could not learn online.

Largely, more extensive research processes were not inherent to me before I had started working on this project. I learned that, with tasks such as this, it is important to be diligent during each step of the project, and pay close attention to personal or varied interpretations of any data findings, and take the earliest stages of analysis very literally. Another difficult aspect for me was managing my concerns about what data or content should be revealed by the end of each stage of the process. Often I would find myself frustrated that certain trends or expectations of data were not apparent. But, by now, I have learned that this dynamic is more fluid, and that information and data changes very drastically and easily in such early stages of a large research project, given that new information is found. Most importantly, during the entirety of the process, I had to remind myself that asking smaller questions is permissible and encouraged in these sorts of tasks, and that clarity on certain issues can only be gained through directly asking for assistance. Without asking for assistance on locating, analyzing, and visualizing the recovered data, this project certainly would have been delayed or lacked any comprehensive and meaningful results.