

## Minority Themes in Academic Discourse: A Corpus-Based Approach to History and Law Book Reviews (Tema Minoriti dalam Wacana Akademik: Pendekatan Berasaskan Korpus terhadap Ulasan Buku Sejarah dan Undang-undang)

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examines how minority themes are presented in academic book reviews in the disciplines of History and Law through a corpus-based approach. Although previous studies have examined the evaluative and rhetorical features of academic book reviews, less attention has been given to how minority themes are foregrounded and framed across disciplines. Addressing this gap, the study compares the distribution of minority-related keywords in History and Law book reviews and examines their phraseological profiles through concordance analysis to determine how these themes are expressed and evaluated in context. The findings show noticeable disciplinary differences. In History book reviews, race, gender, and native identities are more prominent, often in discussions of historiographical critique and efforts to recover voices and experiences marginalized in dominant historical narratives. In Law book reviews, greater attention is given to indigenous rights, migration, refugees and asylum, reflecting stronger concerns with legal frameworks, institutional responsibility, and rights-based responses to contemporary social issues. At the same time, both disciplines share concerns with minority, marginality, and colonialism, suggesting common engagement with questions of equity, exclusion, and postcolonial legacies, although these are approached from different disciplinary perspectives. The phraseological profiles further show that similar minority themes can be framed differently according to disciplinary priorities. Overall, the study demonstrates that academic book reviews provide an important space for examining how disciplinary communities foreground, frame, and evaluate minority issues.*

*Keywords:* book reviews; History; Law; minority themes; corpus-based approach

### ABSTRAK

*Kajian ini meneliti bagaimana tema minoriti dipaparkan dalam ulasan buku akademik dalam disiplin Sejarah dan Undang-undang melalui pendekatan berasaskan korpus. Walaupun kajian terdahulu telah meneliti ciri penilaian dan retorik dalam ulasan buku akademik, perhatian yang diberikan terhadap cara tema minoriti ditonjolkan dan ditingkatkan merentas disiplin masih terhad. Bagi menangani jurang ini, kajian ini membandingkan taburan kata kunci berkaitan minoriti dalam ulasan buku Sejarah dan Undang-undang serta meneliti profil frasaologinya melalui analisis konkordans untuk mengenal pasti bagaimana tema tersebut diungkapkan dan dinilai mengikut konteks. Dapatan menunjukkan perbezaan yang ketara antara kedua-dua disiplin. Dalam ulasan buku Sejarah, tema berkaitan kaum, gender dan identiti peribumi lebih menonjol, khususnya dalam perbincangan tentang kritikan historiografi serta usaha mengentengahkan semula suara dan pengalaman yang terpinggir dalam naratif sejarah yang dominan. Sebaliknya, ulasan buku Undang-undang memberikan perhatian yang lebih besar kepada hak masyarakat peribumi, migrasi, pelarian dan suaka, yang mencerminkan tumpuan terhadap kerangka perundangan, tanggungjawab institusi dan pendekatan berasaskan hak dalam menangani isu sosial semasa. Pada masa yang sama, kedua-dua disiplin berkongsi perhatian terhadap isu minoriti, peminggiran dan kolonialisme, yang menunjukkan keterlibatan bersama dalam persoalan kesaksamaan, pengecualian dan warisan pascakolonial, walaupun isu tersebut ditangani daripada*

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*perspektif disiplin yang berbeza. Profil frasaologi turut menunjukkan bahawa tema minoriti yang serupa boleh ditingkatkan secara berbeza mengikut keutamaan setiap disiplin. Secara keseluruhannya, kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa ulasan buku akademik merupakan ruang penting untuk meneliti bagaimana komuniti disiplin menonjolkan, membina dan menilai isu berkaitan minoriti.*

*Kata Kunci: ulasan buku; Sejarah; Undang-undang; tema minoriti; pendekatan berasaskan korpus*

## INTRODUCTION

Academic book reviews are an influential yet often overlooked form of scholarly communication, particularly in the arts, humanities, and social sciences (Hartley, 2006; Lindholm-Romantschuk, 1998; Liu, Ding, & Gu, 2016; Spier, 2024). They do far more than summarise newly published books. As evaluative and contextualising texts, book reviews help shape academic agendas, open up debate, and contribute to the formation of disciplinary standards and identities (Hyland & Diani, 2009; Liu & Zhu, 2024; Stowe, 1991). Even so, in fields such as History and Law, book reviews are often treated as less significant than peer-reviewed journal articles because they are generally regarded as secondary scholarly outputs that evaluate existing work rather than present original research, and consequently tend to receive less recognition in citation-based and institutional research assessment systems (Lee & Ang, 2024; Liu et al., 2016). Recent bibliometric research also suggests that although the overall number of academic book reviews has remained fairly stable, their share in scholarly output has declined, reflecting broader changes in publishing practices (Liu et al., 2016).

Since their emergence as a form of scholarly communication, academic book reviews have been recognised for their important role in shaping disciplinary knowledge and facilitating the dissemination of scholarly ideas. Reviews signal about the scholarship that can be appreciated within a field (Spier, 2024). Genre analysts have shown how book reviews often share a four-move pattern: introduction of the book, content summary, evaluative commentary, and a final assessment (Groom, 2009; Junqueira, 2013; Motta-Roth, 1998). This rhetorical structure enables reviewers to blend description and analysis. It allows them to commend a book's triumphs as well as scrutinize its deficiencies at the same time (Hyland, 2000).

Building on the view of academic book reviews as evaluative, dialogic, and agenda-setting texts, it is useful to consider how minority-related themes are framed across disciplines. Such themes signal what scholarly communities regard as important, both intellectually and socially (Groom, 2009). In book reviews, judgments of relevance and value are reflected in what is foregrounded, normalised, or marginalised within a field. Examining thematic patterns therefore allows us to move beyond formal features of discourse and see how disciplines engage with broader issues such as inequality, inclusion, and power (Lindholm-Romantschuk, 1998). Focusing on minority themes is especially important, as these help shape disciplinary knowledge and indicate which social concerns are recognised or sidelined (Hyland, 2004; Martin & White, 2005; van Dijk, 2008).

History and Law provide a useful basis for comparison within this thematic landscape. Both disciplines engage with questions of power, inequality, and social order, but they do so through different intellectual traditions and temporal orientations. Historical scholarship often approaches marginalized groups through retrospective analysis, historiographical debate, and efforts to recover excluded voices (Breisach, 2007; Hérubel, 2003). Legal scholarship, by contrast, is more closely tied to contemporary institutions and policy debates, focusing on how laws shape the lived experiences of minority populations (Banks, 2019; Crenshaw, 2002; Delgado, 1984; Deo,

2019). Comparing the two disciplines makes it possible to identify not only their individual thematic priorities, but also where they converge and diverge in framing similar minority issues. Such disciplinary contrasts would be less visible in a single-discipline analysis, which could reveal patterns within a field but not whether these patterns are discipline-specific or shared across fields. The comparison therefore provides a clearer picture of how disciplinary traditions shape the selection, emphasis, and evaluation of minority themes in academic book reviews.

Although academic book reviews are widely recognised as influential evaluative texts, their thematic and ideological work, particularly around minority and marginalised issues, remains underexplored. Existing studies have focused on experiences of book reviewers, book review structure, evaluative stance, and recurring phraseological patterns in considerable detail (Cheng, 2014; Groom, 2009; Hartley, 2006; Jiang & Hyland, 2024; Liu & Zhu, 2024). Phraseological profiling provides a useful means of examining not only which themes are prominent, but also the recurring linguistic contexts through which they are framed and evaluated. However, relatively little attention has been given to using phraseological profiles to investigate how reviewers frame, legitimise or marginalise themes such as race, gender, indigeneity, disability, and migration across disciplines. This gap limits our understanding of how minority themes are linguistically constructed and how disciplinary communities negotiate their epistemological and social priorities.

When these evaluative processes are not examined systematically, discussions of inclusiveness and ideological orientation in disciplines such as History and Law often rest on impressionistic claims or isolated examples. Without stronger empirical evidence, it is difficult to tell whether patterns of emphasis and omission reflect broader disciplinary norms or simply individual reviewer preferences. As a result, the role of academic book reviews in shaping shared understandings of minority-related issues remains insufficiently understood.

To address this gap, the present study adopts a corpus-based approach to examine the distribution and use of minority-related keywords in academic book reviews from History and Law. Relying on a distinct compilation of 28 thematic keywords, combined with the employment of statistical approaches, this research intends to:

1. examine the quantitative distribution of minority themes in academic book review across the disciplines of History and Law.
2. determine how minority-related keywords cluster by theme based on their frequency in History and Law book reviews.
3. identify the phraseological realisations of minority themes in History and Law book reviews.

## BOOK REVIEWS AND RELATED RESEARCH

Book reviews are inherently dialogic and intertextual because they respond to earlier scholarship while also shaping ongoing debate within academic communities (Hyland, 2004; Vassileva, 2022). In disciplines such as linguistics, history, and law, where interpretation and argument are central, reviews often become a space for scholarly exchange and occasional disagreement, reflecting how knowledge is negotiated in these fields (Vassileva, 2022). A distinctive feature of book reviews is their dense use of evaluative language. Drawing on appraisal theory, this evaluation is commonly realised through affect, judgment, and appreciation, with appreciation especially prominent in academic writing (Cheng, 2014; Martin & White, 2005; Motta-Roth, 1998). Evaluative stance therefore does more than express opinion; it helps reviewers position themselves within

disciplinary communities and shape arguments according to disciplinary expectations (Thompson & Hunston, 2000).

Studies in corpus linguistics have shown that meaning in academic book reviews is often constructed not through isolated words but through recurring phraseological patterns, that is, frequent and semi-fixed word combinations that serve particular communicative purposes (Römer, 2010; Sinclair, 2004). Römer's (2010) analysis of phraseological profiles suggests that book reviews are particularly rich in such patterns, which enable reviewers to evaluate books, position them within fields of knowledge, and guide readers through their content. These expressions contribute to genre conventions and disciplinary voice while helping both novice and experienced scholars write in ways that meet the expectations of their discourse communities (Ferris, 2019; Hoey, 2005; Hunston & Francis, 2000). Beyond phraseological patterning, corpus-based research has also examined how book reviews construct disciplinary meanings through recurring themes. For example, Ang and He (2025) investigated the representation of marginalised communities in History and Sociology book reviews and identified disciplinary differences in the prominence and framing of minority-related themes. Their findings demonstrate that book reviews reflect the distinct scholarly priorities and social concerns of different disciplines. At a broader level, quantitative studies and text-mining research suggest that academic book reviews continue to show a strong positive bias, with praise generally outweighing criticism (Hamdan et al., 2016; Liu & Zhu, 2024). This tendency appears to be growing rather than fading. Reviewers often realise this balance through phraseological strategies such as hedging, concessive framing, and praise–criticism sequences, which allow them to offer critical comments while maintaining collegiality and scholarly distance. At the same time, this pattern is not uniform across contexts. Previous research shows that disciplinary background, cultural context, and professional status can all shape how evaluation is softened or intensified (Hyland, 2000; Spier, 2024).

Past studies also point to clear differences in review practices across languages and disciplines. English-language reviews are generally more explicit in criticism and personal evaluation, whereas reviews in Spanish, Chinese, and Brazilian Portuguese tend to be more descriptive, indirect, and attentive to authorial background (Cheng, 2014; Junqueira, 2013; Karunakaran & Ang, 2025; Klaibanmai, 2021; Suárez & Moreno, 2008). Disciplinary variation is equally important: reviews in softer fields such as linguistics and history often foreground interpretation and argument, while those in the sciences are usually shorter and less evaluative (Hyland, 2004; Vassileva, 2022).

In general, previous studies have shown that academic book reviews are influenced by linguistic and academic norms: differences arise from languages, disciplines and scholar traditions. Such research highlights the need to locate reviews within discipline-related boundaries and work with a systematic form of analysis to capture evaluation patterns as well as thematic focuses.

## CONCEPTUAL UNDERPINNING OF THE STUDY

Conceptually, this study treats minority-related keywords as linguistic indicators of how disciplinary communities foreground particular social groups, identities and forms of marginalisation. This approach draws on the view that recurring lexical choices are not neutral, but reflect the concerns, values, and ways of representing social issues within particular discourse communities (Hyland, 2004; van Dijk, 2008). The identification of minority-related keywords was therefore guided by broad conceptual domains associated with minority and marginalisation,

including race and ethnicity, indigeneity, gender and sexuality, migration and displacement and disability. Within these domains, the analysis considers both the frequency of individual keywords and the phraseological contexts in which they occur. Frequency indicates the relative prominence of particular minority themes, while concordance and phraseological profiling show how these themes are framed and evaluated in disciplinary discourse. This provides a conceptual basis for interpreting differences between History and Law not simply as differences in word frequency, but as evidence of different disciplinary priorities and ways of engaging with minority-related issues.

The identification and interpretation of minority themes in this study are informed by insights from critical discourse studies and appraisal-oriented research. Critical discourse studies views language as closely connected to social structures, power relations, and the representation of social groups (van Dijk, 2008). From this perspective, recurring lexical choices can provide insight into which social groups and concerns are foregrounded, backgrounded, or marginalised in disciplinary discourse. This is particularly relevant to the study of minority themes, as representations of race, ethnicity, indigeneity, gender, sexuality, migration, and disability are often shaped by wider social and institutional contexts. Appraisal theory, meanwhile, draws attention to the evaluative nature of language and how writers position themselves towards people, issues, and other texts (Martin & White, 2005). Although the present study does not undertake a full appraisal analysis, this perspective is relevant because academic book reviews are inherently evaluative texts. Together, these perspectives provide a conceptual basis for the initial identification of minority-related thematic domains and for interpreting how particular themes are foregrounded and evaluated within History and Law book reviews.

The following section presents the data sources, corpus-building process and analytical procedures used in this study.

## METHODS

### THE CORPUS

This study adopts a corpus-based approach to examine how minority discourse is represented in academic book reviews from History and Law. The corpus was purpose-built to capture disciplinary discourse in this evaluative genre. Rather than representing academic writing more generally, it focuses on peer-reviewed book reviews written by disciplinary specialists and published in established scholarly journals, allowing us to trace how scholarly work is evaluated and ideologically positioned. To ensure representativeness, the corpus was constructed according to a domain-defined sampling frame, with three guiding criteria:

1. Genre representativeness: only full-length academic book reviews published in peer-reviewed journals were included; short notices, review essays, editorials, symposium introductions, and book announcements were excluded.
2. Disciplinary integrity: reviews were included only if the journal was clearly classified as History or Law based on journal scope statements and indexing categories.
3. Expert authorship: To ensure expert-level discourse, only book reviews written by academics with university or research-institution affiliations were included in the corpus.

The final corpus, designed to examine contemporary disciplinary discourse, consists of 861 academic book reviews published between 2000 and 2024 and first made available electronically through JSTOR, a digital archive of peer-reviewed scholarly journals. This time frame was selected to capture recent patterns in disciplinary communication while also providing enough historical spread to reduce the effect of short-term topical shifts. The corpus is divided into two sub-corpora: 500 History book reviews, comprising about 700,000 words, and 361 Law book reviews, comprising about 830,000 words.

Although the Law sub-corpus contains fewer reviews, it is larger in total word count because legal book reviews tend to be longer. To ensure fair comparison, all quantitative analyses were based on normalised frequencies per 500,000 words. The corpus was built to represent mainstream disciplinary discourse rather than highly specialised subfields. The History reviews cover areas such as social history, colonial and postcolonial studies, gender history, and indigenous histories, while the Law reviews include constitutional law, international law, human rights, migration and refugee law, and critical legal theory. This range makes it possible to examine minority discourse within widely circulated evaluative writing rather than in niche venues. For consistency and replicability, the same criteria for inclusion, time span, source database, and disciplinary classification were applied to both sub-corpora.

#### TEXT PREPROCESSING AND DATA CLEANING

All reviews were downloaded in PDF format and subsequently converted into plain text files for analysis. A preprocessing protocol was applied to ensure consistency and replicability:

1. Removal of non-review material (journal headers, footers, page numbers).
2. Deletion of reference lists, footnotes, copyright notices, and author affiliation metadata.
3. Manual verification to ensure that quoted material from the reviewed book did not dominate the review text.

Preprocessing was performed conservatively to preserve original linguistic context, particularly evaluative and phraseological structures central to corpus analysis. No lemmatisation or POS tagging was applied, as the focus was on lexical and phraseological realisation in authentic form.

#### KEYWORD TAXONOMY DEVELOPMENT

Minority themes were operationalized through a theoretically motivated and empirically validated keyword taxonomy designed to capture how academic disciplines linguistically construct social marginalization in evaluative genres. The taxonomy consists of seven thematic domains, i.e. “race”, “gender”, “disability”, “migrant”, “colonialism”, “native”, and “minority”, expanded into 28 keywords (see Table 1). These themes were not selected a priori as fixed social categories, but were identified through a replicable procedure integrating theory, corpus evidence, and disciplinary expertise.

##### *Stage 1: Conceptual Identification of Thematic Domains*

The initial identification of thematic domains followed a concept-driven scoping process grounded in critical discourse studies and appraisal-oriented research (van Dijk, 2008; Martin & White, 2005), as discussed in the Literature Review. These perspectives provided the conceptual basis for

identifying broad domains related to minority representation and marginalisation. The subsequent corpus analysis was data-driven, with keyword frequencies, concordance patterns and phraseological profiles used to determine how these themes were actually realised in the History and Law sub-corpora. Thus, the study first identified recurrent conceptual dimensions of marginalisation that are widely recognised in humanities and social-science scholarship. These dimensions were selected based on three criteria:

1. Salience in disciplinary scholarship (i.e. recurrent analytical categories in History and Law),
2. Discursive realisability (i.e. likelihood of being explicitly lexicalised in academic writing),
3. Evaluative relevance (i.e. capacity to attract stance, judgment, or appreciation in review discourse).

Applying these criteria yielded seven domains that consistently function as sites of evaluation, ideological positioning, and disciplinary debate in academic discourse. Importantly, the taxonomy does not aim to exhaust all possible forms of marginalisation; instead, it targets those dimensions most likely to be linguistically foregrounded in the genre of academic book reviews.

#### *Stage 2: Empirical Expansion and Refinement of Keywords*

Once the thematic domains were established, candidate keywords were generated through a corpus-driven exploratory process. For each domain, an initial seed list was created based on:

1. terminology used in prior corpus and discourse studies,
2. domain-specific academic usage (e.g. “indigenous” in Law vs. “native” in History),
3. high-frequency nominal forms likely to function as thematic anchors.

To empirically validate and refine this list, pilot concordance analyses were conducted on a randomly selected subset of 100 reviews (50 History, 50 Law). Each candidate keyword was examined in context using KWIC lines to determine whether it:

1. referred to minority-related social identity or structural marginalisation,
2. occurred with sufficient contextual consistency,
3. functioned as a thematic rather than incidental lexical item.

Keywords that showed semantic ambiguity, metaphorical uses unrelated to minority discourse, or very infrequent occurrence were excluded from the analysis. This step ensured that the final keyword set was grounded in actual disciplinary usage rather than relying solely on researcher intuition.

#### *Stage 3: Expert Validation and Disciplinary Calibration*

The refined keyword list was then reviewed and validated by four senior academics, including two historians and two legal scholars. Experts independently evaluated each keyword with respect to:

1. disciplinary relevance,
2. conceptual clarity,
3. appropriateness for representing minority discourse in book reviews.

Each keyword was rated on a binary relevance scale (relevant /not relevant). Only keywords endorsed by at least three out of four experts were retained. Inter-rater agreement was high (Cohen's  $\kappa = 0.82$ ), indicating strong disciplinary consensus. Where disagreement occurred, items were discussed and either reclassified or removed. Only keywords endorsed by at least three of the four experts were retained.

TABLE 1. Themes and 28 keywords

| Themes      | Keywords                                                    |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Race        | race, racism, racial, racialized, racist, ethnic, ethnicity |
| Gender      | gender, feminist, feminism, queer, LGBTQ                    |
| Disability  | disability, disabled                                        |
| Migrant     | migrant, immigrant, refugee, asylum, migration              |
| Colonialism | colonialism, decolonization, postcolonial                   |
| Native      | indigenous, native, aboriginal, indigeneity                 |
| Minority    | marginalized, minority                                      |

## QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

### FREQUENCY EXTRACTION AND NORMALISATION

All 28 keywords were extracted using AntConc 4.1.4 (Anthony, 2022), a corpus linguistics toolkit allowing precise, replicable keyword counts. Normalisation to occurrences per 500,000 words was applied to all raw counts, ensuring frequencies are comparable across disciplines regardless of corpus size differences. This is standard practice in corpus-based research for proportional analysis.

### DATA MATRIX CONSTRUCTION

A  $28 \times 2$  matrix was then created, with each row representing a keyword and each column corresponding to one of the two disciplines (History and Law). This matrix served as the foundation for subsequent statistical analyses and visualisations, enabling a clear and systematic comparison of thematic prominence across the two fields.

### STATISTICAL MODELLING AND VISUALISATION

Descriptive statistic (normalised frequencies) was employed to determine how often each keyword was used in the two fields. The chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test of independence was used to test if the distribution of keywords differed significantly between History and Law. Standardised residuals and Z-scores were also employed to determine which keywords accounted for any significant divergences, providing an indication of the themes that generate inter-disciplinary differences (Agresti, 2018).

Hierarchical clustering was performed in R using Ward's linkage method and Euclidean distance, based on the normalised frequencies of the minority-related keywords in the History and Law sub-corpora. The analysis identifies natural groupings of keywords according to similarities in their frequency distributions across the two disciplines. The resulting hierarchical structure was visualised as a dendrogram using R's clustering and graphical functions. A cluster heatmap was also generated in R to provide a complementary view of the clustering results and the normalised keyword frequencies. The viridis colour scale was applied to the heatmap, with a frequency scale

included to aid interpretation, where differences in colour intensity represent differences in normalised frequency. Together, the dendrogram and heatmap make it possible to compare keyword clusters and identify broader disciplinary patterns in minority-related themes. This combination of hierarchical clustering and visualisation provides a systematic way of examining similarities and differences in the distribution of keywords across the two disciplinary corpora (Murtagh & Contreras, 2012).

#### PHRASEOLOGICAL REALISATIONS VIA KWIC CONCORDANCE ANALYSIS

The unit of analysis is phraseology surrounding minority-related keywords, operationalised as recurrent continuous expressions that contain a target keyword. A concordance analysis was performed with the concordance window set at  $\pm 13$  words around each keyword occurrence. This setting allows for the capture of slightly longer evaluative patterns that are typical of book-review discourse (Hyland, 2004). For each of the 28 keywords, keyword in Context (KWIC) lines were generated separately for History and Law sub-corpora.

## RESULTS

### DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

This section presents a detailed quantitative comparison of 28 minority-related keywords across two disciplinary corpora, i.e. 500 History book reviews and 361 Law book reviews, complemented by an analysis of their phraseological realisations based on concordance line extractions. Table 2 presents the normalised frequency counts (per 500k words) for each keyword under seven themes in History versus Law book reviews, while Figure 1 provides a graphical summary, visually contrasting the thematic priorities of History and Law in the context of minority discourse.

TABLE 2. Normalised frequency counts (per 500k words)

| Themes  | keywords    | History | Law |
|---------|-------------|---------|-----|
| race    | race        | 278     | 52  |
|         | racial      | 255     | 85  |
|         | racist      | 33      | 18  |
|         | racism      | 54      | 27  |
|         | racialized  | 16      | 4   |
|         | ethnic      | 98      | 60  |
|         | ethnicity   | 36      | 8   |
| gender  | gender      | 245     | 168 |
|         | feminist    | 75      | 109 |
|         | feminism    | 48      | 27  |
|         | queer       | 20      | 5   |
|         | LGBTQ       | 2       | 1   |
| native  | native      | 294     | 35  |
|         | indigenous  | 162     | 328 |
|         | aboriginal  | 3       | 8   |
|         | indigeneity | 2       | 2   |
| migrant | migration   | 65      | 75  |
|         | immigrant   | 82      | 15  |
|         | refugee     | 49      | 95  |
|         | migrant     | 36      | 102 |
|         | asylum      | 5       | 77  |

|             |                |    |    |
|-------------|----------------|----|----|
| minority    | minority       | 43 | 28 |
|             | marginalized   | 20 | 24 |
| colonialism | colonialism    | 44 | 48 |
|             | postcolonial   | 13 | 10 |
|             | decolonization | 12 | 22 |
| disability  | disability     | 32 | 7  |
|             | disabled       | 25 | 6  |

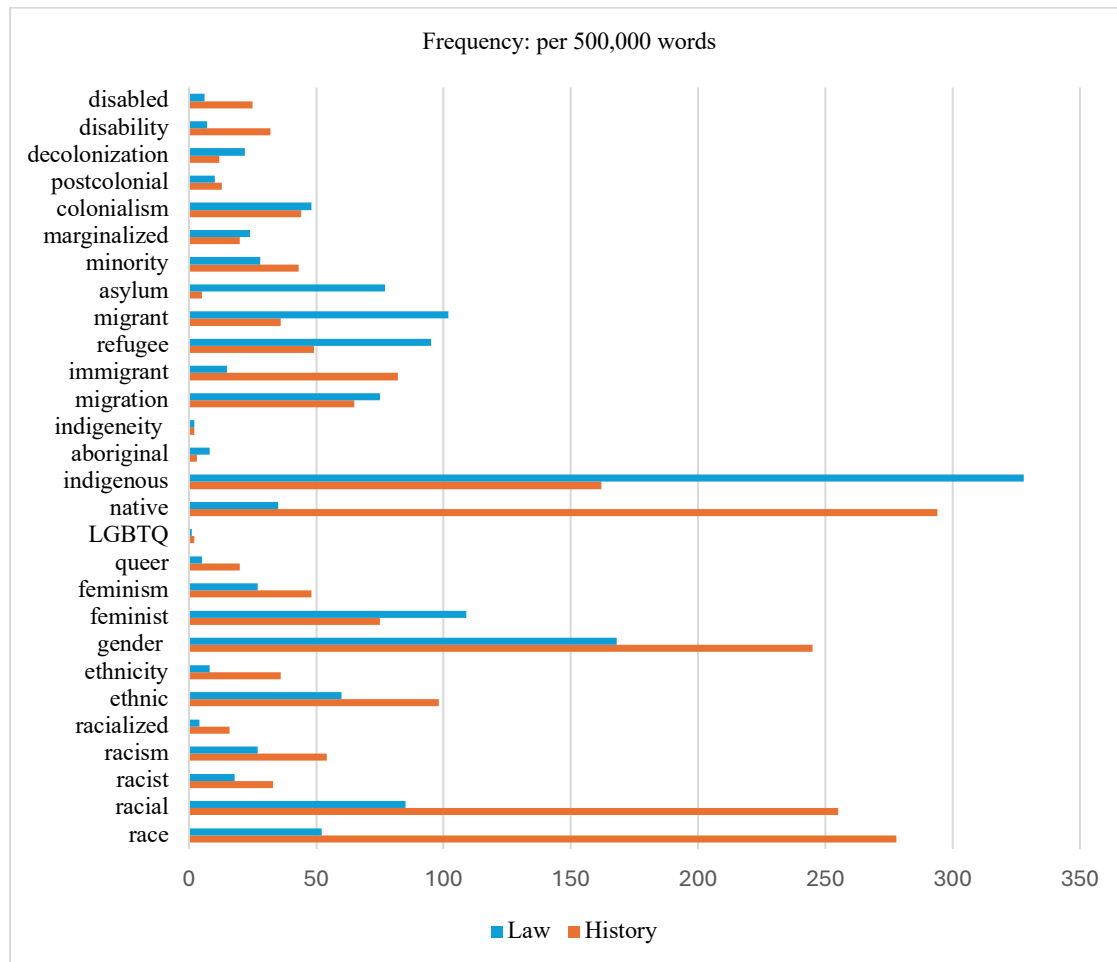


FIGURE 1. Visual comparison of keywords in History and Law book reviews

## INFERENTIAL TESTING OF DISCIPLINARY DIFFERENCES

### CHI-SQUARE TEST OF INDEPENDENCE

To test whether the observed differences in keyword usage between History and Law book reviews are statistically meaningful, a Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test of independence was performed on the full contingency table of minority-related keyword frequencies by discipline. The resulting test statistic was high ( $\chi^2 = 693.92$ ,  $df = 27$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), far surpassing conventional significance thresholds. This highly significant result means that the probability of observing such large differences in keyword distributions by chance is virtually zero. This test confirms that the pattern of keyword usage is not random, but is systematically shaped by the disciplinary context, i.e. there is a true

and substantial association between which discipline is being reviewed and the thematic vocabulary that is deployed.

#### STANDARDIZED RESIDUALS AND Z-SCORES

While the Chi-square test establishes that a significant association exists, it does not indicate which keywords are most responsible for the difference. To address this, standardized residuals (Z-scores) were computed for each cell of the contingency table. These residuals quantify the magnitude and direction of deviation from expected frequencies under the null hypothesis of independence. A large positive Z-score for a keyword in one discipline indicates that the term appears much more often than expected in that discipline, while a large negative Z-score indicates the opposite. Table 3 presents the results for standardized residuals (Z-scores) for all keywords in both History and Law book reviews.

TABLE 3. Standardized residuals (Z-scores) for all keywords

| keywords       | History Z-Scores | Law Z-Scores |
|----------------|------------------|--------------|
| race           | 6.08             | -7.24        |
| racial         | 3.95             | -4.7         |
| racist         | 0.57             | -0.68        |
| racism         | 0.95             | -1.13        |
| racialized     | 1.25             | -1.49        |
| ethnic         | 0.56             | -0.67        |
| ethnicity      | 2.01             | -2.39        |
| gender         | 0.19             | -0.23        |
| feminist       | -3.16            | 3.76         |
| feminism       | 0.61             | -0.73        |
| queer          | 1.4              | -1.66        |
| LGBTQ          | 0.18             | -0.22        |
| native         | 7.29             | -8.67        |
| indigenous     | -7.39            | 8.79         |
| aboriginal     | -1.36            | 1.62         |
| indigeneity    | -0.22            | 0.27         |
| migration      | -1.88            | 2.24         |
| immigrant      | 3.34             | -3.97        |
| refugee        | -3.85            | 4.58         |
| migrant        | -4.99            | 5.94         |
| asylum         | -6.21            | 7.39         |
| minority       | 0.22             | -0.26        |
| marginalized   | -1.14            | 1.36         |
| colonialism    | -1.35            | 1.61         |
| postcolonial   | -0.13            | 0.16         |
| decolonization | -1.78            | 2.11         |
| disability     | 1.91             | -2.28        |
| disabled       | 1.6              | -1.91        |

The analysis of standardized residuals reveals the specific “drivers” of disciplinary divergence:

In History book reviews, keywords such as *native* ( $Z = +7.29$ ), *race* ( $+6.08$ ) and *racial* ( $+3.95$ ) are vastly more common than expected, underscoring History’s enduring focus on archival recovery, social identity, and historical discrimination. In Law book reviews, terms such as *indigenous* ( $Z = +8.79$ ), *asylum* ( $Z = +7.39$ ), *migrant* ( $Z = +5.94$ ) and *refugee* ( $Z = +4.58$ ) are markedly overrepresented. This pattern points to Law’s strong engagement with issues related to migration policy, legal rights, and advocacy for vulnerable populations. Other keywords, including

*immigrant* (History  $Z = +3.34$ ) and *feminist* (Law  $Z = +3.76$ ), further highlight more subtle but consistent differences in thematic emphasis between the two disciplines.

By presenting both the most over- and under-represented keywords for each discipline, these Z-scores provide an interpretable, fine-grained view of the sources of thematic divergence. They highlight that it is not simply “all keywords” that differ, but a focused subset that define the intellectual core of each field’s engagement with minority discourse.

#### HIERARCHICAL CLUSTERING: DENDROGRAM

Each keyword’s pair of frequencies in History and Law was treated as a two-dimensional point. Using Ward’s linkage on Euclidean distances, we generated a hierarchical cluster tree and visualized the structure with a dendrogram and a cluster-ordered heatmap. Figures 2 illustrates the dendrogram.

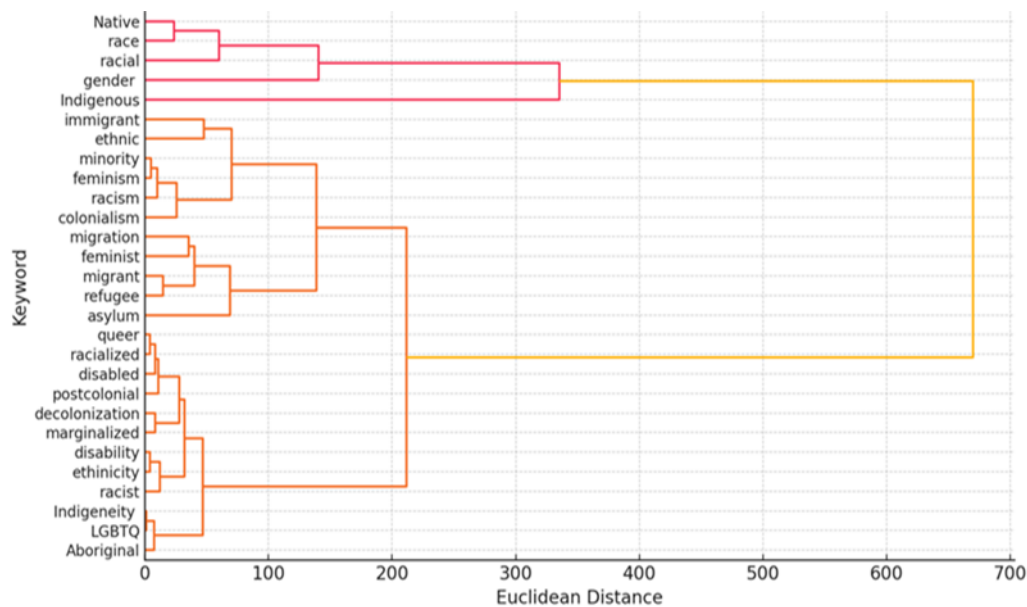


FIGURE 2. Dendrogram of keywords (History vs. Law)

In Figure 2, the vertical axis lists all 28 keywords (e.g., *race*, *native*, *asylum*, *feminist*, etc.). The horizontal axis represents Euclidean distance in the two-dimensional frequency space (History-count vs. Law-count). Keywords that merge at shorter horizontal distances have more similar frequency profiles across the two disciplines. Each branch point (node) indicates a clustering event: two keywords (or two clusters of keywords) join into one cluster at that distance. The colours simply highlight different branches but do not carry independent meaning beyond visual grouping.

The dendrogram provides a visual and statistical roadmap of how minority-related keywords group together according to their frequency distributions in History and Law book reviews. At the outset, each keyword appears as a distinct “leaf”, meaning that every keyword is initially considered separate from all others before any merging occurs.

#### LOW-DISTANCE MERGES: FINE-GRAINED SIMILARITY

At the bottom of the dendrogram, the first merges, i.e. those occurring at or very near zero on the horizontal axis, highlight pairs of keywords with almost identical frequency patterns. For example, *LGBTQ* and *aboriginal* are joined at an extremely low distance, signifying that both terms are similarly rare in both History and Law reviews. Likewise, *native*, *race* and *racial* quickly merge into a tight subcluster, indicating that these keywords share a highly similar profile: all are extremely frequent in History and relatively infrequent in Law. Such low-distance merges are important because they reflect keywords that, despite different surface forms, play almost identical roles in the disciplinary discourse.

#### MID-DISTANCE MERGES: THEMATIC GROUPINGS

As the dendrogram moves upward, smaller groupings begin to merge into broader thematic clusters. Keywords such as *native*, *race*, *racial*, *gender* and *indigenous* come together as a clear History-oriented cluster, showing their strong association with History book reviews. This cluster remains intact until a relatively high linkage distance, suggesting not only a distinctive frequency pattern but also strong internal coherence within the History corpus. In contrast, Law-related keywords such as *asylum*, *refugee*, *migrant*, and *immigrant* cluster together at shorter distances, indicating that they share a similar distribution in Law book reviews. This pattern reflects the discipline's stronger concern with migration, humanitarian protection, and the legal status of displaced or non-citizen groups.

#### HIGH-DISTANCE MERGES: MAJOR DISCIPLINARY SPLITS

The clearest pattern in the dendrogram appears at the top of the distance axis, where the broader clusters finally merge. The relatively high linkage distance between the History-biased and Law-biased groupings points to a marked disciplinary divide. One cluster is shaped by keywords linked to archives, identity and recovery, which are more typical of History book reviews. The other is defined by keywords associated with policy, rights, and legal protection, which are more characteristic of Law.

What makes the dendrogram especially useful is that these groupings emerge from the actual frequency distributions of the keywords across the two corpora, rather than from categories imposed in advance. Clusters formed at low distances indicate words that behave similarly and tend to pattern together within a discipline. By contrast, mergers at higher distances reveal broader disciplinary distinctions in keyword usage.

Read from bottom to top, the dendrogram gives a clear visual sense of a History–Law axis underlying the corpus. Its branching structure reflects the different concerns of the two fields: History's emphasis on archives, race, and identity, and Law's stronger focus on policy, migration, and legal norms. In this way, the dendrogram not only confirms the expected disciplinary split but also provides a transparent way of tracing both subtle and more pronounced patterns in how minority-related issues are framed across the two fields.

# HIERARCHICAL CLUSTERING: HEATMAP

Figure 3 shows a heatmap of keyword frequencies in the History and Law corpora. The keywords are arranged according to the dendrogram, so those with similar frequency patterns appear close together. This makes it easier to identify thematic groupings, as keywords that occur more frequently in one discipline tend to form visible colour blocks. Each row represents a keyword, while the two columns represent the two disciplines. Colour intensity reflects normalised frequency: warmer colours indicate higher frequencies, whereas cooler colours indicate lower ones. Overall, the heatmap visually supports the thematic clusters revealed by the hierarchical clustering analysis.

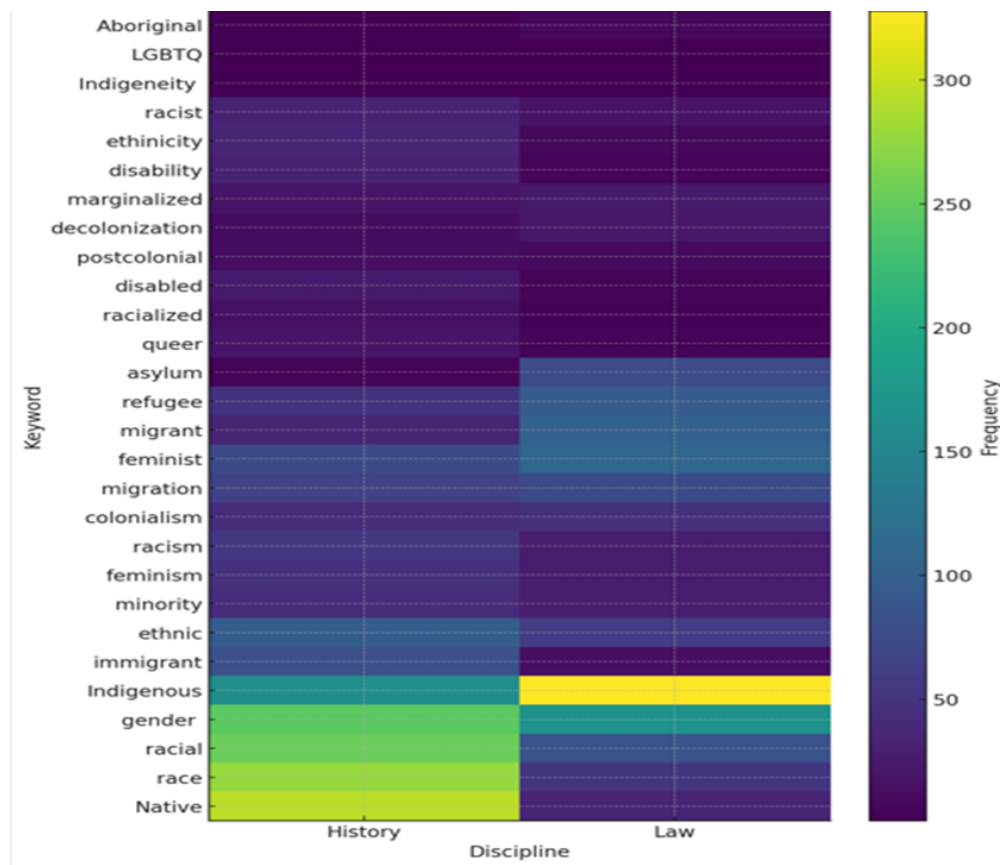


FIGURE 3. Heatmap of keyword frequencies (History vs. Law)

## DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC EMPHASES

The heatmap delineates keywords that are significantly more closely related to History or Law respectively. In the History column, words like *race*, *native* and *gender* present warmer colours (due to being more frequent in History book reviews). In contrast, the Law column features higher associations for *migrant*, *refugee*, *asylum* and *indigenous*, highlighting their significance in academic legal scholarship.

#### BALANCED AND TRANSITIONAL KEYWORDS

Several keywords, for instance *minority*, *marginalized*, *colonialism* and *postcolonial*, appear in moderate warmth in both the History and Law columns of the heatmap. This trend suggests that these keywords occur with similar frequency across the two disciplines, rather than being strongly correlated with just one. Their balanced presence suggests that they function as shared thematic touchpoints, which reflects concerns that cut across disciplinary boundaries. As such, these transitional keywords help illuminate how History and Law intersect in their engagement with broader debates on inequality, colonial legacies, and social justice, even as each discipline frames these concerns in distinct ways.

#### PERIPHERAL AND RARE KEYWORDS

In both columns of the heatmap, *queer*, *LGBTQ*, *aboriginal*, and *indigeneity* appear in cooler cells than most other keywords, indicating that they occur only rarely in both History and Law reviews. Their limited visibility suggests that these themes remain relatively marginal within mainstream disciplinary evaluation, especially when compared with more established topics that occupy a more central place in scholarly discussion. Whether this reflects a genuine lack of attention or the uneven prioritisation of certain minority issues over others is a question that warrants further investigation. Overall, the heatmap complements the dendrogram by making the corpus's thematic structure more visible and reinforcing the conclusion that minority discourse in academic book reviews is shaped by strong disciplinary orientations, alongside a smaller set of shared themes.

#### PHRASEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

##### HISTORY'S EMPHASIS ON RACE, GENDER, AND NATIVE IDENTITY

The results reveal that History book reviews are characterized by the higher frequencies of words associated with race, gender and native identity, revealing each discipline's continuous involvement in issues of social stratification, identity formation and power differences. And these quantitative patterns, importantly, are also detectable in the phraseological contexts in which the keywords are used, which shows how evaluative stance and disciplinary ideology are realized linguistically.

In the History reviews, race-related discourse is especially prominent. Keywords such as *race* (278), *racial* (255) and *racism* (54) occur more frequently than in the Law reviews. Concordance analysis shows that these terms often appear in evaluative phraseological contexts, as shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4. Concordance samples for the keywords *race*, *racial* and *racism*

|                                                                               |      |                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| new emphasis on gender, Foucault, the "cultural studies" movement in Britain, | race | studies and postcolonialism, the boom in popular interest in the past |
| Western antiquity that precede the emergence of modern ideas about a "white   | race | " of people and the long history of what Painter calls, somewhat      |
| misleadingly, the "white slavery" of the middle                               | race | , ruled" (p. 38). Her analysis corrects stubborn notions              |
| ages, where "geography, not                                                   | race | that the racial                                                       |
| their character related to their color? No, for                               | race | nor the idea of 'white' people had been invented, and                 |
| neither the idea of                                                           |      | people's skin                                                         |

|                                                                                |        |                                                                              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The History of White People, Nell Painter offers a detailed survey of          | racial | whiteness as a political rather than biological category. She shows that the |
| that we have come to call white people; white slavery; the Eurocentric         | racial | aesthetics and science of "white beauty"; how the term "Caucasian" came to   |
| 38). As its counterpoint, she explains, the idea of slavery "calls up          | racial | difference, carving a permanent chasm of race between the free and the       |
| the testimonials of British officers who harbored deep antipathies, even       | racism | , for the Spanish. For Esdaile, neither his critique of the guerrillas       |
| moral reflection on America's long and painful history of imperialism and      | racism | . Zinn's writing evoked the moral urgency of the civil rights and            |
| rhetoric about slavery's economic centrality to global progress could hide the | racism | of a society whose cornerstone was slavery. The southern leaders depicted    |
| the many instances in which blacks, recruited to fight a war against           | racism | in Europe, began to resist the dictates of segregation in America" (p.       |

The History corpus shows *race* and related terms occurring not only in descriptions of historical subjects but also in reviewers' explicit evaluation of analytical inclusion or omission, intersectionality, racial ideology, representation, violence and social structure. These patterns suggest that historians do not treat race as a neutral descriptive category. Rather, they position it as historically produced and central to critical interpretation. The repeated presence of *racist* (33) and *racialized* (16) further indicates sustained attention to the ways racialization was constructed and experienced.

Gender is another major area of emphasis in the History corpus. The keyword *gender* appears in 245 concordance lines, underlining its importance in historical writing. It is often embedded in evaluative contexts. Related terms such as *feminist* (75) and *feminism* (48) also occur in similar evaluative frames, as presented in Table 5.

TABLE 5. Concordance samples for the keywords *gender*, *feminist* and *feminism*

|                                                                                                                                        |          |                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| women protested male favoritism toward younger working class women. In these examples, we see how                                      | gender   | and class (and age and ethnicity) intersected with sexuality to shape women's experiences in t                       |
| in exhibits "downplayed or attempted to ignore unequal power relationships in terms of race, class, and                                | gender   | , and privileged the telling of a white patriarchal history that erased controversial histories surrounding slavery, |
| world history or to historical analysis of alternative identities based on ethnicity, race, class, religion, or                        | gender   | . Yet the audience for national surveys has hardly disappeared. In addition to the students who                      |
| with a larger field that is focused, perhaps overly so, on issues of race, class, and                                                  | gender   | . Social military history has gotten military historians back into history departments. While we                     |
| Stanton Blatch (daughter of Harriot, granddaughter of Elizabeth Cady Stanton), Bix hints at the                                        | feminist | implications of scientific participation for women, but this is not a central element of her analysis.               |
| argues that technocratic concerns about scientific womanpower have long converged with more overtly                                    | feminist | efforts to "dismantle gender stereotypes" and that technocratic feminism is an important element of                  |
| guarantee freedom and gender equality while Islam is synonymous with oppression" (ibid.). Like many                                    | feminist | historians educated in the late twentieth century, I studied and absorbed Scott's seminal article                    |
| analysis of feminist theory and practice. However, Getting Equal glosses over much that might show why                                 | feminism | is not more widely espoused by women today. In her desire to catalogue women's achievements                          |
| heterosexual relations-the traditional private sphere. This analysis of the transition from the nineteenth-century "woman movement" to | feminism | in the 1910s and 1920s historicized tensions between equality and difference, public and private, divisions among    |
| it fails to reach, and the uncomfortable sense I have that the empowerment of women through                                            | feminism | has, thus far, served mainly to empower those who were quite powerful anyway - white women,                          |

Taken together, these recurring patterns suggest that gender has become a well-established analytical category in contemporary historical scholarship rather than a peripheral concern.

Native identity is also particularly salient in the History corpus. The keyword *native* appears 294 times, compared with only 35 instances in the Law reviews. Concordance analysis shows that it often occurs in recovery-oriented expressions such as “reclaims silenced native voices within colonial histories”, “traces forms of native agency under imperial expansion”, and “documents the cultural resilience of indigenous communities under colonial rule”. These phraseological contexts highlight historians’ concern with narrative recovery and postcolonial critique. The prominence of *native* therefore signals more than frequency alone; it reflects a disciplinary commitment to recovering marginalized perspectives within historical narratives.

Other keywords, including *immigrant* (82 in History vs. 15 in Law), *ethnic* (98 vs. 60), *racialized* (16 vs. 4), and *disability* (32 vs. 7), are also more common in History. Concordance evidence suggests that these terms are regularly placed within broader accounts of social change, exclusion, and resistance. Overall, the pattern points to a strong tendency in History book reviews to frame minority-related themes within wider narratives of inequality, historical experience, and struggle.

#### LAW’S FOCUS ON INDIGENOUS, MIGRANT, AND REFUGEE DISCOURSES

The analysis shows that Law book reviews are marked by the high frequency of keywords linked to indigenous rights, migration, and legal advocacy, reflecting the discipline’s strong policy-, rights-, and justice-oriented focus. These quantitative patterns are reinforced by the phraseological contexts in which the keywords appear, which regularly point to institutional frameworks, legal accountability, and reform-oriented evaluation.

In the Law corpus, indigenous-related discourse is especially prominent. The keyword *indigenous* appears 328 times in Law book reviews, compared with 162 in History. Concordance analysis shows that it is typically used in procedural and rights-based contexts, as shown in Table 6.

TABLE 6. Concordance samples for the keyword *indigenous*

|                                                                                         |            |                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| is a clear focus on international human rights law, in particular in relation to        | indigenous | rights and classical questions of indigenous rights law, such as self-determination and self-            |
| manages to make the concept of cultural heritage accessible for lawyers and provides    | indigenous | actors with valuable information for the protection of indigenous rights. International human rights law |
| show how international law can be made practically fruitful for the protection of       | indigenous | cultural heritage. There is a clear focus on international human rights law, in particular               |
| UNESCO World Heritage Site. Land rights and their importance for the cultural rights of | indigenous | communities are not to be underestimated. Often, land use conflicts are at the                           |
| in some cases, this is the exception rather than the norm. The loss of                  | indigenous | legal regimes and sovereignty is illustrated with an example from Finland concerning the                 |

These patterns suggest that legal scholars tend to frame indigeneity within legal systems, with particular attention to sovereignty, constitutional recognition, treaty interpretation, and the continuing effects of colonial legal structures.

Migration and humanitarian issues are also highly visible in the Law corpus. Keywords such as *migrant* (102 in Law vs. 36 in History), *refugee* (95 vs. 49), and *asylum* (77 vs. 5) reflect the discipline’s strong concern with migration governance and international protection regimes. They often appear in contexts such as “analyses the legal status of asylum seekers under

international refugee law” and “examines procedural safeguards for refugees seeking protection”, pointing to evaluation centred on the adequacy of legal instruments, institutions, and judicial practices.

Feminist discourse is likewise notable in Law book reviews. The keyword *feminist* appears 109 times in Law, compared with 75 in History. It is often embedded in reform-oriented expressions such as “advances feminist legal theory by addressing gender bias in the administration of justice” and “evaluates the effectiveness of gender equality provisions within the constitution”. Here, feminist discourse is closely tied to critiques of statutes, case law, and institutional practice, highlighting legal scholarship’s concern with structural inequality and social justice.

#### AREAS OF CONVERGENCE AND BALANCE

Although the analysis shows clear differences between History and Law, it also reveals important similarities in how both disciplines engage with minority themes and postcolonial issues. Several keywords occur at broadly comparable frequencies in the two corpora, suggesting a shared discursive focus, even if they are realised through different evaluative and phraseological patterns.

The keyword *minority* appears at similar levels in both disciplines, though slightly more often in History. In the History corpus, it is commonly found in narrative and recovery-oriented contexts such as “recovers minority perspectives silenced by dominant historiography” and “examines minority communities within broader social transformations”. In Law, by contrast, it tends to occur in institutional and rights-based expressions such as “examines the protection of minority rights under constitutional law” and “evaluates legal safeguards for minority communities”. This suggests that both disciplines foreground minority concerns, but frame them differently according to their disciplinary priorities.

A similar pattern can be seen with *marginalized*, which appears at nearly equal levels in both corpora. In History reviews, it often occurs in phrases like “gives visibility to marginalized groups excluded from national histories”, while in Law it appears in contexts such as “analyses barriers faced by marginalized communities in accessing justice”. In both fields, marginalization is treated as an important analytical concern.

Convergence is also evident in colonial and postcolonial themes. Keywords such as *colonialism*, *postcolonial*, and *indigeneity* appear at comparable frequencies across the two corpora. History reviews tend to frame these through interpretive critique and narrative revision, whereas Law reviews approach them through constitutional, legal, and institutional analysis. Even so, both disciplines show sustained engagement with colonial legacies and their continuing social effects.

#### NATIVE CLUSTER THEME (DISCIPLINARY SPLIT)

A closer look at keywords related to native and indigenous issues reveals a clear disciplinary divide between History and Law, both in terminology and in thematic emphasis. Quantitatively, the keyword *native* appears far more often in the History corpus, with 294 occurrences, compared with only 35 in the Law reviews. This marked difference reflects historians’ stronger engagement with archival recovery, cultural interpretation, and the retelling of marginalized voices. The phraseological contexts in which *native* appears reinforce this pattern, linking the term closely to historical narratives of identity, memory, and representation.

Concordance analysis shows that *native* is often embedded in extended interpretive and recovery-oriented expressions such as “reclaims silenced native voices within colonial histories”, “traces forms of native agency in the context of imperial expansion”, and “documents native experiences in relation to nation-building and colonial governance”. These patterns suggest that historians use *native* as both a narrative and analytical category, one closely tied to questions of historical representation, community memory, and colonial entanglement.

By contrast, the keyword *indigenous* appears almost twice as often in Law book reviews (328) as in History (162), reflecting the discipline’s stronger institutional and policy-oriented focus. In the Law corpus, concordance lines place *indigenous* in procedural and rights-based contexts, as in “examines the scope of indigenous rights under constitutional and international law”, “analyses land claims of indigenous peoples under treaty frameworks”, and “evaluates state compliance with obligations toward indigenous communities”. These recurring patterns show that legal scholars tend to use *indigenous* as a juridical category closely linked to sovereignty, land rights, treaty interpretation, and constitutional recognition.

By comparison, *aboriginal* and *indigeneity* appear only rarely in both corpora. When they do occur, they are usually found in more specialised or region-specific contexts rather than as central analytical terms. This suggests that, in academic book reviews, indigenous issues are more often discussed under the preferred disciplinary labels of *native* in History and *indigenous* in Law.

#### LOW-FREQUENCY AND MARGINAL THEMES

Beyond the native and indigenous clusters, other minority-related keywords, especially *queer* and *LGBTQ*, appear only sparsely across the History and Law book review corpora. Their low frequencies place them at the margins of the dataset, suggesting that sexual minority identities are less prominently foregrounded in the evaluative discourse of book reviews in these two disciplines. Concordance analysis, however, gives a clearer sense of how these terms function when they do appear.

In the History corpus, *queer* usually occurs within broader discussions of identity, gender, or cultural analysis rather than as a central topic in its own right. Concordance lines such as “draws on queer perspectives to rethink gender and sexuality in historical narratives” and “briefly engages with queer theory in discussions of identity and representation” suggest that the term is often used as a theoretical lens rather than the main subject of review. Similarly, *LGBTQ* appears only occasionally and usually in broad evaluative contexts, which points to a more secondary role in historical discussion.

A similar pattern emerges in the Law corpus. Here too, *queer* and *LGBTQ* occur infrequently and are typically embedded within broader rights-based or anti-discrimination frameworks. Examples such as “addresses LGBTQ rights within broader human rights frameworks” and “references queer theory in critiques of gender and sexuality norms in law” indicate that sexual minority issues are often subsumed under wider legal concerns such as equality, non-discrimination, and human rights.

Their limited frequency and peripheral positioning may reflect several factors. These themes may still remain relatively marginal in mainstream History and Law scholarship, especially in the evaluative genre of book reviews. They may also be absorbed into broader intersectional discussions of gender, race, and rights. In addition, specialised work in queer and LGBTQ studies may be less frequently reviewed in the core disciplinary journals represented in this corpus.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings show that academic book reviews serve as an expert evaluative genre which disciplinary communities (re)produce professional values and identities. As opposed to functioning strictly as synopses of academic discourse, book reviews become the loci for stance and evaluation as well as ideological position. The comparison of History and Law reviews shows that disciplinary epistemologies are realised linguistically through patterned lexical and phraseological options, revealing how genre conventions encode the communicative goals and valuation systems of academic communities (Bhatia, 2017; Hyland, 2004).

In History book reviews, the prevalence of keywords related to diversity, race and gender can be taken as evidence of the discipline's longstanding commitment to interpretive enquiry and narrative recovery. The phraseological structures that focus on voice, experience and identity frame the reviews as sites of renegotiating power dynamics, cultural production and social memory. These evaluative practices perform a disciplinary identity that is underwritten by critical historiography and reflexive interpretation, where scholarly authority is constructed through empathetic engagement with marginalized voices and historically situated analysis.

The Law book review is, in stark contrast, a model of how to engage procedural reasoning, institutional responsibility and policy-based critique. This is manifested in the use of keywords like *indigenous*, *migrant*, *refugee* and *asylum* applied within phraseological frames which foreground rights, legal frameworks, compliance and reform. These patterns of evaluation are how legal expertise is performed as one (normatively) evaluates statutes, case law, and governance structures. Law reviews thus function as discursive interfaces between academic scholarship and real-world legal practice, aligning evaluative commentary with contemporary societal and institutional concerns.

Despite these disciplinary differences, there is also considerable overlap between History and Law. Keywords such as *minority*, *marginalized*, *colonialism*, *postcolonial* and *indigeneity* occur at broadly similar frequencies in both corpora, pointing to shared concerns with social exclusion and the continuing effects of colonialism. However, concordance analysis shows that these overlapping keywords are not necessarily framed in the same way. In History reviews, *minority* and *marginalized* are more often associated with the recovery of excluded voices and the reinterpretation of historical narratives, whereas in Law they tend to occur in discussions of rights, legal protection, and access to justice. A similar distinction can be seen with *colonialism*, *postcolonial* and *indigeneity*: History tends to approach these themes through historical interpretation and the reassessment of colonial narratives, while Law more often relates them to legal institutions, sovereignty, constitutional recognition, and reform. Thus, similar frequencies do not necessarily indicate similar disciplinary treatment. Rather, the overlapping keywords reveal shared social and ethical concerns that are interpreted through the distinct epistemological and evaluative traditions of History and Law.

These findings highlight academic book reviews as an important site of interdisciplinary interaction. As a flexible and dialogic form of academic writing, book reviews create space for negotiating, and at times crossing, disciplinary boundaries. In this sense, they support intellectual exchange across fields while still preserving disciplinary distinctiveness. Reviews therefore do more than reflect intra-disciplinary values; they also contribute to the broader discursive negotiation of research contributions and shared social concerns (Hyland, 2000; Junqueira, 2013).

Methodologically, this study extends existing work on genre and discourse by moving beyond conventional analyses of rhetorical structure and incorporating corpus-based techniques, hierarchical clustering and heatmap visualisation. These methods make it possible to identify

thematic patterns in a systematic, scalable, and replicable way, offering a clearer basis for comparing disciplinary tendencies (Römer, 2010). By focusing on the distribution and prominence of minority themes, the study also draws attention to the thematic organisation of disciplinary discourse, an area that has received less attention than evaluative stance or rhetorical moves (Ferris, 2019; Sinclair, 2004).

The findings also contribute to research on evaluative discourse in academic reviewing. Previous studies have shown that book reviews generally display a positive evaluative bias and that reviewing practices vary across disciplines and languages (Ang & He, 2025; Cheng, 2014; Hamdan et al., 2016; Liu & Zhu, 2024). This study shows that even within broadly positive evaluative environments, disciplinary differences remain striking. These differences are visible not only in how evaluation is expressed but also in which social concerns are foregrounded, revealing the ideological investments and disciplinary priorities that shape academic reviewing.

At the same time, the analysis points to several thematic gaps. Issues related to LGBTQ identities, disability, and more explicit intersectional categories remain relatively limited in both the History and Law corpora. This pattern is consistent with wider concerns about the uneven incorporation of marginalized perspectives into academic discourse (Breisach, 2007; Deo, 2019; Vassileva, 2022). If book reviews are to realise their full potential as spaces for inclusivity, critical reflection, and institutional change, such imbalances need greater attention.

Overall, this study shows that academic book reviews are not marginal to scholarly communication. Rather, they play an important role in shaping thematic priorities, organising intellectual debate, and responding to broader social change. By combining a clear theoretical focus with a transparent and replicable corpus-based methodology, the study offers a fuller understanding of the book review genre and suggests useful directions for future research.

Several limitations should also be acknowledged. Because the study focuses only on History and Law, the findings cannot be readily generalised to other disciplinary contexts. Future research could extend this work to additional fields and adopt longitudinal designs to trace how thematic emphases shift over time (Liu & Zhu, 2024; Vassileva, 2022). More detailed qualitative work, including close concordance analysis, phraseological profiling, and rhetorical analysis, would also deepen our understanding of how minority themes are negotiated in disciplinary discourse (Martin & White, 2005; Römer, 2010). Greater attention should also be given to marginalized and intersectional issues, especially LGBTQ identities, to better understand why such perspectives remain underrepresented in mainstream academic discussion. Finally, given the role of book reviews in shaping disciplinary dialogue and identity, academic institutions may need to reconsider how this genre is valued within systems of scholarly evaluation.

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