# No Place Like Home
# Analyzing Discursive Constructions of 'Home' in Canadian Mainstream Newspaper Coverage of the Elsipogtog Protest

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# No Place Like Home

# INTRODUCTION

'One man's imagined community is another man's political prison'

Appadurai (1949)

In 2009, the provincial government of New Brunswick signed a license agreement with Texas-

Discourses are instruments of privilege for dominant class factions and those with the power to impose their own forms of knowledge and social realities. Indeed, they are 'capable of producing real effects without any apparent expenditure of energy' (Bourdieu, 1990: 170), and the naturalisation of specific imaginations of 'home' as a nation-wide virtue only serves to legitimise and reinforce existing power relations. Foucault's exposition on the obstacles of prison transformation (Foucault, in Smart, 1995: 323-325) is applicable to Canadian mainstream newspaper's discourses of the home and nation. Although explicit utterances of colonialist nationalism have long fallen out of common custom in Canada, ideas of the home

construct both facts and fictions in a given society through mediated channels. In this respect, mainstream Canadian newspapers hold considerable clout, as they serve both as the prime disseminators of scripts of power relations and in large part are responsible for determining their basic forms. The production of power and knowledge constructed through discourses can be witnessed in the construction of the notion of 'home' prevalent in the Canadian imagination where discourses and characteristics of the nation have not become polyvocal, legitimizing the denial of alternative discourses through symbolic violence and crystallised power relationships.

## HEGEMONY

Similar to Foucault's view of discourse, Gramsci's concept of hegemony is one of power constructed through symbolic and ideological domination, rather than physical or coercive means (Gramsci, 1971). Thompson (1984) defines ideology as 'meaning in the service of power...[including] presuppositions that generally figure as presuppositions in texts' (Ibid:

and Robertson, 2011), demonstrating how securely the notion of 'home' is rooted in the Canadian 'common sense'.

## CANADIAN MAINSTREAM MEDIA

In terms of strategies of self-representation and mediated resistance, the Elsipogtog protest made considerable use of social media (namely Twitter (#Elsipogtog) and the Aboriginal People's Television Network (APTN)) to gain supporters, recruit activists, and mobilise grassroots Indigenous peoples in an effort to attain social and environmental justice. Nevertheless, despite the amplified message that social media affords activists, mainstream media[5] institutions maintain significant media power over Canadian imaginations of the home and nation[6].

The propaganda model of media power theorised by Herman and Chomsky (1988) asserts

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but a form of 'constitutional patriotism' (2001: 74) reinforced through banal[8] practices such as pledging allegiance to a national flag or promoting homeland glorification (Billig, 1999: 38). However, whether the notion of home is primordial or socially constructed is perhaps irrelevant, in light of Anderson's (1986) critique that emphasises that 'true' communities do not exist, per se. According to Anderson (1986) 'communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity or genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined' (Ibid: 6). In the context of the Elsipogtog protests, the style in which the Canadian home has been discursively constructed in mainstream newspapers suggests there is an inextricable link between imagining the nation and Indigenous exclusion.

## DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS OF HOME SECURITY

Mainstream news discourses provide one of the channels t

## HOME AS POLITICAL EXCLUSION

If any power has been able to exert itself, it is because it has been recognized and accepted as legitimate in some quarters (Mouffe, 2009). The notion of 'home' can be said to be a form of symbolic and political violence because 'every consensus [of home] exists as a temporary result of a provisional hegemony' (Mouffe, 2009: 756), as maintenance of power necessitates othering and exclusion (Baumann, 2004). The political hazards of a discourse of 'home' transmitted through mainstream media stems from the fact that it works to legitimate majority interests while silencing, marginalising, and politically excluding minority subjectivities. Categories of 'majority' and 'minority' present in liberal social thought produce what Appadurai (2006) calls the 'anxiety of incompleteness', which is concealed in the project of national purity (Ibid: 8). The majority's fear and rage toward minority groups is owing to the fact that no modern nation, however multicultural it may claim to be, is 'free of the idea that its national sovereignty is built on some sort of ethnic genius' (Appadurai, 2006: 3), and that minority groups 'exacerbate [national] uncertainties and produce new incentives for cultural purification' (Appadurai, 2006: 7). As Said (1979) argues, discourses of the 'self' and 'other' are necessary to an imagined, national ethnos, the final resource by which it may exercise some degree control in an increasingly globalised world. Canadian mainstream newspapers, as sites of significant resources of media power

conflictual consensus[10] (Ibid: 756), allowing for a temporary cessation of hostilities in lieu of a complete abandonment of opposing perspectives.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This dissertation undertakes to critically analyse Canadian discourses of 'home' in mainstream newspaper articles pertaining to the Elsipogtog protest. Where prior studies have largely been confined to considerations of historic coercion, protest movements, and colonial reconciliation efforts, the present study aims to uncover tensions in the construction

peoples as possessing significant agency without adequately considering the influence of dominant structures (Hank, 2009). 'Rational' mainstream discourses of 'home' favour particular power establishments and exclude discourses of those deemed 'other', whose own voice is deemed 'irrational' and therefore unfit for inclusion (Foucault, 1971). Although individuals are always in 'the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising power' (Foucault, 1971: 89), mainstream institutions produce ideological effects by 'concealing the function of division beneath the function of communication' (Bourdieu, 1990: 167), thereby legitimising hierarchical distinctions 'by forcing all other cultures (designated as sub-cultures) to define themselves by their distance from the dominant culture' (Ibid: 167). Silencing and muzzling agonistic discourse is se s-2 ( ) -41-2 (- (n)-3 (r)t -2 (e) 5 (lu1 (g) 76 (c)7 (o) -

significant influences of the construction of the Canadian home and nation. As of 2015, Canada's newspaper circulation stood at '5.1 million copies' per day and '30.4 million copies' per week (Newspapers Canada, 2016), which demonstrates that print media continueees1 2  (m3 (m) -6 (e

ETHICS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Although a valuable methodology for the research question posed in the present study, CDA

descriptions of 'us' versus 'them', descriptions of national community, descriptions and/or omissions of Canada's history of colonialism, and descriptions of resistance. A sample of coded articles can be found in Appendix A.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents findings on the discourse of 'home' in Canadian mainstream newspapers regarding the Elsipogtog protest, and is divided into three themes: home constructed through 'othering', discourses of security, and home through historical amnesia and the silencing of counter-

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(Ibid: 5), which in turn, signifies violent behavioural characteristics. However, the Euro-Canadian 'warrior' contrasts with that of Indigenous 'warriors' who uphold a position of 'ideological commitment to defend land and communities from physical invasion by outside forces' (Alfred and Lowe, 2005: 8), purely utilizing violence as a last alternative to national protection. The dissemination of Indigenous discourse removed from its socially specific context serves to propagate understandings of Indigenous peoples as a threat to the security of the Canadian home, framing them as barbaric, violent 'others'.

*Extract 10*

Southwestern Energy has been and will continue to work closely with local authorities and community leaders to conduct our operations safely and responsibly, and in full compliance with the law of the country and province.

-*The Chronicle Herald*, October 18, 2013

Despite the claims in multiple mainstream articles that Elsipogtog Nation is made up of 'violent environmental activists', and that the protests were illegitimate because fracking

and form our opinions based on as wide a range of perspectives possible' (Ibid: 1) in order to expose ourselves to counter-narratives and underlying issues that reject homogenising national narratives. Vital to this is an acknowledgement of the abuses conferred on

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