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Harperist Discourse: Creating a Canadian “Common Sense” and Shaping Ideology Through Language

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MSc in Politics and Communication

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Harperist Discourse: Creating a Canadian “Common Sense” and Shaping Ideology through Language

Mashoka Maimona

ABSTRACT

Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s government has been subject to press scrutiny for aggressive negative branding campaigning, abusing the prorogation procedure (as recently as August 2013), restraining the access-to-information system, and limiting governmental transparency; however, there is little academic research conducted on how the political leader exploits discourse to manufacture a homogenous imagined community (Anderson 1983) in the reflection of his party’s ideology and preferences — creating a common national “common sense” and “naturalised” conception of reality (see Hall, 1988; Fairclough, 1995).

This dissertation responds to that academic deficit; by employing multi-method Critical Discourse Analysis combining Fairclough, van Dijk, and Wodak’s techniques, the analyst explores the discursive strategies the Harper government adopts to reproduce its ideology, value system, and interpretation of history through discourse and rhetoric — by combining a familiarising tone with an authoritarian discourse to concurrently reassure and discipline the audience. The analyst uncovered several themes and motifs in the rigorous analysis of the seven official speech acts by Harper and two of his close cabinet ministers (James Moore and Jason Kenney): Harperist discourse underscores a reverence for traditional British institutions, fascination for a national community uncontaminated by the toxic influence of crime, and includes a strong undercurrent of nostalgia for the colonial past.

INTRODUCTION

In 1997, Stephen Harper gave a speech to an American think tank in Montreal slamming Canada for being a “European welfare state” and praising his Republican American neighbours. These words resurfaced years later, in the wake of the 2006 federal election campaign; Harper won that election to become prime minister for the first time and “naturally liberal”¹ Canada’s first conservative² leader in thirteen years. Since then, the Conservative Party leader has won two more elections, including a four-year majority mandate in 2011. The modern incarnation of Canada’s centre-right party is the byproduct of a shotgun coalition between the ‘Red Tory’ Progressive Conservative, far-right Reform, and Canadian Alliances parties in 2003. The current prime minister reached out to the fragmented conservative base in the country to incrementally weave together a feasible, albeit tightly disciplined marriage. He campaigns as a political outsider from Western Canada who seeks to reform a corrupt political landscape from years of Liberal Party dominance and restore Canada’s “lost” national identity (Del Mastro, 2011).³

There have been extensive assessments of Stephen Harper’s centralisation of power within the Prime Minister’s Office, cabinet, and the bureaucratic arms of the federal government, with a barrage of media and expert commentary labeling Canada’s twenty-second prime minister a “control freak” and “dictator” for padlocking Parliament (Savoie, 1999; Flanagan, 2009; Martin, 2010; Nadeau, 2011). They cite the Harper government’s misuse of the prorogation procedure, clamping down on the access-to-information system by restricting government documentation and activity to the media and the public, scrupulous information vetting and obfuscation of facts, ramming multiple “omnibus bills” through the House of Commons without adequate critique and open debate, and a permanent negative branding campaign against his political opponents (ibid). This empirical research addresses the deficit of scholarly analysis on “connections between the use of language and the exercise of power” — specifically analysing the use of language and discourse in the Harper government to maintain control, reproduce social ideology, reshape values, and frame a dominant “common sense” (Fairclough, 1995: 54). The press, opposition parties, and academics have slammed

¹ The Liberal Party of Canada carried the title of Canada’s “natural governing party” in the 20th century, a centrist party that dominated Canadian politics for more than a century.

² The previous small-c ‘conservative’ leader was Progressive Conservative Brian Mulroney (1984-1993).

³ The prime minister’s parliamentary undersecretary Dean Del Mastro’s press release (2011) speaks of “strengthening Canada’s military tradition” to restore a “lost” sense of identity. The reinstatement of the colonial era titles of the Canadian Armed Forces (as outlined in the release) ignited a national debate about Harper’s attempt to institute a military-driven “Conservative” patriotism.

Harper's conservative philosophy, but the public has given a general stamp of approval to his vision for Canada and policy agenda by voting him into power in three consecutive federal elections (2006, 2008, and 2011). All parties in office "shape preferences" to borrow the words of Robert Dahl (1961: 164) — to incrementally entrench their ideology as public philosophy; to what extent are Harper and his ministers constructing a "naturalised" imagined community (Anderson, 1983) in the reflection of the party's socially conservative ideology, thus creating "reality" as an effect (Hall, 1982: 75; Fairclough, 1995: 44)?

Antonio Gramsci's intellectual legacy describes hegemony as power achieved through consensus and the construction of a "common sense" that appears "natural and legitimate," rather than by force (Fairclough, 1995, 2003; Gramsci, 1971). Since politics has an "inherently marketing character" based on consumerism (Scammell, 1999: 722), Harperist politics could indeed be a populist strategy that the Tories (as the Conservatives are colloquially referred to) exploit as a "market-oriented party" (MOP) that tailors policy to fit voter needs. With waves of newcomers (Canada accepts 250,000 immigrants annually) disproportionately from more socially conservative areas of the world (such as South and East Asia, countries with strong family values and less regard for individual rights), it can be argued that large segments of immigration population support socially conservative goals. However, academic research and media coverage demonstrate that Members of Parliament (MP) policy positions are less influenced by constituency demands, with party loyalty and discipline shaping MP social conservatism (see Eagles, 2011). It becomes a herculean task to measure effect on the voter-consumer and intent of the party brass, and how the latter are manipulating and framing Canadian common sense and nationalism as a persuasive "sales-oriented party" (SOP) that "make people want what it offers" (Lees-Marshment and Lilleker, 2005: 122; Lees-Marshment, 2001: 11); therefore, focusing the research on discourse manipulation is a nuanced, effective method to study the construction of meaning in text (Saussure, 2005), which is dialectically linked to society. As evidenced through speeches by Harper and his "court government" (Savoie, 1999, 2008), the Conservative Party employ discursive strategies to produce and reinforce national unity by invoking a shared imagined history (e.g. by marginalising dissenting members such as the "ivory tower" of academics, framing common enemies such as lawless "dangerous" criminals). This study does not analyse the political environment of the three-party system in Canada's House of Commons and the fall of the once-dominant Liberal Party, not does it investigate audience or public reaction to Conservative platform and rhetoric; instead, the focus is political discourse analysis of official party speeches.

The methodological centrepiece of this dissertation is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), combining Norman Fairclough, Teun Van Dijk (see his analysis of Tony Blair's speech justifying the Iraq War: 2009), and Ruth Wodak's (see her case study of FPÖ petition 'Austria First': 2001) detailed schools of analysis for a tight but thorough technical model. Fairclough equates discourse to ideology, with political discourse having the ability to "change the mind of others in one's own interests" to reproduce unequal power relations and construct social identities (Van Dijk, 1993: 254; Fairclough, 1995; Phillips and Jørgensen, 2006). Pervasive spin doctoring and message control, along with the growing number of communications consultants within Harper's administration, are indicative of the manipulation of language and demands CDA, a method that investigates linguistic subterfuge and uncloaks the smokescreen of jargon. This study's text-based samples of political speech were harvested from official government and Conservative Party websites. My interpretative authority, coming from a theoretical and professional field as a journalist with a strong motivation for maintaining neutrality (and potential pitfall of influencing, shaping, or resisting elite-sponsored frames; see Entman 2003, 2004) and a political communications scholar, is unique and predisposed to a particular approach to analysis. As Stubbs critiques CDA, "[I]deology cannot be read off texts in a mechanical way" (1997). As an analyst, it is critical to avoid reading meaning *into* texts by searching for "items that seem to fit the case [the researcher] may want to prove" (Deacon *et al.*, 2007: 139). With a focus on ideology, language, and the manufacturing of nationalism, this paper intends to bring political communications in the Harper administration within the purview of discourse analysis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind. George Orwell

The scope of this research necessitates a multi-dimensional deictic and literature review that seeks to draw links between ideology, power, nationalism and language, and the discipline of political communications. This chapter seeks to outline the key, relevant concepts and theories to help answer specific, refined research questions in the eventual analysis. Faircloughian application in the research agenda goes beyond his methodological framework, including his own political analysis *New Labour, New Language* as an exemplar for theoretical background (Stuart Hall's *The Politics of Thatcherism* is another strong case study for methodological and theoretical reflection).

Ideology

Ideology is a system of representation that is “profoundly unconscious” (Althusser, 1969), thus facilitating the ascent and diffusion of ideological dominance, or “hegemony” (Gramsci, 1971). While descriptors “conservative,” “classical liberal,” or “socialist” are established *conscious* ideologies of political parties, the oversaturation of a more nuanced politicised social ideology in everyday language, national symbols, and institutions can become “naturalised” and thereby *unconscious*. To Theodor Adorno, whose work is situated within a Marxist legacy, liberal ideology cannot be rejected as “false consciousness” because it enjoys a measure of autonomy while tacitly critiquing the existing suppression of freedom as ideology masquerading as ersatz reality (see *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, *Minima Moralia*, and *Negative Dialectics*). He identifies ideology’s “pretension to correspond to reality” (1967: 32) as problematic rather than the existence of ideology itself. The problem is further compounded by the idea that “identity is the primal form of ideology” (1973: 148); therefore, ideology is an engine for assimilative identity construction. Stuart Hall’s analysis of Thatcherism drew attention to global capitalism’s post-Fordism shift to the right in a new form of political common sense, scrutinising cultural politics of postmodernism while downplaying economic factors in deregulation. While there can be a multiplicity of ideologies articulated in an arena of struggling interests and power elites, political language by the government in power becomes the legitimated dominant discourse, is central to decision-making (and non-decision-making power), and can be manipulated to shape voter preferences, perceptions, and the existing order of things.

Intertwining ideology and discourse

Ideology permeates everyday discourse as (un)consciousness, common sense, and reality. While ideology is outlined in the preceding section, discourse is defined in this theoretical framework as the linguistic and semiotic language that organizes social relations and how participants understand and experience reality. While Purvis and Hunt (1993) view ideology as *external* to lived experience, this study focuses on the blurring between ideology and discourse — the indistinguishable difference between social relations as mediated through discourse and the ideology determining the discursive nature of lived experience. Noam Chomsky views language as separate from political influence and enjoying cognitive freedom (1975: 69; see 2004). Jürgen Habermas contends that language can be “ideological” and a “medium of domination and social force... legitimis[ing] relations of organized power” (1977: 259). Academics Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe fissured the distinctive but overlapping concepts of discourse and ideology; they outlined the Foucauldian macro-textual approach of

“discourse-as-representation” (1985), focusing on the “meanings, representations or ideologies embedded in the text, and not so much on the language used” (in Carpentier and De Cleen, 2007: 277). While Laclau and Mouffe are in accordance with Foucault in interpreting discourse as distinct from ideology, cultural theorist Stuart Hall, among other Frankfurt School and British Cultural School proponents, was inspired by Louis Althusser’s notion of “interpellation.” Althusser contended that we are trapped as interpellated subjects in an ideological existence in which ideology becomes our reality. Hall extended Althusser’s study by entwining the concepts of ideology, discourse, and hegemony from a Gramscian perspective. The Birmingham School scholar advanced the idea that discourse production has a “complex structure of dominance” that is *imprinted* by hegemonic power struggles in which meaning and reality are constructed for wholesale consumption. Reality is constantly mediated through language as certain codes are “naturalised” as dominant. To Fairclough, ideologies appear as “implicit assumptions in texts” that contribute to “producing or reproducing unequal relations of power, relations of domination” (1995: 14). The exercise of power in a modern society is achieved through ideology, which is pervasively present in language, being the “primary medium of social control and power” and the “prime means of manufacturing consent” (Fairclough, 1989: 3, 4). As language is a social practise — interdependent on society rather than external to it — all texts and institutionalised speech acts are discursive constructions of ideology and meaning production. If politics “consists in the disputes and struggles which occur in language and over language” (Fairclough, 2001: 19) and political discourse is a “form of argumentation” (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012: 1), then the political arena is a boxing ring in which parties wrestle to assert their ideology over their opponents’ versions of truth.

The “opacity” of discourse can subconsciously legitimise power relations and naturalise hierarchies (Fairclough, 1989: 41). According to Fairclough, ideological common sense is “in the service of sustaining unequal relations of power” (1989: 84). Van Dijk outlines the embedded hegemonic power hold of discourse as “stripped of its ideological tone and endowed instead with a ‘common sense’ value” (Van Dijk, 2008: 34). The demarcations between ideology, power, and discourse blur as political forces craft class consciousness and common sense with their ideological paintbrush. Discourse is “inherently political,” write Howarth *et al* (2000: 4), involving the “construction of antagonisms and the drawing of political frontiers between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’.” Carpentier adds to the debate of antagonistic speech, albeit within a framework of political war rhetoric, by asserting that an “us versus them” narrative defines the very “horizon of our thought” by excluding other discourses (2007: 2). This study will investigate the antagonistic elements of Harperist rhetoric and probe the existence of an agenda that represents certain groups as societal

outcasts and eliminates particular voices from the dominant discourse, thus reordering the general culture of a Canadian “national people” (for example, the “expert” intelligentsia or “violent” criminals).

Political discourse

The analysis of political discourse dates back to public orators in the ancient Greek and Roman empires, wherein language became a high art form as rhetoric and was mastered to persuade followers. Over the latter half of the twentieth century, Frankfurt School and Birmingham School scholars, such as Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Jürgen Habermas, Stuart Hall, Pierre Bourdieu, and Raymond Williams, as well as linguists Noam Chomsky and Jacques Derrida, connected the lines between language, cultural critique, social relations, and political power. The proliferation of public relations personnel and spin in politics, with George Bush and Tony Blair’s 9/11 speeches as stark case studies, have re-ignited a wave of political discourse analysis to expose deception and uncover power relations.

Political communication has been identified as an “interactive process that constructs reality for voters” (Swanson, 1991: 11). Politicians in a democratically elected government are not homogeneous elites who have unchecked power “influencing, shaping, and determining the wants” of the public (Lukes, 2005: 27); they also respond to voters, lobby organisations, interest groups, political donors, and external events. But if politics are the disagreements and contestations over language (see Fairclough, 1989: 23), then the power lies in the hands of the language (or meaning) producers — what Holzschneider identified as both “power in discourse” and “power over discourse” (2005). Politicians can shape the *frame* of discourse; as Wodak outlines (2001: 68), parties have the ability to affect legislation, influence public opinion, market their political brand, develop consent, manage dissent, and govern as well as execute.

Managerial government to Fairclough is “partly managing language” (2000: vii). Paul Chilton cites Hague *et al* to describe how political decisions are “authoritative” as the communicative process involves force or the threat of force, such as the withholding of privileges, fines, or incarceration (2004: 4). He asserts the act of politics is “predominantly constituted in language” (2004: 6). As the privileged producers of a nation’s dominant discourse, albeit with existing counter-discourses in a democratic society, politicians as elected officials can imbue their speech acts with institutionalised authority, evidence, and a semblance to the truth, thus “legitimising” their representations (Chilton, 2004: 23) and “manufacturing consent” (Herman and Chomsky, 1988). In his dystopic volume *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, George Orwell

fictitiously accounts thought-controlling language — a totalitarian linguistic and psychological power that offers the inverse condition of Habermas's utopian "ideal speech situation"; the Western status quo is likely in the centre of this spectrum.

Borrowing the Marxist thesis of "false consciousness," it becomes evident how politicians can act as gatekeepers to limit or censor specific voices, knowledge, values, and symbols, and promote others, thereby establishing "taken-for-granted background knowledge" and naturalised ideological representations, or "common sense" (Fairclough, 1995: 28). Politicians can make epistemological moral claims in their discourse and thus set the morality barometer for subjects. Fairclough (1995) points to the manipulative use of the inclusive pronoun "we" in a politician's speech as a ploy of claiming spurious solidarity, thus outlining the intersection between political communication, discourse, and hegemonic control as the audience is "passivated." The passivation through the ideological construction of a uniform national identity by hegemonic forces is problematic and calls for nuanced scholarly understanding.

National identity and language

Language, national and political identity, and social belonging are closely intertwined, as evidenced through the *Volk* ("the people" or "the nation") and the *Volkssprache* ("the people's speech") in the construction of the nineteenth-century German Reich (see Johann Gottlieb Fichte's *Reden an die deutsche Nation*, or *Addresses to the German Nation*). The nation is notably dubbed an "imagined political community" (Anderson, 1983) and nationalism "invents nations where they do not exist" (Gellner, 1964: 169). According to Michel Foucault, the tapestry of nationalism is a "discursive formation" of ideologies (Calhoun, 1997: 3), continually engineered, fabricated, and reproduced. Wodak *et al* too view nationalism as a discursive work-in-progress (2009: 4). To Michael Billig, the "national community can only be imagined by also imagining communities of foreigners" (1995: 78), which calls for the inclusion and exclusion of people in this *national community*. Elias Canetti writes that national ideologies are "peculiar to each nation" (1984: 197) with a myriad of denominators and hyphenated options (e.g. parliamentary liberal democracy, democratic socialism, etc.) defining countries.

Language is part of collective and individual identity construction, a dialectic relationship that implies inclusionary and exclusionary processes (Wodak, 2012: 216). As previously discussed, identity — individual and as a communal nation — is the 'prototype of ideology' (Adorno, 1973: 151); this extends to narratives of national belonging. Benedict Anderson

associated the decline of Latin with a 'larger process in which the sacred communities integrated by old sacred languages were gradually fragmented' (1983: 19).

Political language serves to classify a loose cluster of subjects into a single union of citizens as one territorially bound nation under one government and one discourse of citizenship. Stuart Hall boils down the national meaning-production as a political 'system of cultural representation' (1992: 292). In his analysis of the "authoritarian populism" of Thatcherism in *Hard Road to Renewal*, he cautions that 'however natural [common sense] appears, it always has a structure, a set of histories which are traces of a past as well as intimations of a future philosophy' (1988: 8).

National common sense is therefore a contrived identity that 'holds together a specific social group [and] influences moral conduct and the direction of will', while limiting contradictory states of consciousness and producing moral and political passivity (Hall, 1988: 8; Gramsci, 1971: 333). This 'imagined community' is an imposed sense of false consciousness with symbols, histories, and languages fashioned, endorsed, and mythicized by political elites — what Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) call 'invented tradition'. The classification of nationalism as a comprehensive, distinct monolithic ideology has been criticised by academics such as Alan Finlayson (1998) and Michael Freeden (1998): the former sees nationalism as the 'bedrock out of which political ideologies define themselves' (100); Freeden describes it as a 'thin-centred ideology' or amalgamation of different ideologies that result in a power struggle that 'enforces the selection, prioritization and combination of certain political concepts and elimination of others' (750). Therefore, while resistant ideologies may exist, political parties in office — who have 'power over discourse' — can exploit language to create meaning and normalise a coherent, dominant 'common sense' by colonising the bedrock of nationalism.

Canadian Nationalism and National Identity

Canadian national identity is routinely the subject of quips such as Marshall McLuhan's, 'Canada is the only country in the world that knows how to live without an identity' (Kostash, 1996: 323). It resists a clear definition, budging only to be described as a historical founding pact between English and French immigrants and their indigenous trading partners that has evolved to accommodate multifarious ethnicities, religions, and linguistic groups; this mosaic of constituent nationalities have led to constitutional crises through the nation's history. Historians view Canada as a multi-national federalism (Taylor, 1993; Resnick, 1994; Kymlicka, 1998), including Aboriginal Canadians, immigrants, and a vocal French Canada

with a strong sense of self-determination, evidenced through Quebec's near-secession in a sovereignty-based referendum in 1995.

It is no secret that Harper and his Conservatives are keen on establishing a distinctive sense of being *Canadian*, a uniform national ideology — one that is organically based on nostalgia of the monarchy and its former military exploits, as seen through the dramatic 'Fight for Canada' advertisement paid for by the government commemorating the War of 1812 (Canadian Heritage, 2012), on top of tens of millions spent on celebrating a military culture, and the addition of the 'royal' prefix to Canada's armed forces (see Taber, 2011). Canadian national identity has always been contrasted with its more patriotic, trendsetting southern neighbour the United States, with the creation of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) in the 1920s as an example to counter undue American cultural expansion and preserve Canadian interests. Historians (Ian McKay and Jamie Swift, 2012; Scott Staring, 2013) have documented that long-standing Liberal Party symbols such as multiculturalism, peacekeeping and diplomacy, and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms are being replaced by the Harper Tories' symbols, as evidenced by the republication of *Discover Canada*, the official citizenship study guide. Staring (2013) writes,

The aim of the Harper government is not so much to *conserve* Canada's existing traditions, but to leapfrog backwards in time in hope of resurrecting long-vanished ones. From a genuinely conservative perspective there is always something dangerous about the desire to return to the past in this way. Such ventures are usually inspired by romantic ideals that are at best inchoate, and at worst tip over into a confused and destructive opposition to what exists.

Hall described Thatcherism as a form of 'regressive modernization — the attempt to "educate" and discipline the society into a particularly regressive version of modernity by, paradoxically, dragging it backwards through an equally regressive version of the past' (1988: 2). Contested manipulation of competing mythologies in the pursuit of a political agenda is as old as political debate, stretching back to ancient Greeks Plato, Polybius, and Parmenides. Stephen Harper is far from being the first prime minister attempting to recast Canadian history through partisan lens⁴, with former leader Pierre Elliott Trudeau tabling policies 40 years ago that resonate with national identity today. Multicultural and bilingual policies as national historical legacies were Trudeau's pan-national pet projects joining English and French Canada with incoming immigrants, as was the enactment of the 1982 Charter. His predecessor Lester P. Pearson's legacy was peacekeeping, universal health care, and the

⁴ As witnessed in multiples instances, for example: Canada's foreign affairs minister John Baird's decision to order business cards that eliminated the standard street address for his ministry headquarters, "Lester B. Pearson Building," the name of a former Liberal prime minister.

Canadian flag. Canadian prime ministers are criticised for enjoying more latitude in a centralised, tightly controlled executive, or 'court government,' than leaders in comparable advanced industrial democracies (Savoie, 1999; Simpson, 2001; Charlton and Barker, 2005; Dyck, 2010).

Canadian Conservatism and Harper's Conservative Party

As Ruth Wodak emphasizes in her four-level theory model (2001), a comprehensive discourse analysis is contingent on understanding the social and institutional variables and the broader sociopolitical and historical contexts. Bearing in the mind the limitations of space, this section provides a brief quarter-century overview of the fall of the Liberal Party of Canada and rise of the Conservatives under Stephen Harper.

The modern incarnation of the Conservative Party has its roots in the West; the four Western provinces — Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia — have strong rural, Christian Right constituencies. Western neoconservatives deserted the former Progressive Conservatives in 1987 to ally themselves with the Reform Party, a party that embraced social and fiscal conservatism and a reduced role of government. Harper mended the schism in 2003 and ran a tightly controlled, effective modern political campaign to win the 2006 federal election and threaten the Liberal Party of Canada's titular crown as the nation's 'natural governing party', leading government for nearly seven decades in the 20th century. Team Harper capitalised on a divided Liberal caucus, weakened by a series of uninspiring leaders⁵ and the stigma of the 'sponsorship scandal', and launched an aggressive communications assault against parliamentary opposition (Marland, 2005; Gidengil *et al.*, 2009).

As the precursor Reform Party of the 1990s, the Conservative Party was constrained by the homogenous ideological underpinnings of its far-right membership base. The Reform Party (which leading Canadian political scientist Rand Dyck calls a 'clone of the U.S. Republican Party'; see 2011: 222-223) began as a pledge to 'unite the right' targeting conservatives in Western Canada (mostly the province of Alberta), but soon evolved from its rural focus to cater to urban Canadians and immigrants during a decade-long permanent campaign under the banner of the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC). The Tories struck a balance between

⁵ Paul Martin (2003-2006) staged a coup against predecessor Jean Chrétien; after he lost the 2006 federal election to the Conservatives, francophone Stéphane 'Not a Leader' Dion (2007-2008) replaced him, followed by Michael Ignatieff, who disastrously battled the Tories' negative slogan 'He Didn't Come Back For You' (2008-2011).

the interests of specific segments of the electorate and internal party supporters without a radical ideological shift in their branding efforts (Paré and Berger, 2008). The CPC designed its communications strategy as a 'sales-oriented party' (Lilleker and Lees-Marshment, 2005: 9), with the motivation to persuade or manipulate, thus attempting to change voter preferences rather than giving them what they need or want. Harper concentrated power within his own hands through the 'personalisation of politics' (Harris, 2001; Lock and Harris, 1996): by associating the Tory government with his own image by rebranding the 'Government of Canada' as the 'Harper Government'⁶.

Stephen Harper is candid about his political role model: the Iron Lady, who 'defined contemporary conservatism', and whose philosophy he aspires to 'forever... unite the British and Canadian peoples' (Harper, 2013c). In line with Margaret Thatcher, Harper's brand of conservatism is a product of contradictory elements: a commitment to classical liberalism, which denounces social justice and government involvement in the lives of individuals, and an authoritarian inclination in promoting the state's interference in specific ideological issues (Lukes, 1973).

Roger Scruton describes a conservative as one who sees the bond of society as 'transcendent', recognizing the importance of allegiance, authority, traditions, and customs in the public realm (1980: 105). Traditional conservatism idealises a society dominated by longstanding institutions, based on faith and the family, with a strong moral order and continuity for customs. Canadian conservatism is similar to British conservatism, including: a populist appeal to 'ordinary people'; commitment to a law and order agenda; and deference to symbolic institutions such as the military and the monarchy. Similar to criticisms of Thatcherism, the Harper government exhibits a streak of authoritarian conservatism, or centralisation of the state, manifesting in areas such as the criminal justice system.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

As illustrated in the theoretical chapter, the conceptual framework of this dissertation builds on ideology, political discourse, political communications, and nationalism scholarship. The conceptual and methodological backbone of this dissertation is Critical Discourse Analysis, working under the fundamental assumption that discourse is constitutive of ideology — the dominant discourse, as shaped by the federal party in government, is ideologically

⁶ Harper's attempt to rebrand the "Government of Canada" to the "Harper Government" following the 2006 election was criticised as partisan misuse of government messaging and public resources (see Cheadle 2011).

manipulated through implicit and explicit speech acts to influence the societal “common sense” and nationalistic aims. Academic research on Stephen Harper’s Conservative Party discourse is sparse; the prime minister’s war room and political marketing strategies (Lees Marshment *et al.*, 2012), meta-management of the media and bureaucracy (Martin, 2010), and increasing centralisation of power have been subject to scholarly analysis, but his legacy to national identity and political discourse has been largely reported by mainstream columnists and pundits.

Canadian historian Ian McKay warns about the 'toxic rebranding' of Canada (McKay and Swift, 2012: xi) under an 'authoritarian' system, wherein 'the state takes it upon itself the permanent mobilisation of public opinion' and becomes the 'permanent organizer of a new hegemony' (McKay, 2011). His 2012 book explores how Harper and his Conservatives, along with right-wing historians, are militarising Canadian history, society, and foreign policy with their 'imperial policing'; his focus is on policy agenda, rather than political discourse and language.

Research question and objectives

This dissertation investigates how the Conservatives are asserting their influence over separate spheres in society, including law and order, culture, and history, through language and rhetoric. As the Thatcher Conservatives sought to replace the Labour Party’s post-war welfare Britain with a dominant pro-market common sense, Harper Conservatives are seeking to erase the Liberal legacy for a 'Tory-fied' history. Like Hall’s rigorous analysis of Thatcherism, this research explores 'authoritarian populism' and how political discourse, imparted from a hegemonic position of power, can cease being 'one of *them*' to a more disconcerting 'part of us' (1988: 6). The securing of an extended position of authority — specifically a Gramscian notion of hegemony — goes beyond ruling class domination and into securing a strategic license to conform society into a new historic project (Hall, 1988).

While the analysis critically probes official speeches by Conservative Party cabinet ministers and the prime minister to examine how the Tories use language to manufacture 'reality', the aim of the research is not to gauge audience response or resistance, as that necessitates a different project with quantitative and qualitative analysis of surveys, questionnaires, and ethnographic research. The aim is to analyse the discursive, hegemonic micro-processes of how Harperist rhetoric and discourse is manipulated to produce a new common sense and overhaul national symbols in Canadian society. While the macro-processes of sociocultural change is fleetingly visited, the focus of the empirical study is not how Harperisms are

reproduced and diffused into everyday use or the ramifications of a restructured dominant public discourse; it is the socio-political goals of the Harper administration and how the political discourse is produced — 'not whether they should have done it or not' (John Wilson, 1990: 15) or evaluating 'what is right or wrong' (Wodak, 2001: 65). Van Dijk explains how elites who control public discourse, agenda, and macro- and microstructures have more control over the minds of public through the formation of social representations (2006), so the issue becomes the thin line between discourse control and cognitive mind control — and manipulation against the best interests of dominated groups in society.

Considering these objectives, the fine-tuned research question proposes:

1. How are Stephen Harper and his closest cabinet ministers using language (*Harperist discourse*) to perpetuate ideological discourses and normalise a new Canadian “common sense” and value system?

The primary research focus is operationalised in two interrelated sub-groups for analytical clarity:

- i. What are key elements and general themes of official Harperist discourse?
- ii. What are the discursive and linguistic practises in these Harperist speech acts that seek to redraft Canadian symbols and refashion a new national identity?

Methodology and research design

This work builds on Norman Fairclough, Teun van Dijk, and Ruth Wodak's contributions to Critical Discourse Analysis, specifically the line between “rhetoric and reality” (Fairclough, 2000: 147) in political discourse, as well as Stuart Hall's own textual and thematic analysis of Thatcherism. While Fairclough's work on textual analysis largely serves as a tight technical and methodological model — which has been implemented into the multi-level CDA conducted on the speeches selected in this project — it also provides the discursive, theoretical background for approaching texts, separate to his sophisticated influence on the study of methodology. As van Dijk clarifies, CDA is not a monolithic, homogeneous school or paradigm of linguistic analysis (1993). CDA is a complex, multidisciplinary mechanism that traverses beyond method and the empirically observable to systematically probe how social and cultural 'practices, events and texts arise out of and are *ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power*; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships

between discourse and society is itself a factor *securing power and hegemony*' (Fairclough, 1993: 135, emphasis added).

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) gained ground as an interdisciplinary approach to study political language as a social, historical, and cognitive phenomenon, cemented as Critical Linguistics (CL) in the 1970s by earlier theorists Gunther Kress, Robert Hodge, and Roger Fowler, and heralded post-1980s by academics Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, Teun van Dijk, and Paul Chilton. As the theoretical chapter revealed, there is a symbiotic relationship between language and society, being “socially shaped and socially constitutive” (Fairclough, 1993: 134). Since CDA unmasks ideological power relations by investigating how identity and reality is constructed and naturalised through language, the methodology virtually chooses itself in this analysis to scrutinise official Harperist discourse and how it *shapes* and *is shaped by* society. A pilot project conducted in the spring of 2013 revised and polished the methodological framework by uncovering the holes and institutional biases in a Faircloughian school of CDA and suggesting a mixed model infusing van Dijk’s “socio-cognitive” framework (1993, 2001). As the previous trial run (Maimona, 2013) and literature review summarised, the twofold reasoning for this methodology is: 1) the study of discourse, ideology, nationalism, and political communications call for a qualitative research method; and 2) the interpretation of how the Harper administration is attempting to transform Canadian identity and manufacture reality requires a keen eye for context (as opposed to using evaluative categories to analyse statistical findings, thus overlooking intent).

The analytical framework applied in this project synthesises elements of Fairclough’s three-dimensional framework (1995): the processes of text production (micro-level), distribution (meso-level), and audience consumption (macro-level). Research objectives will deviate slightly from Fairclough’s more traditional Marxist approach in unearthing power relations and inequality (2001) to connect the Harper government’s textual production with its ideological nationalistic aims. Since the focus is not limited only to social hierarchies, the research tools also blend van Dijk and Wodak’s multidisciplinary approaches. The pilot run of an earlier adaptation of the research question recommended applying van Dijk’s socio-cognitive analytical framework to closely examine the *production* and *reception processes* of textual production in a wider social context, particularly the socially cognitive schemas that recreate stereotypes and exclusionary ideologies through discourse. While van Dijk incorporates the macro societal and micro textual (semantic, lexical, and rhetorical) contexts of CDA, he also infuses social cognition into his triangulated analytical framework: ideologies are '*both cognitive and social*', being '*abstract mental systems that organize... socially shared attitudes*' (1995: 18, emphasis in original). These socialised mental representations are

integral to this research as political discourse is almost always framed in a self-serving 'us versus them' ideologically dichotomised narrative. Political discourse, specifically Harperist Conservative discourse and ideology, can be readily organised into van Dijk's notion of group-schemata, through the implicit control of common sense and 'organiz[ing], monitor[ing] and control[ing] specific group attitudes' (1995:19) — in this case, the Canadian populace. As van Dijk describes the relevant social values of racists as focus on self-identity, self-superiority, self-primacy, self-privilege, and hence inequality, this study seeks to unveil the social values and symbols central to Harper's reign. In line with Fairclough's work on constitutive intertextuality, or interdiscursivity (1992), Wodak's discourse-historical method examines the synchronic and diachronic dimensions of textual production. Unlike Wodak's precondition, this study does not incorporate fieldwork or ethnographical research as the focus is on language production and ideology propagation, as opposed to consumption; it does, however, adopt elements of her discursive strategies (such as argumentation, framing/discourse representation, predication, and referential/nomination; see 2001: 63-94) in the hybrid analytical tools.

In analysing governing political parties' hegemonic hold of dominant structures and meaning production, critical discourse analysts must avoid making overly deterministic assessments of texts and society. In this investigation, citizen, media, and academic agency and resistance are underemphasized because the focus is on official discourse production and macro social contexts; while counter discourses are part and parcel of a democracy, the texts concerned are representative of the dominant political discourse.

A charge against CDA is the individual researcher seeping his or her own biases into the interpretations and conducting partial readings of the text (Widdowson, 1995). The analyst takes cautious steps to avoid infusing her own subjectivities as a professional journalist who has witnessed first-hand the steps taken by Stephen Harper in limiting open and transparent communications in the executive and legislative branches of government. In order to strengthen the validity of the results and transparently communicate the methodological process, a meticulous analytical framework is provided (see Appendix B).

Selection of data, design of research tools, and analytical paradigm

Similar to CDA being the naturally fitting research method, the selected speech samples were also unambiguous choices, guided by the terminology and themes each text contained. As previously stated, the general themes of focus were crime, justice, law and order, and deference to traditional institutions such as the monarchy and the military. The researcher

laboriously sifted through hundreds of speeches and statements on official government and Conservative Party websites (specifically the Prime Minister of Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces, Canadian Heritage, Department of Justice, Public Safety Canada, and cabinet ministers' personal websites) to assemble a sample of seven speeches that exhibited one or more of these themes. Stephen Harper gave four of the speeches, while the other three were delivered by two of his closest, most loyal ministers (Wells, 2011) in portfolios that shape national rhetoric, imagery, and symbols — Citizenship and Immigration Minister Jason Kenney and James Moore as Canadian Heritage Minister. Both of these departments experienced a changing of the guard in a recent cabinet shuffle as both Kenney and Moore moved onto more lofty roles in government, but for the purposes of clarity, this paper will refer to the pair as the existing ministers in their former portfolio.⁷ Since Harper has been prime minister for seven years, there is no dearth in material to choose from: the selected texts demonstrate the duration of his tenure, with a speech dating back to his first year in office (July 2006) to the most recent delivered in June 2013. While there was a significant database of literature to examine, the scope of this dissertation demanded the thorough intertextual analysis of a small sample of speeches.

Four distinct yet overlapping themes were identified during the survey of the vast corpus of texts. For clarity's sake, the seven speeches were chosen to speak to these ideologies and motifs: the elimination of crime in 'safe streets and communities' (to borrow the title of Harper's omnibus crime bill), nostalgia for British institutions such as the monarchy in a *post-colonial* Canada, and a glorified militaristic history. Thus, 1) law and order/crime and justice; 2) the military and history; 3) the monarchy and history, and 4) nostalgia for lost institutions constitute the primary code, further dissected and interpreted through CDA to unravel how the Conservatives are reconstructing the Canadian common sense and introducing a new set of national symbols. A preliminary reading of the speeches produced a thematic guideline; subsequent analyses and annotations revealed interdiscursive ideologies and insights into *reality* versus *rhetoric* — into established Canadian identity and Conservative discourse about Canadian identity. Since discourse and ideology are correlated and entwined, the close textual analysis of the speeches and how they relate to the four motifs (each under a separate heading) will be explained in a synthesis of theory, method, and underlying macrocosmic themes. While the divided sections allow for uncluttered ease in

⁷ Citizenship and Immigration Canada minister recently switched from the veteran Jason Kenney (2008-2013) to Chris Alexander (assumed office July 15, 2013); Shelly Glover replaced former Canadian Heritage minister James Moore (2008-2013).

interpretation, it should be noted that they are interdependent and transition as connected elements of Harperist discourse.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Harperist discourse is the articulation of separate ideological elements in a traditional conservative philosophy that constitutes his vision for Canada — an antithetical version of the long-held Liberal Party vision, which had become the Canadian “common sense” and value system over the twentieth century. The analysis of the seven texts can be bracketed into four areas: a wholesome, crime-free society, history, the monarchy, and the military (the latter two traditional British institutions). The emerging themes are: 1) a nation indelibly tied to its colonial ancestry; 2) a move from being peacekeepers to a robust military power; and 3) a pure, law-abiding society based on communal values. The emphasis on generating a climate of fear and “us versus them” rhetoric is a form of “authoritarian populism” (Hall, 1979). Stuart Hall adopted the phrase in his original *Marxism Today* column, which re-appeared in his influential 1988 volume to describe an identifying pillar of Thatcherism, in which political rhetoric becomes a populist appeal to Tory values by targeting the “fears, the anxieties, the lost anxieties, of a people” (167). These ideological fears and fantasies become collective fears and fantasies as Canada becomes Harper’s imagined community similar to 1980s Thatcherite Great Britain — increasingly an “authoritarian law and order” society (Procter, 2004: 97). Like Thatcherism, Harperist politics represents a break from the Liberal-influenced status quo in the manifestation of a new social construct.

Militarising History and Nostalgia for Lost Institutions

Politicians have long evoked the nation as a unitary agent with intentions to rally citizens for their own ideological purposes. The repetitive reference to *Canadians*, the *Canadian people*, and *our country* presupposes a monolithic entity by uniting all citizens under one banner, with similar interests, opinions, and needs that are the sole mandate of Conservative politicians, thus concealing the actual supporters of these viewpoints. The abstract objectification and personification of the nation hides a complexity of viewpoints, nullifies opposing interests, and creates an impression of a shared, vested stake in the Canadian nation.

Metaphorical constructions, a routine and highly effective phenomenon in political rhetoric, can become widely accepted as conceptual descriptors of how we organise society and

structure reality (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Semino, 2008) — for example, the metonymic notion of *axis of evil* or America as the *land of freedom*. A conceptual metaphor substitutes a conscious ideology for an abstract image or ideal, thereby limiting the cognitive delineations between separate things. An unconscious system of metaphors can become deeply entrenched in the human mind to constitute reality.

James Moore extols, 'After 150 years, against all odds of geography and difference, *our country stands tall and proud*, now like never before' (2013, emphasis added). Canada is personified as a physical entity that has defeated external (unnamed) forces. Absent social actors and an oversimplified evaluation of the collective survival of Canadians ("we've survived") help to recontextualise both problems and remedies in this Conservative chronicle. The past is a site of contestation; in this recontextualisation, the past is reconstructed to fit the Conservative representation of Canadian history and value system. The individual becomes representative of the nation and vice versa through the use of synecdoche in the text. Thus self-identity and nationalistic identity become conflated. The embodiment of the individual citizen within the Canadian narrative signifies the collective triumph of the nation-state and its people, while its defeats become the individual's personal loss ('tragically... we have failed as a country'). Canada is elevated in the present ('now like never before') because previous governments (without Harper's trusty leadership), rendered as *others*, have impeded the country's (and thereby, the citizen's) progress.

While Minister Moore reminds the audience that his government 'believes in respecting the provincial jurisdiction' and will not infringe on how provinces teach history, in April 2013 they launched a 'thorough and comprehensive review of significant aspects in Canadian history' in primary and secondary institutions across the country; the Tory-controlled Canadian Heritage House of Commons committee agreed to a revamped academic focus on history 'with an *emphasis on battles*' (Meeting No. 61, Parliament of Canada 2013, emphasis added). Despite evidence of embellishing or purifying history⁸, Harper argued in a speech celebrating his fifth anniversary as prime minister: 'You cannot build a united country by burying or rewriting its history' (2011). The presupposition is that the existing historical narrative is flawed, and it is up to his party to rectify and reify the past. Fairclough describes presupposition, or the assumed, subconscious meanings and ideologies within a text, as "pre-constructed elements" (1995: 107). The militarising of Canadian history is apparent through the micromanaged commemoration of the War of 1812, a military exploit that became synonymous with the "fight for Canada" (Moore 2012) during its bicentennial celebrations.

While celebrating a two-hundred-year-old conflict (that took place fifty-five years before Canadian Confederation) with much pomp and grandeur,⁹ the Conservatives released a terse press release on the thirtieth anniversary of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (a Pierre Trudeau-Liberal Party legacy). Hyperbolic, nationalistic statements ('Which is to say without the War of 1812, Canada as *we know it* would not exist.') appeal to the warrior history of the nation to reconstitute the modern-day (Conservative version of) Canada as a militaristic one; the nation is being re-framed according to a Harperist world order.

There is a palpable nostalgia for lost institutions running through these texts, emblematic of conservative discourse as conservatism honours the 'preservation of the ancient moral traditions of humanity' (Kirk, 2001: 8). The Oxford Canadian English Dictionary (1998) defines nostalgia as 'sentimental yearning for a period of the past; regretful or wistful memory of an earlier time,' or 'a thing or things which evoke a former era.' Harperist discourse is awash with nostalgic speech, a yearning for a mythical golden age with wholesome, crimeless communities. Time and space are displaced within this form of narration, as an abstract, imagined past without specific historicity becomes superior to the degenerating present. In the Conservatives' attempt to (mis)appropriate a lost, immemorial past with their nostalgic discourse, they are redefining the community, the nation, and self-identity. James Donald (1993: 167) writes that these cultural and social values become 'the articulating principle of the nation' to produce a '*fictional* unity' through the differentiation from other nations and peoples. Canadian symbols and national identity thus become timelessly, discursively projected through a Conservative lens, tied to traditional institutions such as the military and the monarchy. The presupposition is that Canada is 'in serious jeopardy' and its history must be 'protected and promoted' in order 'to stay united for the future' (Moore, 2013). Reordering Canada's lost spatial and temporal bearings will cure the nation of its supposed fragmentation, rootlessness, and decline. The overt implication is that Harper and his Tories can reverse the disintegration of Canadian heritage and history for the sake of national unity — endangered by the 'complacency and inaction' (Moore, 2013) of previous Liberal governments, the very survival of Canada as a nation is contingent on the Conservatives. There is an impression of certainty — that the speaker's policy goals are an embodiment of the audience's needs and desires, instead of the speaker shaping what the audience *should* want (Moore, 2013: 'the legislation... serves the best interests of Canada').

⁸ Harper boasted that Canada has 'no history of colonialism' at the 2009 G20 summit in Pittsburgh, neglecting the violent interaction with the country's First Nations people since Europeans first arrived in the 1600s.

⁹ The Conservative government spent \$28 million commemorating the War of 1812 through monuments, a documentary film, advertisements, public re-enactments, and a government website.

The political choice of words offers an illusion that the decision-making power and agentic control is in the hands of the citizenry.

Modality is the truth value of a proposition, assessing the commitment of the speaker to an idea or command (Fairclough, 2003). Alternating between authoritative statements with strong modal verbs and lowered modal terms help persuade the audience by simultaneously deceiving and informing them (Machin and Mayr, 2012). Moore lists the Conservative track record and commitment to executing and ensuring Canadian history and identity are safeguarded against collective amnesia; categorical modal verbs ('we are creating... we're expanding... we are adding... we're reforming...'; 2013) suggest only Harper Conservatives are active agents with the expertise and means to execute. Since the 'texturing of identity' is 'embedded in the texturing of social relations' (Fairclough, 2003: 166), the lowered modality and conversational address to the audience ('You know, I think we have gone the extra mile here...') breaks up the authoritarian discourse and indicates a level of sincerity. The cognitive dimensions of manipulation in the discourse (van Dijk, 2006) include: ideological polarisation (Moore, 2012: 'They repelled the American invasion, and the Canada that we know today was the ultimate result'.); positive self-presentation and moral superiority (taking pride in 'our' collective traditions and history); discrediting of opponents (failure of previous governments or opposition parties); rhetorically exaggerating the issue ('nobody thought this country would survive'); and emotionalising the argument ('our borders', 'our nation', 'our history'). In essence, a communications blitz to market a Conservative-style of history is presented as a centuries-old fight for national identity and Canada's very existence. Adopting an Americanised style of 'permanent campaign' governance (Nimmo, 1999) and having the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) strictly order Conservative ministers' messaging, the Harperist brand of rhetoric is part of a long-term strategy to configure and legitimise social representations.

The 'Little Island' and 'Dominion'

Stephen Harper's address at the Canada-UK Chamber of Commerce (2006) six months after winning his first minority mandate outlined his fidelity to traditional British institutions, history, economics, and values. The specific audience must be considered in the balanced analysis of this text: British businesses with interests in the Canadian market. Albeit this disclaimer, the opportunistic speech act is packed with linguistic, semantic, and thematic strategies that overtly and subliminally carry Harperist ideologies. Seven years later, he returned to London to address the members of parliament at Westminster, a pedestal he referred to as the 'cradle of *our* political system' (*our* meaning Canadian): a nod to the

aforementioned British 'free and democratic institutions' (2013) that are central to the Harperist rendition of the Canadian genesis story. It is reminiscent of the theme discussed in the previous section: nostalgia for traditional institutions.

In the 2006 speech, the prime minister uses a building metaphor, common in political speech (Charteris-Black, 2004) to abstractly convey solidarity and the sense of building something as equal partners (Machin and Mayr, 2012): '[O]ur combined history... is built by layer and layer of common experiences, shared values and ancient family ties' (2006). He quotes the 'incomparable Winston Churchill' (a former British Conservative prime minister) to assert the 'ties which join [Canada] to the mother country are more flexible than elastic, stronger than steel and tenser than any material known to science.' Harper waxes lyrical about the 'stepping stones' (another building metaphor) Canadians 'owed to Britain': 'the *majestic past* that takes us back to the Tudors, the Plantagenets, the Magna Carta, habeas corpus, petition of rights, and English common law.' These British relics are critical in the Conservative draft of Canada's historical founding.

It is starkly apparent that Harper seeks to remodel Canada after the mother country and 'eternal all[y].' He recently became the second Canadian leader to address the British Parliament and spoke at length about Canadian institutions being 'profoundly indebted to their British ancestors' (2013). In presupposing Britain as Canada's direct ancestors, Harperist discourse omits the nation's settler history, its indigenous origins, and its French fur trade roots. There is no identifiable historicity within 'our origins' accounted in these speech acts other than as 'a colony of the British Empire,' which the politician prefaces with emphatic modal adverbs 'seriously and truthfully.' This persuasive rhetorical device conveys his historical-political stance as the incontrovertible truth; this is evidence of 'irrealism,' or statements masquerading as fact and "oriented to achieving results," as opposed to 'reaching understanding' (Fairclough, 2003: 110). The application of authoritative modality also indicates an equally strong commitment to endorse this partial narrative. Harper discounts the blood-stained, systematic exploitation and illegal acquisition narratives of colonialism by applauding British colonialism in Canada as 'largely benign and occasionally brilliant.' Four hundred years of controversial interactions and broken treaties with Aboriginals are neglected and discredited in these speeches and consequently the public discourse, which the elite voice of the government in power helps to shape. Those who not share Harper's view of 'our origins' and 'our values' are lexically, rhetorically, and conceptually rejected from the national narrative. He attempts to associate himself with the ordinary voter by using a linguistically artificial sense of togetherness ('our country,' 'our inheritance,' 'our homelands'). Emotionally arousing argumentative rhetoric ('When Britain has bled, Canada

has bled.') appeals to and rouses the public's vulnerabilities. By personifying Canada and Britain into living organisms that can bleed, the discourse connotes single, homogenous entities (omitting multifarious, discordant identities) that are linked ancestrally by blood — a formidable symbol.

The Canadian prime minister dramatically describes Canada and Britain as moralistic fighters who safeguard Western values of 'democracy' and 'freedom' — both concepts nominalised as precious commodities that require protection — and combat unidentified 'monsters', 'malevolent regime[s]', and 'apostles of terror.' He presents a good versus evil battle of 'epic proportions' that presupposes those against Harper's administration as being on the wrong side of the battlefield. Emphasizing Canada and Britain's democratic credentials serves a manipulative purpose: he justifies the War Against Terrorism and exempts the armies' belligerent, contentious, even illegitimate actions. Harper concludes the 2006 address with the religious and royalist slogans 'God bless Canada and God save the Queen', alluding to both his firm faith-based views and adherence to the monarchy's role in his ideological portrait of a country that long ago separated the church and the state. There is another religious reference in the British Parliament speech, in which he declares that 'ordinary men and women the world over aspire' to 'worship *God*, in *our* own way' (2013, emphasis added), thus presupposing all 34.5 million Canadians (living in a secular country) observe a god-based faith (excluding atheists, agnostics, polytheists from his faith-based narrative). Speculative terms and ideas lacking concrete facts, data, or appropriate citation pepper these two speeches to demonstrate the Conservative track record and present a positive self-representation of their government; for example, 'Our government is making new investments in renewable energy sources such as biofuels.' Harperist ideology polarises and 'otherises' those who do not share this value set as unpatriotic 'non'-Canadians. This type of 'manipulative' discourse (van Dijk, 2006) is a discursive process affecting both cognitive (impacting people's mental models) and social dimensions (influencing socially shared beliefs). The deliberate linguistic strategies and underlying themes in these prewritten speeches indicate premeditated intent to broadcast and naturalise these sentiments and symbols in public forums.

Long Live the Queen: the Monarchy

Harperist nostalgia for traditional institutions extends to the restoration of colonial prerogatives in Canadian society's 'common ground of sociocultural beliefs' (van Dijk, 2008: 160). National surveys have found that Canadians are by and large lukewarm about continuing with a British monarch as the head of state (Ipsos, 2010; Your Canada, Your

Constitution 2013), so it can be concluded that the Tories are not strategically reproducing or pandering to the assumed beliefs or 'taken-for-granted knowledge' of the electorate. Traditionalist conservative philosopher Roger Scruton describes allegiance to the Crown as 'a symbol of nationhood, as an incarnation of the historical entity of which [one] is a part' (1986: 108). Conservative politicians call on tradition to engage the loyalties of voters as a 'fragment of the greatest social organism' — the nation — and to mould 'their idea of what they are and should be' (ibid: 108-109). Therefore tradition, particularly the symbol of the Crown, is Harper's most valuable agent in patriotic discourse and identity construction.

In a special citizenship ceremony in the presence of The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Jason Kenney spends the majority of his speech commending 'Canada's royal family' and the influence of the Crown in the 'great Dominion' of Canada (2011). The over lexicalisation, or 'surfeit of repetitious, quasi-synonymous terms' (Teo, 2000: 20), and overemphasis of the British monarchy ('Dominion,' 'Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II,' 'Queen of Canada,' "constitutional monarchy,' 'our sovereign head of state,' 'Crown') serve to overpower and over-persuade the audience. Nominalisation replaces verb constructions or social processes with nouns or metaphors (Fairclough, 2003: 220; Machin and Mayr, 2012: 137). When Minister Kenney nominalises formidable concepts like 'freedom', he transforms them into tangible *commodities* with connotative and denotative clout. He elevates the British royal family as the active agent determining Canadian fates: 'Canada's royal family... represent the future with all its hopes and dreams.' In a calculated linguistic move, he associates new Canadian citizens with their future 'King' as they too 'represent the future, *our* future.'

The construction of an in-group using the possessive 'our' simultaneously categorises an out-group — those who reject 'Her Majesty's heirs,' view the monarchy as an archaic institution, and disregard the 'principles which recognize the supremacy of *God*' are not *Canadian*. Being Canadian is contingent on the displacement of others, who do not belong to the Harperist fabric of national identity. By easing the deontic modal verb that compels and commands these new citizens and deftly switching between possessives ('I *encourage* you all to remember *our* past and play an active role in shaping *our* future by preserve *our* values and traditions while upholding *your* responsibilities as citizens'; 2011), Kenney merges an intimate welcome with an authoritative reproach. Encapsulating the public in a pronoun passivates and renders them easy participants to whom to espouse moral claims. In using strong modality to articulate their value assumptions and traditions — an incremental shift towards more religious and colonial rhetoric in a secular, independent Canada — the Conservatives conceal and delegitimize alternate voices.

Heavy on conservative touchstones and symbols, Harper's portrait for Canada is more than nostalgic rhetoric for historiographical era, as it extends to his policy agenda. The Conservative government has successfully passed legislation, such as their Safe Streets and Communities Act, or omnibus crime bill (March 2012)¹⁰, and Ending the Long-Gun Registry Act (April 2012), and continued an ongoing makeover of the military: restoring colonial-era designations of five Army corps (April 2013) and the Air Force and Navy (August 2011); returning ranks for all enlisted, non-commissioned soldiers to their original British Army and Commonwealth designations (July 2013); and replacing the Maple Leaf rank indicator with the traditional crown or pip on soldiers' shoulder patches (July 2013). Quite literally, the Conservatives are marching 'back to the future' in the armour of the British colonial past. More innocuous but tell-tale actions by the Harper government have included removing two paintings depicting Canada East and Canada West from the Lester B. Pearson (former Liberal prime minister) Building, or the headquarters of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade — and replacing them with a portrait of Queen Elizabeth II.

Once a criminal, always a criminal: crime and justice

In the socio-political background of Harper's 'tough-on-crime' agenda and 'build prisons to lock criminals away' narrative, crime is construed as transgressions that demand retribution and incarceration. Van Dijk notes the trouble with large-scale manipulation as an abuse of power (2006: 370), because resulting social representations are not in the best interest of the electorate; attitudes in this case are being manipulated to trust that the government's actions are to protect them, when in actuality the Conservative's strict crime policies serve their own ideological purposes and ignore facts and statistics¹¹ to underscore retribution over rehabilitation. The Harper government over lexicalises and hyperbolizes an epidemic of fear or hypothetical dystopia and unites the audience against a generically constructed enemy. There is a transparent plan to 'put organized crime out of business' (2007) and scourge lawbreakers from a romanticised, wholesome Conservative Canada ('[Criminals] infiltrate our neighbourhoods, turning suburban homes into grow-ops and crystal meth labs.').

These official speeches are replete with formulaic phrases and word choices; specific configurations of vocabulary (Fairclough's 'lexical collocations'; see 1992) package ideology

¹⁰ The month the bill received royal assent by the Governor General to become law.

¹¹ Statistics Canada figures demonstrate that the national crime rate continues on twenty-year downward trend, with the 2011 rate at its lowest point since 1972. Criminology and justice experts agree that recidivism is more likely to occur when rehabilitation is not the focus of incarceration.

into simple slogans for easy reproduction and dissemination: 'victims of crime,' 'dangerous' or 'violent individuals,' 'serious offenders,' and 'safe streets and communities. According to Fowler, formulaic phrases are like ideological catchphrases, with simplicity and memorability that provide a 'packaging of ideas with a very solid and clear outline' (1991: 178). These repeated ideological themes become signifiers that help construct a single discourse — Harperist discourse. The conversational nature of the language masks the vocabulary as being biased rhetoric and appeals to the 'Average Joe,' or ordinary Canadian, thus facilitating the transfusion of this hegemonic linguistic undertaking. The speech acts deliberately obfuscate, mystify, and dramatize the social agents involved to exaggerate their evils and exclude them from the law-abiding entity of Canada. Harper quotes a former UK Conservative prime minister (Benjamin Disraeli, who is known for his paternalistic One Nation conservatism) to underscore the importance of harsh justice ('Justice is truth in action'; 2013), linking back to his idolization of and nostalgia for British institutions and traditionalism. In his National Anti-Drug Strategy speech, he is elusive about the exact offences that will necessitate 'mandatory prison sentences for people convicted of *serious* drug offences' (2007, emphasis added). He attacks the previous Liberal administration, which considered decriminalising possession of small amounts of marijuana: 'For too long in Canada, governments have been sending mixed messages on drugs' — a linguistic strategy for positive self-representation by contrasting flawed predecessors to the current Conservative government under Harper's leadership. The fact that he makes the statement, 'It's time to be straight with Canadians,' suggests his 'truth-telling' is based on his personal opinion, as opposed to presupposed 'group knowledge.'

There is neither reference to spatial or temporal determinants nor classified social agents — only generic, one-dimensional classification. Verb constructions conceal how illegal drugs 'destroy lives,' 'rob young people of their futures,' 'lay waste to our communities,' and cause 'deaths of thousands of Canadians.' There is no indication of discussing the root social causes for drug addiction — poverty, homelessness, unemployment, and mental disorders — and how the marginalised and vulnerable can be helped to prevent narcotics reliance and crime in the first place. The repetitive call to 'victims' helps buttress Harper's speech on Bill C-54, the Not Criminally Responsible Reform Act (2013), emotionally silences debate about the provisions of the legislation that will lead to more mentally ill persons in prisons rather than in care facilities. Harper neglects official government agency data (Statistics Canada) of falling crime rates to emphasize a 'dramatic rise' in criminal activity and condemn that 'more and more young people are being charged in drug related crimes' (2007). The ambiguous, reductive descriptions and 'ideological squaring' (van Dijk, 1993) serve to fortify their discourse of fear. 'We won't get clean overnight' assumes the country is battling against a

virus that needs to be purged systematically over time, implying Harper's extensive agenda in overhauling Canada's naturalised values, group knowledge, and national identity. The prime minister affirms that 'we will put our country on the road to recovery,' personifying Canada as an entity that needs mending and his guidance. The source domain of the metaphor is a combined journey ('road to recovery'): the Conservative government will lead the people and the nation into a happily ever after by transforming the criminal justice and value systems according to their ideologies. The electorate are denied the choice of making alternative conclusions as reality is constructed for them (Entman, 1993: 54) and the Harperist outlook on criminal justice is 'naturalised.'

Harper's authoritarian discourse is replete with Conservative value assumptions: 'Our message is clear: drugs are dangerous and destructive... If you sell or produce drugs — you'll pay with jail time' (2007). Emotive informality and emphatic authoritarian discourses are identified within these speech acts ('As a father myself...'), creating a discordant rhetoric that concurrently attempts to casually familiarise the political speaker with the audience while paternalistically disciplining them. This paternalistic structure follows Lakoff's description of the 'strict father model' (2002: 12) in moral politics that conservatives espouse (as opposed to the liberal "nurturant parent model"). Traditional small-c conservatism ascribes the state with the parental right to dictate to society. Conversational language, apparent in the structure, tone, and vocabulary, helps mask ideological aims. Lakoff (2012) notes that American Republican Party politicians specialise in infusing family values into an authoritarian (or 'strict father') frame, which they metaphorically extend to the nation-state. In his defence of his government's Bill C-54, Harper declares:

While it is true that the arm of the state cannot be everywhere at all times, *nor would we want it to be*, nevertheless, when atrocious events do occur and the state fails to act, *fails to do all it can do to defend innocent citizens, it violates the inherent trust upon which its existence is justified*. (2013, emphasis added)

His presentation of the claim that the Conservative government would not want to control the national criminal justice agenda is presented as general knowledge, bolstered by the characterisation of their dramatic fiduciary duty to *defend innocent citizens*; it is a rhetorical tactic to persuade listeners of the state's self-imposed function as lawmakers, policemen, and societal moral compass. Classifying society as a decaying dystopia that requires rigorous, righteous intervention becomes Harper's political platform upon which to sell his nostalgic vision for wholesale consumption.

CONCLUSION

It is key to avoid falling into the trap of Marxist socioeconomic determinism and essentialism, which interprets ideology in texts as all-encompassing and the audience as compliant, passive readers lacking agency. As Hall demonstrates, producers of a text *encode* the discourse according to a specific ideology, but readers *decode* the text in their own social contexts (1973, 1980). Readers are social actors with the ability to resist linguistic ideological pressure and create oppositional readings (Morley, 1990; Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999). Therefore, the creation of a national common sense is the production of disparate fragments of meaning, or antagonistic discourses (Gramsci, 1971; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). However, analysts must also steer clear of post-structuralist linguistic determinism on the opposite side of the spectrum, as readers are not completely autonomous from language. A conception of nationalism, meanings, and common sense can be 'mechanically imposed' on the audience via the external sociocultural and political environments, but also consciously configured by the individual; hegemony limits agency, with the audience sharing the viewpoints of a particular social grouping, and thus being 'conformists of some conformism' (Gramsci, 1971: 323-4).

In summary, the Fairclough-van Dijk-Wodak-inspired multi-method Critical Discourse Analysis of the relatively modest sample of seven official Conservative Party speeches yielded the dominant, interdiscursive themes and motifs in Harperist discourse: a nostalgic preoccupation with the past, traditional British institutions, and an upright, pure society that seeks to exterminate criminal pollution. The analyst outlined the varying ideologically discursive, linguistic, thematic, and lexical tactics found in the speech acts that contributed to the Harperist strategy of combining familiarities with authoritative discourse to control the national 'common sense,' manipulate identity construction, and overhaul group reality: the manufacturing of an ambiguous enemy *other* in a moralistic *us versus them* struggle, hyperbolising a narrative that the nation's very existence and the future of the electorate is on the line in this 'epic' struggle, metaphorical obfuscation, nominalisation, over lexicalisation, recontextualisation, to name a few. While the sample size was limited, the conclusions drawn from the findings can be stated with some degree of authority as they were harvested from multiple channels of official distribution and cover the duration of Harper's governance — from his first year in office (2006) to as recently as June 2013. As quoted in the theoretical chapter, Hall cautions that common sense 'always has a structure, a set of histories which are traces of a past as well as intimations of a future philosophy' (1988:8). This study

demonstrates that there appears to be a concerted effort in Stephen Harper's government to revisit the past and revise a draft of Canadian history in tune with his ideological preferences — a past that features prominently in the Harperist 'interpellation' of the Canadian people, nation, and vision for Canada's future.

The purpose of this dissertation is to academically assess the recent reconfigurations in Canadian politics, individual and collective identities, and the nation's historical and future portraits for a local and non-Canadian audience. It opens the door for further empirical research on non-text based political and sociocultural analysis (surveys, ethnographic study, etcetera) of how audience reception affects the discourse production process (How does public opinion affect and help frame elite discourse? How is the populace challenging Harperist aims?), and to what extent the Harperist regime is effective in rewriting the naturalised value system and homogenising national identity through discourse (Is Harper's ideological discourse successful in reshaping the public imagination and 'imagined community'?).

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APPENDIX A

Table 1:1 Data Sample

Actor	Speech Title	Motif/Theme
Stephen Harper	Address by the Prime Minister at the Canada-UK Chamber of Commerce (July 14, 2006): http://pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=1247	Monarchy, British institutions, history, military
Stephen Harper	Speech for the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister on the National Anti-Drug Strategy (October 4, 2007) http://www.pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=5287	Wholesome, crime-free streets and communities
Stephen Harper	PM delivers remarks in Burnaby, B.C. (February 8, 2013) http://www.pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=5287	Wholesome, crime-free streets and communities
Stephen Harper	Prime Minister Harper delivers an address to the Parliament of the United Kingdom (June 13, 2013) http://pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=5531	Monarchy, British institutions, military, history
Jason Kenney	Speaking Notes for the Honourable Jason Kenney, P.C., M.P. Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism at a special citizenship ceremony with Their Royal Highnesses The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge (July 1, 2011) http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/media/speeches/2011/2011-07-01.asp	Monarchy, history, British institutions
James Moore	Speaking Notes for the Honourable James Moore, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages on the Occasion of the Official Launch of Commemorative Events for the 200 th Anniversary of the War of 1812 (June 18, 2012) http://pch.gc.ca/eng/1342616885503	History, military, British institutions
James Moore	Speech Given by the Honourable James Moore, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages on the occasion of an Announcement About Canadian History (June 11, 2013) http://www.pch.gc.ca/eng/1371488058659	History, military, British institutions

Speeches by Stephen Harper and Cabinet Ministers James Moore and Jason Kenney chosen for Critical Discourse Analysis:

Harper, S. (2006) "Address by the Prime Minister at the Canada-UK Chamber of Commerce." London, United Kingdom. 14 July 2006. Speech. Transcript accessed 02 April 2013:
<http://pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=1247>

Harper, S. (2007) "Speech for the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister." On National Anti-Drug Strategy. Winnipeg, Manitoba. 4 October 2007. Speech. Transcript accessed 08 April 2013:
<http://www.pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=5287>

Harper, S. (2013a) "PM delivers remarks in Burnaby, B.C." Burnaby, British Columbia. 8 February 2013. Speech. Transcript accessed 11 June 2013: <http://www.pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=5287>

Harper, S. (2013b) "PM delivers address to the Parliament of the United Kingdom." London, United Kingdom. 13 June 2013. Speech. Transcript accessed 15 June 2013:
<http://pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=5531>

Kenney, J. (2011) "Speaking Notes for the Honourable Jason Kenney, P.C., M.P. Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism at a special citizenship ceremony with Their Royal Highnesses The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge." Gatineau Quebec. 1 July 2011. Speech. Transcript accessed 11 June 2013: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/departement/media/speeches/2011/2011-07-01.asp>

Moore, J. (2012) "Speaking Notes for the Honourable James Moore, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages on the Occasion of the Official Launch of Commemorative Events for the 200th Anniversary of the War of 1812." Toronto, Ontario. 18 June 2012. Speech. Transcript accessed 20 June 2013: <http://pch.gc.ca/eng/1342616885503>

Moore, J. (2013) "Speech Given by the Honourable James Moore, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages on the occasion of an Announcement About Canadian History." Gatineau, Quebec. 11 June 2013. Speech. Transcript accessed 20 June 2013: <http://www.pch.gc.ca/eng/1371488058659>

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