Discourses of Dehumanization:

Enemy Construction and Canadian Media Complicity

in the Framing of the War on Terror

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Abstract:

This paper examines the Canadian news media's coverage of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. In particular, Canadian newspaper headlines are examined for the way in which an image of the "enemy" is constructed and framed in dominant media discourse. An analysis of the data reveals a pattern of dehumanizing language applied to enemy leaders as well as Arab and Muslim citizens at large in the media's uncritical reproduction of metaphors that linguistically frame the enemy in particular ways. Particularly, the paper argues that the Canadian media have participated in mediating constructions of Islam and Muslims, mobilizing familiar metaphors in representations that fabricate an enemy-Other who is dehumanized, de-individualized, and ultimately expendable. This dehumanizing language takes the form of animal imagery that equates and reduces human actions with sub-human behaviours. This paper argues that the repeated use of animal metaphors by monopoly media institutions constitute motivated representations that have ideological importance. The consequences of these representations are more than rhetorical, setting the stage for racist backlash, prisoner abuse and even genocide.

Keywords: Muslims; Media; News; Dehumanization; Enemy Construction; War on Terror

Résumé:

Cet article fait l'examen de la couverture médiatique canadienne des guerres en Afghanistan et en Iraq. En particulier, les manchettes de journaux canadiens sont analysées pour déceler la manière dont une image de "l'ennemie" est construite et encadrée dans le discours médiatique dominant. Une analyse des données révèle un modèle de langage déshumanisant appliqué aux chefs ennemis ainsi qu'aux citoyens arabes et musulmans en général dans la reproduction des métaphores dans les médias, qui encadre linguistiquement l'ennemi d'une façon particulière. Particulièrement, cet article soutient que les médias canadiens ont participé à la médiation des constructions de l'islam et des musulmans, en mobilisant des métaphores bien connues dans des représentations qui façonnent un ennemi, ou "l'autre", qui est déshumanisé, désindividualisé, et ultimement consomptible. Ce langage de déshumanisation prend la forme d'une imagerie animale qui met sur un pied d'égalité et réduit l'action humaine à des comportements bestiaux. Cet article soutient que l'utilisation répétée de métaphores animales par le monopole d'instituts médiatiques constitue des représentations motivées qui ont une importance idéologique. Les conséquences de ces représentations sont plus que rhétoriques, elles préparent le terrain pour des répercussions racistes, pour le mauvais traitement de prisonniers et même le génocide.

Mots-clés: Musulmans; Médias; Déshumanisation; Construction d'Ennemi; Guerre Contre le Terrorisme

Introduction

Amid the highly-charged milieu of post-9/11 discourse, many Western government and military leaders called for unquestioning, patriotic support for retaliatory wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Under a variety of pressures, wartime news media, writing within the context of what was quickly labeled a War on Terror, often employed the language of military and state discourse in a way that later critics have identified as, at best, unreflective and at worst, propagandistic (Dimaggio, 2008; Kellner, 2003; Kamalipour & Snow, 2004). Contemporary North American coverage of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, as in the broader coverage of the war on terror, points to media complicity in reinforcing the broader political framing of a Muslim enemy. This paper suggests that, in their largely uncritical reproduction of metaphors that linguistically frame the enemy in particular ways, the Canadian media have participated in mediating constructions of Islam and Muslims found in other forms of social and cultural expression, mobilizing familiar metaphors in representations that fabricate an enemy-Other who is dehumanized, de-individualized and ultimately expendable. While many Canadians—who assume that diversity, multiculturalism, and inclusivity are at the forefront of our national identity—might imagine that a public body of metaphors marking the racialized Other as sub-human would be primarily an American phenomenon, our research shows that the Canadian media's reliance on this dehumanizing discourse is surprisingly systematic and coherent.

This paper focuses on Canadian print news and, in particular, newspaper headlines, which represent especially influential components of print journalism. The results reveal a dehumanizing frame that has both political and ideological force, especially when it spreads from specific antagonists such as the 9-11 terrorists or enemy leaders like Saddam Hussein to the populace of an entire nation, region or religion. The Canadian newspaper headlines collected in this paper metaphorically position not just enemy soldiers, but increasingly all Arabs or Muslims as animals, insects and diseases, reinforcing the broader political discourse of essential, hostile difference and, more gravely, potentially laying the groundwork for the language of eradication and annihilation that is the logical corollary to metaphors of the enemy as vermin or virus. The dehumanizing metaphors found in these headlines are so persistent as to form a coherent symbolic language in which, in the war on terror in general and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in particular, pursuit of the enemy is rhetorically figured as a hunt, with the capture of the enemy portrayed as "snaring" prey and imprisonment as "caging" the captured animal. Military actions are figured in metaphorically consistent ways, reinforcing the equation of the Arab or Muslim enemy with animal, an equation so persistent it has, almost without popular notice, become a new culturally dominant force.

As critical race scholars have noted, the rhetorical framing of the West's response to the Oriental Other draws upon long-standing binaries by which the West defines the East as alien to its norm; the barbaric East is seen, through its essential nature, as fundamentally opposed to the civilized West, locking the two into a relationship so innately hostile that it precludes any solution other than a bifurcated crusade-or-cleanse model in which, as in the historical crusades, difference is eliminated through either conversion or destruction. Within this model, difference itself, whether racial or cultural, is seen as inimical. The threat of difference is exaggerated and emphasized in times of war; scholars of propaganda agree that images emphasizing the Otherness of the enemy are fundamental to wartime discourses because they create the preconditions necessary to military action. With respect to racially-Othered enemies, the construction of difference is often more blunt; for example, Japanese opponents in World War II were treated much more harshly in Allied propaganda than were Germans.

The Canadian media are currently reprising this aspect of enemy-construction, collectively and largely uncritically reproducing a historically-freighted frame of the enemy as debased animal—a frame arising from this binary-driven sensibility. This dehumanizing frame, while emerging in the field of the representational, has direct consequences in lived experience. These include a subtle, but significant re-casting of Muslim-Canadian identity, evidenced, for example, in cases of the media calling Canadian Muslims suspected of terrorist activities "Canadian-born" or "home-grown" rather than simply "Canadian", insinuating that Muslim-Canadians are not authentic citizens. This paper suggests that this kind of revocation of citizenly identity is prefigured and enabled by symbolic revocations of human identity through the process of the enemy constructions that the Canadian media, like those elsewhere in the world, have helped to fabricate.

The Role of the Media

In the months following the events of 9/11, the North American media evinced in heightened form the structural flaws that critical media scholars have for decades identified and analyzed. Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky (1988) influentially decoded the subtle operations of media frames and filters—those potent, systemic influences grounded in "money and power"

that shape, distort or censor journalism, "marginalizing dissent" and "allowing government and dominant private interests" to establish their perspective through an apparently neutral network of media. As a result, mainstream, for-profit news media are frequently enmeshed in discursive tactics that are closer to propaganda than to journalism (Altheide, 2006).

While external pressures arise from media realities such as monopoly ownership and the increasing power of advertisers over content, internal pressures and the structural workings by which media manufacture consent create constraints that are "built into the system in such a fundamental way" (Herman & Chomsky, 1988) that they operate more subtly, more indirectly and, therefore, more profoundly than obvious forms of pressure and control. In the climate of anxiety following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, government and military filters became less tacit and more overt, flourishing in an atmosphere in which the twin modalities of fear and patriotism not only permitted, but encouraged journalists to set aside their traditional appearance of objectivity. In this atmosphere, many U.S. news anchors functioned less as reporters than as "icons of sentimental patriotism" (Center for Social Media, 2002), broadcasting in front of imposing, over-sized graphics of American flags and openly declaring their desire to line up behind their Commander-in-Chief.

Robert Jensen sees this kind of public patriotism as antithetical to effective journalism. He argues that it is precisely in times of war, when "a democracy most desperately needs a critical, independent journalism working outside the ideological constraints of the culture" (2003), that commercial mainstream news media is most likely to "fail profoundly" (Ibid). This failure has occurred on multiple levels in the mainstream media's coverage of the War on Terror. In some instances, it takes the form of suppression, omission or under-reporting, as in the minimal coverage devoted to anti-war protest and activism or civilian death tolls, a topic the Western media avoid. Such omissions constitute ideological interventions even on the part of news organs widely seen as reputable and objective. It is through such tactics, argue critics such as Kenneth Payne (2005) and Norman Fairclough (1989), that media discourse plays such a powerful role. Payne asserts that contemporary media are "indisputably an instrument of war", helping governments win "domestic and international public opinion", a task as essential to winning modern wars as "defeating the enemy on the battlefield" (Payne, 2005: 83). Media's role as an instrument of war, argues Payne, is "true regardless of the aspirations of many journalists to give an impartial and balanced assessment of conflict" (Ibid). Winter (2006) echoes Payne's indictment of the media's instrumental role in supporting the wars in Middle East arenas, noting specifically that "mainstream Canadian media, like their American counterparts, have adopted the role of stenographers to power. Although this performance has served the establishment well, it is a disservice to the public, the troops, and to the victims in Afghanistan" (Winter, 2006). For example, criticisms of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are under-reported; when covered, protestors are often treated with media hostility or scorn: a former *National Post* columnist, who resigned because of heavy-handed editorial policies, observed that the paper's "hostility to critics of the [Iraq] war was simply childish. . . There wasn't a peace movement. There was a 'peace' movement, quote unquote" (Pearson, 2003, April 19: A19). While such editorial choices about things like punctuation may be subtle, they have a powerful cumulative effect, eliding the distance between speaker and content so that the newspaper's voice comes to seem neutral, commonsense and obvious rather than ideological.

One of the least visible but most ideologically-charged choices in the Western media's coverage of the Afghan and Iraqi wars is its "consistent disinterest in nonviolent Muslim perspectives" (Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2007). As Peter Gottschalk and Gabriel Greenberg point

out, moderate voices from the Muslim community are routinely omitted from news coverage, an absence that confirms public stereotyping of all Muslims as extremists. While this omission pre-dates September 11, it has intensified since; domestic news sources "seldom mention the terms 'Muslim' or 'Islam' except in the context of conflict, violence, and bloodshed" (Ibid: 10).

Constructing the Enemy

Media coverage of the events of 9/11 and the subsequent coverage of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are critically shaped by pre-existing, Islamophobic frames that reflect neo-colonial assumptions (Henry & Tator, 2002; Kellner, 2004; Norris, Kern & Just, 2003; Nacos, 2002; Paletz, 1992; Picard, 1993). Karim argues that a coherent set of journalistic narratives have emerged regarding "Muslim terrorism" (2003: 81) narratives that reinforce stereotypes of murderous Muslims and advance limited and often inaccurate information about Islam. Edward Said (1997) similarly argues that the image of Islam in Western media is laden "not only [with] patent inaccuracy but also expressions of unrestrained ethnocentrism, cultural and even racial hatred" (Said, 1997: ii). He notes that "malicious generalizations about Islam have become the last acceptable form of denigration of foreign culture in the West; what is said about the Muslim mind, or character, or religion, or culture as a whole cannot now be said in mainstream discussion about Africans, Jews, other Orientals, or Asians" (Ibid: 12). Journalist David Lamb concurs, noting that Arabs are now "caricatured in a manner once reserved for blacks and Hispanics" (cited in Lester & Ross, 2003: 76).

Elizabeth Poole observes that in the media's discussion of the War on Terror, anti-Western violence is "seen to evolve out of something inherent in the [Muslim] religion" (Poole, 2002: 4). As several studies have documented, after the events of 9/11, North American media intensified their depictions of prevailing stereotypes about Arabs and Muslims (Pintak, 2006; Inbaraj, 2002; McChesney, 2002). Pintak contends that the bias in American media after 9/11 constitutes "jihad journalism", adding that such slanted coverage became "the hallmark of the post-9/11 era" (Pintak, 2006: 42-44). The media's dominant narrative, according to McChesney, portrays "a benevolent, democratic and peace-loving nation brutally attacked by insane evil terrorists who hate the United States for its freedoms" (McChesney, 2002: 43). Its chief message is that the U.S. "must immediately increase its military and covert forces, locate the surviving culprits and exterminate them" in order to "root out the global terrorist cancer" (Ibid). This dominant narrative's reliance on disease metaphors points to one of the key features of North American and European media coverage of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the War on Terror in general: the patterned and systematic dehumanization of Muslims (Kuttab, 2007; Esses, Veenvliet, Hodson & Mihic, 2008).

Philip Knightly's (1975) and Sam Keen's (1991) pioneering work on enemy construction analyzes the persistence of animal images of the enemy in media propaganda. The construction of the enemy as a dehumanized Other is much more than a representational strategy performed by the news media; its results can be global in reach. Said's work lays much of the groundwork for current analyses of the media's fabrication of the enemy-Other; it argues that colonial and imperial projects depend on the way we characterize those we see as deeply and oppositionally different from ourselves. Over time, these characterizations are systematized and grouped into an organized body of thought, a repertoire of words and images so often repeated that it comes to seem like objective knowledge. Orientalism, the distorting lens created by this process, offers a framework through which the West examines what it perceives as the foreign or alien,

consistently figuring the East as the West's inverse: barbaric to its civilized, superstitious to its rational, medieval to its modern. While Western citizens are defined by their essential uniqueness and individuality, those of the East are constructed in metaphoric terms that emphasize their indistinguishability; the language of Western media discourse typically emphasizes mass over singularity when it represents the East.

In times of conflict, when constructions of the Other conflate with constructions of the enemy, this pattern intensifies. As Lori A. Peek points out, the processes of defining the enemy and defining the Other have a lot in common, in that they "sometimes lead to devastating outcomes" (Peek, 2004: 28). Presenting the enemy-Other as an indistinguishable mass is an essential strategy in the process of enemy fabrication; wartime images traditionally stress this indistinguishability, as evidenced in Frank Capra's 1945 propaganda film, *Know Your Enemy: Japan*, which claimed all Japanese resembled "photographic reprints off the same negative" (Dower, 1986: 18), a message visually reinforced by inter-cutting scenes of a steel bar being hammered in a forge with scenes of regimented Japanese mass activity, the visual correlative of a race lacking individual identity.

Such representations operate most visibly in overt propaganda, but devolve so thoroughly into public discourse that they influence the media's rhetorical choices. Middle-Eastern identities are confused and eroded; Rayan El Amine notes that the Islamic menace "has replaced the red menace, and the 'evil empire' of the cold war has become the . . . 'evil doers' of the Arab and Muslim world" (2005). The metaphors employed in Canadian newspaper headlines further and solidify such attitudes, compressing difference into unanimity by employing a vocabulary of indistinguishability. Unlike the civilized citizens of the West, who are primarily identified with culture rather than with nature, the hordes of the East are represented as being as natural as insects and as undifferentiated as a hive or swarm. The headlines gathered here clearly indicate an ongoing equation of the Muslim Other with swarming insects and massing rodents, a metaphoric conflation that is especially resilient and persistent. As Merskin notes, we did not see "the end of enemy construction with the war in Iraq. The stereotype was carried from the Taliban, bin Laden, and terrorists to the axis of evil and Hussein. Since the occupation of Iraq, the evil Arab image shifted to . . . 'crazed' Iraqis opposed to U.S. occupation" (2004: 60). Such images are not, as Merskin argues, simply an issue of journalistic imbalance and unfair representations, but speak to fundamental questions of why such images are so necessary and prevalent.

Methodology

The prevalence of animal and disease metaphors has been identified internationally in many forms of public discourse (Steuter & Wills, 2008b); this project specifically examines Canadian newspaper headlines. In this paper, Canadian newspaper headlines that utilized animal metaphors in their coverage of the war on terror from 2001 to 2009 were examined. The importance of metaphor in conveying ideology has been highlighted since George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980), and more recent studies have shown how ideology in press discourse is linked to conceptual metaphors (Schmidt 2005). The news sources were accessed using the Lexis Nexis academic database and ProQuest's Canadian Newsstand database. Following David L. Altheide's Ethnographic Content Analysis (1987; 2002), our research, which involved using animal and disease-related words as search terms, revealed thousands of references in the text of Canadian newspapers articles on the topic of the War on Terror since September 11, 2001. The

study was narrowed to focus on the headlines that utilized animal and disease metaphors in stories about the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Headlines are especially significant, since it is argued that for a large part of the population they represent a primary source of condensed information: many readers scan headlines rather than reading complete articles. Headlines ultimately influence and direct interpretations as much as they summarize content; a headline's compressed narrative is, therefore, particularly ideologically powerful (van Dijk, 1985; Pan & Kosicki, 2001; Norris, Kern & Just, 2003). Since 2001, a clear pattern has become evident in the use of dehumanizing animal metaphors in the Canadian media's coverage of the War on Terror and related coverage of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Reporters have persistently referred to the 9/11 terrorists in animalistic terms, terms that have also been used in descriptions of combatants in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as of Muslims in general.

Results

The symbolic lexicon used by the news media since 9/11 demonstrates a clear pattern. Suspected terrorists, enemy military and political leaders and, ultimately, entire populations are metaphorically linked to animals, particularly to prey. This holds true both nationally and internationally: headlines from newspapers of many political affiliations across the U.S., Europe and Australia generate, with remarkable consistency, this journalistic framing of the enemy as hunted animal. Canadian newspaper headlines echo this framing, particularly in two of its most persistent strains: the enemy as repugnant animal and the enemy as pestilential. Most frequently, enemies are identified with the lower-order animals conventionally regarded as especially noxious by society, as exemplified in headlines such as: "Raid Zaps Iraqi Rat" (*Toronto Sun*, Apr. 18, 2003); "Canadian soldiers mop up Taliban rat's nest in Afghanistan" (*Calgary Herald*, Sep. 14, 2006); and "Iraq war breeding terrorists of future" (*Windsor Star*, Jun 22, 2005). Media reports on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are punctuated by language expressing notions of pursuit, capture and entrapment via a particular vocabulary that relies on animal-related metaphors such as "hunt", "trap", "snare", "net" and "corral". Terrorists, thus, are "caught in a trap" while the enemy "scurries" for cover or "slithers" out of reach. Neutral terms such as "search" or "look for" have been almost entirely replaced by the dominant hunting model, as in repeated references to the "hunt for terrorists".

Canadian headlines also characterize political or military maneuvers as "entrapment", "capture" and other terms indicating actions taken to limit enemy incursion. While the military's obvious intent is to capture aggressors, the consistency of the semantic choices through which these actions are cast by Western media constitutes what bell hooks calls a "motivated representation", (1997) a depiction in which even objective events are subjectively framed, deliberately or through familiarity and habit of representation, to further in a subtle way hegemonic interests and cultural dominance. The basic hunting model is straightforward: the transgressing enemy is an animal that needs to be tracked down. It frames the hunt's successful conclusion as the animal's death. This theme is reflected in headlines such as the *Globe and Mail's* "British police continue hunt for terror suspects" (July 2, 2007) and the *National Post's* "Forces return from arduous Mediterranean terror hunt" (December 15, 2004). When headlines refer to military action as "netting" or "snaring" captives, the enemy-Other must first be, in hunting parlance, flushed out or driven from cover. In the case of Canadian reporting on the search for Saddam Hussein, this takes the form of "smoking" him out, as found in the headlines:

"Why bin Laden is so difficult to smoke out" (*Ottawa Citizen*, Oct. 28, 2001).
"America's new dilemma: How to smoke bin Laden out from caves" (*Edmonton Journal*, Dec. 1, 2001).
"Where's Saddam? Everyone is asking: Unexplained absences only add to speculation Pentagon baiting tries to smoke out elusive leader" (*Toronto Star*, Apr. 2, 2003).

Once smoked out, he is put not in a prison or a holding cell but in a "cage", as in the headline "Even locked in a cage, Saddam poses serious danger" (*Ottawa Citizen*, Dec. 15, 2003). This rhetorical framing of imprisonment further consolidates the hunter-prey dyad. Another example of the animal-inflected language is the use of "net" as a synonym for capture. This is repeated in headlines such as:

"Anti-terror sweep nets 14 suspects in Europe" (*Victoria Times Colonist*, Nov. 7, 2007).
"Trap may net Taliban chief" (*Toronto Star*, Apr. 24, 2007).
"Australian police raids net 16 terror suspects" (*Sudbury Star*, Nov. 8, 2005).
"Terror mastermind escapes U.S. net" (*Ottawa Citizen*, Nov. 10, 2004).
"FBI terror sting nets mosque leaders" (*National Post*, Aug. 6, 2004).

Such semantic elaborations of the hunting theme abound, as evidenced in the number of animal-habitat references that, in Canadian headlines, regularly describe such places as "terrorist lairs" or "nests" rather than in less metaphorically-inflected terms such as "hide-out", "bunker" or "camp". Examples include:

"U.S. jets hit Taliban lairs in deadly hill sweep" (*Globe and Mail*, Aug. 26, 2003).
"Inside the ruined lair of Iraq's secret police" (*National Post*, Apr. 11, 2003).
"In the lair of the terrorist: Hero of radical Islam" (*National Post*, Sep. 13, 2001).

The term "lair" connotes mammalian life, as does the much less common mediatized metaphor of the battlefield as "lion's den", as in the *Kingston Whig-Standard*'s headline, "Afghanistan teeters on the brink: Canadian troops stepping into Kandahar 'lion's den'" (Feb. 20, 2006). Other common habitat metaphors demote the enemy still further down the evolutionary ladder to insects or vermin; these metaphors label enemy habitats as "swamps" or "nests":

"Israeli tanks encircle 'hornet's nest of terror'" (*Province*, Sep. 12, 2001).
"Canadian soldiers mop up Taliban rat's nest in Afghanistan" (*Calgary Herald*, Sep. 14, 2006).
"War on terrorism 'must drain entire swamp'" (*Vancouver Sun*, Oct. 24, 2001).

When suspected terrorists and enemy military and political leaders are labeled by the media as vermin, they conjure up a rich spectrum of negative cultural associations. Within the symbolic category of vermin, rats are seen as particularly loathsome, equated with destruction, disease, and the spread of plague. In both East and West, the rat is seen as unclean; as a denizen of earth's bowels, it "has distinctly anal connotations" (Biedermann, 1992: viii). Almost without exception, rats are culturally figured as repellant, a source of instinctive revulsion. Invoking the imagery of

rats implicitly provokes exterminationist models of response. Canadian headlines repeat and solidify the equation of enemy with rat, as in "Canadian soldiers mop up Taliban rat's nest in Afghanistan" (*Calgary Herald*, Sep 14, 2006). The capture of an enemy leader is also figured linguistically as trapping a rodent, an image echoed repeatedly in political cartoons as well as in headlines (Steuter & Wills, 2008a). This persistent simile is reflected in Canadian headlines, such as:

> "Saddam caught like a rat; U.S. forces capture ex-Iraqi strongman in a dirt hole near his hometown" (*Times-Transcript*, Dec. 15, 2003).
> "U.S. forces capture Saddam 'like a rat'" (*Daily News*, Dec. 15, 2003).
> "Saddam 'caught like rat'" (*Kingston Whig-Standard*, Dec. 15, 2003).
> "Captured: Saddam caught in hole 'just like a rat'" (*Leader Post*, Dec. 15, 2003).
> "Saddam 'was just caught like a rat'" (*National Post*, Dec. 15, 2003).
> "Saddam faces death penalty; Mideast strongman 'caught like a rat'" (*Windsor Star*, Dec. 15, 2003).

Within the animal hierarchy, still lower forms of life include non-mammals such as insects and arachnids, as exemplified by:

> "Israeli tanks encircle 'hornet's nest of terror'" (*Province*, Sep. 12, 2001).
> "Stealth aircraft stir up a hornets' nest: Fighters prove effective over Iraq Series" (*Vancouver Sun*, Jan. 14, 1992).

The spider web, now the dominant image by which real or suspected terrorist networks are connoted, is, like Saddam's "spider hole", a metaphor common to both political and media language. Its prevalence is reflected in the following headlines:

> "Web of terror" (*Leader Post*, Nov. 17, 2001).
> "A world-wide web of terror" (*Kingston Whig-Standard*, Oct. 17, 2002).
> "Web of terror" (*Telegram*, Sep 21, 2001).
> "Bin Laden no longer controls terror web" (*Edmonton Journal*, Jan. 21, 2002).
> "Investigators around the world are slowly unraveling bin Laden's complex and well-financed web of terror" (*Calgary Herald*, Oct. 7, 2001).

Insect and vermin imagery are also linked in headlines such as the *Sudbury Star's* "Terrorists, like rats and cockroaches, skulk in the dark" (May 12, 2004). The term "skulk" is linked to a related set of rhetorical strategies that foster anxiety around verminous enemy behaviours, particularly surrounding issues of mobility and incursion. Within this metaphorical framework, enemy movement is often figured as subterranean; it occurs invisibly and relentlessly, eating away at the ground beneath our feet, invisibly undermining structures we assumed were safe. Other headlines employ verbs such as "swarm" to describe enemy movement, emphasizing the speed, mass and irresistible or overwhelming nature of the attack. This solidifies the rhetorical identification of enemy with insect and reflects anxieties about an enemy so inhumanly numerous that it does not simply move, but "swarms"—threatening not merely attack, but obliteration:

>"Desperate Afghans swarm Canadian health clinic" (*Calgary Herald*, Jan. 21, 2008).
>"Gunboats swarm U.S. navy" (*Province*, Jan. 8, 2008).
>"Canada worried Pakistani turmoil could hurt Afghanistan; MacKay suggests refugees could swarm in" (*Gazette*, Nov. 6, 2007).

A related set of dehumanizing metaphors furthers these anxieties by emphasizing the enemy-Other's growth and expansion through metaphors of breeding or spawning, terms linked in headlines such the *Ottawa Citizen*'s "Iraq war will spawn new breed of terrorists" (Jan. 15, 2005). Internationally and in Canada, these terms dominate headlines documenting real or perceived increases in enemy activity, as in the *National Post*'s "Canada spawns terror" (Sep. 6, 2006) and the *Vancouver Sun*'s "Bin Laden's manifesto spawns cult" (Oct. 15, 2001). Other examples include:

>"Madrassas backdrop to London tragedy: Religious schools spawn terror" (*National Post*, Jul. 18, 2005).
>"Iraq breeding terror" (*Gazette*, Sep. 25, 2006).
>"The war on terror's not lost, Bush insists; Comments follow U.S. intelligence warning that al-Qaida is resurgent and Iraq is breeding global extremism" (*Vancouver Sun*, Jul. 13, 2007).
>"Iraq breeding suicide killers: No shortage of those willing to die" (*National Post*, Jul. 22, 2005).
>"Iraq war breeding terrorists of future: Report says Canada 5th among al-Qaida targets" (*Windsor Star*, Jun. 22, 2005).

These inter-related metaphors both reflect and intensify anxieties regarding enemy movement, growth and territorial expansion, conflating all three into sometimes contradictory or linguistically counter-intuitive combinations, as in the *Windsor Star's* headline, "Creeping terror scurries our way" (Jul. 18, 1990). The message is clear: there are lots of Them! They are growing in number and they are coming our way very fast! The identity of this "They" is often muddied and expansive, especially implicit in the widely-used term "breeding ground". In the final headlines below, in fact, the term expands to apply to an entire continent:

>"MI5 keeps eye on 'thousands' of Muslims: Britain now seen as breeding ground for extremists" (*Ottawa Citizen*, Sep. 2, 2006).
>"Breeding ground for terror" (*Gazette*, Jul. 20, 2004).
>"Al-Qaeda roots run deep in Africa: Terror breeding ground" (*National Post*, Nov. 29, 2002).
>"A breeding ground for terror" (*Calgary Herald*, May 5, 2007).
>"Terror's new breeding ground" (*National Post*, Feb. 10, 2005).
>"Africa may be terror breeding ground" (*Western Star*—Corner Brook, Newfoundland, May 9, 2005).
>"Continent a breeding ground for radical Islam" (*Calgary Herald*, Jul. 8, 2005).

The final metaphoric devolution in media discourse is to characterize the enemy as a disease so that the enemy is not only inhuman, but an utterly different kind of organism: the microbial, the

bacterial, the viral or the cancerous. These metaphors reflect further representations of enemy mobility as threatening, irrevocable and fatal; they emphasize the disease as metastatic, always dangerously changing or "mutating" and always spreading. The language here is linked to fears not only of destruction, but also of proliferation and encroachment, as seen in these Canadian headlines:

> "Terrorism a cancer" (*Daily News*, Aug. 26, 2006).
> "Afghan corruption a cancer" (*Winnipeg Free Press*, Jun. 24, 2008).
> "Stop sectarian 'cancer' in Iraq, urges UN" (*Toronto Star*, Nov. 26, 2006).
> "Only Muslim leaders can remove spreading cancer of Islamic terrorism" (*Edmonton Journal*, Jul. 5, 2007).
> "The terror virus" (*Ottawa Citizen*, Sep. 1, 2002).
> "Al Qaeda mutating like a virus" (*Toronto Star*, Jun. 22, 2003).

The anxieties provoked by these metaphoric conflations of enemy with disease and the corollary language of eradication that they implicitly or explicitly evoke are deeply consequential in the way they frame the War on Terror.

Context of Monopoly Media

When the media echo the government and military positions on the presumed nature of the enemy and aid the cause by banging the drums of war, it is often because the nation is directly involved in the conflict. While Canada is involved in the Afghan mission, it has notably not participated in the coalition efforts in Iraq. Ordinarily, this would suggest that there is thus less pressure for the media to follow the government's agenda in its characterization of the War on Terror. However, the Canadian media have, to a large extent, behaved in a manner very similar to that of their U.S. counterparts in reproducing jingoistic coverage. This may be explained, in part, by the context of monopoly media.

The data collected in this paper reflect the degree to which Canadian news media have begun to participate in the use of this racially-charged, ideologically-inflected and historically dangerous symbolic language. In order to understand the media's role in constructing and reproducing racist rhetoric about the war on terror and conflicts in the Middle East and their willingness to apply uncritically largely-unexamined metaphoric frames, it is necessary to understand the context of the contemporary monopoly media in which powerful political and economic forces significantly shape the content of the daily news. Understanding the monopoly culture in which media operates is crucial, given the complex interplay between media producers, sponsors and viewers. As Norman Fairclough observes, media is socially significant because of its cumulative effect; while the influence of what Fairclough calls "power-holders" on a single text can be negligible, the "effects of media power are cumulative, working through particular ways of handling causality and agency" and "particular ways of positioning the reader" (Fairclough, 1989: 54). Because of this repetition, "media discourse is able to exercise a pervasive and powerful influence in social reproduction" (Ibid). Understanding the sources and operations of media's motivated representations allows us to discern the links between media contexts and real-world consequences - consequences that are critical to national, even global safety.

Who are these powerful owners of multiple media venues? Journalist Robert Parry notes that "news organizations are hierarchical institutions often run by strong-willed men who insist that their editorial vision be dominant within their news companies" (Parry, 2003). While some concessions are made to principles of objectivity and fairness, media owners have historically "enforced their political views and other preferences by installing senior editors whose careers depend on delivering a news product that fits with the owner's prejudices" (Ibid).

While dehumanizing discourse is evident in multiple Canadian news sources linked to a variety of ownership chains, a significant number of the headlines that regularly use animal metaphors are found in the CanWest global papers. CanWest Global Communication has significant media holdings worldwide; in Canada these include the Global Television Network's stations as well as eleven of Canada's biggest newspaper dailies, including the *National Post* and the *Ottawa Citizen*, in addition to numerous community papers. Monopoly ownership and profit-driven publishing has resulted in media convergences that decrease journalistic investigation and independence. Since the corporation acquired a significant share of the Canadian news media in 2000, many journalists as well as Arab and Muslim Canadians have expressed concern about the corporation's position regarding coverage of the Middle East. CanWest founder Israel Asper and his sons Leonard and David, who took over after the death of their father, have been accused of requiring their media outlets to reproduce their support of conservative Israeli policies regarding the Palestinian conflict. "CanWest is 'unabashedly' pro-Israel", stated company executive Murdoch Davis (Macklem, 2002). Stephen Kimber, a journalism professor and columnist for CanWest's now defunct *Halifax Daily News*, resigned in 2002 after being censored by his editors: "It was very direct, [they said] 'You can't say anything that would not be supportive of the government of Israel, that might be supportive of the Palestinians'" (cited in Boehlert, 2007). National Council on Canada-Arab Relations executive director Mazen Chouaib has stated that the *National Post* and its parent company harbour an anti-Muslim and anti-Arab bias (Frum, 2004, October 1). In 2004, Reuters, the worldwide news agency, asked CanWest to drop the Reuters byline from articles the chain published because CanWest editors were rewriting copy originating from the Middle East and replacing the words "insurgents" and "rebels" with the word "terrorist". Writing for the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* in 2005, columnist Joel Connelly noted that CanWest's "news coverage has been so slanted that Vancouver's daily papers should be read at a 45-degree angle" (cited in Boehlert, 2007). Responding to a series of complaints by reporters at CanWest who have had news stories rewritten to follow corporate policy and have been suspended or threatened with dismissal when they objected, the International Federation of Journalists condemned CanWest for "corporate censorship" and the "victimization of journalists who are trying to defend professional standards" (Edge, 2007).

Discussion

The metaphors that collectively construct the enemy in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars require attention because of their potential consequences. The saturation of these metaphors in media reporting has resulted in the dominance of the complementary enemy-as-animal, enemy-as-prey and enemy-as-disease patterns, a dominance that works to obscure public awareness that, first, representational strategies are in play and, second, that these strategies are more than merely rhetorical in their effects. The link between the widespread dissemination of dehumanizing images of the enemy and racism, oppression and even genocide has been well established. Gregory Stanton (1996) observed that the first three stages leading to genocide are classification,

symbolization and dehumanization. Animal, prey and disease-related metaphors accomplish in a single rhetorical gesture all three of these steps, powerfully conflating them into a process that simultaneously identifies, marks, symbolizes and profoundly devalues the Other. For Stanton, genocide is not a product, but a process. It may appear sudden, but it is actually linked to a series of distinct but progressive stages, each integral to the "genocidal process" (1996).

Classification, symbolization, and dehumanization are followed by organization, polarization, identification, extermination and finally denial of the genocidal act. The language and imagery through which the enemy-Other is represented in the news media play a key role in these stages; once the enemy is consistently represented as less than human, it becomes psychologically acceptable to engage in genocide or other atrocities (Frank & Melville, 1988: 15). Historical precedents include Nazi propaganda films that interspersed scenes of Jewish immigration with shots of teeming rats. Jews were also compared to cross-bred mongrel dogs, insects and parasites requiring elimination; Nazi propaganda insisted that "in the case of Jews and lice, only a radical cure helps" (Mieder, 1982). The more recent Rwandan genocide was also fueled by widely-disseminated media voices in print and radio repeatedly calling the Tutsi ethnic community serpents and cockroaches (Kagwi-Ndungu, 2007).

The rat and insect metaphors prevalent in contemporary North American media discourse have antecedents in Western media treatment of the Japanese in WWII, who were also systematically presented as vermin, especially rats, bats and mosquitoes - representations that were expanded from Japanese soldiers to include Japanese citizens. Perhaps inevitably, the rhetoric of pest and infestation slipped into the rhetoric of extermination and eradication, as in the popular poster found in U.S. West Coast restaurants during World War II that proclaimed, "This restaurant poisons rats and Japs" (Dower, 1986: 98). This language of elimination did not remain merely figurative, but influenced the creation and justified the use of new forms of weaponry. Edmund Russell (2002) documents the development of chemical warfare against both human and insect enemies by the U.S. military and the chemical industry in the last century. Creators of chemical insecticides also created poison gas and anti-malarial DDT spray, leading to the use of chemical defoliants as weapons. The comprehensiveness of these weapons, which did not discriminate between civilian and soldier, was justified by propaganda emphasizing the innate danger of any Japanese person as a source of disease and destruction. For example, in the 1944 U.S. government poster titled "Enemies Both", a gun-toting Uncle Sam is shown clutching an oversized, fanged mosquito labeled "Malaria" in one hand and a bucktoothed Japanese soldier in the other. To reinforce their visual equivalence, both bug and human dangle in exactly the same posture, limbs identically splayed. The poster's caption confirms the two figure's equivalence, labeling insect and human as "ENEMIES BOTH!" and reminding soldiers that "It's your job to help to eliminate them" (Russell, 2002).

There are startling parallels between this rhetoric and that which is currently circulating in public discussion of not just enemy soldiers, but all Muslims. The debate that followed *Maclean's* magazine's 2006 publication of conservative political commentator Mark Steyn's excerpt, "The Future of Islam", which predicted an over-running of Europe by Muslim hordes, intent on transforming it into a "Eurabia", showed the extent to which discursive figuring of Muslims as pests created a language that imitates the earlier propagandistic call for the use of pesticides to eliminate the Japanese. The much-publicized human rights complaint lodged by the Canadian Muslim Council against *Maclean's* cited "several Internet blogs . . . which included calls to exterminate European Muslims with DDT because they were multiplying like mosquitoes, calls for an end to Muslim immigration, and calls for enough bullets or nuclear

bombs to eliminate the Muslim problem" (*Economist*, 2008). Once the enemy-as-pest is confirmed as the dominant theme, the tenor of public discourse moves inexorably to a corollary discussion of extermination and eradication.

Similarly, the rhetorical figuring of the Muslim enemy as animal has moved from the realm of language to the realm of experience, paving the way for the now-infamous cases of prisoner abuse from Abu Ghraib. There is, we suggest, a parallel worth noting between the language that informs a headline such as the *Edmonton Journal*'s "Terror suspect kept on short leash" (Jun. 25, 2007) and the crawling and leashed prisoners of Abu Ghraib whose photos, circulated like trophies by American soldiers, caused an international outcry. The experiences of Muslims in Canada following 9/11 attest to the fact that racist backlash has been fomented by media rhetoric: A 2002 survey found that 60 percent of Canadian Muslims experienced discrimination following 9/11 and 82 percent knew of at least one fellow Muslim who had experienced discrimination (CAIR Canada, 2002).

Analyses of public representations are, therefore, more than rhetorical forays into semantic abstractions; they are fundamental steps towards labeling and, ultimately, interrupting cycles of violence that have been mistakenly figured as inevitable and eternal. The proliferation of language that represents the subject as animals to be captured and eliminated has the effect of desensitizing us to it; such phrases come to seem like simple, natural descriptions rather than representations that perform significant ideological work. It is essential to pay attention to these phrases because, constantly reiterated, they take on a collective force, shaping the conceptual frameworks by which the war on terror in Afghanistan and Iraq is framed, responded to and understood.

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