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**Aboriginal representations in the Canadian news media:
A socio-semiotic analysis of the media representation of Aboriginals in the Caledonia land dispute
and of its relevance for the understanding of the identity of this group in Canadian society**

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Jody Graydon

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Abstract

This thesis addresses the issue of aboriginal representations in the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and Canadian Television (CTV) news coverage of the Caledonia land dispute. The theoretical framework derives from the scholarly work done in the field of media and minority studies. The methodology that will be used to address the issue of aboriginal representations in the media is a socio-semiotic analysis of news clips generated by the CBC and CTV. The medium of television was selected for analysis because of its reliance on sound and image to convey meaning, which allows for a visual and a conventional textual analysis of how the aboriginal identity is represented by the media coverage of aboriginal land claim disputes. The results of this study suggest a possible biased representation of the aboriginal identity, one which is primarily based on their status as a minority within Canada.

Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

Contemporary manifestations of racism often are overlooked in favour of defining racism as an issue of our past (Cottle, 2000, p.3). North America has come a long way from days when racism was overtly displayed and condoned; however, different forms of prejudice still occur in society. Modern racism exists within Canada in various manifestations, but generally it does not consist of overt derogatory comments or blatant intolerance (Cottle, 2000). Racism today often occurs “systematically rather than intentionally” (Fleras and Kunz, 2001, p.80). It is engrained in daily discourses and routine practices that place precedence on Eurocentric ideologies, which often overlook minority perspectives and marginalize opinions that do not reinforce dominant ideologies.

Systematic acts of racism are often categorized as “new racism” (Barker, 1981) and work within a framework that suggests “minorities are not biologically inferior, but different” (Cottle, 2000, p.3). Within a society as diverse as Canada, the notion of “being different” should ideally not be reflected in negative opposition to the majority. However, as Fleras and Kunz (2001) suggest, the concept of difference often leads to the marginalization of minorities because it is not illustrated through “a framework that can engage diversity as different yet equal” (p. 3). One of the ways in which minorities are marginalized in society is through media discourse (Cottle, 2000, p.3). Media content can contain covert acts of discrimination, (whether they be intentional or not), which foster the creation or maintenance of erroneous perceptions of minority groups (Hall 1997; Cottle 2000, van Dijk 1988). Examples of “new racism” within the media include the selective coverage of news events, misquoting minorities, presenting minority comments

out of context and the reinforcement of minority stereotypes through “seemingly legitimate ideologies and attitudes” (van Dijk, 2000, p.34). In the corpus of this thesis, the concept of “new racism” is defined as any instance wherein the inaccurate representation of a minority occurs as a result of the news coverage favoring the majority perspective without legitimate justification, the use of stereotypes to facilitate or generalize news narratives, and the omission of the minority perspective when covering issues that impact the identity and livelihood of minority groups.

In recent years, with the development of mass media communication, the news media have become a critical site of cultural reference (Cottle, 2000). As Henry and Tator (2002) state, “The media are one of the most powerful institutions in a democratic society because they help transmit its central cultural images, ideas, and symbols, as well as a nation’s narratives and myths” (p.4). Since the media help to define national norms, they present a key site of inquiry into issues that revolve around the concept of new racism and the misrepresentation of minorities. Within Canada, one area of inquiry regarding the misrepresentation of minorities is through the current representation of Aboriginal peoples (Fleras and Kunz, 2001).

Canadian Aboriginals represent a small but significant percentage of Canada’s population. Having endured years of appropriation attempts by the government, Canada’s Aboriginal population now encounters numerous social issues that deserve the country’s attention and support. The topics that place Aboriginals on the nightly news are policing issues and land disputes (Statistic Canada, 2004)¹, which are relevant Aboriginal issues but should not exist as the primary topics of Aboriginal media coverage. Land claims and

¹ In a recent survey done by the Statistics Canada (2004) it showed that the public recall of Aboriginal issues in the news was most predominately linked to the coverage of policing issues and land claim disputes. Other (lesser recalled) news items included, Ipperwash and Fisheries (Statistics Canada, 2004).

policing issues do not represent concerns that are considered by Aboriginals to be of the utmost importance, when compared to issues of health care and education (Statistics Canada, 2004).² Recently when the United Nations applied their Human Development Index to Aboriginal communities in Canada, they ranked 68th out of 174 nations; Canada ranks 8th (Assembly of First Nations, 2006).

Many of the social conditions faced by Aboriginal people within Canadian society are comparable to the realities of a less developed country; however, public empathy and awareness of Aboriginal issues remains insufficient (Pohl, 2000, p. 3). As noted by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (2006): “Most Canadians still give low priority to the issues of importance to Aboriginal people”. The lack of public recognition of these concerns raises issues regarding the quality and quantity of the media coverage that is provided about Aboriginals. Media treatment of Aboriginal events is significant because “without accurate knowledge it is all too easy for negative stereotypes and simple ignorance to strangle communication” between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2006). In this thesis, the question of quality will be addressed through an analysis of how the news media represents the Aboriginal identity.

In order to approach the issue of how Aboriginals are represented by the news media, I have chosen to focus on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and Canadian Television (CTV) news coverage of the Caledonia dispute. Caledonia is a small town in southwestern Ontario that is currently the location of an ongoing land claim

² A survey done of First Nations people living on and off reserves showed that land claims ranked as the lowest issue that Aboriginals felt needed to be recognized by the federal government (Statistics Canada, 2004). The issues that ranked as the most important to be recognized by the federal government were Health Care, Education and Aboriginal Rights (Statistics Canada, 2004).

protest. Caledonia is home to an Aboriginal group known as the Mohawk Six Nations. Under the Haldimand Treaty of 1784 the British Crown designated Caledonia, as well as the surrounding area, as being rightfully owned by the Mohawk Six Nations group that resided there long before British settlement (Fenwick, 2006). In the decades to follow, the land was sold or traded for various items and monetary amounts (Fenwick, 2006). Today, the history of the Haldimand treaty and the ownership of this area of land are highly disputed. According to members of the Six Nations Grand River reserve, this land is rightfully owned by the Mohawks. According to others, including members of parliament and some non-Aboriginal members of the community, the land is no longer owned by the Six Nations people. The authenticity of the Haldimand treaty, the actions of the Six Nation peoples, the citizens who purchased the land in good faith, and the previous decisions of the federal government remain at the heart of this land dispute in Caledonia (Fenwick, 2006).

The televised coverage of this event began on CBC news, March 20th, 2006.³ As with many land disputes, the origins of the conflict began long before the media warranted the story newsworthy and will likely continue long after the news media has stopped reporting on the event. Televised exposure of the Caledonia dispute did not return to CBC news programming until April 20th, 2006. CTV news programming acknowledged the Caledonia dispute for the first time on April 20th, 2006.⁴ The focus of this thesis will be the first full week of televised coverage of the Caledonia land dispute

³ The clip ran 02:11min. Broadcast Date: March 22, 2006. Program: CBC News. Network: CBC.

⁴ CBC and CTV provided the majority of its Caledonia coverage from April 20th, 2006 – April 25th, 2006. From April 26th, 2006, onward, the event received significantly less media attention. It went from being mentioned daily, to being mentioned every other day, to being mentioned twice a week, to being mentioned twice a month; within a four-month period. Caledonia remains an ongoing current event and still receives news coverage on the odd occasion when progress in the land claim is deemed *newsworthy* by news editors. This information has been gathered using CBC and CTV online news archives; see reference list for further details.

provided by CBC and CTV evening news programs. In reviewing how Aboriginals are represented by the CBC and CTV, this paper will address the issue of minority representations in some of the Canadian news media, with a specific focus on Aboriginal representations.

The topic of minority representations is part of the cultural studies discipline and addresses the portrayals of minority groups in the media. Previous scholarly work within the topic of minority representations suggests that media portrayal of minorities on how society comes to understand and identify with these groups (Hall, 1997; Cottle, 2000; Henry and Tator, 2002; Fleras and Kunz, 2001). Therefore, the media can potentially play a role in fostering racist discourse that remains prevalent in today's society. Through the use of social semiotics, this paper will address how Aboriginals are represented by the CBC and CTV; thus it aims to contribute some relevant elements to decide whether or not this representation does a disservice to the Aboriginal identity.

The central research question for this thesis is: Does the way in which CBC and CTV cover Aboriginal land disputes misrepresent Canadian Aboriginals in their struggle to reclaim what they believe belongs to them? The chosen methodology for this project is to conduct a semiotic analysis of a series of news clips that feature Aboriginals as the protagonists. Given that the central research question addresses how Aboriginals are represented, semiotics presents a suitable means of approaching the selected media content. The central pursuit of a semiotic study of the media is to analyze how signs are organized within systems of meaning, which can shift and change over time and space (Thwaites, Davis, & Mules, 2002, p.3). In particular, I have chosen to use social semiotics, which seeks to integrate the social dimensions of signs and to account for the

process of sign interpretation in different social contexts (Jensen, 1995, p.52). The methodology of this study is based upon a socio-semiotic framework that uses Jensen's (1995) notion of "super themes" as an analytical tool for analysis, and also Thwaites, Davis and Mules's (2002) textual analysis procedure.

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Each section develops the exploration of my central research question. Chapter Two conducts a review of relevant literature and explores the origins of the topic, media and minority studies. Following this overview, the key findings within this field will be discussed using the communication structure of senders and receivers: that is, the important roles of media creators (those who create media content) and audiences (those who receive media content). The chapter concludes with the presentation of the conceptual framework used for this project and a statement of rationale, which highlights the insufficient research on Aboriginal representations within the Canadian media.

Chapter Three discusses the justification for choosing to approach this thesis by means of the theoretical background of social semiotics. It presents Jensen's (1995) notion of "super themes," and it also introduces one additional super theme that was proposed to deal with the research materials of this project. Finally, it presents Thwaites, Davis and Mules's (2002) semiotic procedure of textual analysis, which outlines a relevant analytical take to investigate the central research question. The second half of this chapter presents a justification for using the first week of televised coverage of the Caledonia dispute as the corpus of my research,⁵ and how the chosen analytical tools were applied to this audiovisual text. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations presented by this approach and suggests possible amendments that could

⁵ This justification includes why the medium of television was chosen over other news media.

further this exploration into minority studies, if it were to be developed at the doctoral level.

In Chapter Four, the results and analysis of the material are presented. Using social semiotics as a theoretical basis for analysis and Jensen's (1995) notion of "super themes" as a means of organizing and investigating my findings, I have provided the results in tandem with the analysis. The focus of this chapter is to evaluate whether or not CBC and CTV provide misleading depictions of the Aboriginal perspective and identity. This chapter concludes with a brief discussion about how the structural constraints of news programming negatively affects the representation of the Aboriginal identity and provides some suggestions on how to improve coverage of Aboriginal issues.

The final chapter of this thesis presents a summary of the results and analysis of my research. The initial hypothesis stated that the Aboriginal identity could be subject to inaccurate representations within the news media due specifically to their status as a minority group. A biased representation of Aboriginal people is argued to be part of CBC and CTV's coverage of the Caledonia dispute, which is primarily the result of Aboriginals' status as a minority group. However, as noted in this final chapter, a secondary reason for the biased representation of Aboriginals in the Caledonia dispute may also be due to system-dependent determinations of the news genre, which impose technical and institutional constraints that limit the possibility of producing accurate Aboriginal portrayals.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter Two Outline

This chapter will review the literature on the topic of media and minority studies. It will begin with a brief historical overview of the origins of this topic and then shift to address two central concepts within media and minority studies: receivers and senders. As a communication structure, I will use these two central notions to explore the major findings and controversies that exist in the current literature. Then, I will narrow the focus of the chapter to address my specific subject matter, thus I will introduce the topic of Aboriginal representation in the Canadian news media. Once I review some concrete issues of this field, I will discuss relevant research approaches and provide an overview of my project's conceptual framework. The chapter will end with a statement of a rationale that outlines the social and scholarly contributions of this thesis project.

Background of Media and Minorities Studies

The topic of media representations of minorities emerges from the interdisciplinary field of cultural studies, which is associated with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. Stuart Hall, a former director at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, reports two radical departures from the field of cultural studies. Hall states that the first disruption occurred “around feminism, and the second around questions of race” (Hall, 1999, p. 103). In his essay, *Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies*, Hall speaks of the resistance that occurred around getting “the critical questions of race” to become part of the cultural studies agenda (Hall, 1999, p. 104). He refers to this challenge as a “profound theoretical struggle” and describes his book *Policing the Crisis* (1978) as the “first and very late example” (Hall, 1999, p. 104) of how important minority issues are within a discipline that seeks to understand how

meaning is generated. Through the publication of *Policing the Crisis* (1978) and various other works, Hall sought to acknowledge and articulate some of the major issues associated with the media's portrayal of minorities.

Hall admits to having been influenced by a variety of academic disciplines, including social theory, anthropology and philosophy. Some of his most influential predecessors are Lévi-Strauss (1969) and Barthes (1977). Hall credits Barthes for his recognition of how the media circulate dominant discourses and for his employment of semiological methods to conduct media analysis (Hall, 1980, p.119). Some of Barthes' most cited works within media studies are *Mythologies* (1957), *Music – Image – Text* (1977) and *Camera Lucida* (1981). Although Barthes never mentions the notion of the empirical receiver, each book in some way does attend to the shifting relationship between a text and a receiver and contain insights regarding how a cultural object or narrative is interpreted by society.

When reviewing the origins of this topic, another scholar that warrants mention is van Dijk, who is described as “one of the first scholars to apply critical discourse analysis to the study of the press” (Henry and Tator, 2002, p. 19). Van Dijk (1993) believes that “the mass media are less interested in minority problems such as xenophobia and discrimination than in alleged minority crime, deviance, or cultural differences” (p.1). Based on his political and ethical convictions, in relationship to mass media and public opinion, van Dijk (1993) has written several texts that deal with the media's portrayal of minorities and has indicated that the news media play a prominent role in “the reproduction of racism in contemporary European and North American societies (p.241).” Although van Dijk regards media recipients “as active, and up to a point

independent information users,” he believes the role of the news media is problematic due to a lack of readily available and accessible alternative sources of information (van Dijk, 1993, p.242). He states that “for specific types of social and political events, including those in the field of ethnic relations, the news media are the main source of information and beliefs used to form the interpretative framework for such events” (van Dijk, 1993, p.242). The topic of minority representations in the media is often linked to the continuance of racially biased discourse and the maintenance of ideologies that naturalize acts of prejudice. Through this brief overview, it becomes evident that in order to address minority portrayals in the media from the point of view of its signification, one must consider the role of ideology and acknowledge societal implications that lend themselves to such a representation.

Senders and Receivers: The Central Focus of Media and Minority Studies

Studies of the news media typically focus on one of the two following central components of the classical communication model: receivers (the audience) or senders (the media).⁶ As Dahlgren states, “Within media research, studies of TV news have considered its organizational and institutional structures, its audiences, and most of all, the actual programming (Dahlgren, 1999, p. 189). In order to provide a review of the literature on minority representations in the media, I have chosen to focus primarily on studies applicable to the news media and have adopted these two central notions (senders and receivers) as a basic communicational framework. Below is a concise outline of the

⁶ Please note that I am highlighting here the **topical** focus of media research and not the approaches taken towards media studies. I recognize that there is some overlap between the categories of senders/receivers and the most common approaches to media studies, such as, structural studies (which look at media organizations and systems), behavioral studies (which focus on audiences) and cultural studies (which involve the analysis of meaning and language). I have chosen to discuss these approaches in my theoretical framework.

central aspects of media and minority studies and the predominant topics reviewed by scholars in this field.

1. Receivers (Audiences):

- social impacts of the media
 - public (media effects theory, public opinion)
 - private (identity politics, issues of otherness)

2. Senders (Media Structure and Content)

- organizational structure
- media aesthetics

Although using these two core aspects of media and minority research does not exhaust all the topics scholars have chosen to study, it does enable a relevant review of the core findings and controversies that are central to my research question.

Receivers: Social Impacts of the Media (Public & Private)

The central notion of *receivers* is heavily prevalent in media studies research. In the context of minority representations and the news media, this topic often includes discussions of media effects theories, public opinion challenges, questions surrounding identity politics and sensitive issues of otherness. Mander (1999) comments on the sheer complexity of audience research by stating, “In communication studies the audience wears many different costumes” (p. 6). The most common distinction within this type of research is that the audience is either perceived as a collective mass, which involves the representation of the public as one entity, or as being a group of independent individuals (Lorimer & Gasher, 2001). Critical studies of the audience rose during the second half of the 20th century, when presuppositions concerning how media influence actually works became a heavily debated topic that addressed the importance of the audience and its role

in media consumption (Mander, 1999).⁷ Scholars in the field of media and minority studies began to critically discuss the audience as a subject of research, rather than a general reference point for studying media content (Hall, 1980; van Dijk, 1988). In order to summarize the findings within critical audience studies that have dealt with issues of minority representation, I will first address the social impact of the news media on the public as a collective group, and then I will discuss the social impacts of the media in relation to personal identity formation and issues of otherness.

As early as the 1920s, scholars such as Lippman were critical of the role the media had in forming public perceptions. Lippman (1922/1960) wrote a book entitled *Public Opinion*, wherein he refers to the media as a propagandistic tool that can sway public opinion almost effortlessly. Although Lippman was often criticized for his overzealous account of the media's power and for his very pessimistic interpretations of the public's capacity to challenge dominant interests, he is considered one of the first scholars to express his concern regarding the powerful role of the media in society. Among the many scholars who have expressed a position on the role of media influence on society, Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) argued that media do not change political ideas, values or beliefs, but instead only reinforce beliefs that already existed. Hall (1997) believes that the media directly influence the formation of public opinion and play a role in labeling minority groups in society. Van Dijk (1993) concurs with Hall (1997), as it can be seen in the following statement, "the media play a central role in shaping the social cognitions of the public at large (van Dijk, 1993, p.242)." Some academics are more firm in their beliefs on media effects, as illustrated in Khaki and Prasad's (1988) statement, "The media have become potent channels through which national symbols

⁷ "In the seventies, the field of critical studies largely ignored the audience" (Mander, 1999, p.6).

have been transmitted to ordinary Canadians...without question the media have shaped public opinion” (p.19).

Hall (1997), van Dijk (1993), Henry and Tator (2002) and Cottle (2000), all acknowledge the powerful role of the media in influencing public opinion; however, they also recognize the unpredictability of individual thought processes and acknowledge that the effects of the news media can be difficult to measure since some people are more easily persuaded than others. Henry and Tator (2002) reflect on the debate over media influence by stating that “media consumers cannot be regarded as a homogeneous, passive, and uncritical mass; at the same time, we cannot ignore the media’s crucial role in influencing and reinforcing attitudes and opinions” (p.7).

Although the specific level of media influence on public perception can be difficult to measure and define, there is a consensus that media play a role in shaping how people understand their own identity and the identity of others, in relation to the larger society (Hall, 1980; van Dijk, 1993; Larson, 2006). A few of the primary concerns addressed in the body of literature pertaining to minority portrayals revolve around the ability of news media to encourage public policy, support political candidates and maintain national norms, all of which have social impacts that can affect public welfare. The social impact of the news media has far reaching ramifications within the public sphere, which can either be detrimental or beneficial to society. Regardless of the outcome of social effects of the media, it remains a phenomenon that is not yet fully understood and warrants further analysis.

Until this point, I have referred to the public on a macro scale and used the concept of audience to refer to the audience as a collective mass. However, it is also

important to consider the audience on a micro level and to recognize the role of media in the shaping of individual attitudes and beliefs. Valaskakis (2000) states, “We construct who we are in the process of identifying with the images and narratives that dominate our ways of seeing and representing the world around us, media also contribute to the formation of social identity” (p. 76). In this quote, Valaskakis (2000) acknowledges that cultural narratives and images play a role in how individuals come to understand themselves and others.

A negative consequence of inaccurate minority portrayals is that it fosters feelings of inadequacy among members of the group that is being portrayed (Larson, 2006, p.81). For example, Voyageur (2005), a North American Aboriginal, states that “the media depictions of Indians with which I grew up were overwhelmingly negative, mythical, or inaccurate—sometimes all three” (p.101). This poses a great risk to Aboriginals who seek to identify themselves with their representations in the Canadian media.⁸ Although not all Aboriginals will internalize these harmful representations, those who do will have lower self-esteem and become less likely to make positive lifestyle choices. Larson (2006) states:

Just as stereotypes reinforce beliefs about their own superiority for whites, they can lead nonwhites to view themselves as inferior...people who have internalized oppression accept the blame for their disadvantaged social position and are unlikely to the fight the system (p.17).

From the concerns addressed in the above quote, it becomes clear that negative stereotypes not only influence public perceptions of minority groups, but additionally influence how the minority group come to understand their role within society. In

⁸ It is important to note that there is one network dedicated primarily to the representation of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal issues. This network is the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN), which is run primarily by Aboriginals and fosters more accurate portrayals of the Aboriginal identity; and thus, can function in some way as an antidote to harmful representations of Aboriginal people.

another piece written by Valaskakis (2005), she states, “Our identities are formed not in internal conceptions of the self, but in the adoption of changing representations and narratives that we generate and express in our individual and social experience (p.3).”

In addition to concerns surrounding identity formation, some scholars approach the topic of identity politics and media representation in terms of “otherness” and how the *other* is positioned by (and in) the media. Consider the following excerpt written by Andacht (2005), which documents the issue of otherness through the analysis of a Brazilian advertisement.

Although downplayed in this 2003 Brazilian television commercial as just another endless gag used by contemporary marketing to sell a persuasive sentimental education, it still asserts the need to extirpate the Other’s troubling existence, which supposedly is a threat to our own. This can in no way be an acceptable iconic sign in an age when closer contact with the other is so desperately needed....the last thing society needs is to foster mistrust and alienation from the other, who can only be a source of understanding ourselves, not the barrier to the precious process of self-interpretation (p.108).

In this excerpt, Andacht discusses the message of alterity conveyed in a Brazilian commercial for Polar beer. The commercial features two young men crossing out the word *Export* printed on wooden crates containing Polar beer and expresses hostility toward the “other”, who in this instance is represented by non-southerners living in Brazil (Andacht, 2005, p.105). Andacht describes the concept of *otherness* as part of a relationship that involves a “frightening dualistic logic that carries out its analyses with an axe” (Andacht, 2005, p.108). When the minority is represented within the reductionistic dichotomy of “us and them”, differences are not celebrated, but rather exist to accentuate the majority (us) as being more normal or admirable and the minority (them) as being inadequate or worth less. The concept of otherness is often embodied in

news narratives and illustrates how the media marginalizes the minority. Consider Henry and Tator's (2002) statement:

Media representations are discursive formations that are part of our everyday culture, including the material fabric of institutional culture. Their discourses have enormous power not only to represent social groups but also to establish who is 'we' and who is 'other' in the 'imagined community' of the nation-state (p.27).

Representation of the "other" in a negative light can be particularly harmful in situations where the majority is primarily educated about a minority group via the news media. In these situations, the majority learns about the minority and comes to understand these groups through the often negative dichotomy of *otherness*. For example, some academics feel that Aboriginal Canadians are particularly susceptible to the negative effects of "otherness", because of the limited amount of face-to-face interaction between

Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals. Voyageur (2005) states:

Aboriginal people are particularly vulnerable to depictions of themselves as frequently being at odds with mainstream society because the media is, at times, the only contact that mainstream society members have with Aboriginal people. This negative coverage can foster mistrust and misunderstanding between the majority and minority (p.102).

As noted above, the media often act as a tool for educating the public about minority groups, specifically when interaction between ethnic groups is limited and other means of more formal education are not accessible.

Senders: A Review of Media Structures, Strategies and Practices

The second central theme in the literature of media and minority studies is articulated around the notion of *senders* and revolves around the processes that serve to create or produce media content. It looks at the business of media and its organizational structure, as well as the content of news media programming. I will begin with a brief review of the concerns raised regarding the current structure of Canadian news networks.

The institutional structure of North American news media networks is often criticized for its “increasing commercialization of cultural production, conglomerate ownership of media organizations, conflicts of interest between media companies and other businesses owned by the same corporation and corporate concentration” (Lorimer & Gasher, 2001, p.232). The concerns raised here by Lorimer and Gasher (2001) are directed towards privately owned media outlets, but in recent years has also become true for publicly owned media corporations. For example, the CBC is owned by the government and functions as the country’s national public service television network, whereas CTV is privately owned and is Canada’s largest network (Nolan, 2001, p. 3). Despite the distinction between public and private, however, the daily operations of each network are very similar (Croteau & Hoynes, 2001, p.226).⁹ The major difference between the CBC (as a publicly owned station) and CTV (as a privately owned station), should ideally be the amount of emphasis each network places on the importance of profits. Since CBC is *not* privately owned, it is not under as much pressure to increase company earnings; whereas CTV (as a privately owned corporation) must make money to please its shareholders and to stay in business. In recent years, however, the Media Awareness Network (2007) has documented CBC’s growing concern with financial considerations, which has entailed increasing its advertising revenue as it decreases its local public service programming. Overall, whether a network is public or private, the current trend in Canada is to have media outlets merge to create giant media conglomerates, which control large percentages of the information disseminated to the

⁹ The similarities between the daily operations of private and public media outlets is discussed in detail by Croteau and Hoynes (2001) who state, “In short, the expanding commercial media began doing some of what public broadcasting used to do, and public broadcasting began to resemble commercial media” (p.226).

public programming (Media Awareness Network, 2007). This raises issues of homogeneity and a lack of diversity.

Matters pertaining to homogeneity and a lack of diversity are also present within the personnel employed by the news station. For example, according to a 2000 study by Sauvageau and Pritchard at Laval University, 97.3 percent of Canadian journalists across all media were Caucasian (Media Awareness Network, 2007). Furthermore, of the minorities that occupied journalist positions, Aboriginals had the lowest number, with only 1.3 percent of news personnel classifying themselves as “Aboriginal” (Media Awareness Network, 2007). Given the top-down structure of news programming, even when journalists are members of a minority group, they often find themselves pigeonholed into providing a very narrow version of events and having limited creative control (Larson, 2006).

The second and more prevalent focus of media research within cultural studies deals specifically with the issues of content. The internal practices of news programs are often overlooked by the viewing audience, but remain a major focus for cultural studies theorists, who wish to identify the deeply embedded ideological structures that shape news narratives. The internal workings of a news network not only dictate what is seen on the news but also how the story is presented. *Agenda Setting Theory* is an umbrella term used to reference the strategic processes and techniques that are used in the creation of a news segment (Miller, 2005). Concepts associated with agenda setting theory are the practices of agenda setting (Shaw and McCombs, 1977), priming (Larson, 2006) and framing (Goffman, 1974). Each of these institutional practices contributes to the structure of news programming.

When discussing the concept of agenda setting, editors and news directors are referred to as gatekeepers, who “sift through a huge number of events and decide which events will be covered and which stories will be broadcast or published (Lorimer & Gasher, 2001, p.235). The concept of agenda setting exists on the principle that public discourse is influenced by the topics covered in the news media (van Dijk, 1998). By excluding and including certain events, gatekeepers are able to “set agendas,” implicitly dictating to society what *is* and what *is not* important (Larson, 2006, p.88). As Larson (2006) states, “The public perceives issues that get extensive coverage in the news as more important than issues that are ignored” (p.88). Since there are a large number of topics the media can choose from, the subjects that are selected for public consumption help to reveal the ideological biases of news stations (van Dijk, 1991, p. 71). In a review of subjects selected by news programs in North America, Larson (2006) has written that minorities commonly receive substantially less coverage or are completely excluded from the daily news. Larson states, “To the extent that minorities are excluded from the news and their voices are not heard, their issues and arguments are not part of public debate” (Larson, 2006, p.88). Fleras and Kunz (2001) concur with Larson by stating, “Visible minorities are reduced to an invisible status through ‘underrepresentation’ newsworthy only as entertainers, athletes, or villains and subject to treatment as problems” (p.78). This statement introduces the second concept, which is priming.

Priming is discussed as a central aspect of agenda setting theories. However, it is different from agenda setting because it influences not only *what* news stories are viewed but also how a story is introduced. As Larson (2006) states,

Priming goes beyond agenda setting to influence how readers and viewers attribute responsibility for problems highlighted in the news...Priming can also

effect how racial minorities are evaluated. Stories about racial minorities that focus on the individuals and their problems, rather than on social and institutional structures, prime audiences to hold the individuals responsible for their difficulties (p.88).

As defined by Miller (2005), “priming” refers to the way in which the media provide a lot of time and space to certain issues, which helps to make these issues more accessible and vivid in the public's mind and therefore grooms the public to interpret the event in a particular way (p.34). Fleras and Kunz (2001) discuss priming in terms of a concept they refer to as “shallows and rapids”. The “shallows and rapids” treatment of minorities is defined in the following way: “Under normal circumstances, minorities are ignored or rendered irrelevant by the mainstream press (shallows). Coverage that does exist is situated within the context of crisis or calamity, involving natural catastrophes, civil war, and colorful insurgents (rapids)” (Fleras & Kunz, 2001, p.78). The concept of “shallows and rapids” treatment primes the public to view minorities as the “other” and positions them against dominant groups in society (Fleras & Kunz, 2001, p.79).

One of the most influential practices that shape news narratives is framing. In 1978, Tuchman metaphorically described framing in the following way,

Like any frame that delineates a world, the news frame may be considered problematic. The view through a window depends upon whether the window is large or small, has many panes, or few, whether the glass is opaque or clear, whether the window faces a street or a backyard. The unfolding scene also depends upon where one stands, far or near, craning one’s neck to the side, or gazing straight ahead, eyes parallel to the wall in which the window is encased (p. 1).

In this statement, Tuchman comments on the role of human agency in media production and how consumption inevitably influences the frame of a news story. She exemplifies this point by noting how even minor changes in one’s stance or location can lead to the creation of a different frame. Larson (2006) defines framing as “how the news story

emphasizes certain values, themes, or interpretations” (p.89). To frame a news story, journalists, editors or producers will use a variety of techniques and strategies that structure the stories narrative and determine how the public receives the information. Headlines, photo selection, stereotyping, the order of events, exclusion of arguments and specific selection of quotes, are all common techniques used to frame a news story. As Tuchman (1978, p.1) exemplified in her definition of framing, even small changes to the frame of a story can shift or change the tone and message of the news narrative. For example, Henry and Tator (2002) comment on the strategy are of selective “quoting” and how quotes can be used to frame a story; they state, “When reporters and columnists want to favour a particular point of view...they can do so by quoting a source that reflects it, even while legitimately claiming they are merely reporting a factual account of what has been said” (p.76). This shows how any particular choice of the journalist can influence the stories frame and move the narrative away from an objective account of events and closer to a subjective retelling.

In many cases framing is an unconscious process, which often reflects the commonsensical values of those who create media content. Therefore, when the frame is being used to feature a member of society that may not represent the majority, frames can be misleading and problematic. Fleras and Kunz (2001) state,

Nowhere is the framing power of news media more evident than in media messages about minorities. The often subtle racist discourse of mainstream news media renders people of colour invisible, either by ignoring stories about them or by silencing minority voices. On those occasions when they do appear, minority women and men are usually a) misrepresented by being refracted through a white male stream gaze, b) denounced as social problems and outsiders that are eroding Canada’s social fabric, and c) criticized as freeloading “others” in contrast with hardworking and law-abiding white Canadians. Aboriginal peoples in particular are often framed in ways that do not reflect Aboriginal priorities, realities or experiences... (p. 79).

In this statement, Fleras and Kunz (2001) draw our attention to the issue of framing minority representations and some of the dangers associated with certain frames used to portray minority members of society. It is very important that when presenting a news story, particularly one that features a minority, news personnel attempt to be honest, objective and accurate. However, objectivity is not a simple standard to achieve given the often built-in commonsensical values that lend to the production of media discourse.

Consider Dahlgren's (1999) statement,

All stories have a storyteller, be it an individual person or a collectivity. This holds true for narrative accounts about events in the real world as well as for fictional tales. Storytelling, of necessity, bears the stamp of human subjectivity; its traces cannot be totally removed... Meaning is a construction, albeit at time fragile and elusive, and one of the archetypical practices by which we generate meaning about real world happenings in through narrative form. (p. 192).

Here, Dahlgren comments on the inevitability of subjectivity within journalism and news practices. He acknowledges a core difficulty within journalism ethics by mentioning how difficult it is to remove personal bias and acknowledges the "fragile and elusive" nature of meaning construction. Given the inevitability of personal bias or personal experience weighing in on how a news story is retold, it becomes important for the media to be under constant analysis to ensure that the information being retold is not regarded as the sole truth of the situation or event.

In this section, I have reviewed the literature that focuses on *senders* and the various concerns and key findings that resonate from the practices of today's media. By looking at the practices of the media both in the production of media content and in the organizational structure of the media industry, it becomes evident that there are numerous variables that affect the content of news programming and how news stories are

constructed. Now, I will turn the focus of this section to address the importance of specificity within research that focuses on the media's portrayal of minorities.

Media Representations of Canadian Aboriginals

For the purposes of this analysis, I will be focusing on Aboriginal representations within the Canadian news media. For this reason, let it be noted that I acknowledge the unique sociopolitical status of Aboriginals within Canada, which introduces a host of deeply embedded ideologies that play an ongoing role in the country's national narratives and influence how Aboriginals are portrayed. Despite the uniqueness of Canadian Aboriginals, they are a group that until recently had been somewhat overlooked by scholars.¹⁰ In the past two decades, there has been a respectable increase in the amount of scholarly material written about Aboriginals and media; however, the quality of available research material remains insufficient in comparison to the complex questions that surround the media's treatment of Aboriginal Canadians.

Some texts, that are dedicated primarily to understanding representations of North American Aboriginals are Valaskakis's (2005), *Indian Country: Essay's on Contemporary Native Culture*, Lambertus's (2004), *War Time Images, Peace Time Wounds: The Media and the Gustafen Lake Standoff*, and Kalant's (2004), *National Identity and the Conflict at Oka: Native Belonging and Myths of Postcolonial Nationhood in Canada*. Each text is well researched and uses social, political and historical details to help in their analysis of Aboriginals representations.

¹⁰ In the 1970s issues of appropriation of Aboriginal words by white academics became a large ethical issue, which ultimately led to a distrust of white academics studying Aboriginal issues. Since then it has taken years for white academics to gain back the trust of various Aboriginal groups. It is an ongoing issue and many Aboriginals are still highly suspicious of the intentions of non-Aboriginal academics. See "Trickster of Aboriginal Research: Or How to use Ethical Review Strategies to Conduct Cultural Genocide" By Peter Cole (2004) in *Native Studies Review*, (15) 2.

Conceptual Framework

In this section, I will review the two major categories used to characterize the media's portrayal of minorities, provide a brief overview of the relevant conceptual tools scholars use to analyze media content and close with a summary of the conceptual framework that has been used to frame this thesis project. To begin, Henry and Tator (2002) list three different approaches to the study of media: structural, behavioral and cultural (p.30). Given that I am seeking to understand how Aboriginal Canadians are represented in the news media, I have chosen to approach my media analysis through cultural studies, which "involves analyzing meaning and language" (Henry and Tator, 2002, p.31). When scholars approach media content with the intention of studying *how* the media represent a particular group, they will often distinguish their research materials between media created by minorities from media that is created by non-minorities. The first approach can be characterized as the "hands on" interpretation of media and minorities. Scholars who choose to approach this subject using the "hands on" approach focus on media produced by minorities as the focus of their research material. For example, Roth's (2005) publication *Something New in the Air: The Story of First Peoples Television Broadcasting in Canada*, illustrates the "hands on" interpretation of media and minorities because it documents the development of Aboriginal Canadians pursuit of self-representation within the media. Roth's book provides a comprehensive history of Aboriginal media and Aboriginals' struggle to gain recognition within the Canadian cultural landscape. In the final chapters of this book (2005: pp. 187-218), Roth discusses the establishment of Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN), a Canadian network that is owned and operated by Aboriginals and features programs that reflect the

identity and culture of Canada's first peoples. In Roth's book, the concept of "self representation" (2005: pp. 201-218) is depicted in a very positive way and is presented as part of the solution to help eliminate negative stereotypes portrayed by media. However, it is important to recognize that the "hands on" interpretation of media and minorities will not always document fair and accurate minority portrayals. Regardless of the interpretation of the minority representation, the "hands on" approach seeks to understand the issue of media and minorities through instances where the minority plays some type of professional role in the creation of the media content. Examples are the writings of a minority reporter in a national newspaper, the coverage of an event by a minority reporter or the appearance of a minority character in an entertainment program.

Having now reviewed the "hands on" approach (a relevant detour within my theoretical approach), I will now introduce the "hands off" approach to the study of the media and minorities. The second approach within this field looks at the representation of minority groups by outlets that are owned, operated, and produced by non-minorities. For example, my thesis project seeks to identify, understand and analyze how Aboriginal Canadians are represented by CTV and CBC: two networks that are owned and operated primarily by non-minorities. My approach to the topic studies non-minorities representation of minorities.

In summary, there are two predominant approaches to studying media representations of minorities: either by looking at how minorities represent themselves (hands-on) or by looking at how non-minorities represent minorities (hands-off). Regardless of the approach one takes, a researcher is then left with the difficult process of analyzing the media content. The most popular methods of media analysis are content

analysis, discourse analysis and semiotic analysis. For my thesis project I have chosen not to use quantitative methods; therefore, I will now focus on highlighting some of the qualitative tools I will use for my own media analysis.

The tools described here are primarily derived from the theory of social semiotics. Social semiotics acknowledges the importance of social contexts and allows for several different approaches to the understanding of signs in society. Hodge and Kress (1988) define social semiotics in the following way,

Meaning is always negotiated in the semiotic process, never simply imposed inexorably from above by an omnipotent author through an absolute code. Traditional semiotics likes to assume that the relevant meanings are frozen and fixed in the text itself, to be extracted and decoded by the analyst by reference to a coding system that is impersonal and neutral, and universal for users of the code. Social semiotics cannot assume that texts produce exactly the meanings and effects that their authors hope for: it is precisely the struggles and their uncertain outcomes that must be studied at the level of social action, and their effects in the production of meaning (p.12).

The above excerpt captures the essence of social semiotics and its quest to ascertain a systematic analysis of the generation of signification through the exploration of meaning processes and the refusal to attribute or consider a fixed meaning within a text (Hodge & Kress, 1988, p.12). Inspired by the possibilities of social semiotics and its ability to provide a comprehensive semiotic reading of media text, I have adopted the following conceptual framework to approach my research materials.

In Jensen's (1995) book, *The Social Semiotics of Mass Communication*, he dedicates a brief but pertinent section of his book to the notion of "super themes." Jensen (1995) discusses super themes as part of an empirical research study that explores how viewers decode specific television news stories (p.155). Within the context of a news media analysis, Jensen (1995) states that super themes serve "as a common denominator

for the universe of television news and the respondents' universe of everyday experience" (p.156). Given the emphasis that the notion of "super themes" place on social conditions, the news clips can be analyzed based on material content and how they operate in relation to relevant Canadian ideologies and other frameworks of understanding that are dependent on the viewers social experiences and identity (Jensen, 1995).¹¹ As a brief example, consider a news story that covers the recent social impacts of a series of unusual off season hurricanes. Depending on a viewer's interpretative framework, he or she could consider this a current event piece that depicts the devastating reality of natural catastrophes or as an environmental piece that addresses how human activity has impacted the environment and resulted in unusual weather patterns that can generate off season hurricanes. This example shows how a news story created within a specific news genre (current events) can be interpreted by a viewer in an unexpected way that may or may not have been anticipated, which exemplifies the importance of considering social contexts when studying news media content.

In addition to identifying the various super themes within my selected media texts, another relevant conceptual tool that will be used in my analysis is inspired from an analytical procedure employed by social semioticians, who seek to understand how meaning is constructed and conveyed within various types of media discourse. Thwaites, et. al. (2002) suggest that when conducting a textual analysis, a researcher should identify key signifiers,¹² seek out possible denotations,¹³ look into how these denotations operate

¹¹ Jensen's (1995) notion of "super themes" will be further explained and more explicitly defined in Chapter Three: Methodology.

¹² As defined by Thwaites et. al. (2002), "The signifier is the sensory impression of the sign: the mental image of marks on a page, or of sounds in the air, for example" (p.31).

¹³ As defined by Thwaites et. al. (2002), "The denotations of a sign are the most stable and objectively verifiable of its connotations (p.62). Furthermore, denotations are a sign's most stable connotations; connotations being defined as a sign's "set of possible signifieds" (Thwaites et. al., 2002, p. 60).

within the text, and consider how a text is informed by social circumstances (p.81).

Thwaites et. al. (2002) also consider as central “how the text’s signs and codes are informed by valued social ideas, but at the same time signify those values and quite possibly reinforce their appeal to readers” (p.81). Both Jensen’s (1995) notion of super themes and Thwaites et. al. (2002) semiotic procedure of textual analysis will be further explored in the methodology section of this paper: Chapter Three. I believe this conceptual framework will help me answer my research question.

Chapter 3:
Methodology

Chapter Three Outline

A working understanding of key concepts in semiotics - including their practical application - can be seen as essential for everyone who wants to understand the complex and dynamic communication ecologies within which we live. Those who cannot understand such environments are in the greatest danger of being manipulated by those who can (Chandler, 2002, Strengths of Semiotic Analysis, para. 10).

In this chapter, I will discuss the justification for choosing to approach my materials using the theoretical background of social semiotics. Then, I will outline Jensen's (1995) notion of "super themes", provide my justification for creating an additional super theme, and review Thwaites et. al.'s (2002) standard semiotic procedure of textual analysis, which will summarize the methods used to investigate my research question. In the second half of this chapter, I will provide a justification of why I have chosen to review the first week of televised coverage of the Caledonia dispute and present a description of how my research tools were applied to this media text. In closing, I will provide my rationale for this project, discuss some of the limitations of this approach, and propose some amendments that could be made to my research strategy if it were to be further developed at the doctoral level.

Justification of Research Strategy

When deciding upon the method I would use to approach my study, I was confronted with several options. Each offered an alternative means of finding an answer to my purposed research question, which deals with minority representations in the media. When deciding which method was most appropriate for my thesis project, I focused on what research strategy would work best for developing an understanding of how the coverage was perceived by the public. I decided upon using social semiotics as the theoretical background for my project because of its ability to explore theoretically

the generation of meanings that constitute sign activity. In contrast to traditional methods of communication studies, semiotics seeks to understand meaning as a more complex process than the accurate and efficient transmission of a message (Thwaites et. al., 2002, p.3). The foundational concepts that frame both traditional and contemporary semiotic theories foster a wide ranging pursuit of meaning that is flexible in nature and well suited to cope with televised research material. As Chandler (2002) states,

Semiotics provides us with a potentially unifying conceptual framework and a set of methods and terms for use across the full range of signifying practices, which include gesture, posture, dress, writing, speech, photography, film, television and radio. Semiotics may not itself be a discipline but it is at least a focus of enquiry, with a central concern for meaning-making practices which conventional academic disciplines treat as peripheral (Strengths of Semiotic Analysis, para. 1).

As outlined above, semiotics provides a conceptual framework that approaches signifying practices systematically, which allows researchers flexibility in their pursuit of describing *how* meaning manifests itself through signs. However, the very large domain of semiotics also makes it difficult to provide a definition of semiotics as a means of critical investigation, which allows room for criticism by those who view semiotic analysis as “little more than a pretentious form of literary criticism” (Chandler, 2002, Criticisms of Semiotic Analysis, para. 1). Some academics question the amount of subjectivity involved in semiotic methods of analysis since, for example, it does not “lend itself to quantification” or fit into a strict model of discourse analysis (Chandler, 2002, Criticisms of Semiotic Analysis, para. 2). However, even though the application of semiotic methods of analyses varies according to the model that is employed, semiotics has proven to assist scholars in the pursuit of understanding various cultural signs.¹⁴ Often times, a semiotic study is correlated with ideological analysis, which seeks to determine how sign

¹⁴ See: Kampf, 2006; Andacht, 1997.

systems help to neutralize and reinforce particular frames of “the way things are” (Chandler, 2002). In summary, I have chosen to adopt semiotics as part of my method of investigation for this project because of its aim to deconstruct commonsensical ideologies, and because of its search for understanding and challenging the sign systems that construct meanings within our social world.

In particular, I have chosen to work from the theories that arise from social semiotics.¹⁵ Social semiotics strays from structural semiotics in that it seeks to incorporate the social dimensions of signs and places importance on how signs can be interpreted differently given the receiver and social context of the sign (Jensen, 1995, p.52). Given the importance that is placed on how a sign’s meaning can shift based on the receiver of the sign, social semiotics is often correlated with reception studies. However, based on traditional communication models, which place emphasis on the flow between the sender and receiver and possible “noise” that may exist during the process of signification, it is possible to apply aspects of social semiotic theories without the use of reception studies (Thwaites et. al., 2002, p.2). When a reception study is not imminent, a researcher can substantiate his or her findings by focusing on the meaning of a sign prior to any actual interpretation. For example, consider Peirce’s concept of the immediate interpretant: “The Immediate Interpretant consists in the Quality of the Impression that a sign is fit to produce, not to any actual reaction” (CP 8:315). Peirce’s immediate interpretant considers the potential meaning of a sign based on the structure of the sign and its characteristics. Keeping this notion in mind, I have chosen to forgo the need of a reception study for my analysis and instead have conducted an observational study by means of Jensen’s (1995) notion of “super themes;” thus I will describe plausible

¹⁵ See: Jensen, 1995; Hodge and Kress, 1988.

meanings and effects of my media text based on my own knowledge as an observer. As a Canadian born resident and a member of the general Canadian public, I have the required background knowledge to approach this study. Let it be noted that I recognize the how this methodological choice introduces the issue of personal bias of the researcher and that I have made an effort to maintain the integrity of this study through constant self reflection.¹⁶ I will now further develop the notion of Jensen's (1995) super themes and review how I applied his concept as an analytical tool for my research.

Application of Research Strategy

In *The Social Semiotics of Mass Communication* (1995), Jensen dedicates a brief but pertinent section of his book to the notion of "super themes." The context in which Jensen (1995) discusses "super themes" is as part of his empirical research that explores how viewers decode specific television news stories (p.155). Jensen (1995) defines super themes in the following way:

Super themes are simultaneously very general and very concrete categories of understanding, simultaneously a strength and weakness of reception. They are general, or flexible, to the extent that they accommodate a variety of perspectives on, domains of, and propositions about social reality; they are specific to the extent that they relate to the details of the news event, as represented in visuals or commentary, and perhaps to viewers concrete life experiences... The theoretical implication is that super themes are articulated in a complex process of inference, interpretations, or semiosis that matches categories of everyday experiences (as derived partly from mass media) with the categories of media discourse (p.156-157).

Jensen's (1995) notion of super themes provides a method of exploration of media discourse that can be used to describe representations within a media text. Furthermore,

¹⁶ Through my own determination to remain open minded and as objective as possible throughout this process and the advice of my thesis supervisor to keep me focused on the facts that resulted solely from the analysis, I believe I have been able to carefully track, monitor and minimize as much as humanly possible the effect of personal bias to respect the scientific nature of this work.

Jensen (1995) also proposes four super themes that are found to be at work in the everyday interpretation of televised texts; the family, the nation, the body and other cultures (p.115). After conducting my observational research, I was able to adopt three out of Jensen's (1995) four super themes for my present research purpose; the family, the nation and other cultures.¹⁷ In addition to these three super themes (Jensen, 1995), I also found the need to propose a fourth super theme in order to adequately address the potential interpretation of the Caledonia coverage. The fourth super theme proposed by my study is namely *law and order*.¹⁸ By using the law and order super theme I was able to incorporate a pertinent discussion about the role of the OPP in the Caledonia coverage, which upon viewing the clips, was a salient factor in addressing my research question.

In addition to Jensen's (1995) notion of "super themes" I will also be using a common analytical procedure employed by social semioticians, as guidance for interpreting each super theme and how they contribute to answering the question of *how* Aboriginals are represented within the CBC and CTV news coverage. Thwaites, et. al. (2002) reviews the analytical procedure of semiotic textual analysis through the following list:

1. We located key signifiers in the text.
2. We proposed a range of possible signifieds for each of the signifiers.
3. We identified the connotations and social codes to which the signifieds were relating.
4. We noted which of these connotations seemed to become the naturalized, true meanings in the texts, its denotations
5. We consider that these denotations might reinforce familiar social structures of thought. We tried to derive the larger systems of cultural beliefs and attitudes which the text seemed to represent (p.82).¹⁹

¹⁷ Jensen's (1995) *Body* super theme was not relevant for my analysis of the Caledonia news clips.

¹⁸ The definition of the *law and order* super theme will be addressed in Chapter Four: Results and Analysis.

¹⁹ Let it be noted, that Thwaites et. al. (2002) suggests paying extra attention to the last step of this process (p.82). Thwaites et. al. (2002) state, "The text is both produced by and reproduces cultural attitudes...When

The above analytical procedure is drawn from social semiotics and is used in this study in conjunction with the notion of “super themes” (Jensen, 1995). Through identifying and exploring the key signifiers, in regards to their connotative and denotative meanings, this process of semiotic analysis compliments the notion of “super themes” because it facilitates an analysis into the major codes and interpretative frameworks that shape the narratives within the media text.

In terms of the practical application of these research tools, I was able to access the news clips I was researching online and re-watch them as needed. This allowed me to preview all the news clips²⁰ that would be included in my study, write up a preliminary observational analysis, which included a description of each news clip, and return to re-watch the news clips once I had designed my research tools and was familiar with the content of the news clips. I then sat down and watched each clip numerous times, both in their entirety and sometimes in segments, until I was able to identify which super themes were present, which were more prevalent than others, and the need to create an additional super theme to address the research material in its entirety. Once I had identified which super themes were activated by these representations, I watched the news clips again and conducted a semiotic analysis of each of the previously identified super themes. Overall, my main strategy for applying my chosen socio-semiotic approach to my research material was to watch the clips repeatedly over a period of five months so that I became familiar with them and was able to perform an observational analysis, which replaced the need for a reception study.

signs and connotations appear normal, this is because the text presents itself as obviously truthful. Such connotations disguise the particular social influences that underlie the relevant codes (pp.81-82).

²⁰ CTV's and CBC's evening news coverage of Caledonia for the week of April 20, 2006 - April 26, 2006.

Using Jensen's (1995) notion of "super themes," and Thwaites et. al.'s (2002) guidelines for a semiotic analysis, for my research method I decided to explore the first week of CBC and CTV's televised news coverage of the Caledonia land dispute. I chose to focus on the televised coverage of the Caledonia land dispute because of a particular interest I had in the medium of television. Firstly, television news is regarded as the primary location that Canadian citizens retrieve their information regarding current events (Lorimer & Gasher, 2001, pp.37-38). Therefore, it is likely that the results of this study will reflect how the majority of Canadians have been exposed to the Caledonia dispute, and thus, explore one way in which Canadians become informed of the daily events that impact Canada's Aboriginal population. Furthermore, I selected news clips generated by CBC and CTV which reflects my partiality to consider televised content that has had a greater chance of having been viewed by members of the Canadian public.²¹ The second reason for choosing the medium of television is because of its richness in both visual and audio cues, which allows for numerous possibilities of studying how a sign's meaning is generated.

Justification for Selection of Research Materials

Now that I have reviewed my research strategy, explained its practical application, and described my justification for selecting the medium of television, I will discuss why I chose to focus on the Caledonia dispute and why I limited myself to reviewing only the first week of coverage provided by the CBC and CTV evening news programs. Given my interest in Aboriginal representations, it is a reasonable decision to focus on a current event that features members of the Aboriginal community as primary

²¹ According to the Bureau of Broadcast Measurement, CBC and CTV are two of the most watched news programs in Canada (Gaudet, 2006).

protagonists. Furthermore, the news coverage of Caledonia has not yet been explored by members of the academic community since it is fairly recent and remains ongoing. I limited myself to the first week of coverage due to time restraints presented by the nature of this thesis project and because the first week of televised coverage was more substantial than other weeks of coverage when the event was no longer a *new* news story.

The first week of televised coverage of the Caledonia dispute, which appeared on CBC and CTV evening news programming, provided a wealth of research material that is sufficient for the needs of my MA thesis. Ideally, if one were to explore this research question at the doctoral level, he or she could review coverage over a more prolonged time period and possibly consider supplementary methods of media analyses. That said, the coverage I have reviewed that is currently available online through the news archives of CBC and CTV is not going to be available for an indefinite period of time. I have been informed by the networks online news coordinators that the material posted on the website can be removed at any time.²² If the clips became unavailable, via the online news archives, a researcher would then have to access the material by contacting individual news stations and paying high prices for access to previously aired news programs. As a consequence, if this thesis project were to be revisited at a higher level of study (i.e., the doctoral level) access to online materials might not be an option, which would pose a great limitation to researchers working within a budget. The research strategy for this project and the selected time frame of televised coverage I have chosen to review fit the requirements of an MA thesis project and offer findings that will

²² On November 5th, 2007, CTV removed the Caledonia news clips that were analyzed for this thesis. By this date, I had already spent a great deal of time observing the iconic material and was able to finish my thesis without my analysis suffering from this loss. That said, in some of my citations for the CTV news clips, I am unable to document specific temporal detail, such as, the exact second something I am referencing has occurred within the news clip.

contribute to the understanding of *how* Aboriginals are presented by the Canadian news media.

Rationale

The focus of this thesis is Aboriginal representations within the ongoing land dispute in Caledonia. This topic was selected because of a general interest I had in Aboriginal Canadians after learning that a recent Statistics Canada (2004) report on the “Public Opinion of Aboriginal and Northern Issues” showed that nearly half of all Canadians believe Aboriginal issues are important but do not warrant significant attention by the government (Statistics Canada, 2004). This finding reflects that some Canadians have a general idea of the problems faced by Aboriginal people, but unfortunately it also suggests that few Canadians consider Aboriginal issues as an area of importance. In fact, 40% of Canadians claimed to be either completely unsympathetic or to have no opinion at all on Aboriginal issues (Statistics Canada, 2004). This suggests a possible misunderstanding or an incomplete understanding of the Aboriginal identity and indicates the need for further analysis into how Aboriginals are portrayed in the society.

In addition to the potential explanations this project may furnish to account for the lack of public awareness and poor public opinion of Aboriginals in Canadian society, to date no scholarly work has been done that focuses on the news coverage of Caledonia. Therefore, this project will address a topic within the field of minority representations that has not yet received enough scholarly attention. By focusing on the portrayal of Aboriginal people in the media, this project will also attempt to contribute to fill the current scholarly gap that exists between media studies and Aboriginal studies.

Chapter Four: Results and Analysis

Chapter Four Outline

The following chapter is organized into four major sections. Each section reflects a “super theme,” three of which are recognized by Jensen (1995): The Family, The Nation and Other Cultures. One additional super theme has been created to better deal with my research material. This super theme is “Law and Order”. Within the discussion of each super theme, I have conducted a semiotic textual analysis that is inspired by Thwaites, et. al. (2002). Prior to commencing my analysis, a few brief additional words regarding Jensen’s (1995) use of super themes will be offered to assist in the understanding of this conceptual tool, which is also used to position the forthcoming analysis within the broader framework of social semiotics.

Super Themes: The Importance of Abduction

Jensen’s (1995) notion of super themes is influenced by the process of abduction (p.157). Abduction is one of three forms of logical inference that Jensen (1995) uses to illustrate “reference to the interrelations between three constituents of the Peircean sign” (p.148).²³ The other two forms of logical inference are induction and deduction (Jensen, 1995, p.148). In regards to the notion of super themes, Jensen (1995) places emphasis on abduction because of its capacity to relate “an interpretant and an object” (p.148). To provide the premises for the rules of abduction, Jensen (1995, p.149) quotes Peirce (1986, p.325-326):

Abduction

Rule: All beans from this bag are white.

Result: These beans are white.

Case: These beans are from this bag.

²³ The Peircean conception of the sign is triadic and includes object, sign and interpretant (Jensen, 1995, p.148).

Jensen (1995) uses this example to illustrate the principles of abduction, but also states these premises are not to be viewed as a final conclusion (p.149). In order to reach a final conclusion, Jensen (1995) recommends that “one [also] needs to know what other bags, beans, and other items occur in that context” (p.149). Jensen (1995) places emphasis on contextualization when using the process of abduction; he states “abduction can be defined formally as consisting of a first premise that is particular and factual, a second premise that is general and hypothetical, and a conclusion that is particular and hypothetical” (p.160). In practice, “the second premise [of abduction] introduces a new conception which subsequently in the conclusion serves as a recontextualization of the puzzling fact in the first premise” (Jensen, 1995, p.160). In relation to the concept of super themes, understanding abduction is crucial, given that Jensen (1995) uses this heuristic notion of logical inference to summarize the nature of super themes (p.157). Jensen (1995) states,

One may summarize the nature of super themes through abduction:

- Viewer categories of news are generalized categories of social reality.
- All forms of everyday existence are generalized categories of social reality.
- Conclusion: Viewers’ categories of news are forms of everyday experience (p.157).

Through the use of abduction and the inclusion of relevant social factors, Jensen (1995) is able to draw conclusions regarding how audiences receive information from news sources. Consider the following example, used by Jensen (1995) to illustrate that television reception is dependent on the social experiences of the audience, and not solely on how the story is framed by the journalist. Jensen (1995) states:

In one international story, the journalistic theme was ‘an exchange of hostages’ between two sides of the civil war (1985) in El Salvador, one of the hostages being the president’s daughter. This last aspect, illustrated with visual details in

the first half of the story, led some respondents to introduce the theme of a 'family reunion' as a framework for understanding the event. Other respondents, however, suggested that the story showed how, if people are placed high up in social hierarchy (a president's daughter), they will be taken care of and rescued (p.156).

This example illustrates the two familiar narratives that are applied by the viewers in this situation. One narrative is essentially that of a "happy ending," where the family is reunited and the heart wrenching ordeal is over. The second narrative is structured around the importance of social influence and how people in powerful political positions have privileged access to pertinent resources. Since this is an observational study of Aboriginal media representations and *not* a media reception study, it is important to acknowledge that through the notion of super themes social semiotics can be used to illustrate how media represent certain people and events, and how this representation lends to the way in which the media discourse is understood within Canadian society.²⁴ Keeping this in mind, I will commence with my analysis.

Family Super Theme

The first super theme I will be addressing in my analysis of the Caledonia news clips is "family." Jensen (1995) defines the "family super theme" as "an institution offering physical and emotional security" (p.117). Therefore, the "family super theme" suggests that one way viewers interpret media content is by locating elements in the text that convey physical or emotional security embodied in some way by the social institution of the family. In CBC and CTV's news coverage of Caledonia, the family super theme is used to account for instances that lend to an interpretative framework that relies on the general understanding of the family institution. One presupposes that the

²⁴ The use of super themes in an observational study (and not a reception study) has previously been discussed in Chapter Three, which is why this crucial point is not discussed at great length in this point of the thesis.

protest in Caledonia is disruptive to the physical and emotional security of the community's citizens insofar as their family life is concerned.

The CBC and CTV coverage, relevant to determining the news narratives through the interpretative framework imposed by the common perception of the family institution, features non-Aboriginal residents of Caledonia stating how the protest has negatively impacted their daily routines and how their safety is threatened by the circumstances brought on by the protest. These statements contribute to structuring a narrative that draws heavily upon a viewer's interpretative repertoire²⁵ to produce a preferred reading (Hall, 1980) that works to the detriment of the Aboriginal identity in this situation. This preferred reading, suggested through numerous resident testimonials, draws from the innate parental concern for his or her child's safety to explain why Aboriginal protest efforts are unnecessary and disruptive. The coverage pertaining to the family super theme appears more frequently in the CBC coverage than in the CTV coverage; however, this analysis is relevant to the coverage of each network, because both news programs acknowledge the impact of the dispute only in relation to non-Aboriginal families within the community.²⁶

²⁵ As defined by Chandler (2002), an "interpretative repertoire" is a term that is used to refer "to the interpretative codes and textual codes available to those within interpretative communities, which offer them the potential to *understand* and also - where the code-user has the appropriate symbolic capital - to *produce* texts which employ these codes" (Encoding/Decoding, para. 12).

²⁶ As noted in Chapter Three, the coverage that has been reviewed extends over a seven day period, April 20, 2006 – April 26, 2006. CBC coverage of Caledonia reveals daily references to the family super theme, with the exception of the coverage on April 22, 2006. CTV reflects the family super theme in coverage on April 21, 2006; April 22, 2006, and April 23, 2006.

The emotional interpretant (Peirce, 1907)²⁷ that operates as the preferred reading (Hall, 1980) of these testimonials capitalizes on the natural parental concern for a child's well being and associates it with a distrust of Aboriginal intentions, which leads to the creation of ill-will towards Aboriginal protest efforts. For example, CBC coverage features an unidentified non-Aboriginal resident of Caledonia yelling the following statement at a police officer, "I have six year olds that are afraid to go to sleep at night! They want the lights on!"²⁸ The woman is saying that her children are so upset by the circumstances brought on by the protest (the police lines, the media presence, the barricades etc.) that they will no longer sleep with their lights out. Other CBC coverage features a resident expressing the future concern for her children should this dispute not reach an immediate and peaceful resolution. The resident states, "I've lived here for 25 years! I've got an eight-year-old, a six-year-old and a five-year-old, and they're all men and they're going to be men one day in this community! And I'm not going to have them terrified of going outside their own home!"²⁹ CTVnews coverage of Caledonia features similar resident testimonials that state how Aboriginal protest efforts are frightening to children and disrupt the lifestyle of families within Caledonia. One woman, shown in the CTV news coverage, even goes as far as to insist that the Canadian army is needed in

²⁷ Peirce states, "The first proper significate effect of a sign is a feeling produced by it... This "emotional interpretant," as I call it, may amount to much more than that feeling of recognition; and in some cases, it is the only proper significate effect that the sign produces... If a sign produces any further proper significate effect, it will do so through the mediation of the emotional interpretant, and such further effect will always involve an effort." ('Pragmatism', CP 5.475, 1907),

²⁸ Broadcast Date: Tuesday, April 25, 2006. Network: CBC Television. Clip runs 2:24 minutes. This quote appears fifty-six seconds into the clip.

²⁹ Broadcast Date: Monday, April 24, 2006. Network: CBC Television. Clip runs 40 seconds. This quote appears fifteen seconds into the clip.

Caledonia to maintain peace and protect families within the community from the impacts of the Aboriginal protest.³⁰

The association between the disruption of non-Aboriginal families and the Aboriginal need to protest for their rights hinders the development of constructive relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members of the community. This is not to suggest that resident testimonials should be completely removed from the news coverage, since such sentiments do convey a community concern that is brought about as a result of the protest, but instead that these statements should be balanced with some instances of the Aboriginal perspective on this issue. Fleras and Kunz (2001) state that

Few stories are situated within a historical context; fewer still incorporate cultural insights that reflect Aboriginal concerns from Aboriginal perspectives. Coverage is instead conveyed from an outsider's point of view, without much direct access to original sources because of fear or inexperience in dealing with Aboriginal issues (p.80).

Nothing is presented by CBC or CTV regarding whether or not Aboriginal families are being harmed by the protest efforts. This supports an immediate interpretation that prioritizes the concerns and opinion of only non-Aboriginals. A more balanced perspective on the protest and of its necessity for Aboriginals could be gained by the inclusion of the Aboriginal perspective. For example, are Aboriginal children frightened of the strong police presence so close to their homes? Are Aboriginals worried about what land would be left to pass on to future generations of Aboriginal descendants, if this land is continually encroached upon? Are Aboriginal children worried about the safety of family members who are occupying the barricade site? How has this protest affected Aboriginal families who are struggling to keep up with their own daily routines, as well

³⁰ This statement was made on April 20th, 2006. The events of this day included a police raid of the protest site, wherein Aboriginal protestors armed with sticks were approached by heavily armed police officers using tasers to subdue protestors. Broadcast Date: Thursday April 20, 2006. Network: CTV Television.

as providing support towards this cause? None of these concerns are addressed in either the CBC or CTV coverage of this event, yet they are relevant concerns to the Aboriginal population of Caledonia and would facilitate in a more thorough understanding of this very complex situation.

In the Caledonia news coverage, “the family super theme” serves to imply that the news coverage is likely to favour an understanding of this political episode that has been organized by the Aboriginal people in terms of a criminal like perspective, which consciously or not presents a bias towards non-Aboriginal families’ welfare and minimizes the Aboriginal perspective of the conflict. Given that some of the concerns that would potentially be raised through the inclusion of the Aboriginal point of view would reflect more long term issues, the argument could be made that it is not as relevant for the news to cover these perspectives, (since the nature of news programming is to cover present events). However, this does not justify the complete omission of the Aboriginal outlook in this regard, since the Aboriginal concerns that are suggestive of immediate impacts on their families’ also remain absent from the coverage. This exclusion of the Aboriginal perspective stops the public from becoming acquainted with the reason why Aboriginals deem this protest relevant and lends to misrepresentation of the Aboriginal identity.

To concretely exemplify how the interpretative framework of the family institution fosters misrepresentation of the Aboriginal identity in this context, consider the following summary of the analysis used to determine how this framework functions to determine the cognitive and emotional perspective gained by audiences that are exposed to this news coverage.

Family Super Theme: Summary of Semiotic Analysis

Semiotic Procedure	Outcomes in Relation to Family Super Theme
1. Key Signifiers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-Aboriginal women expressing concern for their children’s future and safety in Caledonia • Only non-Aboriginal resident testimonials (insofar as the institution of family is concerned) • Statements that reflect the concern for the wellbeing of only non-Aboriginal children • Statements that express a lack of support for Aboriginal need for protest in Caledonia (see pg. 45) • Complete omission of the Aboriginal concern for their own families during this protest and the impacts to their families should this land continually be encroached upon
2. Range of Possible Signifieds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal opinions are only valid in an isolated context • Non-Aboriginal children in the community are a priority over Aboriginal children • The Aboriginal protest is unnecessary and inflicts unwarranted disruption upon the non-Aboriginal families of Caledonia • Aboriginal need for protest is less important than maintaining comfortable living conditions for non-Aboriginal families • Aboriginal concern for their own families is not newsworthy and does not warrant public attention
3. Connotations Produced by Signs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal people are troublesome constituents • Aboriginals are second class citizens within this community • Aboriginal children are likely to grow up into ‘troublesome constituents’ and therefore do not warrant the concern of the community
4. Denotations (naturalized connotations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within Caledonia the needs and opinions of non-Aboriginal families are a priority over the needs of Aboriginal families
5. Larger Systems of Cultural Beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Aboriginal in Canada poses a serious threat to average Canadian citizens • Minorities impose upon the social order within Canada

The previous summary of the semiotic analysis supports the relevance considering this interpretive framework, which uses the institution of the traditional family to display a common ideology (that can be easily understood by the average Canadian), and which works to the detriment of comprehending the Aboriginal plea for protest and the Aboriginal identity. Without the inclusion of the Aboriginal side in this conflict, concerning how this event affects Aboriginal families, the coverage favors the rights of non-Aboriginal constituents and thus stigmatizes the Aboriginal identity.

Nation Super Theme

The second super theme I will be addressing is “the nation”. Jensen (1995) defines this super theme as being “subject to more contradictions than the other super themes,” since it is “continually undercut by irony and humor” (p.118). In Jensen’s (1995) study involving the “nation super theme,” he states that there are some “current difficulties of defining the American nation in positive terms, [however], the representation of *other cultures* can be seen as a negative definition, projecting what American culture is *not*” (p.118). Within the current study, the “nation super theme” (Jensen, 1995) can be used to explore the ways in which the CBC and CTV represent Aboriginals through a framework of interpretation that is reliant on national ideologies. In particular, I will explore the use of two recurrent images that are closely linked to the concept of the nation and notions of what it means to “be Canadian”. The images that I will be exploring in this section are the Mohawk flag and Tim Hortons coffee cup.

First, consider the below statement made by Fleras and Kunz (2001), regarding the media’s role in fostering a poor relationship between Canadian Aboriginals and Canada as a nation.

As problem people, they are taken to task by the media for making demands that may imperil Canada's unity or national prosperity. Too often Aboriginal peoples are portrayed as individuals whose relationship to Canada is mediated by conflict, welfare dependency, disruption and militancy, social pathologies, and excessive demand. Recurrent images define Aboriginal peoples as a) a threat to Canada's territorial integrity...b) a risk to Canada's social order...c) an economic liability (costs associated with settling massive land claims)...d) a thorn in the side of the criminal justice system...or e) unscrupulous manipulators who are not adverse to breaking the law (p.145).

This statement suggests that Aboriginal portrayals in the media often imply an understanding of Aboriginals as being harmful to Canada's social and economic traditions. As I commence with my results, it will be shown that within my own analysis I found elements of this statement to be true, while also locating some contradictory messages, which provided a more amicable interpretation of Aboriginals through an association with a popular Canadian brand name.

One of the most frequent images within both the CBC and CTV coverage of the Caledonia dispute is the Mohawk flag.³¹ For the purposes of this analysis, the ubiquitous presence of the Mohawk flag will be explored by means of the icon, index and symbol classifications of signs³², to illustrate how the flag generates meaning that extends beyond its formal definition.³³ By observing the formal functions³⁴ of the Mohawk flag in this

³¹ CBC and CTV coverage from April 20th, 2006– April 26th, 2006, feature the Mohawk flag at least once within each news segment. Instances where CBC showed the flag more than once is as follows: April 20th, 2006 (3 times – 0:23min., 1:53min., 2:31min.) April 22nd, 2006 (two times – 0:40min., 1:15min.) April 23rd, 2006 (two times – 0:15min., 0:30min.) Instances where CTV showed the flag more than once is as follows: April 20th, 2006, April 21st, 2006, April 23rd, 2006. (Unable to provide exact times; see footnote: 22, for further explanation.)

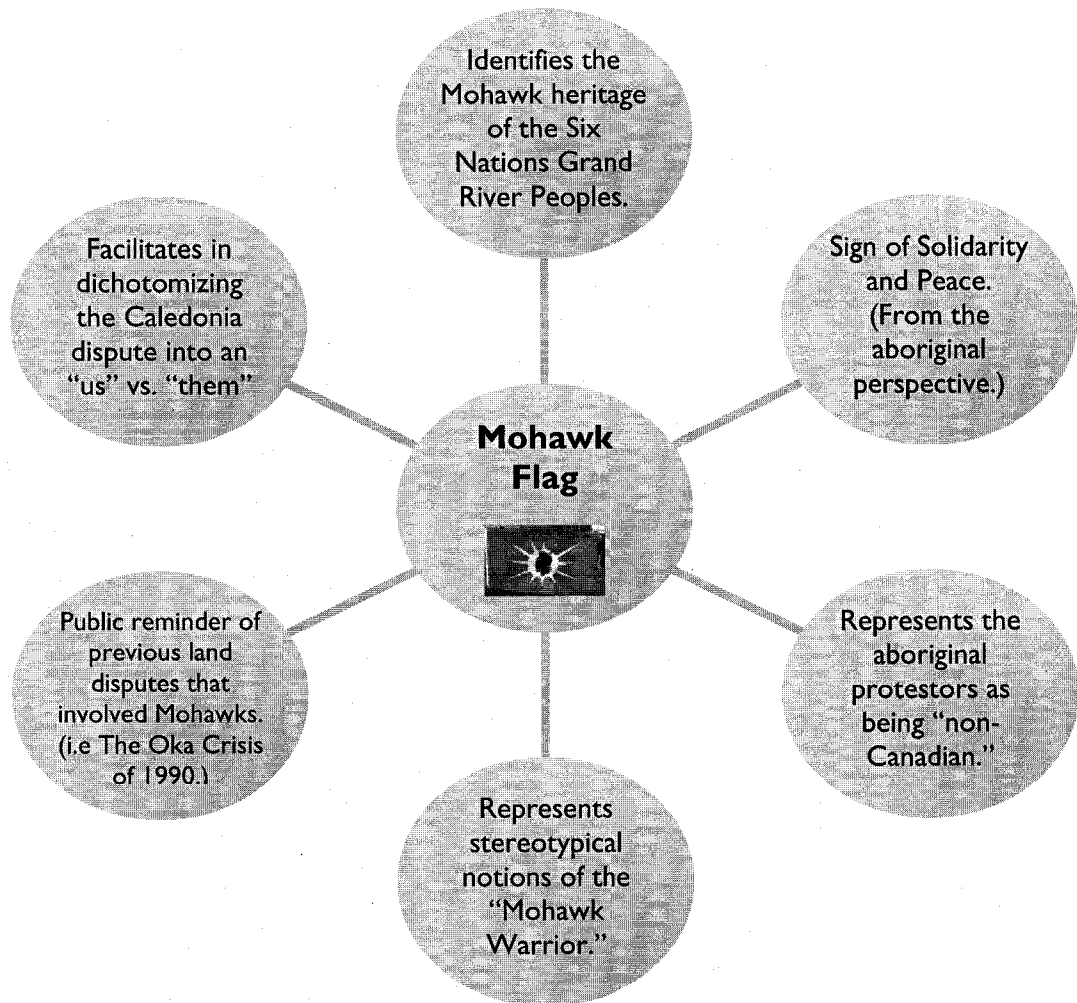
³² Peirce's theory of signs consists of the division of signs into icons, indexes, and symbols, Peirce states, "an analysis of the essence of a sign . . . leads to a proof that every sign is determined by its object, either first, by partaking in the characters of the object, when I call the sign an *Icon*; secondly, by being really and in its individual existence connected with the individual object, when I call the sign an *Index*; thirdly, by more or less approximate certainty that it will be interpreted as denoting the object, in consequence of a habit (which term I use as including a natural disposition), when I call the sign a *Symbol* " (CP 4:531).

³³ A flag's literal or formal definition is a "piece of cloth of distinctive colour or bearing distinctive emblem displayed from pole or halyard as a signal, symbol, or decoration" (The Penguin Dictionary, 1991, p. 293).

³⁴ The formal functions of a sign addresses its format, formal structure and the context within which it is used, to determine the meaning of a sign. (Thwaites, Davis, and Mules, 2002, p. 16)."

coverage, the flag is understood through “not only what is said, but how it is said” (Thwaites, et. al., 2002, p. 16), which indicates the need for analysis of the spatial structure and of the kind of media representation the flag. From this investigation, a host of connotations can be drawn from the frequent use of the pictorial image of the flag; these connotations have a negative effect on the understanding of the Aboriginal identity. Consider the following diagram, which provides an initial overview of the potential meanings conveyed by the use of the flag in this coverage . (See following page.)

Connotative and Denotative Meanings Associated with the Mohawk Flag



The above diagram provides a summary of the potential meanings construed by the pictorial representation of the flag as part of the Caledonia coverage, many of which feed into cultural myths about Aboriginal people and reinforce Aboriginal stereotypes. To begin this analysis, we can consider the flag as an icon.³⁵ The face on the flag is the profile of an Aboriginal man, which is iconic because this profile provides a strong resemblance to members of the group within which the flag signifies. In this regard, the

³⁵ "Icons, as picture-like signs which either are or resemble what they signify, have the modality of direct perception, and hence are the most persuasive of signs (as modern advertisers and news editors are aware)" (Hodge & Kress, 1988, pp26-27).

flag also relates to its denotative significance,³⁶ as a conventional tool that is used to identify the Mohawk people. The Mohawk flag (shown below) is easily recognizable because of its signature colour (red) and the iconic profile of an Aboriginal man positioned against a portrait of the sun and wearing a feather on his head.

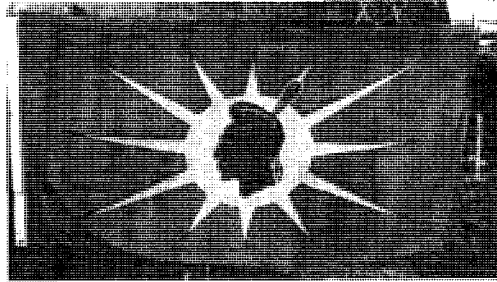


Image of Mohawk Flag

The flag, which was designed by Karaoniaktajeh (a well known elder within the Native American Mohawk community) features a Mohawk warrior who wears the feather as a symbol “of unity for the purpose of the continuation of the Mohawk people, their nation, their race and their heritage” (The Flag Bulletin, 1977, p.108). The Aboriginal origins of the Mohawk flag, which reflect its significance to Aboriginal people as peaceful sign of solidarity, are never reviewed in the Caledonia coverage. Although the lack of Aboriginal perspective on the flag’s significance is detrimental to the public understanding of flag’s use within this context, it is not outside the norms of standard news practices to omit this type of information. Most news programs aim to provide concise narratives that rarely provide in-depth historical information on various symbols that appear within the coverage (Lorimer & Gasher, 2001, p.234).³⁷ As an icon, the flag represents Mohawk people as a group bound together by cultural bonds, which in and of itself is a reasonable

³⁶ Denotative significance refers to the flag’s “most stable and verifiable of its connotations” (Thwaites et. al., 2002, p.62).

³⁷ This type of in-depth review of the flag would be more likely to appear in documentary style programming.

and justifiable use of the flag. However, the increased exposure and the polemical circumstances within which the flag is displayed facilitate a host of connotative meanings that can also be associated with the flag's presence (as outlined in the previous diagram).

The flag's use in the CBC and CTV news coverage of Caledonia extends beyond its iconic and denotative significance as a signifier of the Aboriginal protestors. Through the pictorial representation of the flag and the atmosphere in which it is shown, the flag embodies additional meanings. As an index³⁸, the flag functions to provide a linkage between this land dispute and other conflicts involving Aboriginal people, wherein the flag was also prominently displayed. Therefore, the flag suggests an association between this land dispute and other various land claim disputes involving the Mohawks and other First Nations affiliates. For example, the Oka Crisis of 1990 received a significant amount of news coverage and within this coverage the Mohawk flag was often present.³⁹

To further exemplify this notion, consider the following CBC coverage. On April 20th, 2006, CBC host Lloyd Robertson introduces the Caledonia coverage by saying, "The burning barricade, the blockade, it all evokes memories of other native standoffs. Oka in Quebec, Ipperwash in Ontario." Then he passes it over to CBC reporter Kathy Tomlinson, who says (as the Mohawk flag waves in the background), "Evoking ugly memories of Oka, Ipperwash. Fears [short pause] of, here we go again."⁴⁰ Tomlinson's tone of voice as she makes this statement is solemn, which implies a concerned or distressed reporter who is weary of Aboriginal protests. The brief pause she makes prior

³⁸ "Indexical signs are formed from cause-effect chains (e.g., smoke-fire) or contiguity linkages (e.g., an arm for a person). These have a high modality (i.e., a close fit between sign and meaning), but since they are still based on an act of judgment or inference they have a lower modality than icons (Hodges and Kress, 1988, p. 27).

³⁹ See; CBC news archives of Oka Crisis:

<http://archives.cbc.ca/300c.asp?IDCat=71&IDDos=99&IDLan=1&IDMenu=71>.

⁴⁰ Broadcast date: April 20th, 2006. Network: CBC. Program: The National. (Statements made during first 30sec.)

to saying “here we go again” acts as an index to her apparent aggravation towards this issue, which also comes across in her tone of voice. From a metacommunicational level of interpretation, the iconic (i.e., the qualities of her voice), the indexical (i.e., the fact that she says it thus at that particular moment), and lastly, the symbolic function of the reporter’s tone in this situation, all three elements suggest the relevance of this dispute is arguable and they also imply media fatigue toward the acknowledgement of Aboriginal land claims. Furthermore and most importantly, as the reporter makes this statement, the Mohawk flag waves prominently in the background. Through the overall composition of this news segment, including the visual and verbal cues, this clip provides an interpretative framework that lends to the flag’s embodiment of additional meanings. More specifically, the flag’s use in this social setting insinuates a direct correlation between the Mohawk people and protests that the media and public foresee as reckless and tiresome.⁴¹

Another connotative meaning that is generated through the socio-semiotic analysis of the flag’s use in this coverage is the flag’s dramatic correlation with acts of violence. The flag is shown juxtaposed with scenes of violence, chaos and burning tires. This contributes to a meaning effect of flag as being symptomatic of high conflict situations and it also implies a relationship between Aboriginals and actions that are deemed unlawful.⁴² For example, consider the visual composition of CTV’s opening shot during its April 20th, 2006, coverage of Caledonia. The opening shot consists of a close-

⁴¹ It is not uncommon for flags to become associated with a certain vision regarding the group of people the flag represents. However, this association becomes a crucial site of inquiry when the meanings generated by the use of the flag lend to a misunderstanding of a minority group. Therefore, although the argument could be made that all flag’s have an associative function, the interpretative affects of the flag use in this context, exemplifies the need for analysis and is relevant to the central research question of this study.

⁴² This is illustrated in the April 20th, 2006 coverage of Caledonia from both CBC and CTV news programs.

up view of the Mohawk flag in the upper right hand corner and in the distance (behind the Mohawk flag) are burning tires, flashing police lights, and several groups of Aboriginal protestors. Through the spatial structure of this shot, the Mohawk flag is associated with the other subjects within the frame (burning tires and flashing police lights). This suggests one of the formal functions of the Mohawk flag in this coverage is transference,⁴³ which in this coverage promotes the flag as ascertaining notions of violence and unlawfulness. This definitely contributes to a very specific and reductionistic meaning effect of the Mohawk flag, so that it denotes and connotes the group which it represents (the Aboriginal protestors) as somehow intrinsically linked to unlawful and aggressive behaviors. Therefore, the presence of the flag in this environment fuels social myths of the “Mohawk Warrior” and insinuates Aboriginal people are prone to hostility and conflict.⁴⁴

As a symbol,⁴⁵ the Mohawk flag refers conventionally to a certain way of conceiving a group’s identity, through using this emblem to facilitate an oversimplified understanding of the conflict as an “us versus them” scenario.⁴⁶ One specific way in which the flag dichotomizes the situation in Caledonia is by turning the dispute into one between those who bear the Mohawk flag versus those who display the Canadian flag. For example, on April 25th, 2006, CBC and CTV provided coverage of a rally held by

⁴³ Transference is defined as an instance where certain qualities of one sign can transfer to another sign, “which is thus invested with properties it might not have originally have had” (Thwaites et. al., 2002, p.51)

⁴⁴ The use of ‘myth’ in this sentence refers to the ability of texts to contain structural elements that encourage the audience to think a certain way or to believe certain facts are being inherently true. “Myths structure texts but, for many readings, they remain unrecognized (Thwaites, et. al., 2002, p. 85).”

⁴⁵ Symbols relate sign to object by bonds of convention (Hodge & Kress, 1988, p. 27).

⁴⁶ The term used in this sentence, ‘troublesome constituents,’ is used by Fleras and Kunz (2001), in the following context: “Time and time again Aboriginal people are depicted as “troublesome constituents” whose demands for self-determination and the right to inherent self-government are contrary to Canada’s liberal-democratic tradition. Aboriginal activism tends to be framed as a departure from established norms regardless of context or urgency, while protestors are frequently labeled as dangerous and irrational” (p.145).

Caledonian residents to protest the road blockade. This rally was attended primarily by non-Aboriginal residents of Caledonia. In this coverage the Canadian flag is seen for the first time, in the hands of (and being worn by), non-Aboriginal rally participants. The introduction of the Canadian flag under these circumstances further alters the significance of the Mohawk flag by promoting the dispute in Caledonia as an issue between Aboriginals (who are “acting outside of Canadian norms”) and non-Aboriginals (who bare the Canadian flag and are representative of “Canadian norms”).⁴⁷ Therefore, an additional connotative reading on the interpretation of the flag’s use in this coverage suggests that this emblem assists in “construct[ing] a sense of who ‘we’ are in relation to who ‘we’ are not...By such means, the social interests mobilized across society are marked out from each other, differentiated and often rendered vulnerable to discrimination” (Cottle, 2000, p.2). The CBC and CTV use of Mohawk flag contributes to a simplified narrative that overlooks the multifaceted nature of the on going events in Caledonia. Complicated issues of self governance and Aboriginal sovereignty remain at the heart of several land disputes, yet are overlooked by both the media and the Canadian government.

Admittedly, the genre of news programming is subject to over simplification due to time constraints and programming restrictions. However, it has been found that the ‘us versus them’ scenario is more prevalent within the coverage of minority issues (van Dijk, 2000, p.37). Consider the below statement made by, Fleras and Kunz (2001),

The mainstream media are not averse to problematizing anyone, white or non-white, given the tendency of media narratives to cram reality into a framework of

⁴⁷ The flag represents one example of how the dispute in Caledonia is dichotomized by the media. However, as illustrated in the analysis of other super themes, the tendency for news media to dichotomize this dispute is carried out through a variety of techniques and narratives that facilitate in the overgeneralization of the Caledonia dispute.

conflict or negativity. But impacts differ: the institutionalized power at the disposal of the mainstream helps to deflect and diffuse the unflattering; in contrast, the impact of disparaging minority representation is sharpened because of their specific vulnerabilities. The consequences of this miscasting reinforces the wedge between the “minority them” and “mainstream us.” Such miscasting also has a tendency to demonize an entire community for the actions of a few, in effect further marginalizing minority men and women (p.146)

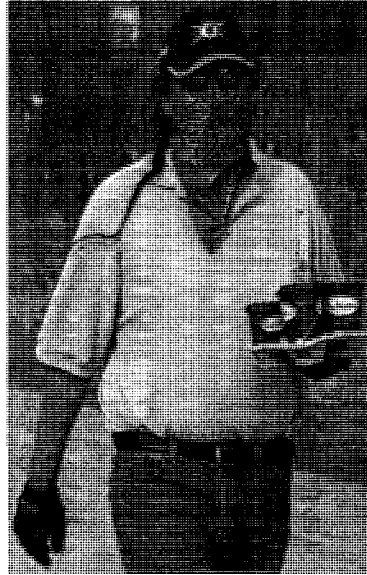
As affirmed here by Fleras and Kunz (2001), despite the genre of news programming having structural constraints that limit its ability to provide in-depth information and a large diversity of opinions, the impact of these realities are felt most by society’s minorities (including Canadian Aboriginals). One way to avoid the simplification of this dispute, as represented through the use of Mohawk flag, would be to encourage reporters to seek diverse or alternative views of the dispute from a variety of sources. Furthermore, in terms of the flag being used to identify the Aboriginal protestors (and conversely by an overextension all Canadian Aboriginals), perhaps the media could focus more on associating the protestors with specific spokespersons who are introduced as representing one view of the very multisided land dispute.

In summary, media use of flags to identify a group of people is not uncommon. In fact, as a universal tool of identification, the use of flags in dispute coverage can usually be expected. However, the pictorial representation of a flag in news media coverage can embody very different connotations that are highly dependent on the circumstances within which the flag is shown, the group of people it represents, and the existence of other flags that may also be present in the coverage. As an icon, the flag can be interpreted as representing qualitatively, through its color, pattern and emblem, the Mohawk protestors. As an index, the frequent pictorial image of the flag, during certain moments of the coverage, functions to associate the protestors to chaotic situations. As a

symbol, the flag suggests a conventional reading of the Aboriginal identity, which in this context, attaches negative denotations and connotations to the representation of Aboriginals. Through an interpretative framework that is shaped by national ideologies and the tendency to frequently display the flag within chaotic scenarios, the meaning effect generated by the flag is that it embodies an oppositional understanding of Aboriginals as “who we [Canadians] *are not*” (Jensen, 1995, p. 118).

Moving forward with the analysis of the “nation super them” (Jensen, 1995), I will now discuss how the media’s use of a popular Canadian brand name presents an alternative and more amicable way of understanding the Aboriginal protestor. The brand name I am referring to is Tim Hortons, a franchise so well known and adored by Canadians that Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Rick Hillier recently suggested Tim Hortons would be “a big morale booster” to the Canadian troops who were located overseas in Afghanistan (CBC Online News, March 8, 2006). This comment, which led to the opening of a Tim Hortons store in Kandahar on Canada Day in 2006, reflects how highly Canadians regard Tim Hortons products.

As a relevant detour in the analysis of how the Tim Hortons brand name works within the televised news coverage, first consider the below image, which was never shown on air but appears on CBC’s online news write up for the events in Caledonia on April 21st, 2006. (See following page.)



This photograph is from CBC's online report of the Caledonia dispute for April 21st, 2006. The caption on CBC's website reads: "A protester returns to the barricades from a coffee run" (Frank Gunn/Canadian Press, <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2006/04/21/caledonia-friday.html>).

From the photograph's caption (that designates this man as a protestor) and the Mohawk emblem on his hat, it can be concluded that this is an Aboriginal man. His choice to disguise his identity by wearing a bandana, sunglasses and a baseball cap, suggests he is a potential threat to society and coincides with the common understanding of Aboriginals as problem people.⁴⁸ On the other hand, his choice of coffee implies he is a regular Canadian citizen; since Tim Hortons is notoriously associated with Canadian culture and society. However, only when this image is deconstructed does it encourage varying frameworks of meaning; one that marginalizes Aboriginals and one that emphasizes the similarities of Aboriginals to other Canadian citizens. When the overall composition of this image is viewed, the significance of the Tim Hortons brand name is overshadowed

⁴⁸ Let it be noted, that to Aboriginals, the bandana over the face can also represent a fear towards non-Aboriginal Canadians.

by the attire of the Aboriginal protestor, which closely resembles a stereotypical depiction of an outlaw or someone who is about to engage in criminal activity.⁴⁹

If this still image epitomized use of the brand name within the televised Caledonia news coverage, the significance of the Tim Hortons brand name would likely be overlooked, as the public would more readily perceive this man through his choice to conceal his identity and thus label him as socially deviant. However, when the brand name appears in the audiovisual coverage of Caledonia, the Aboriginal protestors who are shown drinking or holding Tim Hortons coffee cups do not have their identities concealed, and in some instances are not readily identifiable as Aboriginals. Therefore, for the purposes of this analysis (which only addresses the televised coverage of the Caledonia dispute), the previously mentioned more amicable interpretation of the Aboriginal protestor in possession of the Tim Hortons coffee cup remains accessible to the viewer.⁵⁰

In the televised coverage, the Tim Hortons brand name contributes to representing iconically a more domestic portrayal of the Aboriginal identity. This meaning effect is generated by the visual representation of those Aboriginals who are clothed as non-Aboriginal Canadians and who look “normal” as they drink Tim Hortons coffee; their ethnicity is only known because the reporter identifies the person as either a “native” or a “protestor”. For example, CBC shows a group of men standing and chatting calmly, one of the men is drinking a large Tim Hortons coffee;⁵¹ the only thing that suggests these

⁴⁹ The stereotypical depiction of this man is furnished by his attempt to conceal his identity through wearing dark sunglasses and a bandana over his face.

⁵⁰ Let it be noted, that from this point onwards the analysis returns to deal strictly with the televised coverage of Caledonia.

⁵¹ I was unable to provide a photo of this example because it is part of CBC’s televised coverage and was not available as a still image.

men are Aboriginal is the reporter's voice over that says, "Native protestors are standing firmly."⁵² Another example of the Tim Hortons brand name in the Caledonia coverage occurs when a CTV reporter states, "At the barricade, this was the extent of the action [the camera points towards an average looking man walking with a tray of Tim Hortons coffee cups], people making coffee runs".⁵³ This influences the perception of the protestors because it provides a similarity between the average Canadian; who enjoys Tim Hortons coffee, and the Aboriginal protestor; who also enjoys Tim Hortons coffee. Consider this statement made by Macarthur (2005), regarding the significance of Tim Hortons in comparison to Canada's designated national emblem, "In the land with more doughnut shops per capita than any other, the brand named for its hockey-legend founder is as synonymous with Canada as the maple leaf" (p.20). Macarthur (2005) further goes on to mention that within Canada Tim Hortons has a cult like following, which he refers to as the "cult of Timmy" (p.20). Therefore, the Tim Hortons brand name functions to imply a distinctively Canadian commonality between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals.

In a recent publication of *Advertising Age* (2005), the magazine features Tim Hortons as being a "top player" in the marketing department and recognizes its advertising campaign entitled, "True Stories," which insinuates that by drinking Tim Hortons coffee, a person is *more* Canadian. The magazine states:

The latest spot in this 12-year-old "True Stories" campaign ties three generations with a Canadian tradition: enjoying coffee from Canada's leading fast-food chain Tim Hortons at the local rink, while watching kids play hockey. It also conveys the feeling of "belonging" as a new Canadian. The spot by WPP Group's Enterprise Advertising, Toronto, introduces the tagline "Every cup tells a story" (Wentz, 2005, p.15).

⁵² Broadcast Date: April 22nd, 2006. Network: CBC. Program: CBC News *The National*. Beginning of clip.
⁵³ Broadcast Date: April 25th, 2006. Network: CTV. Program: CTV News. Approximately half way through the clip.

This advertising campaign reinforces the significance of Tim Hortons coffee within Canada and suggests to audiences that drinking Tim Hortons coffee is a part of “being Canadian.” Within the Caledonia news coverage, the presence of the Tim Hortons brand name in the hands of an Aboriginal protestor creates a more domestic portrayal of Aboriginals as ‘regular’ Canadian citizens.⁵⁴

The Tim Hortons brand name thus creates a positive meaning effect regarding the Aboriginal identity that is very different from the sense generated by the use of the Mohawk flag. Both are iconically and indexically related to well known ideas of Canadian norms; however one of them emphasizes the differences between Aboriginals and other Canadians, while the other provides a commonality between Aboriginals and other Canadians. Through the iconic, indexical and symbolic meanings generated by the Mohawk flag, this image promotes a characterization of the Aboriginal representation as being outside of Canadian norms and ideologies. Alternatively, the Tim Hortons brand name facilitates a depiction of what it means “to be Canadian” and lends to a more “Canadian” portrayal of the Aboriginal identity. These findings are outlined in the following table:

⁵⁴ It is also relevant to consider the possibility of the Tim Hortons brand name being shown in this coverage intentionally as a form of product placement. Given the current marketing trend to covertly include corporate logos within the media, it cannot be ruled out that this image was not put here as part of an implicit marketing ploy. Although the likelihood of this is not high, given that news coverage remains one area of the media yet to be fully exploited by advertisers, it is a relevant consideration. However, regardless of the potential hidden value of this brand name within the coverage, this does not change the perceptions influenced by the representation of the Tim Hortons emblem within this coverage.

Summary of Semiotic Analysis: Nation Super Theme

Semiotic Procedure	Outcomes in Relation to Nation Super Theme
<p>1. Key Signifiers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still image (on CBC website) of man with Tim Hortons coffee cups, who has chosen to conceal his identity • Images of Aboriginal protestors consuming Tim Hortons coffee, who are primarily identifiable as Aboriginals through verbal cues (in the televised coverage) • Mohawk flag in juxtaposition to scenes of violence and chaos • Mohawk flag used to represent the Aboriginal protestors • Mohawk flag visually represented during reporter comments that insinuate notions of “not again” • Canadian flag used to represent non-Aboriginals at a rally held by Caledonia residents
<p>2. Range of Possible Signifieds</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The image of the Aboriginal man who chose to conceal his face indicates that he does not want to be identified, and thus negates the positive signified meaning that is associated with the Tim Hortons brand name. • Aboriginal protestors like Tim Hortons coffee • The Mohawk flag is often present during disputes involving Canadian Aboriginals • The Canadian flag is present during events that are attended by Canadian citizens
<p>3. Connotations Produced by Signs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The multiple images of Tim Hortons coffee being consumed by Aboriginal protestors, who are only identifiable as Aboriginals through verbal cues, generates a more amicable portrayal of the Aboriginal identity; since it provides a parallel between the preferences of Aboriginals and other Canadians (in regards to their choice of coffee). • The Tim Hortons brand name is significant because it is so highly regarded among Canadian citizens as a household name of a popular choice of coffee and suggests a commonality between Aboriginals and other Canadians, which lends to a more amicable interpretation of their identity • The Mohawk flag becomes intrinsically linked to acts of violence and chaos, due to the context in which it is used, which thus lends to a stereotypical understanding of the Mohawk people and suggests all Aboriginals are prone to hostility • Aboriginal protests result in chaos and lend to social disarray that does not comply with Canadian norms

<p>4. Denotations (naturalized connotations)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tim Horton’s coffee is a classis Canadian favourite. • The image of the Mohawk Warrior is not outdated and is relevant to Aboriginals who chose to involve themselves in protests.
<p>5. Larger Systems of Cultural Beliefs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tim Hortons represents the notion of: “being Canadian.” • An Aboriginal person is more prone to acts of violence than a non-Aboriginal person, which means Aboriginals represent a threat to Canadian society.

From the findings of this analysis, we come upon a series of oppositional understandings: one that marginalizes Aboriginal people and represents their identity as being distinctively non-Canadian and one that presents a unique notion of sameness between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians. In the corpus of the overall findings of this study, the notion of Aboriginals as representing what it means “to be Canadian” is restricted iconically to their association with the Tim Hortons brand name. Therefore, although the Tim Hortons brand name does promote an alternative reading of the Aboriginal identity, this must be considered in conjunction with the more prevalent notion that suggests Aboriginals as being representative of “the other” and as distinctively non-Canadian people. In the context of this entire study, the Tim Hortons brand name does not weigh heavily on the overall perception of Aboriginals; since the impression of Aboriginals as being similar to other Canadians exists only through the use of Tim Hortons brand name. Nevertheless, it is important to note this exception as it does represent an isolated example of one way in which the CBC and CTV do not alienate the identity of the Aboriginal protestor. Unfortunately (and to the detriment of the perception

of the Aboriginal representation as demonstrated throughout this study), this example is more the “exception” than the “rule.”

Law and Order Super Theme

During the exploration of my preliminary findings, I recognized a process of interpretation that influenced the perception of Aboriginals in the Caledonia dispute, but it did not correspond to any of the categories of understanding as outlined by Jensen (1995). This suggested the need for an additional super theme. Since Jensen (1995) does not suggest that his list of super themes is exhaustive, I decided to create an additional super theme without compromising my methodology. Jensen (1995) comments on the wide ranging possibility of potential super themes by stating: “The theoretical implication is that super themes are articulated in a complex process of inference, interpretation, or semiosis that matches categories of everyday experiences (as derived partly from mass media) with the categories of media discourses” (p.157). Given that it would not be plausible to limit the process of understanding everyday existence to four predetermined super themes, it is reasonable to think that Jensen (1995) never intended his list of super themes to be exhaustive, which supports my justification for posting an additional super theme.

In order to adhere to Jensen’s (1995) concept of what a super theme is, I needed to define a super theme that could “be thought of as an overdetermining metaphor mediating between several metonymic sequences...[and] the viewers frames of everyday understanding” (p.165). Based on my knowledge of Jensen’s (1995) empirical research and the findings of my observational analysis, I proposed the super theme of “law and order,” which presents an interpretative framework that relies on the social codes

associated with a state run institution that provides citizens with a sense of order and security through the physical enforcement of national laws. The “law and order” super theme provides the necessary analytical tool for a social semiotic analysis regarding the role of Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) in the Caledonia dispute coverage. By using the interpretative framework embodied by the law and order super theme, we can address the following issue: does the presence of the OPP in the Caledonia coverage exert a significant influence upon the representation of Aboriginals? In the following analysis, I will discuss how the news media simplify the dispute coverage to suggest that the main issue in Caledonia is a conflict between Aboriginals and the OPP. Issues of ideology will also be addressed in relation to how public perception of the OPP may foster a misunderstanding of the Aboriginal protestors.

In order to explain the need for an additional super theme and justify the relevance of this socio-semiotic tool for the exploration of my central research question, the prominent role of the OPP must first be established. This is a necessary detour in the analysis, given that it is not abnormal for the OPP to be present within the coverage of a protest situation. Therefore, it is important to establish that the coverage received by the OPP indicates that they play a prominent role in this dispute, which extends beyond the routine presence of law enforcement officials during protest situations.⁵⁵

Both the CBC and CTV feature daily references to the role of the OPP throughout the first week of news coverage for Caledonia.⁵⁶ For example, on the first day of CTV’s

⁵⁵ For example, consider CBC’s April 14th 2004 coverage of a large protest effort to end the Canadian seal hunt in. There is *minimal* police presence in this coverage. To access this archived news clip see: <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2004/04/14>

⁵⁶ From April 20th, 2006 - April 25th, 2006: CTV and CBC make daily references to the OPP and visually represent their presence in Caledonia. The only other party involved that received this type of recognition within the coverage is the Aboriginal protestors. Even the non-Aboriginal residents of Caledonia are

Caledonia coverage, Kathy Tomlinson (a reporter) states, “The OPP moved in here, apparently without telling the Ontario government.” She then goes on to say, “The Ontario government says it’s [the Caledonia dispute] a police matter.”⁵⁷ The CBC coverage also emphasizes the role of the OPP in this dispute. For example, CBC host Peter Mansbridge, introduces the Caledonia dispute in the following way: “A smouldering land dispute turns into a burning confrontation between native protestors and police.”⁵⁸ These statements emphasize the role of the OPP and reduce the Caledonia dispute to a conflict between Aboriginal protestors and police. The tendency to simplify dispute situations is not abnormal in standard news media practices, which place precedence on providing concise and coherent narratives for public consumption. However, the dichotomization of conflicts involving a minority party tends to disfavor the role of the minority and facilitate a heightened misconception of their identity.

Through the process of generalizing the dispute in Caledonia, the media omit relevant social factors that help explain the Aboriginal need for protest and downplay the relevant roles of the Canadian government and the non-Aboriginal Caledonian residents. Without establishing proper social context, the dispute in Caledonia becomes characterized as an unnecessary conflict between the OPP and Aboriginals, which facilitates in demoting the importance of the issue of land claims within Canada.⁵⁹ For example, consider CTV host Lloyd Robertson’s introduction to the April 20th news coverage of Caledonia:

sometime overlooked in the coverage. For example, on CTV’s April 20th coverage and CBC’s April 21st coverage, there is no mention of the residents, but there remain references to the OPP.

⁵⁷ Broadcast Date: Thursday, April 20, 2006. Program: CTV NEWS. Network: CTV (Approximately twenty-seconds into news clip).

⁵⁸ Broadcast Date: Thursday, April 20, 2006. Program: CBC NEWS. Network: CBC (First 5 seconds of the news clip).

⁵⁹ In both the CBC and CTV coverage of Caledonia, mention of the Aboriginal conflict with police takes precedence to the land claim issue.

Good evening. The pre-dawn police raid was meant to end a seven week native standoff in Ontario once and for all. Well, it didn't quite work out that way. The move to evict protestors backfired, and tonight the native protest is bigger and angrier than ever. It revolves around a piece of disputed land in Caledonia.⁶⁰

This example epitomizes the Caledonia coverage made by both the CBC and CTV; in regards to the emphasis that is placed on the dispute between the police and the Aboriginal protestors. Although the conflict between these two parties may function as more newsworthy material, it is still damaging to the understanding of the Aboriginal identity. The willingness of the media to construct this framework of understanding, as illustrated in the first day of the Caledonia coverage, suggests the lack of any effort to convey the conflict in a more accurate and comprehensive manner. The dichotomy of police versus protestors took effect from the first day of televised coverage of Caledonia; it was not the end result of weeks of coverage that included instances of combat between the two parties. This implies how the law and order framework promotes a misinterpretation of the protest in Caledonia, and suggests that the simplification of the dispute was not solely the result of standard media practice, namely, to simplify news narratives, but alternatively, that it is a consequence of a heavily encoded and maybe unconscious media tendency to mistreat minorities in the media.

Henry and Tator (2002) comment on how media representations of Aboriginals tend to overlook relevant social factors and facilitate a misunderstanding of Aboriginal people through only acknowledging their presence as a threat to social order. Henry and Tator (2002) state: "Media depictions of Aboriginal initiatives that seek to challenge historic and current inequities tend to focus on the conflictual and confrontational aspects rather than on the historical and social contexts underpinning the issues at stake" (p. 203).

⁶⁰ Broadcast Date: Thursday, April 20, 2006. Program CTV NEWS. Network: CTV (Beginning of news clip).

Through the centralized role of law enforcement, the Caledonia coverage omits relevant social factors that would provide a more well-rounded vision of the Aboriginal identity and need for protest.⁶¹ Furthermore, one may also consider the impact of the social codes used for making sense of this news coverage through the interpretative framework of the law and order super theme.

In media studies that analyze content which feature ethnic minorities in conflict with members of the majority, it is often concluded that there is a bias towards the majority, which tends to infringe upon the minority identity (Cottle, 2006; Henry and Tator, 2002; Fleras and Kunz, 2001). Based on this common media practice, one tends to think that the Caledonia coverage (that places emphasis on the role of law enforcement) would represent the OPP positively. However, this is not the case with the Caledonia coverage, since neither side of the dispute (as retold by CBC and CTV) receives preferential treatment. I want to argue that the perception of Aboriginals does not benefit from the media's negative treatment of the OPP; on the contrary, the effect of this kind of portrayal of the OPP can sometimes create a meaning effect that is more centrally focused on conflict between these two parties and not on the identity or the plea of either side involved in the dispute. Therefore, in spite of the critical portrayal of the OPP, which does not coincide with common media practices, the Aboriginal identity remains subject to misinterpretation due to their plea for protest being reduced to an Aboriginal conflict with law enforcement.

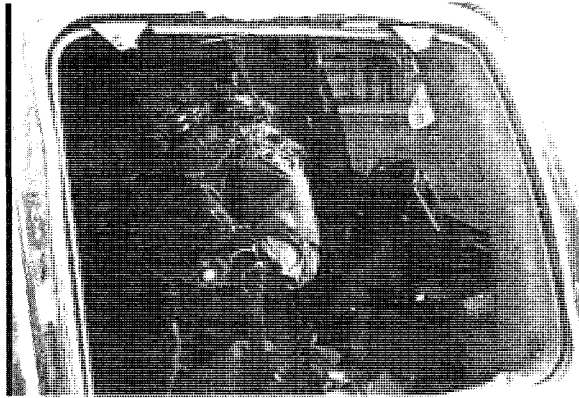
⁶¹ This type of dichotomization is not unfamiliar to Aboriginal issues in the media. Consider the case study on the Mohawk Crisis conducted by Fleras and Kunz (2001: pp. 80-83). Fleras and Kunz (2001) state, "Newspaper headlines clearly emphasized the salience of confrontation as the preferred slant, while the issue itself framed around a struggle between the forces of order and those of disorder, involving the police, the government, the military, the Mohawk factions, and the Oka community. Articles invariably reduced the Oka crisis to an issue of law and order rather than a struggle over land or Aboriginal rights" (p.81).

To exemplify the notion of how CBC and CTV coverage of Caledonia does not romanticize the actions of OPP officers, consider the following examples, which suggest the OPP are doing a poor job of controlling the situation. CBC reporter Kas Roussy states, "Police said they used as little force as possible during the raid, but protestors saw it differently." Roussy makes this statement as still images of police overpowering unarmed Aboriginal protestors appear on screen, which is then followed by two brief interviews with Aboriginal protestors who were injured by OPP officers.⁶² This statement, in tandem with the still photographs, shows the OPP's actions as gratuitous and overly aggressive. Another example occurs on April 20th, 2006, when CBC aired an amateur video of OPP leaving the land barricade site wearing bullet proof suits, traveling in armored trucks and armed with advanced weaponry. The news clip, replayed throughout CBC's Caledonia coverage for that week, is described by CBC in an online report in the following way:

Protesters say police were armed with M16 rifles, tear gas, pepper spray and Tazers, and subdued a number of people with shocks from the Tazers and pepper-spray. A spokeswoman for the protestors said one female protester was "beaten by five OPP officers." OPP would later deny that excessive force was used (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/caledonia-landclaim/>).

The weapons described in this excerpt are pointed directly at the Aboriginal protestors (as shown below), which implies that the OPP are using unnecessary force or that Aboriginals pose an immediate threat to the safety of the community.

⁶² Broadcast Date: Thursday, April 20, 2006. Program: CTV NEWS. Network: CTV (Approximately thirty seconds into news clip).



This picture presents a still imaged captured from the video shown within CBC's April 20th, 2006, coverage of Caledonia, it was retrieved from the following web address:
<http://www.answers.com/topic/police-raid-protest-april-20-06-jpg>

As illustrated in the above still image, the OPP were armed with heavy artillery that signified an intense conflict situation with Aboriginal protestors. Therefore, in spite of the impartial media treatment of the OPP (in this context), the dichotomy that pits these two groups against each other can potentially be viewed as embodying a meaning effect of Aboriginals as criminals, who pose a threat to society. Furthermore, the news coverage provided by both networks suggests tension between the OPP, the Aboriginal protestors and the non-Aboriginal population of Caledonia. Some non-Aboriginal citizens within the community criticize the OPP for not making enough arrests,⁶³ while the Aboriginal protestors criticize the OPP for their alleged use of excessive force to subdue protest efforts.⁶⁴ Although this is a rather typical situation, wherein those who do not agree with the demonstration request additional law enforcement and those in support of the protest complain of excessive law enforcement restrictions against their freedom to protest

⁶³ For example, one unidentified non-Aboriginal man is shown yelling at a group of OPP officers. He yells, "You pull me over for six miles an hour over the limit. And you tell me, strict is fair, strict is fair! What about those tires over there that are burning?! Strict is Fair! Strict is Fair!"
Broadcast Date: Thursday, April 25, 2006. Program: CBC NEWS. Network: CBC (Approximately twenty seconds into news clip).

⁶⁴ Broadcast Date: Thursday, April 20, 2006. Program: CBC NEWS. Network: CTV (Approximately thirty seconds into news clip).

against actions they feel are unfair, it is relevant to note this tension towards the OPP from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, because it definitely determines how the public comes to perceive the role of the OPP in this conflict.

At this point in the analysis, it becomes relevant to consider the social codes that are attributed to the role of the OPP in society. Although the coverage may not show the OPP as acting *heroically*, it also must be noted that this interpretation is working against commonly held ideologies regarding the role of law enforcement within Canada.

Therefore, in spite of media coverage that questions some of the OPP's actions in this dispute, the protestors who are shown in conflict with the OPP remain at risk of judgment based primarily on the very notion that they are in opposition to a well-known Canadian institution. In order to understand all angles of how the representation of the OPP during the first week of CBC and CTV's coverage of Caledonia influences the way in which the plea of Aboriginals is understood, one must also consider the underlying social codes that are associated with the role of the OPP in society. As Kalant (2004) states, "Interpretations of stories offered by...dominant institutions make sense because they take familiar forms and call on already understood and agreed upon truths" (p.164). To non-Aboriginal members of Canadian society, it is likely that the OPP are recognized favorably for their reputation of upholding national laws and protecting Canadian citizens.

This commonsensical interpretation of the role of the OPP in society is supported and reinforced, of course, by the OPP itself, who state on their website that the role they play in society is to "continually to earn the confidence of the citizens of and visitors to Ontario...by striving to build a culture of trust, and open and honest dialogue

(<http://www.opp.ca>).” This statement, admittedly, has been taken from the OPP website and is part of a public relations campaign that is intended to idealize the role of the OPP in society. This indicates a definite preferential bias towards the “good natured” role of police enforcement. However, although this statement is not meant to be reflective of public opinion regarding the OPP, it is not far removed from Canadian ideologies of law enforcement officials.⁶⁵ That said, consider the possible implications regarding the role ideology can play in media interpretation as illustrated in the following statement by Fleras and Kuntz (2001):

Put bluntly, people may only see what they want to see; they may absorb only what they are predisposed to accept. Too mechanical an interpretation of cause and effect relations is equally problematic. And while protracted exposure may influence people’s attitudes or beliefs, the mainstream media may not directly determine behaviour... Such exposure tends to de-sensitize people by decreasing their empathy towards other while enhancing their apathy and indifference (p. 57).

If the public were to allow bias into their interpretation of these events, this would neutralize the objectionable actions of the OPP and tend to reinforce the notion of Aboriginals being typecast as deviant members of society. However, positive public perceptions of the OPP are going to be balanced with the unfavorable news coverage that is presented within the Caledonia coverage. This may cause some viewers to conclude that the actions of the OPP were uncalled for and position the Aboriginal protestor as a citizen whose right to protest is being unlawfully infringed upon or as vulnerable and in the role of the victim, with the latter possible indicating an additional obstacle to the public construal of the Aboriginal identity.

⁶⁵ As myself, a Canadian citizen who has lived here my entire life, I am speaking from experience of this notion, which suggests police are highly regarded in our communities as peacekeepers and law enforcement officers.

In previous studies of Aboriginal representations, the role of the victim is documented as one of the stereotypical ways in which the public perceive Aboriginals (Larson, 2006, pp: 110-115). Consider the following statement by Fleras and Kunz (2001) regarding media tendency to portray minorities in either the role of the social deviant or vulnerable victims,

Minorities in Canada and abroad have long criticized news portrayals of them as being belligerent, ruthless, or callously indifferent towards human life. No less flattering is their depiction as victims, vulnerable to social decay and societal disorder, enmeshed in graft and corruption, and without much capacity for cooperative or productive activity. Such miscasting of minority men and women is not necessarily the result of bad people doing their job poorly...Rather, news media minority depictions tend to be embedded within the very logic and process of newscasting (p.65).

In the above statement, Fleras and Kunz (2001) recognize how minorities can be miscast into clichéd roles within news narratives, which reflect deeply embedded ideologies that are damaging to the representation of minorities. In addition to social myths that regard Aboriginals as deviant or criminal, the Aboriginal identity has also long been perceived as “childlike and vulnerable,” which indicates the need for Aboriginals to “be protected from the modern world” (Larson, 2006, p.111). In this context, the possible interpretation of the minority protestor as a victim does not entail a movement away from traditional stereotypes. Therefore, the non-romanticized role of the OPP in this conflict (as engaging in unwarranted necessary force) could generate an additional imposition to the perception of the Aboriginal identity through instigating an understanding of Aboriginals as helpless victims.

To conclude and summarize the findings of this analysis, consider the following table that outlines the semiotic procedure used to establish how the role of the OPP

influences the perception of Aboriginals in the Caledonia land dispute coverage provided by CBC and CTV.

Summary of Semiotic Analysis: Law and Order Super Theme

Semiotic Procedure	Outcomes in Relation to Law and Order Super Theme
1. Key Signifiers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The image of heavily armed OPP officers • The Aboriginal testimonials which document the OPP's use of tasers to subdue protestors and lawful protest demonstration • Statements from Aboriginal protestors that condemn OPP officers for their use of excessive force • Still images shown of the OPP wrestling Aboriginal protestors to the ground • Remarks made by reporters that support the Aboriginal claim of the OPP using excessive force upon scarcely armed Aboriginal protestors
2. Range of Possible Signifieds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The OPP are in conflict with the Aboriginal population of Caledonia • Actions of Aboriginal protestors require the use of excessive force by the OPP to maintain social order • Aboriginals do not get along with police • Aboriginals can be over-powered by the OPP • Aboriginals are the victims in the dispute and need to be protected from the OPP
3. Connotations to which Signifieds Relate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginals are perceived as either deviant members of society who disobey national laws or as the victims in a dispute between the OPP and Aboriginal protestors • Aboriginal protests result in social chaos and do not comply with Canadian norms
4. Denotations (naturalized connotations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This conflict involves only two parties: Aboriginals and the OPP • The OPP are those who enforce social order, Aboriginals represent those who pose a threat to social order • Aboriginals are helpless and at the mercy of OPP law officials

<p>5. Larger Systems of Cultural Beliefs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginals inconvenience Canadian institutions and thus burden social stability, hinder social progress and delay economic development • Aboriginals are not well adjusted within Canadian society and need to appropriate their cultural values and norms to become more compliant (and more regular) Canadian citizens
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As summarized in the above chart, the semiotic analysis of the law and order super theme indicates an interpretative framework that works to the detriment of the representation of Aboriginals. Despite impartial news coverage of the OPP, the simplified narrative of the events in Caledonia is detrimental to the public understanding of the conflict. Aboriginals are depicted as either social deviants or victims; neither of which accurately represents the Aboriginal identity or the Aboriginal need for protest in Caledonia.

Other Cultures Super Theme

The fourth and final super theme I will address is Jensen's (1995) "other cultures" super theme, which is similar to the "nation" super theme in that it is partially defined as an interpretative category which is based on a negative opposition that projects "what American culture is *not*" (p.118). In the Caledonia dispute, the "other cultures" super theme can be used to address the immediate interpretant that results from a framework which relates the Aboriginal identity to notions of otherness. Within the CBC and CTV Caledonia coverage, the notion of otherness is used to create a concrete category of understanding that separates Aboriginals from other Canadian citizens and distinguishes them as deviant members of society.⁶⁶ Through specific examples within this coverage, I

⁶⁶ This has been illustrated through the discussion of the previous three super themes, which each (to some extent) contained a discussion of *otherness*.

will attempt to show how the notion of otherness provides an emotional interpretant that fosters the belief that Aboriginals are hostile to Canadian society.

In accord with Jensen's (1995) definition of the "other culture" super theme, the emphasis of this analysis will be to address the issue of *otherness* when used to negatively represent the Aboriginal identity.⁶⁷ Within the CBC and CTV coverage of Caledonia, the notion of otherness is frequently the result of double standards within common news media practices, which tend to question the actions and opinions of minorities more so than the actions and opinions of the majority. Fleras and Kunz (2001) state: "double standards are not necessarily the fault of mean spirited news editors...but are often implicit within and central to the organizational dynamic of the newscasting process" (p. 84). An example of a double standard within news coverage is when news media "minoritize people of colour in ways and wording that extol the traditional roles or stereotypical images of minority women and men" (Fleras and Kunz, 2001, p.83). An example of this practice is illustrated through the following excerpt from CBC's news coverage of Caledonia:

Unidentified man: "We have to work here too. Like they can't be running the town"

Kas Roussy (CBC reporter): "Who's they?"

Unidentified man: "The Indians."⁶⁸

In this excerpt, the CBC reporter prompts a non-Aboriginal resident to label the Aboriginal protestors. The term he uses [Indian] is outdated and considered to be

⁶⁷ For an in-depth discussion on media, racism and multiculturalism in Canada; see, Fleras and Kunz (2001: pp. 1-27).

⁶⁸ Broadcast Date: April 20th, 2006. Network: CBC. Program: CBC News: The National. End of the clip.

politically incorrect (particularly when used by non-Aboriginals).⁶⁹ This short exchange does not in any way advance the factual retelling of the events in Caledonia, which poses the question of why this statement was even included in the CBC coverage. For the purposes of this analysis, one might consider that a preferred reading of the term *Indian*, when used in this context, sets up a racial barrier between the citizens in Caledonia and compartmentalizes them into two distinct groups: us and them. The connotations associated with this term are heavily rooted in stereotypical images of Aboriginals, which encourage an interpretation of Aboriginal identity as being outside of acceptable Canadian norms. Therefore, the presence of this term within the Caledonia coverage favors an understanding of Aboriginals through an interpretative framework of otherness that can be construed as belittling to the Aboriginal identity.

In addition to the use of the term *Indian* in the coverage, another instance where the news media enforce the notion of otherness through the use of stereotypes can be found within the April 23rd, 2006, CBC coverage of Caledonia. Reporter Melanie Nagy says the following, “Anger still lingers, but behind unflinching faces and immovable obstacles [referring to the barricade], there is hope [in reference to the protest coming to an end, not in regards to the Aboriginal spirit or identity].”⁷⁰ As this statement is made, the camera remains focused on the face of an Aboriginal protestor. The description “unflinching face” denotes a popular Aboriginal stereotype of the “Warrior Indian”, a stereotype that works to dehumanize the Aboriginal identity through the suggestion that they are emotionless and void of personality (Media Awareness Network). Other

⁶⁹ The politically correct term for indigenous people of Canada is Aboriginal, which “refers to organic political and cultural entities that stem historically the original peoples of North America (Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples, 1996).

⁷⁰ Broadcast Date: April 23rd, 2006. Network: CBC. Program: CBC News: The National. (Beginning of clip).

stereotypes that can readily be seen in the CBC and CTV coverage of Caledonia are the depictions of Aboriginals as welfare dependents who are draining to the Canadian economy and as social deviants who disrupt the normalcy of Canadian society.⁷¹

Wagamese (1996), an Aboriginal writer, comments satirically on these stereotypes by saying:

Prior to the media explosion of the 80s, the general perception of Canadian Indians was that of guttural, welfare-dependent wards of the state with a charming romantic history. In tense social situations, all you really needed to do was grunt a little, remain stone-faced and talk about your grandfather (p.149).

Through narratives that include stereotypical representations of Aboriginals and statements that dehumanize their identity and suggest that they do not work and unlawfully do not pay taxes, the Aboriginal protestors in this coverage are negatively positioned against average (“hard working”) Canadian citizens. This represents the notion of otherness and is detrimental to the general perception of the Aboriginal identity, since it allows for their portrayal to be understood in negative opposition to members of majority.

To further explore the use of double standards within the Caledonia coverage, consider how “news media expect minorities to speak as a unified voice on controversial issues... [whereas] mainstream communities are expected to have a variety of diverse viewpoints” (Fleras and Kunz, 2001, p.83). The following excerpt from CTV’s coverage of the dispute illustrates a reporter questioning the validity of the comments made by an

⁷¹ For example, consider the following two statements made by a non-Aboriginal resident of Caledonia: “Who’s going to pay for the road that was set on fire? Tax payers. Me.” (Broadcast Date: April 20th, 2006. Network: CTV. Program: CTV News. Beginning of clip.) “They live on the reserve tax free. We pay taxes. We’ve got two laws in this country. You’ve got one for the minorities and one for the rich.” (Broadcast Date: April 22nd, 2006. Network: CTV. Program: CTV News: Halfway through news clip.)

Aboriginal spokesperson who acknowledges the diversity of Aboriginal opinions regarding the issue of self-governance.

O'Regan (CTV Reporter): Janie, I want to ask, I mean, did these protestors act within the sanction of Six Nations leadership or not?

Jamieson (Aboriginal Spokesperson for Protestors in Caledonia): Yes, we do. And the leadership we follow is our traditional form of governance, which is the Handenosaunee Confederacy who were forcibly removed by gun point in 1924 by the RCMP. That's who we're here under the governance of, our chiefs and clan mothers.

O'Regan: But Janie... [Cut off by Aboriginal spokesperson]

Jamieson: We're not here under the... [Cut of by CTV reporter]

O'Regan: But the leadership says the protestors are acting on their own, they're not acting with the sanction of the leadership?

Jamieson: The person you are referring to is not our leadership. That... [Cut off by CTV reporter]

O'Regan: He says he is though. So what is it?

Jamieson: He thinks he is. I am trying to explain it to you, if you'll listen. In 1924 our traditional leadership was forcibly removed at gunpoint by the RCMP. At that point it was stated: Here's your new governance. Whether you like it or not you're following this and you're following the Indian Act. And that's how David General came to be. He represents a system that is at arms length of Canadian government. But any person that's back here today, we do not stand behind that government, we've never supported it. And we're here under the direction of our traditional government, the chiefs and clan mothers.⁷²

While this excerpt does provide some relevant social context regarding the issue of Aboriginal self-governance within Canada, it also displays the reporter's dissatisfaction with the response of the Aboriginal spokesperson, who acknowledges the diversity within Aboriginal communities regarding the issue of self-governance. When the CTV reporter says, "He [David General] says he is though. [Referring to David General's proclamation

⁷² Broadcast Date: April 21st, 2006. Network: CTV. Program: CTV News: At the end of the news segment.

as an Aboriginal leader] So what is it?” The reporter’s assertive tone indicates unequivocally a sense of criticism and disapproval. She is questioning the validity of the comments based on the fact that they do not coincide with the opinion of another Aboriginal. This reflects negatively on the Aboriginal representation because it creates an immediate interpretant that suggests thatAboriginaš should have one homogenous perspective and that diversity between Aboriginal opinions is frowned upon by the majority. Through this excerpt it can be seen how “values are encoded into this process [the process of framing news stories] in ways that reproduce dominant interests while other perspectives are whittled down to the size of irrelevant or inferior” (Fleras and Kunz, 2001, p.71). Furthermore, this example also demonstrates the existence of a media tendency to remind minorities of their differences, but then to imply that they should conduct themselves as if these differences didn’t matter” (Fleras and Kunz, 2001, p.83).

Through the other cultures super theme, the Caledonia coverage is shown as contributing negatively to the understanding of the Aboriginal identity. The CBC and CTV news coverage of Caledonia involves an interpretative framework that produces the meaning effect of “what Canada is not” through assertions of “how Aboriginal are.” To summarize the findings of this social semiotic analysis, see the following chart.

Summary of Semiotic Analysis: Other Cultures

Semiotic Procedure	Outcomes in Relation to Other Cultures Super Theme
1. Key Signifiers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-Aboriginal use of the term “Indian” • Images of Aboriginal protestors with bandanas covering their face • The close up image of a protestors face, as a CBC reporter describes his face as “unflinching” • Non-Aboriginal statements that comment on Aboriginal tax benefits • Aboriginal comments that acknowledge diversity between the opinions of Aboriginals are disregarded through a reporter’s use of a condescending tone

<p>2. Possible Signifieds</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Images of Aboriginals “bandits” means an involvement in criminal activity • The “stone face” of the Aboriginal protestor indicates he is void of human emotion • Non-Aboriginals who pay taxes are superior Canadian citizens as opposed to Aboriginals who receive tax benefits from the government • Tone used by reporter in interview with Aboriginal spokesperson indicates disapproval
<p>3. Connotations Produced by Signs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through use of the term “unflinching” to describe the face of an Aboriginal man, the reporter facilitates a characterization of this man as being representative of a Warrior Indian, which is a common stereotype that suggests Aboriginals are heartless and void of human emotion. Other stereotypes (present in this coverage) that hinder an accurate understanding of the Aboriginal identity, are the Aboriginal as unintelligent and unable to have independent thoughts and the Aboriginal as a social deviant (who does not pay taxes). Through this set of stereotypical depictions, Aboriginals are misunderstood as one dimensional and uncaring, which reinforces a negative perception of their identity. • Through the use of the term <i>Indian</i> (by a non-Aboriginal Caledonia resident), images of people who are immediately recognizable as Aboriginal protestors (as seen in the CBC and CTV coverage), and the condescending nature of reporter comments (as illustrated in the previously noted exchange between a CTV reporter and an Aboriginal spokesperson), the coverage reinforces the perceived differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians. By using a framework of difference, the Aboriginal identity is subject to being interpreted as radically unlike other Canadians, which in this context connotes that Aboriginals are absolutely and not relatively different from non-Aboriginal Canadian citizens.
<p>4. Denotations (naturalized connotations)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal Canadians maintain values and traditions that are different from other Canadians.
<p>5. Larger Systems of Cultural Beliefs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Aboriginal ideology is radically opposed to Canadian social norms, which place priority on the principles of capitalism. The Aboriginal need to protest in Caledonia hinders the economic progress in this area. Within the framework of capitalism, this action is perceived as being ludicrous and has a negative effect upon their identity. It casts doubt over their choice of lifestyles and priorities, which further shows Aboriginals to be deviant members of Canadian society, because they are not supportive of the modern development of land in Caledonia.

As illustrated in the previous summary, through the social semiotic analysis of how the notion of “otherness” is determined by the CBC and CTV Caledonia news coverage. Aboriginals are construed as being outside of acceptable Canadian norms in a manner that is likely to be understood by the public as deviant. This biased framework of understanding conditions the interpretation of the Aboriginal identity, and thus reinforces negative Aboriginal stereotypes, and represents Aboriginals as being part of an inferior minority group.

Summary of Results and Analysis

The results and analysis of this study are consistent with the hypothesis that the CBC and CTV misrepresent Aboriginals within the Caledonia news coverage. Through the notion of the family super theme, it was shown that the news coverage overlooked the Aboriginal perspective in regards to how this dispute affects the lives and livelihoods of Aboriginal Caledonia residents. The nation super theme was used to consider the visual sign of the Tim Horton’s brand name as part of the coverage of the crisis, which produced a more amicable Aboriginal portrayal and thus provided an isolated example of one way in which the news coverage did not frame the Aboriginal protestor as outside or separate from Canadian norms. Alternatively, the nation super theme also served to explore how the pictorial representation of the Mohawk flag generated negative connotations that associated hostility with the Aboriginal identity and contributed to the dispute being understood through the framework of “us versus them.” The tendency for the CBC and CTV to confine the dispute to a simplified narrative of “us versus them” was also relevant from the analytical viewpoint of the law and order super theme, which dealt with the understanding of the inappropriate role of the OPP in this conflict. Through

the framework of understanding facilitated by the use of the other cultures super theme, the media use of Aboriginal stereotypes was explored in relationship to how the latter generate the characterization of this minority as ruthless and void of emotions. A summary of the results and analysis of this study is provided in the following diagram

Review of Key Findings and Outcomes

Super Theme	Key Findings	Outcomes
<p>Family</p>	<p>Through numerous non-Aboriginal testimonials, the interpretative framework in this context allows audiences to more readily identify with the concerns of non-Aboriginals (in regards to their concern for non-Aboriginal child welfare). Media tendency to favor the non-Aboriginal perspective on this issue and omit the Aboriginal opinion, promotes a misunderstanding of the Aboriginal identity and creates the perception of Aboriginals as people with no regard for the consequences of this protest on families within the community.</p>	<p>The impact of this exclusion, of the Aboriginal perspective on this issue, is that the Aboriginal identity is perceived as uncaring and in absolute opposition to the non-Aboriginal population of Caledonia. This supports a misguided interpretation of the Aboriginal protestors and could result in the audience internalizing notions that suggest Aboriginals do not value the institution of family.</p>
<p>Nation</p>	<p>The Mohawk flag provides several connotations that affect negatively on the interpretation of the Aboriginal identity and encourages a misperception of it through the implied natural connection between chaos and the presence of this group. The online photo of an Aboriginal protestor who has chosen to conceal his identity from the media is suggestive of a stereotypical interpretation of the Aboriginal protestor as criminal and socially deviant, despite the fact that he is holding a tray of Tim Hortons coffee cups. However, when the this brand name was used in the televised coverage of Caledonia, the protestors shown consuming the coffee were not in disguise nor were they readily identifiable as Aboriginals. In this context, the Tim Horton's coffee cup suggested a more relatable portrayal of the Aboriginal identity, one which provided a more accessible means for non-Aboriginal Canadians to identify with, and more neutrally perceive the Aboriginal plea and identity.</p>	<p>The image of the Tim Hortons coffee cup in the hands of Aboriginal protestors provides a more relatable Aboriginal identity, one which is more consistent with Canadian norms. However, this does not make up for the numerous other instances where the Aboriginal identity is presented in opposition to Canadian norms. The pictorial representation of the Mohawk flag, for example, alternatively generates a host of negative connotations that present Aboriginals in contrast with Canadian norms and favors the misunderstanding of Aboriginals in this context.</p>

<p>Law and Order</p>	<p>Emphasis is placed on the role of the OPP in this conflict. This institution notably does not receive <i>preferential</i> media treatment, but a <i>significant</i> amount of media coverage. The perception that is generated by the dominant representation of OPP presence in this dispute is that the Aboriginal protestors are in direct conflict with the OPP, which limits the dispute narrative and minimizes the importance of the Aboriginal plea in favor of positioning Aboriginals as being against the law.</p>	<p>The dominant presence of the OPP in this coverage contributes to the transformation of the Caledonia dispute into a conflict between Aboriginals and OPP officers. The impact of this characterization is that the Aboriginal plea and need for protest receives minimal media attention. It favors a misrepresentation of Aboriginal identity and of this group's need for protest in the context of the Caledonia dispute.</p>
<p>Other Cultures</p>	<p>Through the use of Aboriginal stereotypes that position Aboriginals as outside of Canadian cultural norms, the identity of Aboriginal protestors comes to be understood through negative ideologies that represent them as deviant and outside of societal norms.</p>	<p>The use of stereotypes, the 'us vs. them' dichotomy, and the tendency to depict Aboriginals as social deviants, all determine their misrepresentation. This particular super theme is supported by the scholarly findings of minority representations in the media, as outlined in Chapter Two. The results of this misrepresentation impose upon the interpretation of Aboriginals that is gained through this coverage. Through an interpretative framework that positions the Aboriginal identity within a narrow and stereotypical understanding of Aboriginals, they are perceived as socially deviant, which typifies the kinds of injustices faced by minorities in the media and determines a misperception of their identity.</p>

As outlined in the above diagram, the results of this analysis show that the interpretative frameworks used to understand the Aboriginal identity in the CBC and CTV Caledonia news clips, foster a misrepresentation of the Aboriginal identity. In this context, it is most frequently the result of CBC's and CTV's strategy of reducing the very multifaceted situation into an "us versus them" dichotomy. This places Aboriginals in a negative

opposition to Canadian norms and overlooks the Aboriginal perspective on relevant issues.

The coverage provided by CBC and CTV was very similar stylistically and in content. The quantity of the coverage of Caledonia during the first week of coverage was also consistent, with daily news segments that on average ran about one and half minutes. Originally, I had anticipated a contrast in the coverage of the CBC to the coverage of the CTV, due to their difference in status as a public (CBC) and private network (CTV). As a public network, I thought the CBC would provide more thorough coverage that reflected a greater diversity of opinions and more contextual information, in regards to the unique status of Aboriginals in Canadian society. This hypothesis was not consistent with the CBC coverage. That said, with more time and resources, it would have been interesting to compare a larger sample of the Caledonia coverage and to look into supporting media efforts, such as, online content, and other televised programs, which might have facilitated in providing more in depth coverage to the events in Caledonia.

A secondary concern that was touched upon in this analysis was how the structural constraints of the news genre may lead to inaccurate portrayals of minorities in the media. Although this concern represents a valid consideration to discussions of how to rectify minority misrepresentation in the media, the systematic limitations of the news genre do not justify or provide a sufficiently valid explanation for the inaccurate and unfair portrayal of Aboriginals in this coverage. Overall, the findings of this thesis tended to be consistent with the scholarly material on minority representations in the media. A misperception of Aboriginals was identified, and as discussed previously, this is deemed

to be primarily a result of Aboriginals being understood as the “other” placed in an absolute irreconcilable opposition to Canadian society.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Conclusion

Through the social semiotic analysis of these news clips, the aim of this thesis was to provide an answer to the question, Does the way in which CBC and CTV cover Aboriginal land disputes misrepresent Canadian Aboriginals in their struggle to reclaim what they believe belongs to them? After a critical observational analysis of these news clips, it can be stated that CBC and CTV represent the Aboriginal identity in an unfair manner in the news coverage of the Caledonia dispute. Overall, the coverage tends to favor an interpretative framework that produces a misinterpretation of Aboriginals through the general omission of their opinions, the use of stereotypes, and a tendency to distort the circumstances of the dispute and allow relevant social factors to be ignored. The media portrayal of the Aboriginal identity feeds a biased framework of understanding that cannot produce an accurate representation, whether conscious or systematic, such a communication strategy hinders the audience from attaining a true understanding of Canadian Aboriginals and of the significance of the protest in Caledonia. If the news coverage of Caledonia incorporated an increased presence of the Aboriginal voice, acknowledged the importance of this land dispute to Aboriginal communities, and discussed the issue in relationship to the ongoing national narratives involving Aboriginals and the Canadian government, there is a greater likelihood that the perception of Aboriginals would be accurate. This would have shifted public perception away from disparaging ideologies that regard Aboriginals as infringing upon the economic and social development of Canada. In the present media context, the audience's perception of this group of is thus filtered through a Eurocentric approach to the issue of

Aboriginal land claims, one which does not acknowledge the importance of such disputes to Aboriginal communities across Canada.

The findings of this study are significant, because through identifying an inaccurate representation of Aboriginals in the media this thesis could contribute to acknowledging a larger social issue, namely, that Aboriginals are severely misunderstood by many Canadians. In a country as vast and diverse as Canada, many people's knowledge of Aboriginals is based on the media depictions of this minority group. Since this study has determined a certain degree of biased representation of the Aboriginal identity within the news media, this suggests that Aboriginals are perceived by the public through erroneous frameworks of understanding, which is a disturbing reality within a country that prides itself on multiculturalism and the appreciation of all ethnicities.

Given the sociopolitical implications that are generated by media misrepresentations, a possibility for further research would be to incorporate a reception study of audiences who lack first hand experience with Aboriginals, together with an observational analysis, which would provide a study of media content that portrays Aboriginals. This would more conclusively posit a casual correlation between the public opinion of Aboriginals and their media representation. Although the magnitude of this research would require substantial time and effort, if the results confirm the hypothesis, it could provide convincing empirical evidence that would warrant the news media to adopt new approaches for the coverage of Aboriginal issues; approaches that more accurately portray their identity.

In conclusion, the results of this thesis indicate that the CBC and CTV coverage of the events in Caledonia present Aboriginals through reductionistic interpretative

frameworks that underscore the significance of the Caledonia land dispute and the importance of Aboriginal rights within Canada. As the descendants of the original inhabitants of Canada, people whose cultural traditions and heritage are routinely dismissed as trivial and outdated, Aboriginals warrant fair representation in the media and the right to defend themselves against actions that they feel infringe upon their rights, which in this context is the non-Aboriginal occupation of land Aboriginals consider to be their own. It is socially unjust to disregard the importance of Aboriginal land claims in Canada, which are all too often ignored or drawn out by the federal government into prolonged legal battles that rarely appease the Aboriginal population. For too long Aboriginals have been depicted in Canadian society as social deviants who do not comply with Canadian norms. As Canadians now move into an era of increased social consciousness, the importance of recognizing the injustices endured by the original inhabitants of our country is essential to Canada's social integrity and weighs heavily on our capacity to foster a greater understanding of the Aboriginal identity.

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