

Managing Dissent: Energy Pipelines and “New Right” Politics in Canada

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ABSTRACT *This article explores the political controversy surrounding the proposed Northern Gateway bitumen pipeline by analyzing the modalities through which elite rationalities structure public news discourse. First, through a news analysis, the authors identify the most common pro-approval actors cited speaking in favour of the project. Next, they identify the most prominent pro-approval civil society sources and ascertain their level of embeddedness in conservative discourse coalitions. Finally, the authors identify the dominant framing techniques that disproportionately structure the public discourse around the Gateway project. The article ultimately argues that over-reliance on “official sources,” the prominence of industry-backed civil society organizations, and the influence of hegemonic discourses on journalistic practice all conspire to structure the public discourse on Northern Gateway in favour of elite preferences and rationalities.*

KEYWORDS *Corporate communication; Public relations; Agenda setting; Political communication; Environmental journalism*

RÉSUMÉ *Cet article explore la controverse politique entourant l'oléoduc de bitume proposé par Northern Gateway en analysant les modalités selon lesquelles les rationalités d'élites structurent le discours tenu dans les médias d'information. D'abord, au moyen de l'analyse de nouvelles, les auteurs identifient les acteurs appuyant l'oléoduc que les médias citent le plus souvent. Ensuite, ils identifient les sources de la société civile les plus en vue et évaluent leur degré d'appartenance à des coalitions conservatrices. Enfin, les auteurs identifient certaines techniques de cadrage qui jouent un rôle disproportionné dans la structuration du discours public à l'égard du projet Gateway. Cet article se conclut en soutenant qu'une dépendance excessive envers des « sources officielles », la centralité d'organismes de la société civile appuyés par l'industrie, et l'influence de discours hégémoniques sur la pratique journalistique coïncident pour structurer le discours public sur Northern Gateway en faveur de préférences et de rationalités d'élites.*

MOTS CLÉS *Communication d'entreprise; Relations publiques; Mise sur agenda; Communication politique; Journalisme environnemental*

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Introduction

The relationship between the news media and environmental politics has traditionally been a tendentious one. On one hand, environmentalism has gained acceptance in mainstream discourses and politics over the past four decades. On the other, critical scholars argue that political and economic elites continue to possess multiple modalities through which their preferences structure environmental news discourses. For one, editorial cultures in highly concentrated media markets may prioritize framing techniques that privilege those discourses preferred by economic and political elites at the expense of those proffered by oppositional publics. Simultaneously, the oligopolistic structure of news media firms combines with dominant journalistic practices to prioritize the use of “official” sources—such as government and private firms—in environmental reporting. Increasingly, the rise of corporate-backed Elite Policy Information Infrastructures (EPIIs) has provided a powerful new type of “official sourcing” as the economic capital of a business elite is translated into the cultural capital of expertise that can be invested in the journalistic field.

The authors explore these dynamics from a left-environmental perspective to produce an empirically grounded analysis of the media discourse on the proposed Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline. This research aims to explore two core modalities—duplication and source domination—through which elite rationalities structure news discourses. The exploration begins with a source count and social network analysis of the most common pro-pipeline sources in our sample of Canadian newspaper articles concerning the National Energy Board’s (NEB’s) 2012 Joint Review Panel (JRP). In this analysis, we attempt to ascertain the extent to which official sources are supplemented by representatives of New Right EPII groups and discourse coalitions previously active in climate denial campaigns.

We then move on to a content and discourse analysis of those news articles from our sample that had high rates of duplication in newspapers across Canada. This analysis aimed to evaluate how a limited number of original articles could shape representations of public reactions to the Northern Gateway proposal. In our evaluation, we argue that on the whole the news media’s framing and sourcing for JRP-focused stories demonstrates a bias that favours elite rationalities and is hostile toward pipeline opponents. We also argue that New Right EPII sources have been key sources used to undermine opposition to the proposal, though not with the frequency of traditional sources from government and corporations.

Northern Gateway and the JRP

In January 2012, the National Energy Board began a Joint Review Panel for Enbridge’s Northern Gateway pipeline proposal. If approved, Gateway would pump bitumen from the Alberta tar sands—an extremely carbon intensive and ecologically destructive source of oil (Davidson & Gismondi, 2011; Nikiforuk, 2009)—through British Columbia and its Great Bear Rainforest to ports in Kitimat for export overseas.

The Joint Review Panel is an independent body established by the National Energy Board in collaboration with the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency to evaluate the proposed project’s environmental and social impacts. Its public hearings represent a rare historical moment wherein a component of Canada’s economic apparatus can be

politically challenged by members of the lay public. Here, Daniel Hallin's (1986) concept of spheres is instructive. It divides "the journalist's world ... into three regions, each ... governed by different journalistic standards" (p. 116). The sphere of consensus contains the social objects accepted as part of society's makeup (Hallin, 1986). By contrast, the sphere of legitimate controversy refers to issues recognized as legitimate subjects of debate among established political actors. Finally, there is the sphere of deviance, which comprises the political views and actors rejected by the mainstream (Hallin, 1986). The JRP hearings demonstrate two shifts between spheres, with bitumen pipelines transitioning from the sphere of consensus while pipeline opposition transitioned from the sphere of deviance, both meeting in the sphere of legitimate controversy.

These shifts were further facilitated by Northern Gateway facing an overall crisis of legitimacy, during "which the established order of things is shaken to the foundations" (Frank, 2012, p. 21) and called into question by oppositional publics. Such scrutiny alters how news media approach and frame articles related to the delegitimized issue, transporting it from the sphere of consensus to legitimate controversy. The crisis of legitimacy for the Northern Gateway project resulted from a series of events, including the halting of production of the Keystone XL pipeline extension in the United States (Goldenberg, 2012); British Columbia First Nations' resistance to the proposal (O'Neil, 2011); and three pipeline spills in Alberta in May and June 2012 (Kheraj, 2012). However, these events did not have equal impact on the project's legitimacy, and the level of crisis was not constant throughout the samples. Media coverage and portrayal of these events was pivotal to determining how far into the sphere of legitimate controversy Northern Gateway tar sands/pipeline projects as a whole shifted.

Attempts to establish legitimacy for the project by delegitimizing its opponents centred primarily around an open letter penned by then Natural Resources Minister Joe Oliver. In it, Oliver (2012) attempted to strip pipeline opponents and their arguments of any potential legitimacy by warning that "[t]heir goal is to stop any major project, no matter what the cost to Canadian families in lost jobs and economic growth ... These groups threaten to hijack our regulatory system to achieve their radical ideological agenda" (p. F11). Just two days before the JRP hearing began, Oliver's letter was published by both the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Financial Post*, and his arguments quickly framed the growing opposition to the project throughout the news media.

Environmental news media and New Right politics

Critical scholars have illustrated how, despite journalistic norms of balance, journalistic practices, editorial cultures, and increasing media concentration all work to normalize framing techniques that privilege those discourses preferred by political and economic elites (Curran, 2002)—a trend that has most certainly extended to coverage of environmental issues (Gutstein, 2009). At the same time, journalists tend to disproportionately quote official sources—especially from government and industry (Hansen, 2010; Reis, 1999)—and award them primary definer status (Antilla, 2005). With the ability to define discourse frames within news articles, these primary definers have tended to either downplay environmental concerns or to frame them in ways that can be integrated into governmental or corporate rationalities (Leiserowitz, 2005).

By contrast, lay voices are generally excluded from environmental media coverage (Hansen, 2010), with non-institutional sources remaining on the “unofficial” fringe (Jönsson, 2011). When non-elite voices do enter the media, they are frequently framed as indecorous: driven by emotion and/or lacking the technical knowledge deemed necessary to participate in the conversation (Cox, 2012). Hence, the Enbridge hearings were a pivotal moment for pipeline opponents, providing them with a rare opportunity to share their concerns with the JRP and the media.

The ability of corporate and government elites to disseminate messaging via the media is further enhanced by a mutually shared ideology. Numerous factors, including high entry costs, concentration, corporate ownership, market advertising-based business models, and an overreliance on public relations and official sources all tend to skew editorial culture and news values in favour of elite rationalities (Curran, 2002; Gutstein, 2009). This affinity has been made even stronger by the hegemonic rise over the past 40 years of a neoliberal ideology that has increasingly normalized a discourse that prioritizes “free market” economic growth and is increasingly skeptical of any perceived barriers to capital accumulation—chief among these environmental regulation and politics (Gutstein, 2009; Harvey, 2005; Jacques, Dunlap, & Freeman, 2008; Oreskes & Conway, 2010). In recent decades this discourse has become dominant in Canadian newsrooms (Compton & Dyer-Witherford, 2014; Gutstein, 2009), though it is often articulated uneasily alongside countervailing discourses—such as the broad acceptance of environmental sustainability and regulation—that remain constitutive of many editorial cultures.

Easy-to-reach official sources are a boon for increasingly cash-strapped and time-poor newsrooms, which gladly accept low-cost content in the form of interviews, press conferences, press briefings, and reports (Davis, 2000; Oscar Gandy, cited in Lewis, Williams, & Franklin, 2008; Gutstein, 2009; Hansen, 2010). Today a significant number—often a majority—of news stories are based on such “information subsidies.” Unsurprisingly, information subsidization has been particularly prevalent in contemporary pipeline politics, with the Alberta government having spent tens of millions of dollars annually to distribute pro-business messages through its Public Affairs Bureau along with its more targeted pro-tar sands messaging campaigns (Nikiforuk, 2009).

It is not only government and corporate actors that provide information subsidies. For decades now, a networked movement of corporate-backed New Right civil society groups has coordinated the promotion of environmental skeptic discourses in the public sphere (Boykoff, 2009; Gutstein, 2009; Jacques et al., 2008). This coordination is related to their integration into broader “New Right” Elite Policy and Information Infrastructures (EPIIs): decentralized yet interlocked networks of conservative intellectuals, activists, think tanks, corporations, foundations, and advocacy organizations that together have promoted neoliberal politics and economics in the public sphere (Neubauer, 2011). These groups have provided their representatives, policy entrepreneurs, and scholars with media training; arranged media interviews and provided expert sources for journalists; developed media kits and coordinated “science” briefings for journalists; and produced a steady stream of written materials for major newspapers. EPII groups have been at the forefront of previous campaigns to undermine the

environmental movement, most notably by promoting climate change skeptic discourses in the public sphere. The investment in this regard has been substantial, with millions of dollars in funding coming from the hydrocarbon industry and other polluting firms, business lobby groups, and the large conservative charitable foundations (Neubauer, 2011). Though dominated by economic elites that fund them and sit on their governing boards, EPII groups often bring together a variety of corporate, media, academic, and government actors to develop policy responses to emergent economic, political, and social issues (Fischer, 1991; Gutstein, 2009).

The support of networked civil society organizations has allowed for the formation of discourse coalitions of experts linked through shared ideological dispositions and a common political project (Stone, 1996). Members of these coalitions can then leverage their institutional backing to promote their shared discourses in the public sphere through the provision of information subsidies to news media. With the climate change–denial movement, for example, industry-backed groups and their minority of skeptical “experts” promoted climate change–denial discourses in the media, misleadingly giving the broad scientific consensus around climate change the appearance of an evenly divided debate (McCright & Dunlap, 2010).

Before moving on to our analysis, we should note that many of the same dynamics identified here with New Right civil society networks are present in the networks of their left-wing and environmental rivals. Certainly, progressive think tanks such as the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives are also integrated into networks of politically aligned individuals and institutions. They too cultivate discourse coalitions of like-minded experts and activists to generate perceived source legitimacy in the media sphere by way of information subsidies. And while on the whole, it has been demonstrated that “New Right” think tanks are significantly better funded and more numerous than their progressive rivals (Gutstein, 2009; Rich, 2004), some green advocacy groups in particular have accumulated a good deal of economic, cultural, and symbolic capital.

It is therefore not our intention to identify in the dynamics of New Right EPII groups a set of political and institutional modalities entirely monopolized by the conservative movement. Rather our core questions concerning such groups relate to the following: their prominence as news sources concerning the ongoing Gateway controversy; the degree to which their preferred frames and arguments dovetail with dominant media discourses and/or elite rationalities already privileged in the public sphere; and the extent to which such groups are institutionally and interpersonally interlocked with corporate and state elites promoting the project. Given the significant impact such groups displayed in previous campaigns of climate change denial, such inquiries seem only prudent.

News media sample: Methodology

For this project, we collected three time-based samples of Canadian newspaper articles regarding the JRP hearings. The primary source for these articles was the LexisNexis database, with the Canadian Newsstand database and Internet searches providing additional documents as required. Each sample is a representation of news media during a different period in the hearing process during which the Gateway project was considered particularly newsworthy:

December 2011—a pre-hearing period during which the U.S. Congress voted in a 60-day timeline forcing President Obama to make a decision about the Keystone XL pipeline extension proposal (Payton, 2012).

January 7–27, 2012—the three-week period during which the first National Energy Board hearings took place. Also during this time, President Obama delayed the Keystone XL decision until after the U.S. Presidential election (Payton, 2012).

May–June 2012—this sample period included three significant pipeline spills in Alberta (Canadian Press, 2012a, 2012b; Kheraj, 2012), which together had the potential to create a renewed crisis of legitimacy for the Gateway proposal.

The samples included stories from Postmedia, Torstar, the *Globe and Mail*, and Glacier Media. Stories with the terms “pipeline” and “hearings,” with either “Enbridge” or “Northern Gateway” in their text, were included in the samples. Based on this criterion, the initial samples comprised a total of 853 stories, with two roughly equal samples for December and May–June (168 and 178) and a much larger sample of 503 stories representing the eruption of coverage associated with the JRP’s January start.

Source analysis: Methodology

Given the disproportionate reliance of news media on official sources, as well as the significant activities of EPII groups in previous environmental skeptic campaigns, we began with a source count to identify the most common groups and individuals cited in our samples as sources speaking out in favour of the pipeline approval. For the source analysis, the three samples were culled into a smaller sample ($N = 180$) of stories from Postmedia, the *Globe and Mail*, and Torstar. (Glacier Media, given its quite small market share, and the fact that local media tend to focus less on official sources than national and “quality” outlets [Hansen, 2010], was not included.) The smaller sample excluded duplicates of previous articles ($N = 306$) and articles that did not explicitly use sources—predominantly letters to the editor and editorials. Sources were sorted into the following groups: firms, governments, advocacy groups, industry associations, think tanks, academics, journalists, unions, and unaffiliated individuals. We wished to see whether the findings followed the trends established by the climate change debate, in which firms were less willing to directly challenge scientific and environmentalist claims than were industry-backed New Right EPII groups.

After we identified the most prominent sources, we performed a social network analysis of the single most prominent unambiguously pro-approval Policy Institute and Advocacy Group sources, focusing on an organization’s board members, fellows, and staff. We searched online biographies, media articles, and other public documents to ascertain how interlocked group membership was with various levels of government, EPII-backed groups and discourse coalitions, and the corporate sector.

Source analysis: Results

Throughout our sample, firms and government were by far the most prominent pro-pipeline sources. Within the 158 stories from Postmedia and the *Globe and Mail* in this sample, pro-pipeline sources appeared 305 times (with each “appearance” counted only once per article). Representatives of the federal government were the most com-

mon source category, with 113 appearances. Private firms came in second, appearing as sources 108 times, with Enbridge itself accounting for 60 of these appearances. Representatives of the Alberta government were the third most common category, at 31 articles. Industry associations were the fourth most common source category, at 27. Hence, traditional official sources—firms and government representatives—and not industry-backed EPII groups, were the most common pro-pipeline sources in our sample. The next three sources fell in the middle of the range, with academics (15 appearances), advocacy groups (10 appearances), and think tanks (7 appearances) coming in fifth, sixth, and seventh, respectively.

Of the 10 advocacy group appearances, all were for Ethical Oil (EO), making it the sixth most common pro-pipeline source. This high level of information subsidization is significant, as the group's discourse paralleled federal government attempts to drag the project back into the sphere of consensus by xenophobically slandering pipeline opponents as foreign-funded radicals. Therefore, we decided to look closer at the members, staff, and founders of the group to ascertain their level of embeddedness in New Right discourse coalitions.

The non-profit group Ethical Oil recently emerged from a blog dedicated to promoting the thesis of Ezra Levant's best-selling book of the same name (EthicalOil.org, 2013). The group "encourage[s] people, businesses, and governments to choose Ethical Oil from Canada, its oil sands, and from other liberal democracies" as opposed to "Conflict Oil from some of the most politically oppressive and environmentally reckless regimes in the world" (EthicalOil.org, 2013, para. 1). The group argues this is so because "[c]ountries [like Canada] that produce Ethical Oil protect the rights of women, workers, indigenous peoples and other minorities including gays and lesbians," while "Conflict Oil regimes ... oppress their citizens" (para. 2).

The framing of Ethical Oil as a grassroots, progressive advocacy organization is revealing, as a closer look at the organization shows it to be heavily interlocked with the Canadian New Right EPII network and its discourse coalitions. For example, while refusing to take donations from government or foreign donors, they "DO accept donations from Canadian individuals and companies ... working to produce Ethical Oil," which is to say tar sands producers (EthicalOil.org, 2013, para. 10). Meanwhile EO co-founder Thomas Ross is a prominent Calgary lawyer whose law firm, McClelland Ross MPP, represents numerous tar sands clients. As such, Ethical Oil is similar to those Canadian climate change-denying organizations such as the Fraser Institute that have received significant backing from hydrocarbon industry actors over the past 20 years.

Although the organization is small (and proudly promotes its small size as evidence of its grassroots credibility), its members—past and present—are deeply embedded in the New Right discourse coalition. Of the six individuals who co-founded or have been employed by Ethical Oil since its founding, two have worked for the oil-funded, climate change-denying Fraser Institute, including Levant himself. A co-founder of the organization (Hong, 2012), Levant is a well-known conservative policy entrepreneur, activist, journalist, and intellectual with a deep history in the civil society, media, and political networks of the Canadian right (Gutstein, 2009). He is also a founding director of Civitas, the yearly conference of the Canadian conservative move-

ment, which brings together prominent conservative academics, journalists, authors, politicians, and activists to discuss political strategy and policy issues.

Other EO employees have similar histories. Blog founder Alykhan Velshi served as an intern for the American Enterprise Institute, an oil-backed neoconservative think tank and prominent climate change denier organization. He later worked as an aide to two Conservative cabinet ministers, Environment Minister John Baird and Immigration Minister Jason Kenney, only leaving Ottawa to help found Ethical Oil in Vancouver. Upon exiting the group he returned to Ottawa to become the prime minister's director of planning. He was replaced at EO by Jamie Ellerton, who, like Velshi, had also worked as an aide to Minister Kenney prior to joining the organization. In fact, of the six current or past employees of the organization, three have worked directly under Conservative cabinet ministers in Harper governments. Despite Ethical Oil's self-promotion as an independent grassroots group, the people behind it are firmly embedded in New Right discourse coalitions and their civil society and governmental networks.

A look at the pro-pipeline think tank sources also reveals the activity of groups deeply embedded in the broader New Right discourse coalition. Of the seven citations, three came from the Macdonald Laurier Institute (MLI), while two came from the Canada West Foundation. While the latter's place in Canadian New Right discourse coalitions has been documented elsewhere (Gutstein, 2009), the Ottawa-based MLI is a less well-known organization that deserves consideration. Founded in 2010, the MLI claims to be "rigorously independent and non-partisan" as well as "Canada's only truly national public policy think tank based in Ottawa" (MLI, n.d.b, para. 1).

Although its three citations in our sample would seem to limit its relevance, there are several reasons why the MLI is deserving of closer scrutiny. First, that the most commonly cited pro-pipeline think tank source is a relatively new and unknown group and not one of the numerous avowedly conservative institutes that were such prominent climate change deniers is noteworthy. Second, that the MLI bills itself and its research as unbiased gives its claims a more authoritative weight than those of governments, firms, and openly ideological civil society groups such as the Fraser Institute. Third, although the MLI received only three citations in the sample, they were prominently featured as sources in news stories related to pipeline and tar sands production *before, between, and immediately after* our samples. MLI members were also quite prominent sources, and often editorial authors, in stories that took place *during* our sample periods, though did not deal specifically with the Gateway review but rather with tar sands production *more generally*. For example, the release of one MLI report disputing the arguments of pipeline opponents was prominently covered in 20 separate stories in news outlets across Canada—including 10 of our sampled newspapers—in just two days during Sample 3 (MLI, 2012). Dozens more examples can be found, republished, on MLI's website, all of which promote the supposed benefits of tar sands production and pipeline projects and/or discredit their critics (MLI, n.d.a). Since it is impossible to analyze the narrower frames of the Gateway conflict without understanding the broader discursive context in which they operate, precluding this group would seem incomplete at best, and misleading at worst.

The findings revealed that the 42-person membership (members here being defined as directors, advisory board members, research advisory board members, research fellows, and staff) of the MLI are—on the whole—deeply embedded in Canadian conservative discourse coalitions and EPII networks. First, Canada's corporate elite is very well represented on the MLI's governing boards. On average, members of the MLI's directorate or advisory boards hold or have held 2.9 executive and/or high-ranking corporate positions during their career. Only three of the MLI's 20 directors or advisory board members held no such positions, with the best represented director holding a total of 13 throughout his career. What's more, MLI directors and advisory board members have held on average 1.75 executive positions with oil sands producers, firms that provide secondary or tertiary services for oil sands production, and/or resource extraction firms.

The policy entrepreneur members of the MLI are also heavily interlocked with those of other North American think tanks and advocacy groups, with these interlocks weighted toward the New Right EPIIs. MLI members (excluding staff) interlock with, on average, 1.5 other policy institutes. They each share 1 interlock with prominent and/or self-described conservative institutes, and 0.5 with centrist or politically undefined groups. Not a single interlock was found for any avowedly progressive or left-leaning think tank—such as the Pembina Institute or the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. There was also not a single interlock discovered with any major environmental think tank or advocacy group, nor with any large union or labour organization. Clearly, MLI membership is heavily biased towards the corporate sector and New Right EPII groups, with seemingly no crossover with progressive groups and institutions.

Of the nine think tanks that shared three or more interlocks with MLI, five were openly neoconservative or neoliberal in ideological orientation. Of the top five, the Frontier Centre for Public Policy (first, with 8 interlocks), the Atlantic Institute for Market Studies (second, with 7 interlocks), and the Fraser Institute (tied for third, with 5 interlocks) are all prominent New Right groups, with Frontier and Fraser being prominent players in promoting climate change denial discourses in the Canadian press over the past two decades (Gutstein, 2009, Hoggan, 2009). Eleven of the MLI's members, including five out of their eight research advisory board members, have either presented at or worked for the aforementioned far-right annual networking conference Civitas, for which MLI executive director Brian Crowley is a past president and Ethical Oil's Ezra Levant is a founding director.

In 2013, the MLI membership and staff boasted six positions as ministerial aides and/or high-ranking cabinet employees, five of them under the Harper Conservatives (the sixth was under PM Brian Mulroney's Progressive Conservative government, one of the two parties that eventually merged to form the Conservative Party of Canada). All in all, then, the MLI, like Ethical Oil, has been highly interlocked with the hydrocarbon industry, the Harper Conservatives, and the interpersonal and inter-organizational networks of Canadian New Right EPIIs. None of this means that the MLI can be simplistically written off as an "Astroturf" arm of the Conservative party, nor a covert proxy for blatant propaganda groups such as the Fraser Institute. However, it *does* illustrate the extent to which New Right discourse coalitions continue to supplement—if not

lead—traditional official sources through the provision of information subsidies to journalists in their campaign to bring Gateway back within the sphere of consensus.

Source analysis: Discussion

As pro-approval information subsidizers, firms, industry associations, and governments played the most active role in propagating elite-preferred discourses in an attempt to bring pipeline expansion back into the sphere of consensus. While not as numerically well represented in our source count, those advocacy groups and think tanks that were cited as pro-pipeline sources were overwhelmingly associated with the same discourse coalitions and EPII groups previously active in promoting eco-skeptic discourses in the public sphere. Meanwhile, those “traditional” oil-backed New Right EPII organizations such as the Fraser Institute were not cited in our sample *at all*.

The prominent place for hydrocarbon firms as pro-pipeline news sources suggests the contemporary pipeline debate may differ from previous ones around climate change. One possibility is that during times of economic uncertainty, broad ecological concerns seem less newsworthy than do the potential economic benefits of tar sands expansion. Firms arguing the economic benefits of a pipeline may be more readily accepted as expert sources on “job creation,” rather than as actors with material interests in undermining a scientific consensus, as was the case during the climate debate. In a downturn, the economic frame—always prominent—seems to reign supreme, and what in one context made corporate sources suspect—their commitment to growth and profit—now may lend them perceived source credibility.

As for the lack of older, more prominent climate change—denying EPII groups in our sample, there are at least two possible explanations. These groups may not have tried to gain entry to the press, preferring to let relatively unknown groups take the lead. Such coordination is certainly in keeping with the history of EPII groups (Gutstein, 2009; Jacques et al., 2008; McCright & Dunlap, 2010; Rich, 2004; Stefancic & Delgado, 1996; Stone, 1996). Or possibly they have been shut out by journalists reacting to these groups’ history of duplicitous technical claims, poor standing in the scientific community, and close ties to the hydrocarbon industry. Regardless, the sourcing of both traditional official sources and EPII-related groups served to propagate elite rationalities in service of bringing the Gateway project back into the sphere of consensus.

Discourse and frame analysis: Methods

If the prevalence of traditional official and—to a lesser extent—EPII-related pro-Gateway sources illustrates one modality through which elite rationalities structure environmental news discourse, the framing of these sources and the larger news narratives in which they appear constitutes another. To explore this second modality, we proceeded to carry out a detailed discourse and frame analysis of the news articles in our sample. However, while we were reviewing the samples, we observed a prevalence of duplicated articles (stories that originated with one publication but were later reprinted in others). This duplication was particularly true of Postmedia papers. The duplication of content represents an important aspect of news culture in an age of flexible accumulation and media conglomeration (Davis, 2000). Yet it is a largely undocumented phenomenon.

Focusing on duplicated content, however, led to a focus—for this stage of the study—on Postmedia papers and its online news portal, Canada.com. Not only does Postmedia own and manage a sprawling national network of newspapers whose circulation reached 31 percent of the national total in 2011, but in seven of the 10 metropolitan areas serviced by Postmedia daily newspapers, the Postmedia publication is the only English daily newspaper in the city (Postmedia, 2011). Its singular presence gives this media brand exceptional power to shape public opinion and awareness of issues like the JRP, giving its duplicated content disproportionate weight in the national discourse. While Torstar articles are duplicated within the same region, content generated by Postmedia outlets in one market is often reprinted across the country. Meanwhile, the *Globe and Mail*, independently owned by Ontario's Thompson family, is not embedded in a sprawling network of papers through which it can duplicate content.

Given these factors, we decided that our discourse analysis should focus on the duplicated content from Postmedia for the following reasons:

- By limiting the scope of our sample in such a way, we could perform a more detailed analysis than would be possible by using our initial larger sample.
- By focusing on duplicated content, we could identify those frames that had the greatest reach throughout multiple media markets. This would allow us to narrow in on a relatively understudied modality of elite structuring of news discourse—the capacity of highly concentrated media markets to amplify particular frames and discourses throughout networks of media conglomeration and cross-ownership.

Hence, from the source analysis sample, a high duplication sample (Sample HD) of stories was curated containing only the stories that were reproduced more than once on the Canwest News Service and/or in other Postmedia newspapers. These included those papers associated with Postmedia's online news portal, Canada.com: *Calgary Herald*, Canwest News Service, the *Edmonton Journal*, the *Leader-Post* (Regina), the *Gazette* (Montreal), *Nanaimo Daily News*, *National Post*, *Ottawa Citizen*, the *StarPhoenix* (Saskatoon), *Times Colonist* (Victoria), the *Province* (Vancouver), the *Vancouver Sun*, and the *Windsor Star*. Focusing on Canada.com affiliates reduced the samples to 82 stories (Sample 1: December), 315 stories (Sample 2: January), and 48 stories (Sample 3: May–June).

This criterion of having more than one reprint eliminated stories that had gone out over the Canwest News Service once but had not been reprinted in a newspaper. Although it was quite common for a story to have a single run on the news wire, the stories in Sample HD were run on the wire more frequently, up to 10 times. Recognizing the uneven rates of duplication in both news wire releases and reprinting, the purpose of this final comparison was to evaluate which story themes and news frames were most likely to be present in duplicated content and to ascertain any noticeable differences between the code frequencies for this sample and the other non-duplicate samples. Units within this sample were assigned three possible codes: high wire (wire duplications, $N = 21$); high reprint (reprints in other Canada.com affiliates, $N = 15$); and high wire/low reprint ($N = 5$). Sixteen of the 23 stories in this sample were coded

as both high wire and high reprint. It is worth noting that these 23 stories were duplicated a total of 284 times, 195 times on the Canwest news wire and 89 times as reprinted articles.

The high rates of content duplication were recognized immediately as potentially enhancing the influence of particular frames and narratives on the broader public discourse. Hansen (2010) identifies that quality media has on the content of smaller media outlets. Early in this study, the news outlet that was considered the quality source was the *National Post*, based on its status as the only Postmedia newspaper with national distribution. Finally, Good's (2008) analysis of how climate change is framed in news media identifies the inevitability of neoliberal progress as a dominant message in environmental communication. Recognizing the context in which the JRP was unfolding, after the 2008 economic collapse and the rejection of Keystone XL - the tension between environmental risk and economic imperatives was of central concern.

Given the potential for unorthodox coverage with a prevalence of lay voices, this research employed the grounded theory method of open coding. The initial phase of coding the articles' qualitative attributes identified "repeating ideas" within stories—in this case, story themes and media frames. During this process, bibliographic information, story subjects, repeated themes, and frames were recorded. Frames were identified based on the journalist's attribution or application of "keywords, metaphors, and concepts" to various story subjects (Antilla, 2005, p. 343). All stories within the three samples were coded twice to verify coder consistency and accuracy. Over the coding of the three samples, 37 active codes were identified as prominent, which were then sorted into nine groups. Although this project included a complete analysis of the frequency of these codes within the three samples, this article focuses specifically on code prevalence among duplicated content.

Discourse and frame analysis: Results

The study of duplicated content offers an important avenue for considering how certain frames and ideas became the dominant repeating ideas of the media discourse regarding the JRP and the pipeline proposal. The high duplication sample (Sample HD) is discussed here as it provides a snapshot of the themes and frames shaped and utilized within the JRP/pipeline discourses in Canadian news media. The prominent codes for this sample were recorded, and the frequency means were then contrasted with the means of Samples 1 to 3.

The significant differences between Sample HD and Samples 1 to 3 were the delegitimization of opposition and the framing of Northern Gateway as being a national imperative. The use of official sources such as Joe Oliver as primary definers for these issues was greatest in the high duplication sample. Of the nine EPII/Oliver frames identified in the qualitative coding process, the Sample HD frequency means were greatest for six of the codes (see Table 1). The size of Sample HD limits the generalizability of this trend. However, a description of their content provides a map for how the discourse unfolded.

At the start of the JRP hearings, Ethical Oil launched a campaign, Our Decision, amplifying the messaging from Minister Oliver's letter. The online and radio ad campaign echoed Oliver's warnings of foreign-funded radicals infiltrating the JRP process

Table 1: Coding frequency of “pro-approval” frames for Samples 1 to 3 and Sample HD

PMO/Oliver’s, Ethical Oil’s messaging	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	H totals
Framing opposition as backed by foreign money or foreign interests	0	0.3	0.16	0.261
Framing pipeline as in the national interest	0.481	0.192	0.12	0.609
Framing opposition as radical or ideological	0	0.458	0.08	0.261
Presenting an unnecessary dichotomy (i.e. we can have a thriving economy or we can care about the environment but we can’t do both)	0	0.092	0	0.174
Framing opposition as unnamed but threatening groups	0	0.058	0	0.087
Framing the government as needing to step in to protect Canadian interests (prior to Bill C-38’s announcement)	0.037	0.033	0	0.13
Framing pipelines as undeserving “lightning rods” for oil sands/climate change criticism	0.148	0	0.04	0.13
Framing pipelines as a critical component of Canada’s energy security	0.074	0	0	0.087
Dismissing opposition by claiming that their arguments lack “facts and science”	0.074	0.067	0.04	0.174

(OurDecision.ca, n.d.). This amplification helped establish the dominant frames for the media coverage that followed. An article written by Licia Corbella on January 11, 2011, investigated the individuals who had signed up to present to the JRP. Corbella (2011) contacted two Brazilian women, Ines and Flavia Gudic, who had been registered to present, apparently without their knowledge. This article not only suggested that many JRP presenters beyond the Gudics did not have legitimate grounds to present to the NEB, but implied that NGOs such as the Spirit Bear Youth Coalition were purposefully signing up their supporters in an attempt to jam the hearings and delay the NEB’s decision (Corbella, 2011). “It appears that someone or some organization or organizations, is signing people up to bog down and delegitimize the [JRP] process,” (Corbella, 2011, para 10). Beyond delegitimizing the concerns of pipeline opponents, this article framed the JRP hearings as vulnerable to co-optation by pipeline opponents.

The vulnerability of the hearing process and the responsibility of the federal government to protect it against the efforts of protesters was the subject of two more highly duplicated articles (O’Neil, 2012a, 2012b). These articles explored the possibility of protesters upending the JRP and causing an irreversible ruling against the pipeline. O’Neil (2012b) reported that the JRP was “the final decision maker” (para. 8) for the pipeline and that a negative ruling from the panel would be “the end of the line for the project” (para. 10). Once the JRP hearings were thoroughly problematized as vulnerable to co-optation by foreign-funded radicals who could stall energy projects critical to Canada’s economic prosperity, the Harper government announced its solution (Penty, 2012). On January 26, a *Calgary Herald* article announced the Conservative gov-

ernment's plan to remove the NEB's power to approve and deny energy projects (Penty, 2012). The newly restrained NEB would no longer have final say on energy projects, with final approval for proposals deemed to be in the national interest becoming the responsibility of the federal government (Penty, 2012). Additionally, JRP hearings in the future would have strict time limits to prevent presentations from being used by protesters as a means of stalling project approval (Penty, 2012).

Returning to the notion of inevitability, the necessity to increase bitumen exports was echoed by two high duplication articles, published in January. While looking in different directions, these articles proposed alternate routes for tar sands bitumen to take should the Northern Gateway project stall indefinitely. A *Financial Post* article introduced Enbridge's proposal to reverse Line 9 to pump bitumen to Quebec (Pratt, 2012), and a *Calgary Herald* article proposed exporting bitumen via Slave Lake (Finch, 2012). The articles were quick to admit that alternatives to Northern Gateway would be cumbersome and expensive. However, the imperative to connect the emerging economies of China and India with Canadian bitumen was so critical, the articles argued, that the bitumen would need to be exported by whatever means necessary (Finch, 2012; Pratt, 2012).

The centrality of bitumen exports to the Canadian economy and the threat posed to these exports by meddlesome protesters were further reiterated by other stories within the HD Sample. The *National Post* published a summary of CBC journalist Peter Mansbridge's interview with Stephen Harper on January 17, 2012 (CBC News, 2012), a story that received four publications on the news wire and seven duplications. During the interview, Harper built on the "foreign radicals" framing introduced by Ethical Oil's site and Minister Oliver's letter (Kennedy, 2012).

[J]ust because certain people in the United States would like to see Canada be one giant national park for the northern half of North America, I don't think that's part of what our review process is all about. Our process is there to determine what the needs and desires of Canadians are. (Harper, as quoted in Kennedy, 2012, para. 12)

In addition to the hyperbolic suggestion that those opposed to the pipeline wanted to turn Canada into a national park, Harper reiterated multiple times that Canadian jobs and the economy were dependent on this project, and that the JRP hearings had been "hijacked" (Kennedy, 2012).

Another high duplication story published on the same day reported Minister Oliver toning down his condemnation of pipeline opponents (O'Neil, 2012c). While Oliver had retreated slightly from the discourse that labelled opponents as radicals and extremists, he remained steadfast in his convictions that pipeline construction was absolutely necessary (O'Neil, 2012c). "Our government will not sit back and have Canada's international reputation sullied by people who cannot or will not acknowledge the facts" (Oliver, as quoted in O'Neil, 2012c, para. 5).

Discourse and frame analysis: Discussion

The predominant frames within the HD Sample reinforce the economic imperative for bitumen exports while delegitimizing the concerns of pipeline opponents. These

frames continue the discourse that began with Minister Oliver's open letter and Ethical Oil's website. Tim Powers, a lobbyist and strategist for the Conservative party, unashamedly detailed the letter's purpose in an interview for the *Vancouver Sun* in June. The article explained that

“talk of conspiracies and money-laundering helps Harper level the playing field with his arch-critics. It's a hell of a lot easier if you're Stephen Harper and you have organizations saying ‘No, I'm not radical, no I'm not a money launderer,’ leaving aside the debate saying ‘There's a problem with line X of the fish habitat bill,’ [Powers] said. ‘It's kind of a classic Harperian strategy.’” (O'Neil, 2012d, paras. 47–49)

Numerous scholars have argued that, in order to succeed, propaganda requires the perception of a crisis (Gutstein, 2009; Hall, 1988). The potential for protesters to delay the NEB's decision not only provided such a crisis, but set up the Conservative government to offer a solution. Although potential economic crises played a central role in the media discourse, environmental crises—specifically those caused by pipeline ruptures—were far less frequently discussed. Moreover, when discussed, the focus of spill coverage was not the environmental or social impact. Even in stories that provided a history of recent spills, this context was couched between lamentations for the spills' unfortunate timing and the resultant headaches they caused for Enbridge and the Alberta government. It is important to note that any attempts to cite recent spills as a cause for concern by pipeline opponents was discredited as a nefarious tactic. As a *Calgary Herald* article explained following one such spill, “[the leak is] providing valuable ammunition to those fighting against the new pipeline” (Wood & Varcoe, 2012, para. 29). Focusing discussions of the spills on their ability to impede new pipeline projects reflects the trend of the supplanting of ecological concerns with elite economic priorities in environmental discourses (Leiserowitz, 2005; Reis, 1999). Moreover, it confirms Good's (2008) finding that environmental news presents “neoliberalism's most important message ... that there is no alternative to the status quo” (p. 247).

Conclusions

The relative dominance of “pro-Gateway” frames in our samples cannot be taken as a simple sign of the ultimate victory of project supporters and New Right EPII groups. Northern Gateway received cabinet approval in 2014. However, nearly three years after our initial sample period, it seems increasingly likely the pipeline will never get built for a variety of reasons, including Prime Minister Trudeau's proposed ban on oil tanker traffic off the Northern BC coast (Morton, 2015). Also, the persistent resistance to Gateway demonstrates that media framing is only one factor in the ultimate approval and construction of the project, and in some situations institutional and legal factors may trump discursive ones. Most significantly, unresolved First Nations concerns over rights and title will make drawn-out legal challenges a near certainty, and may themselves be sufficient to stop the project from ever being completed (Hume, 2015). Meanwhile, local opposition has remained high and stable despite the dominance of pro-Gateway frames in our news samples and the public relations activities of industry and EPII groups (Hoekstra, 2014).

It is beyond the scope of this article to determine precisely why opposition remains so high, but there are several possible factors that should be explored in subsequent work. First, traditional news media are only one channel through which frames can be generated and circulated. Green groups such as Dogwood Initiative and the Sierra Club made significant use of social and alternative media to propagate their counter-claims, while a resurgent First Nations decolonization movement provided various means for anti-Gateway frames to circulate among project opponents. Secondly, perceived local interests—protection of local waterways and food sources; local jobs in fisheries and tourism; the association of BC identity with environmental values; and for First Nations, a political and cultural identity rooted in protecting local economies, ecosystems, and ancestral homelands—may override media frames more concerned with national priorities.

Regardless, as public support for Northern Gateway waned over the course of our three samples, the framing and sourcing in our samples overwhelmingly represented the ability of elite rationalities to structure news discourse so as to re-establish the larger issue of tar sands production and pipeline projects within the realm of consensus. Media coverage largely replicated traditional environmental news discourse, with oppositional voices relegated to secondary, contextualizing roles throughout the articles. As was demonstrated in the discourse analysis, the predominant frames in our sample reinforced the economic imperative for bitumen exports while delegitimizing the concerns of pipeline opponents. This was significantly accomplished by granting official sources—especially those from the Harper government and industry representatives—primary definer status.

Official sources, New Right discourse coalitions, and the organizational networks of EPII have been very active in the promotion of this project and represent another modality through which elite rationalities structure environmental news discourse. Although not the same groups that have been so prominent in promoting climate denial discourses and environmental skeptic discourses more generally in the press, the most common civil society groups in our sample were certainly deeply embedded within the same discourse coalitions and EPII networks as these other groups. Their institutional strategies also fit well into dominant journalistic practices that privilege official sources as primary definers and incorporate radical “free market” and “growth-at-all-cost” ideologies into the sphere of consensus. Consequently, the lay public continue to be marginalized from and dismissed within media discourses over Northern Gateway.

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