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“TIED TO THE LAND”: PIPELINES, PLAINS AND PLACE ATTACHMENT

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ABSTRACT

Since first proposed, the Keystone XL and Dakota Access pipelines have been extensively covered by the media, shaping readers' perceptions of the pipelines, as well as perceptions of the places and peoples impacted by them. Using critical discourse analysis, this paper examines the media coverage, their Plains descriptions, and expressions of place attachment. Through the media's use of “place talk,” it presents a hybrid Plains: placeless, yet with a strongly place-attached population who are “tied to the land.” As conflicts over environmental and energy projects become increasingly contentious, place and place attachment are important for understanding the conflicts and potentially mobilizing resistance.

KEYWORDS:

climate change, discourse analysis, Great Plains, pipelines, place attachment, water

In April 2017, Jim Carlson, a Nebraska farmer, was quoted in a New YorkTimes article on the Keystone XL pipeline: “It's the people who are tied to the land ... who understand what's at risk” (Smith 2017b). This article and others like it on the Keystone XL, as well as the Dakota Access Pipeline, shaped readers' understandings of peoples, places, and events (Figure 1).

The Keystone XL (KXL) pipeline was proposed in 2008 by TransCanada (now TC Energy), a Calgary company, to run from Alberta's Athabasca tar sands to Texas refineries (Hodges and Stocking 2016, 225).¹ Supporters say it will safely transport needed oil and offer employment and tax benefits (Schulte 2011). KXL has been resisted generally over climate change concerns and in Nebraska over potential Ogallala Aquifer contamination and the use of eminent domain to forcibly cross private property (Pierre-Louis 2017). One of President Joseph Biden's first acts after his inauguration was to revoke its federal permit (Gillies 2021). TC Energy announced as this article was going to press that it was terminating the project (Davenport 2021).

The Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) was proposed in 2014, to run from North Dakota oil fields to Illinois refineries, ports, and facilities (Meyer 2017). Energy Transfer Partners L.P. (ETP), a Texas company, received construction approval from the states it would cross and from the Army Corps of Engineers to cross Lake Oahe (a Missouri River reservoir) (McMaken 2016). Supporters say it will provide a safe domestic energy source and offer employment and tax benefits (Miller 2017). DAPL has been opposed

by Native Americans over the disturbance of sacred sites, the threat to the Standing Rock Indian Reservation water supply, and climate change, supported by a coalition of environmental justice and climate change groups (Sullivan 2016). At peak protests in late August 2016, an estimated 7000 protestors were at “water protector” camps (Gass 2016a).² Police and ETP-hired guards clashed violently with protestors in fall 2016 (Sullivan 2016). The pipeline was completed in April 2017, but legal challenges continue. In January 2021, a U.S. Court of Appeals upheld a ruling revoking the easement that allowed DAPL to cross beneath the Missouri, but permitting the oil flow to continue. With Biden’s cancellation of KXL comes calls to also shut down DAPL (Forliti 2021).

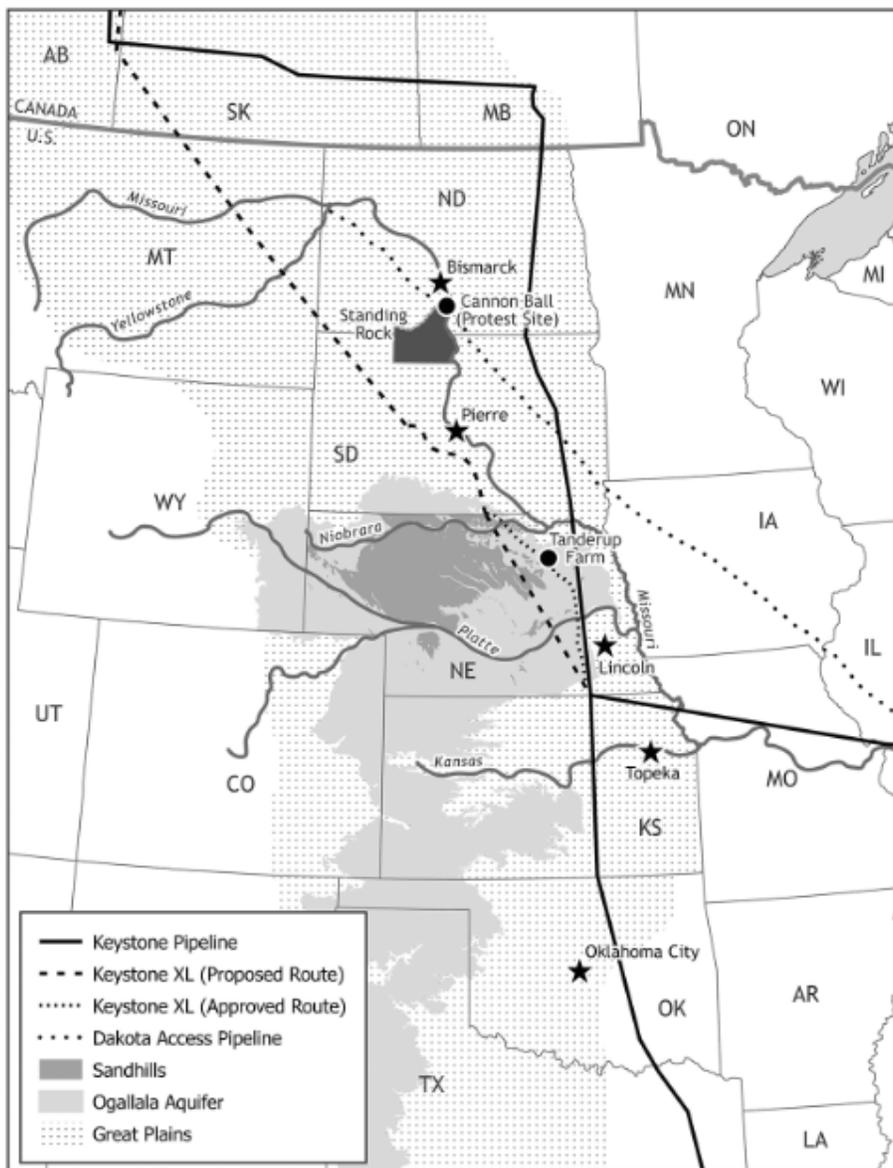


Figure 1. Map of the Great Plains. Cartography by Paul Hunt

Place is important to those resisting the pipelines, such as Jim Carlson and others trying to stop the pipelines. Sense of place and place attachment (“tied to the land”) are but two sides of a coin, one attempting to capture those elusive qualities of a location that give it its unique character in human eyes, the other expressing the emotional bond humans have to locations (Smith 2017a, 2; Williams and Stewart 1998).

Place also matters to the media. News coverage of any event provides the who, what, where, when, why, and how, usually in the lede or opening paragraph. “Where” is a location, often supplemented with a description. The Great Plains are a challenging landscape for many people off the Plains to comprehend, often perceived as being “nowhere” or placeless, with little apparent value (Dando 2009). Did journalists provide a sense of place for the pipelines on the Plains? Or did they reinforce a sense of placelessness?

This paper considers the construction of the Plains and expressions of place attachment in media coverage of the pipelines. Critical discourse analysis is used to examine the media’s pipeline coverage, the reasons given for resistance, their Plains descriptions, and the use of place attachment in their framing of the pipeline conflicts. What do the individuals quoted in the articles say they are attached to? How is it articulated? Why are they opposed to the pipelines? And how and why is the media utilizing these quotes in their articles?

This paper contributes to a better understanding of the media’s role in shaping public perceptions of peoples, places, and events, as well as to a fuller understanding of how place attachment is articulated and employed by those “tied to the land.” It may seem cliché to suggest “place matters,” but it does. Conflicts over environmental and energy projects are increasingly contentious, with individuals mobilizing to protect landscapes they are attached to. We must understand the media’s role in these struggles, as well as their employment of place and place attachment, as land use conflicts play out in these public forums.

Overview of Place Attachment

Place-attachment research in geography began in the 1970s, led by scholars such as Anne Buttner (1980), Yi-Fu Tuan (1980), and Edward Relph (1976). Relph is often recognized for advancing our understanding of the emotions tied to place, from deep attachment (such as home) to placelessness (such as a strip mall) (Relph 1976, 6). A human bond with a location impacts thoughts, emotions, and connections of and to places, with place bonds serving important human purposes.

Leila Scannell and Robert Gifford propose a conceptual framework for considering place attachment, focusing on the attached actors, the psychological process of attachment, and the object of attachment (Scannell and Gifford 2010, 2). Scannell and Gifford echo journalism’s five w’s and an h, emphasizing the importance of providing essential facts on place attachment. Scannell and Gifford’s framework is important for considering place-attachment functions for humans: for survival and

security, for goal support, continuity, and for identity and belongingness (2010, 5). Humans depend on their environments for survival; where humans find these necessities, they tend to cling, developing strong ties. Environments can be appreciated for providing space for valued activities, such as the space or resources needed to attain personal goals (for example, a business opportunity) or an environment for “self-reflection, problem-solving, and stress relief” (for example, a park) (Scannell and Gifford 2010, 6). Place attachment is often tied to identity, can be key to maintaining its continuity (reconnecting with their pasts or with cultural or religious identities), and can be shared for providing a sense of belonging to a larger community.

The media contributes to place attachment and to human understanding of places. In creating or reinforcing particular perspectives, the media can have positive as well as negative impacts on human place perception. Relph suggests the media contributes to placelessness by promoting uniform landscapes and cultures, providing “no roots, no sense of belonging to a place” (Relph 1976, 61, 90–92).

Since Relph’s original work, research has addressed the intersection of place-attachment, media, and environmental issues (such as Shriver and Peaden 2009; Devine-Wright 2012) as well as specifically climate change (Devine-Wright 2013; Scannell and Gifford 2013; Upham et al. 2018). One significant research area is the threat to place and place attachment by forces such as economic development or climate change, with the greatest threat being place destruction (Adger et al. 2011, 3; Smith 2017a, 10). Douglas Porteous and Sandra Smith coined the term “domicide” to capture the intentional destruction of home “for political and/or corporate interests” (Nowicki 2014, 785; Porteous and Smith 2001; Porteous 1989). Mel Nowicki extends the concept, including “... the ways in which successful resistances [to domicile] are enabled from the ground up, both through highly visible resistances via public protest and petitioning and equally through banal performances of the everyday that aid and abet the damage domicile causes” (Nowicki 2014, 786).

A related research thread focuses on “disruptions” to place attachment. Patrick Devine-Wright considers the social and psychological aspects of new energy infrastructure siting, and how such projects often pit national or global benefits against local concerns. Wright proposes reconceiving NIMBY (not-in-my-backyard) responses “as place-protective actions ... founded upon processes of place attachment and place identity” (Devine-Wright 2009, 432). Local inhabitants often perceive such projects as being “... ‘imposed’ upon places by companies or state organization without genuine public engagement” (Devine-Wright 2009, 434).

When a location is threatened, those identifying with the place may mobilize to save it (Cheng et al. 2013, 1170; Carrus et al. 2014, 160; see also Scannell and Gifford 2013). The stronger the fight, the more protective they can be, and the more attached they can become (Tonge et al. 2015, 730). Place-protective actions can mobilize citizens removed from the immediate vicinity. Tyra Olstad considered how personal experiences may be used to rally the public (Olstad 2013, 105). Olstad explains that

hearing of others' place attachments resonates with readers' own experiences and can deepen understanding and respect. "Imagined communities" of individuals linked by place attachment are formed and the media reinforces the linkages and associations (Devine-Wright 2013, 63; Tonge et al. 2015, 740).

These acts of place protection are important for the reciprocal relationship that exists between humans and the places they care about: "Maintaining the character of a place requires care from actors. Places, if they change their character, can then cease to sustain those who inhabit them, as the 'secure space' that makes embedded agency possible decays. With the loss of this secure space, the lived futures of its inhabitants may be undermined" (Groves 2015, 857). Moreover, as individual and community identity can be linked to place, threats to place are also threats to identity (Brown and Perkins 1992, 280).

Broadly, Relph's work is important in considering the Plains, a location where residents often express a deep sense of place attachment, yet outsiders frequently describe it as placeless. Native peoples have occupied the Plains for thousands of years, but little scholarly research has considered their sense of place or place attachment despite their clear embeddedness in specific landscapes (Estes 2019, 70). Early Europeans and Americans to the Plains projected onto its surface their expectations, be it a garden or a desert, passage or barrier (Allen 1985; Allen 1993). As the Great Plains were colonized, Europeans and Americans adjusted their gaze to the new land and came to associate it with home (Dando 2008). Over time and overcoming hardships, these settler-colonizers, now Plains residents, developed "an unyielding connection to place" (Smith and McAlister 2015, 183).

Methodology

The Lexis-Nexis/NexisUni database was utilized, as well as Internet searches, to locate pipeline articles set on the Plains, particularly newspaper and magazine articles published outside the Plains, and as straight or business news or feature articles (Table 1) (Budinsky and Bryant 2013, 211–212).³ Such media sources are important for informing and shaping public opinion. Altogether, 171 articles were located, published between 2008 and 2018 (106 on the KXL and 65 on the DAP).⁴

Rudimentary content analysis was conducted on the articles, using a grounded theory approach (Reynolds 2018, 53–54).⁵ Analysis considered the types of stories represented, what made the material "newsworthy," the arguments made, the language used, who was named and who was quoted, the conversations, and the landscapes depicted and in what way, seeking to expose and explore the "persistent, politically relevant patterns" (Entman 2007, 164). Periodically, coding sheets were revised to reflect the topics surfacing, and the articles reanalyzed using the revised coding sheets. Separate coding sheets were created for the KXL and DAP to reflect the different conversations taking place (Table 2). From the coding process, codes were grouped under umbrella themes representing "the dominant discursive formations of the stories

examined” (Reynolds 2018, 61). From this process, major themes employed by the media were identified (Table 3). Once major themes were identified, critical discourse analysis was utilized.

Table1 Media Sources used in this study

Keystone XL	Dakota Access
Bloomberg.com	Agweek
CBS News	The Atlantic
Christian Science Monitor	Christian Science Monitor
Ecologist	Esquire
E: the Environmental Magazine	Fortune
Esquire	The Hill
farmaid.org	Huffington Post
Forbes	The Humanist
Fortune	Los Angeles Times
Grist	Mother Jones
Huffington Post	Ms. Magazine
In These Times	The Nation
Inside Climate News	National Geographic
Los Angeles Times	National Public Radio
Mother Jones	Newsweek
The Nation	New York Times
National Geographic	pbs.org
National Review	Popular Science
The New Yorker	The Progressive
New York Times	Rolling Stone
Popular Science	Star-Tribune
PRI	St. Louis Post-Dispatch
The Progressive	Time
Reuters	Utne Reader
Rolling Stone	Wall Street Journal
Scientific American	Washington Post
Time	
USA Today	
US News & World Report	
Wall Street Journal	
Washington Post	

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is both a method and a theory: “CDA is a helpful approach for scholars interested in examining mass media’s roles in the social construction of reality” (Reynolds 2018, 48). Media analysis uses two different terms for the themes emerging from such analysis: “framing (or frame) analysis” in mass communication research and “holistic codes” used in CDA, with both being part of a single analytical frameworks “family” (Reynolds 2018, 59). All media contains frames “used strategically to frame a particular topic—like a picture frame that accentuates certain things, hides others, and borders off reality in a certain way ... frame analysis looks at how existing ‘objects’ or ‘topics’ are framed by different actors, bending their meaning in certain directions” (Lindekilde 2014, 200). Coding is the process of analyzing the frames (and other information) to consider the ways in media constructs meaning. While there are similarities, each analysis addresses slightly different

research questions. If the researcher is interested in how content is being presented to an audience, framing analysis is logical. If the researcher is working with a larger data set and wishes to systematically break content into points or ideas to illuminate categories and themes, coding is used (Erlingsson and Brysiewicz 2017). For the purposes of this study, both were utilized: coding to tackle the breadth of the media coverage, but framing for presentation of the Plains.

Table 2 Coding differences that emerged from the media analysis

Keystone XL	Common codes	Dakota Access
High plains	Plains as vast	Camps
Heartland	Plains as flat	Tipis
Breadbasket	Prairie	Sacred space
Family farm	Grasslands	Pray*
Sandhills	Water	Burial/graves
Sandhills as delicate, fragile, vulnerable or sensitive	Irrigation	Spirit*
Ogallala Aquifer	Drinking water	Prophecy
Climate change/global warming	Water supply	Black Snake
Tar sands	Missouri River	Sovereignty*
Oil sands	Safety	Nation
Negatives of tar/oil sands	Jobs	Treaty*
Safety	Energy security	Treaty rights
Jobs	Threat of oil spills	Water protectors
Energy security	Account of actual oil spills	Movement
Landowner	Pipeline breaks	Solidarity
Private property	Farm* or Fields	Allies
"in the national interest"/"in the public interest"	Ranch* or grazing land*	Conflict
Reroute	Rural	Defense
	Reservation	Occupy*
	Cowboys	Flashpoint
	Indians	Front*
	Bison/buffalo	Resist*
	Frontier	Violent
	Citizen/citizenship/rights	Disorderly
	Easement	Trespass
	Eminent domain	Unlawful
	Environmentalists	Stand-off/Taking a stand/Last stand
	Environmental groups	
	Protest*	
	Demonstrate*	
	Oppose*	
	Activists	
	Block*	
	Arrest	
	Civil disobedience	
	Nonviolent	
	Peace*	
	Fight*	
	Battle*	
	War*/act of war	

Notes: An asterisk behind a word indicates coding included variations of the stem. For example: demonstrate* would include demonstrate, demonstration and demonstrator.

Table 3 Major themes in media news coverage, in order of frequency. Number indicated approximate numbers of frequency across the sample

Keystone XL		Dakota Access	
Positive economic aspects (jobs/safety/energy security/less dependence)	191	Language of conflict or contestation (fight*/battle*/resist*/protest*/demonstrate*)	695
Ogallala Aquifer	188	Language of sacred/spiritual	159
Oil spills/leaks/breaks (potential and actual)	185	(sacred space/ceremonies/pray*/spirit*/prophecy*/Black Snake)	
Tar sands	183	Language of rights & sovereignty (sovereignty*/rights*/nation)	74
		Water protector/s	73
Language of conflict or contestation (fight*/battle*/resist*/protest*/demonstrate*)	159	Treaties (treaty*)	68
		Water supply/drinking water	66
Sandhills as delicate (delicate/vulnerable/sensitive/fragile)	156	Oil spills/leaks/breaks (potential and actual)	52
		Positive economic aspects (jobs/safety/energy security/less dependence)	37
Oil sands	117		
Water supply/drinking water	108		
Eminent domain/easement	99		

Notes: An asterisk behind a word indicates coding included variations of the stem.

Language reflects mind-set while it constructs reality: “our lived experiences (for example, our thoughts, feelings, motivations, and the meaning we attribute to the world ‘out there’ are actively created through day-to-day linguistic practices and that process is, in turn, delimited by the shared language that culture makes available to us” (Di Masso et al. 2014, 75). Place meanings, often assumed to be individualistic, can be reinforced through interactions, where “place meanings become collectively shared, disseminated, and deployed” (Di Masso et al. 2014, 79). By publicly expressing place attachment, “we may be doing far more than expressing internal feelings that would otherwise remain within the private recesses of our minds ... we may be performing social actions whose situated effects, quite literally, can move mountains” (Di Masso et al. 2014, 81).

In addition to considering the conversations taking place about the Plains and the pipelines, attention was paid to who was doing the “place talk,” what was being said about place, and if place attachment manifested in their quotations (Di Masso and Dixon 2015).

Results: Themes, Place/Placelessness, and Place Attachment

major themes

With the media coverage of the KXL, the most frequently occurring themes were arguments in favor of the pipeline’s construction (creating jobs, improved safety, energy security, less dependence on foreign oil). After this, environmental themes dominate:

the Ogallala Aquifer, mentions of oil spills, the Sandhills, and concerns over the water supply and/or drinking water. The greater usage of “tar sands” suggests stronger proenvironmental framing, as proenergy and business framings use “oil sands” (Eilperin and Mufson 2013). Language of conflict is significant, but not as extensive as with the DAPL, reflecting fewer protests to date. Eminent domain/easement was a significant theme, as expected. This was one of the major issues, along with the Ogallala Aquifer. The Sandhills theme, while separate, is part of the Ogallala argument: a spill in the Sandhills could contaminate the underlying aquifer, a critical source of water for drinking and agriculture.

With DAPL, the media coverage overwhelmingly focused on conflict. The protests against DAPL were strong and the language used by the media emphasizes the conflict, often playing on the contentious history of Plains tribes and the U.S. government (such as “last stand,” or “taking a stand,” invoking “Custer’s Last Stand”).⁶ DAPL’s violent protests, extensively covered by the media, reflect the speed of pipeline construction and the protestors’ determination to stop it, resulting in police and pipeline-security aggression.

Despite the focus on conflict, the prevalence of the sacred/spiritual theme (“sacred fire,” “prayer,” “spirit camp”) reflects the Standing Rock leadership’s framing of their actions (see Gass 2016a; 2016b). David Archambault II, then chairman of the Standing Rock Sioux, is quoted saying “We don’t have weapons ... We have people and prayer” (Worland 2016). “Water protectors” is what the resistance preferred to be called and invokes their belief in the sanctity of water (mni wiconi or “water is life”) and the need to protect it for all (Enzinna 2017, 32).

There also occurred media discussions of rights, sovereignty, and treaties. The site of the pipeline’s crossing of the Missouri was just outside of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation but on lands granted to the Great Sioux Nation in the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868.⁷ DAPL resistance revived discussions of Native American rights and sovereignty and of the U.S. government’s history of broken treaties.

Finally, as expected, in DAPL media coverage, there were recurrent themes of water supply/drinking water and of oil spills/leaks/breaks. There was significantly less discussion of the positive economic impacts of DAPL than with KXL.

place/placelessness

In presenting the “where” in news coverage, the media attempts to provide more than an absolute location, but pipelines present challenges when it comes to sense of place as they impact many locations. With the KXL media coverage, there is not one focal point; the potential construction site is thousands of miles long and protests largely diffused. Media coverage, as a result, tends to describe small town meetings or farmers or ranchers interviewed on their land.

When journalists did provide a sense of place, they tended to emphasize the rural landscape or attempted to capture a sense of the Plains:

The wide open spaces of central Nebraska are an unlikely battlefield, but this is where the two opposing sides come head-to-head in the fight over the Keystone XL pipeline.

Dean Reynolds (2014)

Or they try to convey the Sandhills:

Gotschall and Kleeb were concerned that Keystone XL would cross the Sandhills, a 12 million-acre landscape of fragile, erodible soil and rolling sand dunes. A patch of trampled grass there can weather into a dune blowout and destroy a hay meadow.

Madeline Ostrander (2012)

One of the few locations to receive repeated attention was Art and Helen Tanderup's farm:

From the edge of rye field teeming with grasshoppers, Willie Nelson and Neil Young sang on Saturday in opposition to the proposed Keystone XL project ... The site of the concert—a patch of farmland where 26 acres of corn were harvested early to create a makeshift parking lot ... Their land in the rolling hills of northeastern Nebraska would be directly along the pipeline route.

Mitch Smith (2014)

As the site of the 2014 "Harvest of Hope" concert, of an annual crop art instillation, and of an annual planting of Ponca sacred corn, on land donated to the tribe, the location (and the Tanderups) have become one of the go-tos for the media (Fahy 2017; Wernick 2017). As evident from the examples above, a sense of place for specific Plains locations is not provided, rather it is a generic space, using phrasing like "wide open," "rolling hills," and references to rural landscapes ("hay meadow," "rye field").

In contrast, the DAPL protests were more situated, taking place along the advancing construction sites leading to the Missouri River crossing:

Horseback riders, their faces streaked in yellow and black paint, led the procession out of their tepee-dotted camp. Two hundred people followed, making their daily walk a mile up a rural highway to a patch of prairie grass and excavated dirt that has become a new kind of battlefield, between a pipeline and American Indians who say it will threaten water supplies and sacred lands.

Jack Healy (2016a)

The Standing Rock Sioux reservation sits in the Dakota Prairie Grasslands, an endless sweep of elephantine hills once home to millions of members of the

Lakota Nation. Today, it's inhabited by few than 9,000 of their surviving descendants, and one of the few places in America where buffalo roam wildTheir encampments of teepees, tents, and RVs were mostly ignored by the media until private security guards set dogs on protesters and a few journalists were arrested, sparking a national conversation about tribal sovereignty, environmental racism, and police brutality.

Wes Enzinna (2017)

These descriptions of the protest camps are of a very specific location, yet they are also generic, with "rural," "prairie," and even buffalo roaming. The camp descriptions almost seem to describe stereotypical Native American existence 150 years ago, with references to horseback, teepees, face paint, and battles.

In both cases, there are challenges in presenting a sense of place; it is not a single place or town that will be impacted by the pipelines, but a 1,600-mile corridor of places. For KXL, there is an attempt to capture the Plains landscape, but journalists produce generic plains landscapes, reinforcing a sense of placelessness. With DAPL, the construction sites, protests, and camps received the most coverage, yet the descriptions conveying both a sense of placelessness and a sense of timelessness. The Plains, much as they were 150 years ago, are constructed as a plain space to be utilized for economic gain.

place attachment

In the KXL and DAPL coverage, a range of individuals are quoted on the pipelines. With KXL, those who express place attachment are primarily local residents, largely farmers and ranchers. With DAPL, those expressing place attachment are primarily Native American. Place attachment is a crosscutting theme in the media, manifesting throughout the coverage. In particular, place attachment is expressed in terms of threats: to home, to a valued resource, and to the future, tied broadly to Scannell and Gifford's functions that place attachment serves to humans (2010). Scannell and Gifford focus on the ways places serve humans: for survival and security, for goal support, for continuity, and for identity and belonging. The threat to home is a threat to survival and security, to continuity, as well as to identity and belonging. The threat to existence is a threat to survival and security, to continuity, and to belonging. The threat to the future is a threat to survival, to goal support, and to continuity.

Threats to home

Home for some is a refuge; for others, it's a prison. For those with a positive home experience and deep attachment, a threat to home can be profound, shaking the foundations of identity (Brown and Perkins 1992; Nowicki 2014). Threats to home can mobilize populations, near and far, to protect locations they call home (Carrus et al. 2014) as expressed by Nancy Zorn: "I can no longer sit by idly while toxic tar sands are pumped down from Canada and into our communities ... It is time to rise up and defend

our home” (quoted in Chamberlain 2013). “Home” manifested on a variety of levels, from the familial to the broader concept of homeland.

A number of individuals cite place attachment to land their families homesteaded or they currently farm: “I don’t want something like this to happen to what my grandparents built up,” said Helen Tanderup (Struck 2017). With the Standing Rock community, it is a more complicated landscape:

Verna Bailey stared into the silvery ripples of a man-made lake, looking for the spot where she had been born. ‘Out there,’ she said pointing to the water. ‘I lived down there with my grandmother and grandfather. We had a community there. Now it’s all gone.’

Jack Healy (2016b)

The heart of the reservation was inundated when a dam was constructed in the 1950s (Estes 2019, 133–5). Yet, despite the loss, they still associate it with home, as Bailey expresses.

This deep familial attachment has been drawn upon by those organizing resistance:

‘We still have a bunch of family farmers on the land that their ancestors homesteaded,’ said Jane Kleeb, chair of the Nebraska Democratic Party and long-time organizer of opposition to the Keystone XL. ‘They have a deep emotional and cultural tie to the land and feel a responsibility that they must protect it.’

Steven Mufson (2017).

Familial place ties may link an individual to parents and grandparents who lived on and worked the land, and can be a positive element of their identity.

A more profound argument is made with DAPL in the ancestral ties of the Great Sioux Nation to the landscape: home on a different scale.¹⁰ The Nation was granted all of South Dakota west of the Missouri under the Fort Laramie Treaty, but the treaty was broken (Lennard 2017). Place attachment is expressed on both an individual and a broader community/tribal basis. Laurie Running Hawk is quoted saying, “‘I’m here,’ ... ‘You’re not going to kick me out. This is my land’” (Healy 2016d). Darrell Seki stated, “‘These lands that you call the United States, these were tribal lands. You guys are foreigners. You guys are trespassing’” (Hughlett 2016). The place attachment may be familial, to a landscape that their ancestors have called home for generations, as well as having tribal ties, forming an important component of identity. The dispossession of the Nation creates a population with strong place attachment with few having legal land ownership.

Not ironically, a recurring frame for KXL resistance is of a foreign corporation (TransCanada) threatening Americans’ lands. Many individuals were angry the United

States and state governments supported a foreign company's plans in the name of economic development and its use of eminent domain. "Does a foreign company have the right to take a Texan's land if they don't want to give it up?" asked Julia Trigg Crawford (Mufson 2012). There are strong sentiments of insiders feeling their homes threatened by outsiders, of the possibility of domicide. Home threats can result in action being taken to "defend our homes," as Nancy Zorn articulates.

In fact, while the DAPL protest camps were not home to anyone initially, they became home through lived and shared experiences. Retha Henderson said of the Sacred Stone Camp, "This is my home now" (Healy 2016c).

Threats to existence

On the Plains, water is a valuable commodity seldom taken for granted. The Plains' variable rainfall leads to feast and famine, bumper crops some years and devastating drought at others. An individual's perception of water is tied to their cultural, social, political, and economic context, with individuals dependent on water for their livelihood, such as farmers and ranchers, having a markedly different perception than someone living in a different environment with abundant resources (Shriver and Peadar 2009, 145).

Plains citizens' concern over water come through clearly in the media, such as Art Tanderup's, "Everything we do here is out of the aquifer ... We drink it, the livestock drink it, we irrigate with it, and we water our gardens with it. It's our water" (Pierre-Louis 2017). But they also attempt to frame water protection pragmatically, considering its value to the greater region, as Greg Awtry says: "You can't see the Oglala Aquifer, but it may be the single most valuable resource the country has ... " (Reynolds 2014). Or Nick Tilson's "The goal is to stop the pipeline, and it's not just for us ... We know there are 17 million people downstream from us. The problem is bad for whatever community is near this pipeline." (Heim 2016). They emphasize the implication of a spill beyond the immediate vicinity.

To threaten a water supply is to threaten survival, especially with the prospect of climate change, with Plains states likely facing a hotter, drier future (EPA 2016). Without the water provided by the aquifer and by the Missouri, will it be possible to continue to live and make a living on the Plains? This threatens continuity as well as a sense of belonging.

Plains agriculture has been struggling for decades. Plains tribes have been struggling for even longer. Drucilla Burns' lament—"We're supposed to be the protectors of the land and water. My God, they took everything away from us. And now they want to take our water too?"—captures a sentiment expressed across the Plains (Burns, quoted in Heim 2016).

Threats to a future on the plains

Threats to the future are tied to place functions of survival, goal support, and continuity. Future can be tied to identity with a particular group (such as a tribe or nation), as well as the goals of building a legacy that might be someday passed to children, grandchildren, and so on.

There is concern over the immediate future, of how will people survive if their crucial water supply is contaminated, as in Cyril Scott's quote: "We need to start remembering that the earth is our mother and stop polluting her and start taking steps to preserve the land, water, and our grandchildren's future" (Haq 2014). Scott's concerns are for the immediate future and for future generations. The consideration of the immediate future can also be seen in quotes used in the discussions of threats to home and to existence: without the water needed for both home and livelihood, how will they continue to survive? This is a threat to the place function of goal support. They are dependent on the water, to make a living and to continue to utilize the land. It is also tied to their lifestyle. Farming and ranching are not just a profession but also a lifestyle, one that may have a familial connection. Thus, it is also a threat to continuity.

The concern for future generations comes up quite often in the media, such as: "You and me are probably lucky, because we won't see it ... But our kids and our families and our descendants will have to deal with it one way or another" (Pierre-Louis 2017). This concern over providing a future for their descendants is all about continuity, about the family line continuing, about a community continuing.

But this concern over water extends far beyond the protestor's descendants, to consider the future of the planet, as Shannon Graves expresses:

'When I first started this, it was about my house ... I just wanted to protect my home.' That was six years ago. Now, Graves said, 'what was once just my home is now my world that I'm standing to protect.'

Jillian Goodman (2017)

The sentiments express a long view, considering those who will call the Plains, as well as the planet, home, not only now but also in the future.

Discussion: Reflecting on "WHO Loves This Land"

Chase Iron Eyes challenged his community to step up:

'Fighters, brothers and sisters. Come. Heed the call to defend this country against all enemies, foreign and domestic. We shall find out who loves this land, who is loyal to the water and who is a traitor to this land, to our water.'

Michael Bennett Cohen (2017)

To the people who "love this land," are "loyal to the water," and whose voices are utilized by the press (such as Iron Eyes), they are defending their places: their homes, their family farms, the landscapes they make a living from, their ancestral lands, or

those that they simply love. They are practicing place protection and some articulate their place attachment in their efforts to gain allies and block the pipelines. Native Americans and the descendants of settlers-colonizers relate to the Plains differently, given their diverse cultures and histories. Both are attached to this landscape for different reasons as constructed in the media (Williams and Stewart 1998, 22). Farmers and ranchers, largely descendants of settlers-colonists, are presented as attached to a familial home (family farm), the places where they grew up, the place where they live and/or work. Native Americans are presented as attached primarily to an ancestral land, to “a specific geography,” though there are some tied to a familial home, too (Estes 2019, 70). Through media’s use of quotations, farmers such as Jim Carlson, Art and Helen Tanderup, and members of the water protectors such as Chase Iron Eyes and Laurie Running Hawk, faces and voices are given to those who oppose the pipelines and who, in voicing their opposition, express their place attachment. Readers are clearly being shown “who is attached,” who belongs to the Plains (Scannell and Gifford 2010, 2).

In addressing the question of “where” in their coverage of U.S. resistance to pipelines, the media attempts to construct a sense of place, but often creates an impression of an empty, uninhabited, or unused landscape. Words such as “rural” or “plain” suggest little to be attached to. Without a clear sense of the value of this land (societal, financial) that will be lost or impacted by the pipelines, there seems to be little reason not to put a pipeline in.

Some locations are clearly constructed, such as the camps and the Tanderup farm. These locations serve as nodes in the media coverage, providing “imageability” to phenomena that are largely beyond the conception of the American public, inscribing these locations as sites of resistance, and essentially elevating these locations in the landscape, declaring “... themselves as places that in some way stand out from the surrounding area” (Relph 1976, 35). Moreover, they are distinct places in a landscape often perceived as “placeless.”

Imageability also extends to the pipelines. Pipelines crisscross the world but, as many are buried, they are not apparent to most viewers of these landscapes. As David Bond points out, the current activism around pipeline protests is really “to trip up the tidy image of fossil fuel infrastructure as ‘safe, silent, and unseen,’ to borrow a popular industry description of pipelines ... Oil pipelines have become, well, visible. And in that rising visibility, petro-networks are being opened up to new forms of accountability and refusal” (Bond 2015, 27). Pipelines are not only made visible, but they are placed and take place. By drawing attention to the placement of the pipelines, pipeline resisters are making visible these threats to place.

With the landscapes being crossed by the pipelines, we have the construction of both placelessness and place, both grounded in human experiences of place and place attachment. Relph wrote in 1976 that the media contributes to placelessness, providing “no roots, no sense of belonging to a place,” yet with the pipeline media coverage we

have placelessness and a sense of belonging. Liu and Freestone call for a reconsideration of this binary of place and placelessness:

These attributes need not be mutually exclusive and a more effective paradigm responsive to the complexities and contradictions of locality, globality, culture, experience and subjectivity recognizes the possibilities of their simultaneity. Better understandings of both place and placelessness today start not with their polarity but their hybridity.

Edgar Liu and Robert Freestone (2017)

In locations like the Plains, it is a place to those attached to it and placeless to those who are not—it is both, simultaneously. This hybridity, both placed and placeless, is at the core of the conflicts over the pipelines: being simultaneously a plane/plain to utilize for economic development and a place with a deeply attached population. And this hybridity clearly comes through the media.

The media, in covering the pipeline battles, are informing the public of events occurring in the country and attempting to provide the essential facts about the events (five h's and a w). This includes the “where”—where does this take place, where should it?—and “who”—who is affected, who will benefit, who will be harmed. But it also helps to explain “why” a conflict is happening over the pipelines. Yet by reading, identifying with, and perhaps sympathizing with “place talk,” connections can be made to an imagined community that extend well beyond the Plains (Scannell and Gifford 2010, 4; Tonge et al. 2015, 732).

Toward Conclusions: “OUR Tie to the Land”

Larry Wright Jr., like Jim Carlson, has ties to the land:

‘When we talk about our tie to the land, it’s not about ownership.’ Wright says. ‘It’s the fact that our relatives, our ancestors are buried in these hills. And every year when the grass grows [and] things green up, their spirit, their DNA is in those trees, in those flowers, in the corn that’s grown. That’s who we are.’

Justin Perkins (2018)

In telling the pipeline protest stories, the media utilizes “ties to the land” to explain why individuals, as well as groups, have ferociously fought, and continue to fight, the pipelines. These expressions reflect the important functions place attachment serves to the human species, in particular the attachment to home as a place of both memory as well as identity, the deep ties to both land and water needed for survival of both the species and the individual, and the concerns over the future.

Place still matters. Place attachment still matters. In our increasingly polarized landscape, polarized over politics and issues like climate change, tensions will continue as we attempt to balance projects seen in the “national interest” (for example, pipelines or dams) and the places and peoples impacted by such projects. The media has played

and will continue to play a role in influencing public opinion of these projects. “Ties to the land” are a means for the media to explain why Plains people actively fought the KXL for the past 12 years and why the DAPL led to two intense years of clashes that became increasingly violent. The hybridity of place and placelessness, and the potential leveraging of place attachment, are important to consider in the face of continuing battles over development.

Notes

1. “XL” stands for Export Limited. The southern Keystone XL leg from Cushing, Oklahoma to Texas refineries was completed in 2010.
2. DAPL protest sites were far from cities and resources: camps provided food and shelter for the protesters.
3. Plains-set articles are in contrast to those that are set in Washington, D.C. (protests, hearings), or that deal abstractly with financial aspects. “Straight news” is a plain account of news facts, without exaggeration. Feature articles are a compelling news narrative. Editorials and opinion pieces are written from a particular perspective, often persuasively, and were excluded.
4. All the articles on the pipelines published during this period were not collected. This is an extensive sample. All media sources have their ideological standpoints and attempts were made to balance sources for a representative sample.
5. The author was the sole coder and analyzer of the articles. The value of multiple coders to content analysis is acknowledged (Erlingsson and Brysiewicz 2017, 98). As the intent was a qualitative analysis, using the content analysis only to get a sense of the “big picture,” having a single coder was viewed as acceptable.
6. Also called the Battle of Little Big Horn or of Greasy Grass, the 1876 battle was a decisive victory for the tribes, defeating the 7th Cavalry Regiment of the U.S. Army and killing its leader, George Armstrong Custer (White 1991, 104 and 622-3).
7. The Great Sioux Nation is composed of Seven Council Fires or tribes, subdivided into 18 bands, including the Hunkpapa of the Standing Rock Indian Reservation (Estes 2019, 69-70).

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