as well as demonstrate how that presence is affected by the actions of Enbridge.

Each stanza in the first half of the poem starts with “I’m angry” followed by a reason for that anger. Each reason is one that directly points out a negligent or detrimental action taken by Enbridge. The result is that by the time Macdonald switches to “I’m inspired” the reader is ready to fight for change too. In this way Macdonald brings the reader into the fight mentally if not physically. She pulls the reader out of their acceptance of the petroleum narrative and pushes the reader to want to see change. Macdonald takes aspects of slow-violence and makes them real by recalling the damage Enbridge has done and still attempts to do. In these ways Dear Enbridge engages the narrative put in place by big oil and uncovers the story of the other side. The reader is able to understand why change must occur and is able to appreciate, if not actively support, the eco-critics who have already answered the call to action.

Works Cited


Many of our psychologists, sociologists, economists and other latter-day cabalists will have numbers to tell them the truth or they will have nothing. . . We must remember that Galileo merely said that the language of nature is written in mathematics. He did not say that everything is. And even the truth about nature need not be expressed in mathematics (p. 23)

- Neil Postman, Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business

The observations made in both of Danzinger’s (Dzinas, 1997; 2009) articles seem to parallel the arguments asserted by media communication theorist Neil Postman, in his work entitled Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business (1985). Personally, it has become increasingly imperative to highlight and acknowledge
the role of media studies with respect to psychology, as the media of societal discourse ultimately decides the medium used to communicate, which in turn, determines the possible information members of society can ascertain and acquire in attempts to understand the world in which we live (Postman, 1985). The research journal is the primary means of discourse for Psychology. The discipline then proceeds to disseminate the content of the current state of scientific psychological research and its findings through articles. These journals are meant to be understood and considered meaningful by the intended. That said, if the experimental method provides the content of the information communicated, then the experimental method used to conduct and generate the findings, results that subsequently provide the conclusions on the basis of observation, also becomes the medium; the medium in turn influences the type, amount, and quality of information that is presentable for communication.

Danziger (Dzinas, 1997; 2009) illustrates how the adoption of symbolic discourse through the displacement of technology, mathematics and statistics by American Psychology served to form the basis of a pidgin language that unifies the communication between and within a multiplicity of disciplines. Fallacious Pythagorean rationale suggests that all humans have a priori understanding of mathematics that can be ascertained, known, acquired and understood through reason (Postman, 1985). This proposition acts to assert that if the above arguments are true, then it becomes reasonable to assume that the symbols of math can function to facilitate discourse that mediates communication by using commonly understood universal symbols. American psychology has attempted to establish a lingua franca that allows for comprehensible communication of all disciplines by manipulating the symbols of math (Danzinger & Dzinas, 1997; Danzinger 2009). By extension, the discourse of statistics was made comprehensible through the symbolic language of math (Postman, 1985; Danzinger & Dzinas, 1997).

However, this insidious transduction that removed the objects from their original context has also stripped away their intended meaning (Postman, 1985; Danzinger, 2009). Through an intentional historical and continual misrepresentation, the discipline of psychology has allowed these objects to infectiously replicate as symbols that have disseminated themselves virally throughout the discourse of our scientific findings.

My interpretation of Lambdin's argument called me to warn members of the psychology community, and to the American Psychological Association (APA) about the dangers of psychology’s continual practise of using misrepresented symbols to signify and give the appearance
of a study’s findings as significant (2012). Such symbols may come to appear as their own hamartia; missing the mark may be detrimental to their own body of epistemologically validated literature, rendering it a lifeless corpse. By employing intentionally obscurest practises which have rendered the past obsolete, creating a self-referential definition, and through appropriation and exploitation, the discipline of psychology has infused “variables”, “statistics”, “contingent probability” (p-value), and “correlation (r)” with their own identities (Danzinger, & Dzinas, 1997; Danzinger, 2009; Lambdin, 2012). Both of Dazinger’s articles elaborate on how the signs and vernacular known and understood within Psychology as having symbolic reverence have been misrepresented and misinterpreted as a form of misinformation (Danzinger, & Dzinas, 1997; Lambdin, 2012). Through providing a richer contextual account of its original historical development, meaning and understanding, Lambdin (2012) explicitly states the connotations and weight associated with its misappropriated use: nothing. But something always comes from nothing. In Psychology, ‘nothing’ signifies a significant concept or idea. This is especially true with respect to data produced in experimental findings. By identifying and imposing meaning and value on objects and creating a self-referential definition within the discipline, Psychology as an academic discipline has also agreed upon how objects should be interpreted (Danzinger, 2009; Pierce, 1866). Some objects have an identifiable characteristic and this recognizable characteristic is known to be associated with the interpretation and understanding of the object: the presence of a “p value” has an iconic value that is known through its association to be representative of a sign of universal fact (Pierce, 1866).

Technology is analogous to a Trojan horse, in that, within it is a chimera for social change. Postman (1985) has indicated that “technology is ideology” (157), and ideology is never neutral. As the symbolic significance of a particular medium insidiously and subtly embeds itself within the fabric of a specific social context, the machine becomes transmogrified as the medium in and of itself (Postman, 1985).

Sometimes, it is more difficult to prove one’s own identity than it is prove one’s existence. The adoption of the “p-value” by the APA illegitimately established and constructed a social identity that has tried to confine its use within the discipline. Having an objectively small, almost unrecognizable, yet visible form, aided in cloaking the “p value”: its historic frequency increased its fitness and all the while it remained both unquestioned and unchallenged, allowing the “p-value” to take on a nature of its own (Lamdin, 20012; Edmund 1.2.1. in reference to Shakespeare, 1994). Through the meaning imposed on its
external appearance becoming the basis of its force, by the very nature of its appearance, the “p-value” has become known through its association to represent significance (Edmund 1.2.1. in reference to Shakespeare, 1994). A superficial understanding of its meaning and value has allowed the “p-value” to subversively and unnaturally insert itself into the “natural” symbolic and social order within Psychology, as it has become an axiom; its appearance as a legitimate, recognizable source of identification understood to symbolize factual knowledge (Edmund 1.2.1. in reference to Shakespeare, 1994). Unfortunately, its use has spread to other important and practical disciplines such as medical sciences and education. Danziger (2009) highlights that human acceptance of the scientific findings and explanations offered by psychology as a legislative authority of unquestionable fact initiates the start of the fall of human experience.

The “p-value” is an abscess in need of removal. The APA’s continued reliance on experimental studies that require quantitative measures in order to calculate a numeric value that is then used in the statistical analysis of data allows Psychology to use the “p-value” as a tool to conduct a statistical litmus test for significance (Danzinger, & Dzinas, 1997; Lambdin, 2012). Despite ninety years of criticism, the APA’s appropriation, intentional obscurantism and mandatory implementation of the “p-value” has allowed it function as rhetorical trope that bamboozles the audience, detracting from specious and flawed arguments based to test theories (Lambdin, 2012).

Postman also highlights a statement by Gavriel Salomon that pictures only “need to be recognized, words need to be understood.” (as cited, 1985, p.72). Since humans are born into a superordinate linguistic structure, such an overarching and inescapable structure imposes limitations on the medium of communication. Marshall McLuhan stated, “the medium is the message,” which Postman slightly modified to “the media is the metaphor” (as cited in Postman, 1985). With Psychology, it follows that typography is the media used to communicate the representation of an experiment, and Psychology’s method is the medium, which dictates how experimental data is communicated.

Consider the following: articles about experiments as photographs; snapshots that capture a concrete representation of a momentary instance in space-time/ time space, “a particular fragment of the here-and-now” (Postman, p.72). Words are required to contextualize and communicate the concrete representations in an image (Postman, 1985). Experimental reports are an impression of an external representation of a historical event; to communicate its occurrence, it must be codified by the researcher(s) who observed and witnessed the event and its results. Reports become codified typographic
writing. As the only observer(s) of a historic moment in question, in turn, researcher(s) then also must become the source whose perspective offers the only rendition and impression of that instance in history. Thus, the researcher(s) who interpret the event also act as medium of communication, providing both the content and context that conveys experimental data and findings.

Journals are a collection of articles. As previously mentioned, articles portray a particular image of an impression(s) that captures an external representation of an experiment: fragmented aspects of a concrete representation from a privileged perspective(s) that takes a snapshot at particular instant in space-time (Sontag as cited in Postman, 1985). Within this image composed of words, the content, doubling as the context that acts to manifest as the image's boundaries, have also been supplied by the same researcher(s) (Sontag as cited in Postman, 1985). Photographs, as the media of societal discourse, portray and select fragmented aspects of a current context in a concrete representation so that the images of experimental findings become decisive, as they have “no arguable propositions, make no extended and unambiguous commentary” (Postman, 1985, p.93).

Furthermore, typically within these images is the appearance of an icon (Pierce, 1866). The presence of this icon is taught to psychology students in statistics classes as an identifiable and recognizable source known and understood through its association: the object’s icon placed in a direct relation to other objects, becoming a sign (Pierce, 1866). The presence of this sign then becomes reinterpreted and understood as a significant symbol, one that has an authoritative quality that denotes a fact of significance (Pierce, 1866); the “p-value” is commonly understood to represent factual data as being statistically significant.

On this basis, psychology journals seem to be reflective of a scrapbook that is “mise en abyme”: composed of external representations of articles; articles have an iconic image embedded within their representation; the appearance of the “p-value” within an external representation of an article; in turn, as a research article presents a representative image of an experiment (Pierce, 1866). Therefore, under the surface, a research journal appears to be composed of many images that depict an iconic image within an image, an image of an external representation of a historic event (Postman, 1985). Additionally, an experiment itself is nothing more than an intersubjective impression championed by respective researcher(s) to be representative of an objective representation of an external event that is depictive of “scientific fact” (as indicated by the “p-value”). Infinite recursion reaches a new level when considering that articles are digitally typed rather than written.
Considering that Lambdin (2012) mentioned that over twenty years ago the rate of publishing of peer reviewed psychology journals was estimated at one journal every fifteen minutes, and personally observing an increasing current interest with psychology, such that the content of studies becomes frequently commonplace, appearing to rapidly circulate within social media and televised news, has helped me establish my own metaphor. An image of that the APA functions like a paparazzi tabloid: the emphasis of its content and its findings of psychological research are presented in an augmented and distorted one-sided manner. The stories on the cover one day will be discarded for tomorrow’s news (Postman, 1985). Bearing in mind all of psychology’s eclectic array of disciplines, sub-disciplines, and a vast number of unique journals that specifically publish a narrow domain of topics, it would seem that psychological research is printed and treated as a form of pop entertainment (Postman, 1985).

Lambdin suggests that it becomes mandatory for psychology students who are intending to become the discipline’s future researchers to compulsory classes on propositional logic rather than statistics, and to me, after reviewing the problematic understanding and interpretation of the “p-value”, it seems like a rational choice (2012). Perhaps, this is why there is always such a great emphasis to watch your p’s and q’s in school.

Works Cited


