

Raising Anxiety to Construct the Nation: *Heartland* – A Case Study

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Abstract

Television is recognised as one of the best mediums to effectively access a great number of people within a nation and unite them by communicating stories which help them understand and feel they belong to a country. Shared meanings of nationhood are constructed in narrative form (Barker, 1999) and it is television's use of images that adds character and places it in a superior position to radio and print in eliciting a direct response from the audience (Corner, 1995). This paper uses critical discourse analysis to examine the narrative structure of an episode of the New Zealand television series *Heartland*, titled "East Coast – Towards the Light" to investigate the way it constructs a national identity for New Zealanders. It is argued that the programme uses a narrative structure similar to that described by French structuralist Tzvetan Todorov (1971) of equilibrium-disequilibrium-equilibrium whereby anxieties are raised within the audience psyche and then resolved in order to convey a positive message for New Zealanders - that in spite of differences whether ethnic, cultural or socio-economic - they can all be part of a united nation.

Seeking a National Identity

The television programme *Heartland* first broadcast in 1992 enabled other New Zealanders to visit and experience places they may have never been to before and see the other kinds of people who shared their country's citizenship. It was a documentary series hosted by a popular New Zealand celebrity Gary McCormick who, in each episode, travelled to a different place in New Zealand, visiting mostly rural locations and connecting with the locals who lived there to show other New Zealanders the life that existed beyond the suburbs. *Heartland* screened in prime time (8.30pm) by the state-owned broadcaster Television New Zealand on TV2. Although broadcast in a highly commercial environment at this time *Heartland* rated regularly in the top five programmes for the week, attracting between 550,000 and 650,000 viewers. It won a bronze medal at the 1994 Film and TV Awards in New York and was voted best factual series at the New Zealand Film and TV awards in 1994.

The popularity of *Heartland* can be interpreted as a response to the feelings of insecurity amongst the population during a period stemming from the 1960s and referred to by historian James Belich as 'decolonisation' (2001). Factors such as a rise in Maori nationalism, increased immigration and a breaking of links with Britain when it joined the EEC, led to doubts by New

Zealanders as to who they really were. Already they had been classified through a series of labels as a European country, a Pacific nation, and more recently an Asian nation (Pawson 1996). In light of this it is suggested that viewing *Heartland* helped bring a sense of unity to the New Zealand audience and an examination of its narrative structure indicates that this was instrumental in achieving this.

Narrative structure is seen as one of the important elements in a programme's appeal. Television producers and programme makers have an objective to keep the audience watching by ensuring what is being broadcast can be understood by making the narrative coherent and logical (Lealand and Martin, 2001). Narrative discourse has a crucial role to play in human life according to sociolinguist Barbara Johnstone (1990) as it helps to structure and give meaning to the past. Telling stories, she says, is also a comfortable and familiar way for people to converse and communicate. It is also an effective way to persuade the audience to see arguments in a particular light. Television imposes its own structure however on what is broadcast and restricts not only what can be said but how it is said through the restraints of format. The fact that it avoids "normal face-to-face communication" allows it to "exercise a subtle but never-the-less real form of cultural control" (Silverstone, 1981, p. 8) .

The extent of television's ability to persuade its audience to think a certain way, or guide viewers in how to react to situations, is debatable. But Ronald Berman (1987) says that television also has the power to assure viewers that changing their minds is all that is necessary to settle national problems. Berman expands on this by pointing out that people on television are seen as being rational. While they all have problems these can be resolved through a simple change in belief or behaviour:

"The strategy of the medium (television) has been to imitate limited parts of social life, to replicate certain human experiences and, emphatically to create some empathy between the characters of its fiction (and even of its non-fiction) and the audience."

(Berman, 1987, p. 109)

Silverstone (1981, p. 70) states that "the mythic dimension of culture contains traditional stories and actions whose source is the persistent need to deny chaos and create order". The world fears chaos, he says, as in the unknown and the unthought, but we constantly "revise the limits of what it is that we can take for granted, constantly incorporating more and more within our own stock of knowledge... the knowledge which guides our everyday activities, is bounded" (Silverstone, 1981, p. 5). A sense of chaos could also be applied to the minimal narrative plot described by Tzevetan Todorov (1971). He described this as a transition from one equilibrium to another. The beginning of an "ideal" narrative starts in a stable situation (equilibrium) which is then disturbed by some power or force creating a state of disequilibrium. However equilibrium is once again re-instated through "the action of a force directed in the opposite direction"--though this second equilibrium while similar, is not identical to the first (Todorov, 1971, p. 111).

This paper's analysis of the narrative of an episode of *Heartland* aimed to test the hypothesis that the programme took the opportunity of using the insecurities of the population, increasing its level of anxiety (or a sense of chaos) through a move towards disequilibrium in the narrative structure, only to be resolved at the end. As a result with the audience craving order over chaos, it is suggested that a positive and reassuring sense of national identity was reinforced and accepted. The episode "East Coast - Towards the Light" was selected as a case study on which to test this hypothesis using critical discourse analysis. The text is examined to look at the way words and images are put together in developing the narrative arc. However the investigation goes beyond this into socio-cultural practice, assessing how the programme influences others as well as the external influences that have affected the construction of the programme.

East Coast – Towards the Light

This episode explores the eastern coast of the middle of the North Island of New Zealand, simply known as the "East Coast". Presenter McCormick spends time in the communities in this area of Tolaga Bay, Tokomaru Bay, and Ruatoria along the route to his final destination, the East Cape lighthouse.

In analysing the text in "East Coast - Towards the Light", it is important to be aware of the social/political background against which the programme was set. James Belich (2001) relates that between 1960 and 2000 New Zealand underwent a domestic process of decolonisation where a "coming out" of differences and dissent was matched against a "coming in" of new influences and new migrations. Part of this coming out was a Maori cultural resurgence and, prior to the *Heartland* series, activities such as protests on Waitangi Day and at Bastion Point (crown-owned property in Auckland which once belonged to local Maori) attracted a great deal of media attention.

In addition Belich says a tendency was apparent for some younger Maori men to form gangs with names such as the *Mongrel Mob* and *Black Power* and these groups were associated with illegal drugs and violence.

The East Coast also drew a lot of attention with negative publicity regarding racial conflict over the possession of land and the existence of a new "gang" of Maori in the area associated with racial violence. McCormick refers to this in his book (1994) describing the relatively recent period of turbulence when arson and unlawful acts were conducted by a band of young Maori. They named themselves the *Ruatoria Rastafarians* in recognition of their allegiance to Rastafarianism as part of their identity alongside their Maori traditions and spirituality. Their desire to "drive others off 'their' land and away from the sacred mountain Hikurangi" (McCormick, 1994, p. 72) created tension between themselves and Pakeha (New Zealanders of European descent) farmers, but also indirectly created an anxiety amongst New Zealanders.

McCormick's book says that the leader of the Rastafarians at the time, "Diesel" Maxwell, claims he was kidnapped and threatened by policemen and later another leader Chris Campbell was fatally shot. With this history and subsequent media coverage these events received, the audience who watched "East Coast - Towards the Light" when it was originally broadcast would already have had a presupposed image of the East Coast as a wild part of New Zealand -- economically depressed, dangerous and threatening with a racial tension that some would blame the Ruatoria Rastafarians for creating. This negative representation of the East Coast is used by the programme makers to build tension in the programme as the audience becomes aware that McCormick will at some stage have to pass through Ruatoria on his travels.

However the programme starts in a state of calm and equilibrium. McCormick travels through the East Coast in a rusty old Holden car - a tongue-in-cheek underlying 'text' indicative of his Kiwi bloke persona and humour as he tries to blend in with the area known for the run down, rusty cars which sit in the front yards of many dilapidated homes. In other words it is a "when in Rome..." attitude whereby a visitor will gain greater acceptance by the locals if seen to be, or attempting to be, like them.

The opening scenes display the beauty of the East Coast using a montage of shots of beautiful scenery -- beaches, cliffs, rural scenes, local people and aerial shots of small townships. McCormick helps establish the state of equilibrium of the narrative as he comments to the viewers that this part of New Zealand is unlike any other:

View of waves pounding on beach, cliffs behind. Gary McCormick walks into view, surveys scene then turns and faces the camera in direct address.

GM: "When you drive north to Gisborne up to East Cape -- you feel like you are entering another world, which to some extent you are. The communities of the East Coast are spread out over some 200 kilometres."

Aerial shots

"We are going to be travelling these 200 kilometres all the way up to the lighthouse at East Cape."

(Title: Tolaga Bay)

Montage shots of local people. Their dress and housing indicate that this is a low-income region.

GM V/O: "This is the Heartland of the Ngati Porou. Although this is a sparsely populated area consisting of remote and scattered farms and small towns, the people who live on the Coast do tend to feel that they are all part of the same community..."

" One of the things that connects many of them is their interest in horses and one of the big events on the East Coast calendar is the Horse Sports Competition... "

Setting the scene, McCormick's words have already constructed a sense of community and togetherness by the people who live there, despite the area being so sparsely populated. In addition he also suggests that the local Maori iwi (tribe) the Ngati Porou are the people who

“belong” to this area -- it is their *Heartland*, which also suggests a spiritual ownership. Already a discourse of cultural/racial tension is running through the programme as it attempts to turn the audience from blaming Maori or viewing them negatively, to seeing another side of the story than the discourses portrayed by the national news media.

McCormick proceeds to interview a variety of social actors throughout the programme, some as they practice on their horses and enter preliminary events for the upcoming horse sports competition which brings the various communities together. Other social actors are representatives of their groups whether farmers, residents, Maori elders or a local photographer. The social actors are both Maori and Pakeha but the differences between the two ethnicities are made apparent and certain anxieties are built up as the narrative moves towards a state of disequilibrium. The Pakeha are portrayed as being the owners of large farms and one camera shot shows a farmer in a commanding position on top of a hill with his horse obediently to one side, dog at his feet ready for his owner to tell him what to do next. The farms are captioned as “stations” and cut-away shots are made to aerial views of their land and the large farmhouses. Discussion with Pakeha social actors also shows that they are forthcoming in announcing their rights to living on the East Coast:

GW (V/O and Title: Graeme Williams): "I was born here but my father came here about 34 years ago from the family farm ... my grandfather farmed further up the coast and then he had three sons who all wanted to go farming... so they acquired two other farms and this being one of them... so yeah I've spent all my life here. My father and his father and his father and his father were all down here. So we've been here for a day or two."

In contrast Maori are sometimes framed in a more intimidating way. For example, the presenter has already told the viewer about the arson and violence between the Ruatoria Rastafarians and local Pakeha farmers, so when John Heeney, the leader of the Ruatoria Rastafarians is interviewed in close-up, his face covered in moko (facial tattoo), the impression is somewhat haunting.

This deliberate contrasting representation of Maori and Pakeha not only implies that such groups are spatially separated within the community, but Wilson (1996) claims that it also reinforces and critiques the colonial discourse of the Pakeha. In her analysis of *Heartlands'* Ngaruawahia episode she says Maori were portrayed as victims of a Pakeha-dominated society. Wilson says the East Coast programme showed that race issues were being dealt with more positively by the community but this could also be as a result of different directors involved in the programmes.

In the programme's narrative development McCormick raises various issues with people appearing such as changes in New Zealand's economy which saw the closing of industries such as the local freezing works leading to many families having to move to the cities for work. Soil erosion is also highlighted with aerial shots displaying dramatic slips and bare earth and

McCormick apportions blame for this (both through voice-over or directly to the camera but never in front of social actors) to the pioneers who cleared the virgin bush for farming. But he also admits that in more recent years events such as Cyclone Bola which struck the East Coast in 1988 also caused devastating erosion. As the issues of erosion and unemployment are introduced a sense of guilt and colonial anxiety for Pakeha viewers is suggested. It is not an onslaught of accusation but the comments come from McCormick (a Pakeha himself) rather than the people he meets.

Although the narrative moves closer to the climax of disequilibrium it does so in intermittent bursts which, while to seemingly raise the tension gradually within the programme, would also have been influenced by the broadcaster's requirement for advertisement breaks. However when issues were brought to the fore and a certain tension raised, these were often dealt with superficially. For example, when the social actors are questioned they merely give their opinion and there is no further probing for more serious comment. In one instance McCormick interviews a local Maori, Phil Aspinall, on the communities' housing problems. A response is given but never dealt with in depth as the scene quickly changes to an interview with a local photographer about her work:

Gary McCormick interviews a local Maori Phil Aspinwall:

GM: "There was a bit of a fuss made about housing problems here. In fact there was a bit of a fashion here for a while to talk about your housing problems."

PA: "I guess the media seeks sensationalism. I must say that they showed all the Maoris living in these squalid conditions but they didn't show the Pakehas living in Tokomaru Bay living in the same conditions in beat up caravans and what have you. They only showed us Maoris. But we're happy. Money is not everything, but happiness is more important and we are very happy here in Tokomaru Bay I can assure you of that."

Cut-away to shots of black and white photos of scenes from the Coast.

Programme makers are mindful of maintaining their audience and if this episode becomes too accusatory there is a risk of losing Pakeha audience share and subsequent ratings. In the commercial broadcasting environment successful ratings are important not only for programme makers, but also for New Zealand On Air (the Government-funded agency charged with supporting local programming), the broadcasting channels and the advertisers.

As shown in the previous example, issues are raised in the *Heartland* programmes but they rarely dominate. Rather they are interspersed with lighter, more entertaining topics, such as the history of the Tolaga Bay wharf which was built in 1929, field trials for the horse sports, or some "hamming it up" by McCormick as he attempts to catch a sheep to enter in the Ruatoria Sheep Show.

It is at the midpoint of "East Coast- Towards the Light" that McCormick confesses to having been misled as to the true nature of the East Coast. He also implies that the viewers, in as much as they identify with McCormick as their guide through this journey, are also victims of misconception:

GM: "Well I'm halfway through my trip up the coast -- in fact I'm just entering Tokomaru Bay and I'm starting to wonder whether the myth of the Coast as a sort of depressed area is exactly that -- a myth. I'm wondering whether, -- if I've been sold a line for example in Gisborne where I come from, the expression "up the Coast" is sort of synonymous with backwards or in decline... In point of fact people seem to be remarkably cheerful about their predicament. I'm starting to wonder whether or not the judgments made about the Coast aren't sort of European ones."

Here McCormick attempts to persuade the audience to take a more positive look at the notorious East Coast. Rather than just stating this directly he uses language that conveys that he has been the victim of "misconception", as has the audience, and been "sold a line". His repetition of "I" focuses on his apparent self-revelatory process of seeing evidence which is contrary to what he has been led to believe and implies that a revised opinion of what he is seeing is in order. This journey has been a process of self-discovery which the audience is witness to and part of. In this passage he uses the word "wonder" on three occasions -- "I'm starting to wonder..." , "I'm wondering...", "I'm starting to wonder" -- which draws the audience into his way of thinking as they seek to answer his inquiries for themselves.

This repetition is a form of lexical cohesion, demonstrating a relationship between words in a text (Paltridge, 2000, p. 134). Repeating the word 'wonder' within a short space of time is a subtle form of persuasion led by the narrator. It suggests to the audience that they should 'wonder' too and perhaps make similar judgments to those of the narrator. It also assists in the construction of national identity by persuading the audience to take a more positive view of East Coast inhabitants, namely Maori, who seem so different from them.

The programme tends to vacillate between negative and positive aspects of the area through images and interviews. There is an attempt to show how happy the local people are whether Maori:

Phil Aspinwall: "Money is not everything, but happiness is more important and we are very happy here in Tokomaru Bay I can assure you of that..."

or Pakeha farmer's wife Deb Higgins on Ihungia Station:

GM: "It's a pretty nice set up here Debs -- does this come with your job or with Cooch or what?" (laughs) "How did you come by this attractive setting?"

DH: "Well it came with him." (her husband)

GM: "Yeah very good choice if you ask me. It's lovely out here ..."

However, because of the alarming media publicity at that time the audience is aware that McCormick's visit to Ruatoria will be the telling point of the programme because that was the centre of violence. After raising some uncertainty through discussion of unemployment and erosion in the area, there has also been an underlying curiosity coupled with anxiety on top of this as McCormick moves closer to Ruatoria. It is two-thirds of the way through this episode that the state of disequilibrium becomes very apparent as McCormick enters the domain of the Ruatoria Rastafarians.

Anxiety reaches its peak as a montage of images of the Ruatoria Rastafarian lifestyle is shown backed by Rastafarian music. Shots of their communal living, tattooed faces and leather clothing, a graveyard with the Rastafarian flag flapping in the wind, and smoke rising from their chimney (perhaps a subtle reminder of arson, or a suggestion of marijuana). A sense of intimidation or unease can be implied in this part of the programme through their image of being the "other". Prior to meeting with the Ruatoria Rastafarians McCormick tells the audience that he can't help but notice a certain tension in the air which, in fact, raises the tension with the audience as they wait to find out how McCormick will be treated.

Even before the introduction of the Ruatoria Rastafarians the programme has, by these sinister images and the accompanying reggae music, already created a dark image of them. However McCormick appears to seek sympathy for them and shows he is willing to listen to their side of the story by happily sitting down, accepting their hospitality and discussing their lifestyle while sharing their breakfast in the communal dining room.

When McCormick questions them on their views his language is phrased from their point of view as in the following example where he actually articulates what he believes they would say:

GM: "Do you believe the land has been taken off you and you should have more of it?"

Rastafarian leader John Heeney paints a picture of reverse intimidation by the authorities with his reply:

JH: "I believe I have a birthright, eh, and I can walk upon my ancestral lands without fear of being, you know, plucked off, you know, by people coming in helicopters and landing in trees and wearing guns and black clothes and just and away and gone, eh, without them having to issue trespass notices, contesting my rights. Right from the start I was saying to the people, we have every right to be on this land, this is why we wear the moko, this is our citizenship."

The interview with John Heeney is juxtaposed with that of Pakeha farmer Jeremy Williams whose home was burned down in an arson attack on his wedding day. While there may be an expectation of resentment to be voiced by either party both appear to calmly put the past behind them and indicate they want to learn to live together.

GM: "One of the things that has hit me in my trip up the East Coast is, that an interest in things Maori is very strong... they are very strong on their traditions and values... and the other thing is the intensity of feelings with which people have about issues here."

JW: "I would agree -- ah we've had our troubles as everybody knows in real terms that has tended to polarise views but... you know, put the worst of our trouble behind us and everybody is trying to get on with their lives now really."

McCormick in a peacemaking/mediating role with his questioning suggests words for the social actors to explain their predicament. This is seen with Jeremy Williams:

GM: "So the troubles you had in the past are being exceptional in a sense you got dragged into something...?"

JW: "Oh, yes...yes -- we're quite comfortable... obviously things weren't pleasant for a few years when we got married... but... things have settled down and we have adjusted. Put it this way. I don't have any trouble remembering my wedding anniversary."

as well as John Heeney:

GM: "And so in the next 10 years or so do you see yourself being able to co-exist with the Williams, the visitors who come here, your own elders? Do you see yourselves walking forward?"

JH: "Put it this way... We can co-exist with anyone that doesn't set themselves against us... because to me if people set themselves against us, it brings the other quality out of the tattooed man to defend himself eh, against whatever he hoped to do to us. The way I see it is if they want to be a part of it, there is a place set aside in this land where they can go to find it. But all those that don't want to be a part of it, well there is the rest of Aotearoa where they can go and their oyster eh... you know... it's enough... you know... there's enough area over here to provide for everyone."

Jeremy Williams also explains that his children have attended Kohanga Reo (lit: Maori language nest/kindergarten where only Maori is spoken) and that his daughter is in a Maori total immersion class, seeking to imply that his family is willing to embrace the Maori culture as part of their life. Even the Ngati Porou (tribal) elder Tom Te Maro, interviewed at sunrise in a spiritual

scenario with Mt Hikurangi in the background, says he would welcome more communication with the younger Maori who have split from their iwi to embrace Rastafarianism.

McCormick makes no direct comment on these interviews. Rather, it is through his questioning that an empathy for each group has been raised and there is a sense that his unthreatening approach to the Ruatoria Rastas was an attempt for them to have some faith in the programme in spite of bad experiences in the way they were portrayed by other media.

The willingness of the representatives of each group (Pakeha, Rastafarians and Maori elders) to co-exist is apparent and this relaxes the tension in the programme. However, none of these social actors has contact with each other within the programme and they are interviewed separately by McCormick. Their individual comments imply an attempt to live side by side rather than an overt friendliness to each other. Jeremy Williams' comment that he won't forget his wedding anniversary because of the arson attack suggests he is willing to forgive but not to forget and there is still an underlying threat that conflict could rise again when John Heeneey says:

"We can co-exist with anyone that doesn't set themselves against us... because to me if people set themselves against us, it brings the other quality out of the tattooed man to defend himself eh, against whatever he hoped to do to us."

A sense of equilibrium is reached. This however is on a different level from that established in the introduction of the programme as it relates more to a sense of resolution in relation to racial conflict whereas the first stage of equilibrium dwelt on scenes of beautiful landscape and a peaceful way of life.

The final state of equilibrium also picks up on these aspects with the cut to the scene of the Ruatoria Horse Show demonstrating the happier members of East Cape communities joining together in an activity that they can share and enjoy together. McCormick's success in his adopted sheep winning "the best sheep" category at the sheep competition lightens the atmosphere as he jokes around with another Pakeha farmer Graeme Williams.

The end of the narrative is marked by a coda – part of the narrative structure where the writer or narrator expresses his or her own perspective on the story and provides a summary to his exposition. Walking around from the East Cape lighthouse, McCormick delivers his assessment of the East Coast and highlights the meaning of the programme's title *Towards the Light*:

GM walks towards camera:

GM: "The East Cape lighthouse -- the end of our dusty and rather warm journey along the East Coast... I've always tended to think of the East Coast as being the last frontier but that may be because I live in Gisborne and have a romantic notion about these things. None the less it will be the first in the world to see the New Year light in the year 2000 to welcome in the new millennium which is

appropriate in a sense because it's also the area in the country which is dealing with one of the great issues facing New Zealand today. The relationship between Maori and Pakeha..." (shots of Maori and Pakeha girls together) "...and for that matter between Maori and Maori. But it is an area which contains amongst the people a sense of warmth, or hospitality and an overwhelming sense of spirituality and for these reasons it will be resolved."

Credits with shots of farmers mustering sheep, the beach, playing rugby.

McCormick speaks authoritatively as he ties in the metaphor of the East Coast being the first to see the light of the new millennium with the concept that (and he stresses this emphatically) relationships between Maori and Pakeha and Maori and Maori "will" be resolved. The metaphor of the light can also be tied in with his "warm" journey and the warmth of the people.

The cultural -- racial discourse has been carried along through the narrative development and McCormick's role as peacemaker by attempting to present a balanced view of the East Coast that is not dominated by a Pakeha perspective. The programme's narrative has finished in a state of equilibrium as it has displayed a resolution by East Coast inhabitants to get along. A move to a more (but not totally) homogenised national identity has been constructed which leaves a positive outlook for the future. Wilson (1996) suggests that the rural landscape is valued and that in the construction of national identity it is seen to be a place where lifestyle, space, spirituality and healing contribute to the working out of racial tension.

It is useful at this point to reflect on the comments quoted earlier by Berman (1987) who said that television has the power to assure viewers that changing their minds is all that is necessary to settle national problems and that it can do this by creating an empathy between the characters and the audience. It can be seen that through the narrative arc and changes in the tension and equilibrium of this programme, viewers (in particular Pakeha viewers) are encouraged to think about the situation of people living on the East Coast and to be persuaded that the problems can and will be positively resolved. *Heartland* director Bruce Morrison said in a *New Zealand Listener* article (Wichtel 1994, p. 45) that the purpose of the programme was not to dig for dirt because there was a "cultural agenda" in its production.

Riding the Narrative Arc

Fairclough (1995, p. 188) says that "intertextual analysis shows how texts selectively draw upon orders of discourse - the particular configurations of conventionalised practices (genres, discourses, narratives, etc.) which are available to text producers...". In this analysis of one episode from the *Heartland* series, a narrative arc within the documentary form was found to follow the pattern of construction suggested by Todorov (1971) which ultimately leads to the creation of a sense of security about New Zealand's national identity. A state of equilibrium was

established by building a discourse of national pride through scenic images of the landscape and community, followed by an introduction by narrator McCormick who presented historical information on the area and explained the intended focus of the programme. The state of equilibrium was consolidated as McCormick moved through the communities meeting social actors, looking at the lifestyles and developing a specific theme as well as adding his own humour and entertaining manner. From the scenic beginnings of the programme, the introduction of social characters and the establishment of the journey McCormick will take us on, the move to disequilibrium is gradually built upon as different issues or anxieties are raised. While issues reach a climax they are never dramatically threatening as the topic is touched on and referred to, but then backed away from avoiding any “pushing” of the point or developing it further. A story is created within the episode enabling the audience to identify with the “characters” and feel that they are part of the story.

With a gradual move to a state of disequilibrium signalled when elements of anxiety, some subtle and some more overt, are raised concerning issues in each location it suggests that everything is not always perfect in the paradise-like image so often portrayed of New Zealand. The underlying text of *Heartland* has been shown to construct a national identity through the narrative exposing different lifestyles and backgrounds of the people who are all New Zealanders. The intention appears to be that any anxieties or negativity should not dominate the programme in order to keep a positive focus. To do otherwise would in fact detract from the entertainment aspect of the programme and risk a loss of its wide audience appeal. Issues are raised but never pushed to the limit. There are no intensive interviews, deep probing or in-depth exposition. An example to illustrate this position can be seen by a case study on the Ngati Porou and forestry on the East Coast (Wall and Cocklin, 1996) which outlines the barriers Ngati Porou have faced in attempting to have full participation with the Government-funded East Coast Forestry Project. This is not even referred to in the East Coast episode of *Heartland* and only superficial opinions of local farmers and Ngati Porou are sought.

Heartland avoided developing too much comment on issues, often by reverting to a positive or humorous topic. Yet a residue of anxiety had still been left allowing a sense of disorder or disequilibrium to be built. This tension was swiftly dispersed by a resolution at the conclusion of the programme that left the audience feeling more at ease with the return to the state of equilibrium and the prospect of a bright future for their fellow New Zealanders. The conclusion of the episode with McCormick’s epilogue direct to the audience leaves us with the impression that nothing is ever perfect, but that as New Zealanders we have a special ability to adapt to whatever changes or obstacles come our way. There is a very strong sense conveyed in *Heartland* that through diversity there can be unity. To reject this would lead to chaos and a return to disequilibrium. The implication is that, making the “right” choice -- to be accepting of others and to strive for unity -- will ultimately lead to a positive and healthy future for the nation. (Todorov’s narrative structure was apparent in other episodes of *Heartland* analysed by the author indicating a consistency of style in creating a positive national identity see Smith, 2003)

Who's Influencing Whom?

Through the analysis of "East Coast - Towards the Light" the hypothesis that the programme used a narrative structure that built on the insecurities of the population to create anxiety but then order to create a sense of unity was shown to have foundation. The programme makers attempted to expose the audience to different views that may affect the way they see themselves as collective New Zealanders and as being part of the New Zealand "culture". The programme was filmed at a time when there was a move to a greater realisation by Pakeha of the complex and rich relations of Maori iwi and hapu identity with place (Bedford, 1996, p. 360). However, attempts are made in the programme to construct a national identity with a positive outlook. While it can be argued that it is up to the audience to decide to what degree they accept this representation, it is still reliant on the resources or knowledge at their disposal within a programme. The media can tell people not what to think, but what to think about (Cohen, 1963, p. 13), however this episode of *Heartland* provides a limited version of how a diverse community has the ability to become unified, frames it in a very positive way and suggests that this is "the" way in which it should be viewed -- leaving little room for debate.

The narrative format successfully created a sense of national identity because the state of disequilibrium provided a dilemma for the audience which they felt empowered to resolve. At the same time other influences were also at work. A programme about New Zealand identity fitted into the type of programme that NZ On Air was charged with the responsibility to fund and *Heartland's* popularity and high audience ratings appeased both the broadcaster and advertisers whose commercial interests were contained within a competitive broadcasting environment. Ultimately too the New Zealand Government would have welcomed a programme that promoted stability and unity amongst the population in light of new immigration policies, the rise in Maori nationalism and changes in the economy.

Overall *Heartland* enabled the New Zealand audience to feel it was an active participant in experiencing, exploring and resolving the issues of their "imagined" community even though it was through the television screen and in the comfort of their own home. By reinforcing pre-existing popular myths such as the pioneering spirit, resourceful Kiwis, the beautiful scenery, and the sharing of a unique New Zealand culture, the goal to create racial harmony and unite the nation is powerfully suggested.

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