Media Coverage of the Baltimore Unrest in the Op-Ed of *The New York Times*: A Case Study

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Abstract

Newspaper Op-Ed articles are an important form of intellectual debate that communicate views on public policy matters and help shape public opinion. They are challenging, information-rich and persuasive short media texts imbued with worldviews, arguments, sarcasms and biases, hence providing salience cues regarding key national and international affairs. Recent police killings of citizens in the US have attracted mass coverage in the media, predominantly in the Op-Ed section of *The New York Times* in 2015. Informed by Critical Discourse Analysis, this case study is a multi-layered qualitative analysis of the Baltimore unrest media coverage, particularly in one article authored by a guest contributor in *The New York Times*. To identify how the nation-wide case of the Baltimore unrest is rhetorically represented in media discourse, the study is premised on Appraisal Theory and Conceptual Metaphor Theory. The paper aims to: first, pinpoint the inherent appraisal resources used by the author to frame his argument and dialogically position the intended audiences in (dis)alignment with his worldviews; second, showcase the metaphoric repertoire that serves his ideological stance.

Keywords: appraisal; attitude; conceptual metaphor; engagement; graduation

Resum. *La cobertura mediàtica dels disturbis de Baltimore en la secció d'opinió del* The New York Times*: un estudi de cas*

Els articles d'opinió representen una font important de debat intel·lectual que influeix en la formació de l'opinió pública. Són textos periodístics desafiadors, rics en informació i persuasius, imbuïts de visions del món, arguments, sarcasmes i biaixos, per la qual cosa brinden pistes de rellevància respecte d'assumptes internacionals clau. Els recents assassi-

nats de ciutadans per part de la policia als Estats Units han merescut una cobertura massiva en els mitjans de comunicació, especialment en la secció d'opinió de *The New York Times* el 2015. Ancorat en els estudis de l'anàlisi crítica del discurs, aquest estudi de cas ofereix una anàlisi qualitativa de la cobertura periodística dels disturbis a Baltimore, particularment en un article a *The New York Times*. Per identificar com es representa retòricament el cas nacional dels disturbis de Baltimore en el discurs periodístic, la investigadora adopta un enfocament eclèctic basat en la teoria de la valoració i la teoria de la metàfora conceptual. La investigadora té com a objectiu: primer, identificar els recursos d'avaluació inherents, utilitzats per l'autor per emmarcar el seu argument i posicionar dialògicament el públic (des)alineant-lo amb la seva visió del món; segon, mostrar el repertori metafòric que serveix de base a la seva postura ideològica.

Paraules clau: avaluació; actitud; metàfora conceptual; compromís; graduació

Resumen. *La cobertura mediática de los disturbios de Baltimore en la sección de opinión del* The New York Times*: un estudio de caso*

Los artículos de opinión representan una fuente importante de debate intelectual que influye en la formación de la opinión pública. Son textos periodísticos desafiantes, ricos en información y persuasivos, imbuidos de visiones del mundo, argumentos, sarcasmos y sesgos, por lo que brindan pistas de relevancia con respecto a asuntos internacionales clave. Los recientes asesinatos de ciudadanos a manos de la policía en los Estados Unidos han merecido una cobertura masiva en los medios de comunicación, especialmente en la sección de opinión de *The New York Times* en 2015. Anclado en los estudios del análisis crítico del discurso, este estudio de caso ofrece un análisis cualitativo de la cobertura periodística de los disturbios en Baltimore, particularmente en un artículo en *The New York Times*. Para identificar cómo se representa retóricamente el caso nacional de los disturbios de Baltimore en el discurso periodístico, la investigadora adopta un enfoque ecléctico basado en la teoría de la valoración y la teoría de la metáfora conceptual. La investigadora tiene como objetivo: primero, identificar los recursos de evaluación inherentes, utilizados por el autor para enmarcar su argumento y posicionar dialógicamente al público (des)alineándolo con su visión del mundo; segundo, mostrar el repertorio metafórico que sirve de base a su postura ideológica.

Palabras clave: tasación; actitud; metáfora conceptual; compromiso; graduación

1. Introduction

High-profile police brutality is arguably the most divisive national issue and alarming flashpoint in race relations in the US (Klinger, 2012). The excessive use of force by police continues to proliferate and is once again in the national and international spotlight in the wake of several recent controversial fatal shootings of citizens, notably in 2014. The US began to experience a crisis of police legitimacy as a natural consequence of these events (Nix and Pickett, 2017). The acts of violence against black people have spurred nationwide furor over the implicit racial bias, prompting politicians, journalists, and scholars alike to question the nexus of race, criminal justice, and police militarization. A large body of literature sheds light on the causes of police killings and consistently demonstrates that the fatal brutality correlates with vio-

lent crime rates, income inequality, and racial heterogeneity (Legewie and Fagan, 2016).

Minority communities are deeply affected by the publicized examples of police violence (Weitzer, 2015), not excluding Baltimore. Over the years, severe tension grew on account of the high levels of poverty, racial segregation, and zero-tolerance policies prevailing in the city, targeting African American civilians in epidemic proportions, who were, compared to other racial groups, systematically preyed upon. Anecdotally, during the Baltimore unrest in 2014, sensational videos documenting some of these incidents went viral, generating significant media attention, and fueling intense scrutiny and public discontent with the police (Weitzer, 2015). Days of protests and rioting resulted in millions of dollars' worth of looting, property damage, and destruction within the city (Wegner, 2015). Mainstream media turned their lens to America's many disadvantaged minorities, largely due to the instigation of mass media coverage that sparked civil unrest in several American cities (Pyrooz, Decker, Wolfe and Shjarback, 2016).

The killings of black citizens in Baltimore have garnered attention and mass coverage in the Opposite-Editorial article (henceforth Op-Ed) of *The New York Times*, particularly in 2015. The Op-Ed debuted in *The New York Times* on September 21, 1970, and since its inception, it has been written by a diverse array of elite experts on the salient issues of the day with the purpose of prompting civic discourse and shaping public opinion (Golan, 2013). Strategically located in most daily newspapers, the Op-Ed is a rather short, in-depth reflection meant to bridge readership and feature several critical lenses on complex realities. Ideally speaking, it is a rich terrain devoted to soliciting a broad range of voices and accommodating the opinions of those not affiliated to the newspapers on issues of public interest to enhance readers' ability to make informed decisions.

Over the past few decades, Op-Ed writing has taken on prominence and evolved into an art of its own; the Op-Ed pages of *The New York Times* are no exception. Op-Eds have become challenging, information-rich and persuasive media texts replete with worldviews, arguments, sarcasms and biases. It becomes, therefore, germane to critically examine the rhetorical strategies and ideologies infused within and unravel how Op-Ed authors provide readers with (un)balanced exposure of competing issue stands, with the ultimate aim of uncovering the larger ideologically (un)biased discourses therein. As van Dijk (1993) posits, elite discourses (political, racial, educational, and academic) find expression through the mediating and reinforcing functions of the media, and, accordingly, provide the dominant worldview and control public opinion. Van Dijk (1988) argues that the dominant textual representations in journalistic discourse have the potential to position readers and naturalize particular underlying ideologies by which social actors are judged.

With this line of thought in mind, Op-Ed articles, being explicitly subjective, value-laden and evaluative, are an important form of intellectual debate

whereby readers are positioned to regard some social actors in a more positive light and others in a more negative light.

2. Literature Review

A substantial body of research on journalistic discourse, particularly editorials and opinion pieces, is discernible in the literature to date (See, for example, Jegede, 2015; Lawal, 2015; Vestergaard, 2000a, 2000b; Zarza and Tan, 2016). Some studies dwell upon the use of evaluative language in English-language editorials (Morley, 2009), whereas other studies adopt a cross-linguistic approach to evaluative language use in the genre (Blanco, 2011). Despite the importance of the Op-Ed genre as a journalistic form that communicates views on public policy matters, overtly evaluates events, and persuades readers, the extant scant research is geared solely toward Op-Ed's use of issue-framing (see, for example, Golan, 2010, 2013; Porpora and Nikolaev, 2008) and not from the perspective of critical discourse analysis (CDA).

Included on the editorial page, the Op-Ed dialogue is essentially one between readers, experts and freelancers, unfettered by the newspaper's official editorial positions. Van Dijk (2006) reiterates that newspaper opinion discourses, including commentaries, play an important role in shifting public opinion and setting political agendas. It follows, when examining media discourse about racial issues in Op-Eds, that it is imperative to analyze media representations of police violence incidents from appraisal and cognitive vantage points.

On a different note, objectivity in reporting incidents in newspapers is a long-standing myth (White, 2006) heavily researched in studies premised on the various traditions of CDA (see, for example, Van Dijk, 2006, 2015; Fairclough, 2013). The role of sources in the news received some attention in the linguistic journalistic literature (Sundar, 1998). However, little attention is paid to the evaluative role sources play in the content of the Op-Ed pages whereby external voices are allowed to speak their minds much more loudly than authors do. Depending on the type and stance of the newspaper, the opinions expressed may vary considerably in their ideological presuppositions. Do gatekeepers of newspapers select Op-Ed guest contributions that tacitly encode and reinforce the paper's worldview in alignment with its editorial orientation? Alternatively, do the Op-Eds of guest contributors act as a medium for the articulation of divergent opinions absent of institutional policy? This is an issue worthy of inspection from a CDA perspective, especially in argumentation primarily driven by evaluation in journalistic discourse.

In (mediated) political media discourse, it is argued that metaphor goes beyond being merely a cognitive phenomenon to being a strategic rhetorical resource for winning consensus and projecting certain truths and ideologies. Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) argues that metaphor has the power to transform complex political realities into more readily graspable concepts (Bougher, 2012); it may also be employed manipulatively to serve political

agendas. Since CDA is geared towards the deconstruction of ideologically (un)biased discourses, metaphor appears to be among the covert linguistic tools that may mask subtle (a)symmetries and repressions.

In light of the aforementioned account, the current study aims to contribute to the Op-Ed scholarship by analyzing the source and content diversity strategies of a randomly selected article written by an African-American male guest contributor to the Op-Ed section in *The New York Times* in a thorough examination of how evaluative stance and authorial/non-authorial voices are enacted in journalistic discourse.

3. Research Questions

The study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the inherent appraisal resources that shape the argument of the Op-Ed article under scrutiny?
2. What is the metaphoric repertoire that serves the author's ideological stance in the Op-Ed article under study?

4. Case Study

A randomly selected Op-Ed article from the online version of *The New York Times* thematizing key controversial issues regarding the Baltimore unrest, and published on May 1, 2015, is the case study for analysis. The research endeavor follows the case study method on account of the information-rich, in-depth analysis it affords. The randomly selected article is entitled "Black Culture Is Not the Problem", retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com>. It is written by the guest contributor Nathan Connolly, an associate professor of history in Johns Hopkins University. Among the highest average circulation rates of national newspapers (as cited on <www.auditedmedia.com>), *The New York Times* is favored in the current study for the quality of coverage and its political leaning and ideological affiliation. More specifically, during the Baltimore unrest, it kept the audiences informed about the high-profile cases of unarmed African-American men allegedly killed by police officers, reporting the latest and most significant news about them.

5. Methodology

This research endeavor is premised on a hybridized approach based on two analytical frameworks: Appraisal Theory and Conceptual Metaphor Theory. Martin and White's (2007) appraisal theory provides a fine-grained taxonomy of lexical realizations for the analysis of evaluation in language. The system of *attitude* constitutes the main resource for evaluating, adopting stances, constructing textual personas, and managing interpersonal positionings and relationships whereas the other two systems, *graduation* and *engagement*, are

attendant systems that contribute to attitude and function simultaneously. The *attitude* system enables the author to foreground his subjective presence through the construal of three main semantic domains, namely, *affect* (emotional states), *judgment* (evaluation of people and their social behaviors), and *appreciation* (evaluation of entities, processes, and phenomena) in either explicit or implicit manners, positive or negative ways.

The *engagement* system is concerned with the linguistic resources the writer uses to adopt a particular stance (interpersonal positioning) toward the propositions/values they advance as well as the intended audience they address. This is materialized by acknowledging their voice and/or other prior voices to either *expand* or *contract* the dialogic space, thereby creating possibilities for the reader to comply with or resist the position(s) constructed by the text. The *graduation* system operates across two axes of scalability: force and focus. Critically, choices in graduations of attitude and engagement affect strength of feeling and level of commitment to value positions (they either '*up-scale*' or '*down-scale*' evaluations).

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), developed by Lakoff and Johnson (2003), argues that metaphor allows us to understand abstract areas of experience in terms of more concrete, embodied ones. In the simplest sense, within CMT, metaphor is a cross-domain mapping between the *source* (abstract concept) and *target* (physical experience) domains. The concept that becomes understood is the TARGET domain. The other concept, which facilitates understanding or discussion of the target is the SOURCE domain. Conceptual Metaphors (CMs) are written in upper case, whereas the linguistic realizations of CMs are written in lower case.

6. Analysis

6.1. Appraisal Analysis

6.1.1. Attitude

Connolly turns his Op-Ed page to a mixing bowl of explicit authorial/non-authorial attitudinal inscriptions and attitudinal invocations. While the former are locutions that have a consistent attitudinal value by means of evaluative lexical items, the latter are triggered (or *betokened)* via various mechanisms of association and implication. Overall, the inscribed and invoked subjective attitudes co-articulate with the discursive construction of Connolly's ideological stance.

To elaborate, the author's overt sympathetic attitude, basically of judgment and appreciation with lower occurrences of affect, is expressed by means of a range of grammatical structures and lexis (attitudinally laden adjectives, nouns, and verbs) such as *spurred on, ostensibly, stained, apparent, dispossessed, empathy*, and *assault*, ascribed to several appraisers (social actors, including himself). From a different angle, with the help of lexical metaphors like "*fighting a myth"* the writer tokenizes some extended and concerted action,

even though he refrains from overtly describing the action in these terms. There are no explicitly negative (or positive) terms in this utterance, yet, via implicature, it has the potential to activate negative judgment values by apparently neutral, ideational meanings, which nevertheless, depending on the reader's social, cultural, and ideological position, are meant to evoke judgment responses.

Essentially, attitudinal evaluations and other potentially contentious meanings are largely confined to materials attributed to external voices. At the start of his Op-Ed, Connolly lays out numerous affectual responses toward police brutality to express dissatisfaction, solicit sympathy, and share emotional responses to the Baltimore turmoil. The presence of evaluative polarities and semantic intensification related to gradable lexical items, articulated by multiple appraisers, is discernible. The affects of the realist type, basically those of the reporter voice, are primarily ascribed to the non-authorial voices embedded in the media text, to negotiate solidarity and invite readers to sympathize and empathize. Example affects to cite are italicized and set in bold below:

— "*Instead, we lionize* [-affect: antipathy] *people like Toya Graham*",
— "*the mayor later expressed regret*" [-affect: unhappiness], and
— "*…most observers did not see an understandable social response* [-affect: disinclination] *to apparent state inaction*".

It is noteworthy that reports of affectual responses have the potential to act as tokens of other types of attitude, to invoke judgments of human behavior, as indicated in the examples above. Connolly does not assign great importance to affect, and proceeds with clear negative judgments of the social sanction type against a few social actors with references to prior statements, incidents, and positions. The author's attitude toward the racial disparities sweeping America is expressed mostly through inscribed, negative instantiations of judgments within the sub-category of propriety in disapproval of the current situation in black America. Propriety is expressed in the italicized and bold phrases below:

— "…they saw *thugs… criminals and thugs"* [-judgement: social sanction: propriety],
— "*…a city and a country that still segregates people* [-judgement: social sanction: propriety] *along racial lines.*", and
— "*…a political culture that has long bound black bodies* [-judgement: social sanction: propriety] *to questions of property*".

Propriety values concern the social sphere of right-versus-wrong or good-versus-evil behaviors, which most societies tend to penalize via law enforcements. Moreover, attitudinal judgments of the political actors include comments on their moral character with respect to their truthfulness

and ethical norms of behavior. The negatively-assessed examples are indicative. For instance, how the observers or the mayor himself see those killed black people (as thugs and criminals) is the result of a dominant ideology about the black culture at large, on the one hand, and of a desire for social acceptance by the very system that binds them, on the other. The attitudinal arrangements further operate somewhat indirectly and potentially invoke negative judgments of those who might be deemed responsible for the killings of black people or their parlous circumstances. These negative judgments are in alignment with simultaneously validated and intensified sourcing of similar assessments.

Connolly further applies his perspective to a series of issues prevalent in black America as shown in the italicized and bold instantiations of negative appreciation of the valuation type. In the context of this study, valuation concerns the non-aesthetic appraisal of the evaluated entities relying on social worth, which are to some extent institutionalized. Example instantiations of valuation include:

— "… *Commentators noted the absence of black representatives*
— [-appreciation: valuation: discredit/lack of recognition] *among Ferguson's elected officials and its police leadership*",
— "*Ferguson's mostly white City Council and its courts spurred on explicitly racist policing*" [-appreciation: valuation: harm] "*in part to harvest fines*
— [-appreciation: valuation: harm] *from black residents*", and
— "*Yet the city still has one of the most stained records of police brutality*
— [-appreciation: valuation: harm] *in recent years.*"

These examples show that packaging events as entities and appreciating them in terms of valuation acts as a resource for contextualizing affect and judgment. Hence, readers are repositioned as the text unfolds to be more aligned, in terms of their moral and political response, with the rhetoric therein.

6.1.2. Engagement

Assuming some readers may resist the positions advanced by the Op-Ed article, Connolly uses a dialogic weaving of different voices to naturalize a number of positions and negotiate solidarity with the readership at a time of social and civil unrest in the US. The point of departure here is the distinction between two dialogic orientations: *monogloss* (dialogic contraction) in the form of bare assertions and *heterogloss* (dialogic expansion) which signals an alternative position or source. More specifically, the author takes the liberty of alternating between two engagement choices; key to the choice is whether he construes the position of the text as given or at issue and up for debate. In analyzing engagement, the researcher is interested in the extent to which the author acknowledges these alternative voices and, if he does, the different

ways in which he interacts with them. Moreover, distinguishing voices is relevant to the current study since it helps illustrate the degree to which authorial subjectivity or objectivity is present in the article examined.

Connolly allows inter-subjective positioning as early as the very first lines of his Op-Ed, skillfully manipulating instantiations of diaglossia to *expand,* thereby creating possibilities for the reader(s) to comply with (or otherwise resist) the positions constructed by the text. In effect, the *expansive* dialogic resources used by the author either *entertain* (i.e. the writer is represented as the *source* of the propositions or values, thereby making space for alternative viewpoints) or *attribute* (i.e. the author presents propositions and values as arising from external sources).

When *attributing*, Connolly presents his proposition as one of a range of possible positions and abstains from explicitly interfering with the propositions made. It is a fact that makes it difficult to distinguish between an authorial and non-authorial evaluative stance since voices are blurred. Particular appraisal choices combine to give rise to specific 'evaluative voices' or 'keys' in the case of journalistic discourse, labeled as 'reporter voice', 'correspondent voice' and 'commentator voice'. Fundamentally, attribution in *reporter voice* (rather than in *correspondent* and/or *commentator* voice) of the *acknowledge* type (i.e. no overt indication of where the authorial voice stands in relation to the attributed, unmarked, and neutral propositions) functions as a form of impersonalization through which the authorial voice is backgrounded. Despite variation in their evaluative intensity, almost all reported materials are negatively evaluative, attributed to the external sources of commentators, experts, community leaders, eyewitnesses, among others.

While some of the linguistic instantiations of the reported materials clearly stood out as outright forms of appraisal, others evaluated more moderately. Connolly deftly dissociates himself from the stances advanced, employing:

— verbal process reporting verbs with illocutionary force coupled with ostensibly unbiased sources (e.g. *"A Department of Justice report highlighted how Ferguson's mostly white City Council…"* and *"the footage affirms violence as the best way to get wayward black people under control"*; and
— third-person mental process verbs as in *"Baltimore Police Commissioner applauded…"* and *"Lester Freamon understood that following the money took our eyes off the street and up the chain of real political power"*.

By virtue of cultural resonance, the intertextual positioning of these social actors and the exculpatory accounts of police violence recast police in antagonistic roles and resituate the civil unrest as foci of local political controversy.

The *attribute* choice, in heteroglossic terms, helps readers attend to the signals Connolly provides regarding how he expects those he addresses to respond to the current propositions and the value positions he advances. Martin and White (2005) argue that these reported selections seem to warrant the widespread impression that news reporting is objective and seems to

grant the paper a bit of protection from gross partiality. It is observable how the reporting verbs used at different junctures in the Op-Ed surface in tandem with *evidential standing* whereby the social standing or authority of the source acts as a sign (a token) that the associated value position is well-founded, reasonable or otherwise credible. Negative assessment is *evoked* through this experiential factual material which, as a result, has the potential to trigger a negative reaction in the reader's mind via processes of attitudinal inference. The reader is positioned to view the propositions made as highly warrantable and is aligned with certain truths of the matter. Connolly is describing a state of affairs based on facts but these facts, through appraisal, are furnished with subjective evaluations imbued with ideology.

The interweaving of voices is part of the writer's effort to construct images, mobilize meanings, and further the argumentation to a climax to bring it to a close, thus projecting a compliant reader aligned with the authorial/non-authorial voices. Legitimation is achieved through the cultivation of shared valuations of phenomena, incidents, and social actors. As such, the boundary between knowledge and opinion in the description of social actors and actions is distorted. The critical question is then whether readers are able to separate facts from ideology in the course of discourse or take these subjective colorations as simply objective descriptions of the way the world really is in the US. The positioning of the reader to take a negative view of the police culture is further conditioned when the writer intervenes (i.e. when he *entertains*) in several intriguing ways by which authorial alignment with the reported value positions is highlighted. In collegiality with the non-authorial voices infused in the media text, Connolly implicitly expresses the position he takes with regard to the attributed material through:

— *judgements* as in "*Baltimore Police Commissioner applauded her, pleading with parents to…*" whereby a positive judgement of the commissioner is 'invoked' by reference to his actions;
— *modal adjuncts* as in "*the footage certainly affirms…*" whereby Connolly overtly declares his support of the reported proposition or point of view by passing positive judgement on the reliability of the source itself; and
— *intensifications* as in "*harvest fines*" and "*swift responses*" to amplify the focus of the utterances made.

These textual insertions show how the killings come amid public outrage over a series of deaths of unarmed black men at the hands of law enforcement agents. More vividly, there are utterances in which the Op-Ed author issues directives that urge, command or recommend actions with regard to the issue at hand, albeit less liberally, making them sound like a natural outcome emerging from the incidents and references he endorses early on in the article. The challenge Connolly faces is to shape an argument that would build shared values, yield immediate actions and, therefore, Connolly leans the most on:

— *bare assertions* as illustrated in "*The problem is not black culture. It is policy and politics, the very things that bind together the history of Ferguson and Baltimore and, for that matter, the rest of America*" to project representations of reported incidents or beliefs as categorical truths or facts; and
— *epistemic modal verbs* as shown in "*political leaders, black and otherwise, can help us all see…*" to express ability and reveal relations of authority and/or power.

6.1.3. Graduation

Within attitude, the author manipulates graduation to amplify his negative feelings and assessments to scale up the strength of his utterances, hence serving the argument made. Implicitly, however, the vocabulary of focus often serves to index attitude, especially in cases where attitude is not already inscribed in the amplified item. Particularly noteworthy is the use of deftly employed intensifiers, attitudinal lexis, and linguistic metaphors that augment the force or the intensity and degree of the realities the author is negotiating to maintain solidarity with the readers.

Intensifiers are visible in several instances, namely "*ostensibly*" and "*routinely*". Attitudinal lexis includes adjectives such as those in "*stained* records", "*degenerate* black culture", "*subsequent* unrest", "*rioting* son", and "*preemptive* riot" as well as the reporting verbs used such as "*affirms*", "*highlighted*", and "*noted*". All linguistic metaphors are used as means of triggering emotions as the basis of evaluation, thus persuasion. Several examples relating to various social actors and issues at stake are found, explicitly in "*in the wake of the shooting*", "*looting erupted*", and "*on the heels of any ghetto economy*" whereby Connolly is maximally committed to the value position being advanced.

When Connolly *upscales* the force of the meaning, it usually indicates that he is strongly invested in the proposition, whereas whenever it is *downscaled*, or the volume is turned down, it indicates he is less invested and is distancing him from the proposition (the latter being seldom an option in the Op-Ed under study). Instances of softening are used as conciliatory devices in an attempt to negotiate solidarity with the readers whom the author anticipates may not share his point of view. They express an explicit assessment of the degree of *intensity* (e.g. *"…and the relative confinement of black unrest to black communities during this week's riot…*") as well as *quantity* with respect to amount (e.g. *"Slavery was not so much a labor system as it was a property regime"*) and *extent* (e.g. "*What we do not prosecute nearly well enough, however, is the daily assault on black people's lives*").

6.2. Cognitive Analysis

By probing how meanings are mobilized from a cognitive perspective, this analysis illuminates the metaphoric repertoire of Connolly's Op-Ed, which relates to his stance and ideology, showing how metaphorical framing has the

potential to compromise the quality of argumentation. In their mediation of the racial issue under scrutiny, several linguistic metaphors reveal Connolly's apparently inadvertent ideological stance toward police brutality and violence. Connolly's argument is situated in a larger context, an 'all-inclusive' America.

To create a persuasive emotional argument, the most dominant conceptual metaphor emerging in the Op-Ed discourse, is "THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA IS ONE FAMILY". Deploying a metaphor with high public resonance is a useful rhetorical tool to advance contentious claims. The metaphor is linguistically realized via Connolly's effective use of '*we*', its object variant '*us*', and the possessive adjective '*our*(s)', leading the readership to conceptualize group identity, solidarity, and a national collective. More precisely, "*we*" is used anaphorically to render the conceptual metaphor, foregrounding responsibility and agency and assuming national singularity and homogeneity, thus creating a discourse of sameness especially when decisions are controversial as illustrated in:

— "*Yet when black people of influence make these arguments, it prevents us from questioning Baltimore…*", "*Instead, we lionize people like the Baltimore mother who went upside the head of her rioting son.*"
— "*We have a right to expect that our administrators will use the bully pulpit to speak about the policies, systems and structures over which they preside*."

As shown in these utterances, "*we*" is significant for it puts all the social actors in the same boat (with the author included) in spite of the gross disparities that exist. "*We*" clearly presupposes the existence of a '*they*' or '*you*'. Thus, by inclusion, it, at the same time, excludes and assumes that a parallel '*other'* exists elsewhere. In the article under study, "*we*" is brought to full political effects in several occurrences, simultaneously inclusive (of solidarity) and exclusive (of rejection). There is a constant ambivalence and slippage between exclusive and inclusive "*we*", as a rhetorical device for both the formation of 'in' and 'out' groups and for making the border between the two less clear.

Connolly constructs himself as having the implicit authority to tell readers, the government, and other social actors what to do, and to speak on their behalf, in a form of simulated personal address. In doing so, the article employs the 'inclusive' *we*, inclusive of the reader as well as the writer, as opposed to the 'exclusive' *we*, which refers to the writer plus one or more others, but does not include the addressee(s). The inclusive *"we"* involves the intended readers as well which, in turn, helps the author to emphasize particular linkages in the Baltimore unrest and to mute others, hence the metaphorical reasoning succeeds in advancing dialogue with proponents (as well as opponents) and positions readers to hold a similar view of the desired actions. All of these forces (guised by "*we*") once compounded, may increase young black civilians' capacity to trust police officers and optimize their ability to see themselves as fully respected and valued community citizens.

7. Conclusion

This case study examined how the appraisal and cognitive choices employed by the author frame the Baltimore unrest in line with the values, concerns and fears of readership in his article in *The New York Times*. Connolly's ideologically charged journalistic contribution reveals his primary agenda of bringing attention to the racial disparities that have been a part of the criminal justice system for decades in the US. The Op-Ed may be read as impartial while at the same time it may advance a particular (axiological) value position. Despite the fact that emotional, ethical and logical appeals are invested in, the writer makes calculated choices, leaning most on the latter two to promote, persuade and strengthen his arguments, on the one hand, and to align readers with the ideologically laden messages therein, on the other.

This research endeavor is not without limitations. Caution should be exercised since the findings cannot be generalized beyond the randomly selected article until further research is carried out on a more representative sample. Future research can examine a diversity of Op-Eds from local and national newspapers written by a pool of male/female, black/white Americans of different academic/professional backgrounds to obtain a more representative sample of different political leanings. Op-Ed writers may show divergent or convergent patterns of ideological stance across diverse corpora of newspapers, in (dis)alignment with their respective editorial policies and orientations.

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