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METAPHORS OF KINSHIP IN THE AMERICAN NON- INSTITUTIONAL POLICE INTERNET DISCOURSE

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to investigate the corporate culture of the US police based on the analysis of its metaphorical representation. The article deals with the features of the functioning of kinship metaphors at the verbal level of American non-institutional police Internet discourse. The analysis of the contexts of the spheres of the specified linguistic culture and the direction of deployment of metaphorical word usage in the period from 2014 to the present is carried out. The author correlates the revealed contexts into groups based on the contiguity of the initial conceptual sphere: “Family as a unit of society”, “Family ties”, “Family members”, “Brotherhood, unity”. Through a series of examples, a variety of interpretations of the relationship between US law enforcement officers in the performance of their duties is illustrated. The established conceptual connections are considered through a broad approach to the selection of research material, which allows to cover a significant and diverse amount of information. The American police are characterized by a respectful, trustworthy attitude towards their colleagues, loyalty and social solidarity, that is most clearly expressed in metaphors with the original conceptual domain "family ties". The attitude of “us against them” is formed among employees, by means of interpretation of a certain approach to the selection of personnel, their training and performance.

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1. Introduction

This article discusses metaphorical use cases that simulate the image of the American police in a non-institutional police Internet discourse, which refers to a special type of communication mediated by electronic communications in the field of law enforcement. According to the discourse description model proposed by Karasik (2018), it is necessary to identify the participants, conditions and organization of communication (Karasik, 2018). Thus, if in the institutional police discourse the agents are official authorized and competent persons, professionals using the official style of communication, in a non-institutional discourse the agent is a layman, an anonymous or semi-anonymous user of the Internet. The client in this case implies other users (citizens), as well as law enforcement officials, depending on the specifics of a particular communicative situation. Interaction and communication in a special militarized environment with a pronounced hierarchical structure in real time is carried out not in the form of instructions or commands, but in emotionally colored comments with high evaluative modality. Thus, the status roles of participants are leveled, and the manner of speech is not subject to regulation or rationing (there are no official appeals, ritual forms of greeting / farewell that are typical of institutional discourse). Intentions imply the transfer of subjective, not mediated by the official powers of the parties opinions on the functioning of law enforcement agencies of the country, assessment of legality of officers' actions, their competence and moral principles.

2. Problem Statement

Public perception of the law enforcement reflects the political state within the country. Thus, in the context of rapidly changing political, economic and social conditions, a cognitive approach to the representation of the image of the modern US police determines its importance from the point of view of understanding the connotation vector (Hanic, 2017; Sullivan, 2018) of public perception of US police.

3. Research Questions

The issues of the research are as follows:

- carrying out the analysis of the contexts of the spheres of American linguistic culture and the direction of deployment of metaphorical word usage in the period from 2014 to the present;
- correlation of the revealed contexts into groups based on the contiguity of the initial conceptual sphere: *“Family as a unit of society”*, *“Family ties”*, *“Family members”*, *“Brotherhood, unity”*;
- illustration through a series of examples of a variety of interpretations of the internal relationships in the ranks of US police officers.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this article is to investigate the corporate culture of the US police based on an analysis of its metaphorical representation on the verbal level of the text.

5. Research Methods

The research is carried out from the position of a cognitive approach to studying metaphor (Bundgaard, 2019; Chouinard, 2019; Fan, 2018; Fan et al., 2017; Grothe, 2017). The main methods are corpus analysis, cognitive-discursive analysis (Chudinov et al., 2018; Jiang, 2019), and the metaphorical modeling method (Bogoyavlenskaya et al., 2016; Ruzhentseva, 2015). 346 contexts with metaphors of kinship from 2014 to 2019 were selected by the broad sampling method from the sources of verbal level, reflecting the activities of the US police and the relations of officers in their work environment. These sources imply comments on articles in the Internet, forum notes, blogs and videos devoted to law enforcement.

6. Findings

As a result of consideration of the revealed metaphors of kinship, the author notes that the most frequent and productive are the word usages with the source domain “Family as a unit of society” and “Family members”. Thus, it seems possible to conclude that in the workspace of law enforcement agencies there is a special environment that has a number of distinctive features that is characterized by a specific set of values that determine how the police perceive their work environment and function in it.

6.1. The concept of corporate culture of police officers

The workspace of law enforcement officers is usually considered as an integral separate collective of individuals with their own corporate culture. The concept of “work collective” means a group of people united by common goals and objectives identified by the employer company for the production of material and spiritual values. The formation of the collective is characterized by the need for the participants in the labor process to interact with one another in some way, to enter into certain relationships, to unite into groups, to emerge some ideology (views and ideas) inherent in each specific collective and psychology (social moods, opinions, collective habits and traditions). The policy of the employer company also has a significant impact on the nature of the interaction of employees, and it also determines the corporate culture of the work team. The study of this concept has been the subject of many works (T. Dil, A. Kennedy, K.R. Thompson, F. Luntas, H.M. Triis, E.Kh. Shein, S.G. Abramova, T.Yu. Bazarova, V.A. Barinova, V.A. Spivak et al.). Various models and classifications of corporate culture have been presented, contemplating its structural elements, identifying and analyzing its functions. In this regard, at present there is a huge variety of interpretations of the term. For instance, Bagrinovsky (2004) defines corporate culture as a special culture of large industrial, commercial and other associations with a certain form of economic and legal structure (that is, corporations). The researcher claims that it is a system of material and spiritual values interacting with each other, inherent in the given corporation and reflecting its individuality, manifested in behavior, interaction, the perception of oneself and the environment (Bagrinovsky, 2004). Gitelman (1999) notes that corporate culture is a set of values, beliefs and attitudes prevailing in a collective as well as the general moral climate that helps employees understand the purpose of the organization as a whole (the meaning of their activities, the goal of their work) and the mechanism of its functioning. Thereby it creates standards of activity and behavior and rules for following them (Gitelman, 1999).

Semenov (2015) offers a generalized definition of the term considering corporate culture as a way of life of a company that is being formed throughout its development. It includes ideals, values, principles, developed and adopted norms and the so-called organization's unique "gene pool" that determines the nature of its internal relations, the forms of organization of its economic activity and management, the image of relationships with the external environment (Semenov, 2015). Despite the huge variety of definitions, most researchers agree that corporate culture helps to optimize and increase the efficiency of the labor process, create favorable working conditions and psychological climate in the organization, and also significantly predetermines the success of the organization's functioning and long-term survival.

With regard to the police as a social institution, it is also necessary to refer to the concept of "deontological culture of officers" in view of the specifics of their professional development, which implies continuous training and growth, career promotion and the need to meet the requirements of a new post. The presence of a service-training environment allows the recruits to gain knowledge, develop professional skills, but also to show their moral and ethical qualities while carrying their duties in daily attire. Dekkert (2018) in his study of the theoretical foundations of the formation of a deontological culture of police officers defines this term as a combination of knowledge of ethical and legal norms, basic and official values. They are formed from birth and developed in the process of vocational training and through the service and educational environment at an educational organization. Later on police officers continue to gain necessary skills and knowledge the course of further career activity. This also refers to the realization of a sense of duty, both civil and professional, towards society and the state. The formation of the deontological culture of a police officer is a process aimed at the awareness and assimilation of moral, ethical and official norms by a police officer, their implementation in the process of fulfilling official and operational tasks (Dekkert, 2018).

6.2. Representation of the corporate culture of US police in metaphors of kinship

The specifics of professional activities of the police and their shared experience contributes to the establishment of a special working "climate", i.e. close relationships involving trust, loyalty, empathy and willingness to provide any kind of assistance or psychological help. It is not surprising that such close contacts acquire an informal status of a family (though not always a happy or friendly one). The presence of such mindset is necessary to ensure the safety of officers in performance of their duties in cases of threat to their life and health:

"When you hear the sirens coming you know they're coming to help you. Thank you for making the sacrifices to serve and protect" (OdysseyAuthor, 2019).

Metaphorical **word usages** (WU) in 346 contexts representing family ties between officers of the American police, are divided into the following semantic groups: *"Family as a unit of society"* (112 WU), *"Family ties"* (78 WU), *"Family members"* (102 WU), *"Brotherhood, unity"* (54 WU).

• Family as a unit of society.

Any society functions thanks to the institution of the family, which ensures a harmonious and sustainable existence of citizens in small social groups based on consanguinity, community of life, spiritual closeness, reinforced by marriage as a voluntary and legal registration of marital relations.

"God bless my Blue Blood Family, I love you so much" (OdysseyAuthor, 2019).

The idiom “blue blood” has a pragmatic meaning of special origin, nobility. In the commentary presented, “blue blood” is correlated with the color of the uniform and professional unity.

*“Embrace your **new blue family**. The camaraderie among the officers and their families is amazing. Soak it in and enjoy”* (Wilson, 2019).

In this statement, the addressee resorts to the use of the “blue family” synecdoche, in which the definition of “blue” performs the function of a unifying attribute: police uniforms of blue color. Thus, the expression “blue family” means the whole institution of the police, and therefore, being tied to an officer, the spouse is included in the circle of people living according to special attitudes and values.

The following statement has a similar meaning:

*“Being married to a Police Officer is totally different than being **married to a regular Joe**. It is a **responsibility, a burden and an honor / blessing**”* (Wilson, 2019).

As noted, the functions and title of law enforcement officers are transferred to family life, despite the fact that it does not have ranks or a strict hierarchy:

*“Interesting that you went with **“your officer”** instead of “your spouse”*” (Clifford, 2019).

The lexeme “officer” allows transferring the semantics of the militarized environment to other areas and transmitting the following pragmatic meanings: duty, calling, order, formality, rigor, respect, pride.

It should be noted that metaphors of kinship do not always have a positive connotation, since the work in law enforcement agencies is accompanied by a number of difficulties regarding the personal lives of officers. Various factors influencing the families of police officers include: long shifts with irregular or prone to frequent changes schedule, duty, difficulty in differentiating role settings and responsibilities in family and professional activities, as well as psychological deformation of the person (Maynard et al., 1980). When stress is transferred from the workspace to home, family relationships are going to undergo a certain test. The issue of the influence of professional life on personal life has not received wide coverage among researchers, however, it is advisable to mention the work of Karaffa et al. (2014), who presented an evaluation study of the main causes of problems and contradictions in police marriages, as well as ways to provide psychological support. The results showed that the spouses are inclined to feel proud of their partner working in the field of law enforcement, however many financial problems, conflicts between work and family, negative public attitudes towards the police are among the specific factors. The above difficulties are reflected in the prism of metaphorical perception:

*“Ugh ☹ This is like reading Steve Harvey’s, “Think Like a Man, Act Like A Lady” except this is **“Think Like a Cop, Act like a Wife”**”* (Clifford, 2019).

The addressee refers to a precedent name - the title of a famous book, the author of which reflects on the gender characteristics of cognitive activity and patterns of behavior of representatives of both sexes. In this context, the profession has a certain impact on the person expressed in the need for a special approach to interaction with him/her. Efforts to maintain healthy family relationships require considerable internal resources, and therefore the support of outsiders is extremely necessary:

*“Stand strong **blue wives!**”* (TEDx Talks, 2019).

In this comment, it is noteworthy that the color is transferred to the wives of the officers, which allows to conclude that the spouses are equal members of the police family and, in this regard, stand out from the rest of the citizens.

Of course not all marriages withstand such tests and they result in divorces. However, there is a point of view that such unions are fraught with all kinds of problems and may turn out life threatening:

“Marrying a cop and putting him on child support will lead you to the grave ☹️” (USA TODAY, 2019).

The addressee of the utterance uses the means of text expression, giving the comment a hint of irony. At the verbal level of the text, the inevitability of a deplorable result is conveyed to the recipient, and at the non-verbal level - fun from what is expected from the police and everything connected with it.

• Family bonds

Metaphorical usage in this group is characterized by the presence of pragmatic meanings of communication and unity based on spiritual affinity, acquired experience, friendly feelings, trust and confidence in partners or colleagues.

*“Law enforcement is tied by **bonds of common experience**”* (OdysseyAuthor, 2019).

Common experiences and events act as a joint element in the corporate culture of the police and are fixed by the token “bond” and the predicate “to tie”, which have similar definitions: communication, connection, bond, obligation. Duplication of units that are so close in semantics can enhance the impact on the recipient. In addition to all sorts of abstract images of unity it is possible to find metaphorical word-uses that appeal to physical objects with similar functions:

*“Brothers in blue **wear the same belts of responsibility and power**”* (OdysseyAuthor, 2019).

In the comment under consideration, the image of the belt, which has pragmatic meanings of maintaining clothes, fastening, fixing, is actualized. It is noteworthy that the belt can also be considered as part of the uniform and also as a weapon.

• Family members

The metaphors of kinship in this group actualize blood ties with the closest people: father, mother, brother, sister, etc. The vast majority of word-uses have a connotation with a positive vector, since the pragmatic meanings of trust, respect, love, mutual assistance, empathy are embedded in the used nominations.

*“Felt like I was listening to **my Dad** ... great job!”* (TEDx Talks, 2019).

The addressee of the statement, commenting on the video plot with the participation of an experienced police officer in age, likens it to a wise parent who is able to give valuable advice and protect from mistakes.

*“My great grandfather, my grandfather, and my father **wore a badge** and I hope to follow them into law enforcement. I guess **it is our family genetics**”* (Warhawk, 2019).

In this comment, the badge as an identification of the profession of a policeman gains the additional value of a family tradition that evokes respect and pride. Moreover, the addressee is inclined to believe that the desire to work in this area is a biologically determined factor. For many commentators, American police officers appear as children of one huge family:

*“I’ve just retired 41 years of honorable service 🚔 **be safe brothers**”* (Warhawk, 2019).

*“Thank you **brothers and sisters in blue** for letting me come home save every night 🇺🇸❤️”* (Warhawk, 2019).

*“I wish every single officer / deputy can go home to be their families without any injuries, and it hurts to see **many of the blue line brothers and sisters** were hurt by the damn demons”* (Warhawk, 2019).

Among the many positively colored statements there are also usages with negative connotation, translating pragmatic meanings of contempt, permissiveness, concealment, absence of moral principles and guidelines, ambitiousness.

*“Police are trained to **arrest and handcuff their Mother**”* (Officer Jones, 2019).

*“**BROTHERS IN BLUE ALL STOOD THERE AND WATCHED HIM KILL HIS WIFE. I WONDER HOW MANY TIMES HE PUT HER IN THE HOSPITAL AND WAS NEVER ARRESTED**”* (USA TODAY, 2019).

Statements have a pronounced negative connotation. By means of metaphors of kinship authors emphasize the ubiquity of such egregious behavior and behavioral patterns. The use of the capital register is designed to draw attention to the words of the addressee as well as to enhance the emotional impact on the recipient.

• **Brotherhood, unity**

The word usage in this group has the function of not only uniting, but also differentiating the communication participants on certain sides: “us” are the police, and “them” are the society or criminals (since any citizen is viewed as a potential offender) and vice versa. The following nominations can be found: brotherhood, partnership, union, league, circle, unity, affiliation, involvement, dedication.

*“I’m glad to know the **LEO brotherhood is strong**”* (Officer Jones, 2019).

*“This structure is **a club for brave and devoted professionals**”* (Officer Jones, 2019).

*“**The Police circle** rely on each other”* (Officer Jones, 2019).

Metaphorical word usage in the detected contexts performs nominative-evaluative, modeling, emotive and incentive functions. Most of the statements have a positive connotation, since the semantics of the original conceptual sphere “brotherhood” evokes pleasant associative relations and implies a certain spiritual closeness and a sense of unity with colleagues.

7. Conclusion

Summing up, it seems possible to conclude that the most frequent and productive metaphors are those with the original conceptual sphere *“Family as a unit of society”* (112 WU) and *“Family members”* (102 WU). This indicates the presence of a special friendly and comfortable environment that has a number of distinctive features that are not characteristic of any other groups or corporate cultures in the workspace of law enforcement agencies:

1. The corporate culture of police officers is characterized by a specific set of values that determine how police officers perceive their work environment and function in it. This worldview is formed due to the presence of real and perceived dangers associated with the work of law enforcement agencies, and is characterized by strong group introversion and cynicism towards individuals and groups that are not related to the police. Similar features are revealed in the metaphors of kinship with the original conceptual sphere *“Family as a unit of society”* and *“Family members”*.

2. Another feature is the formation of the “us against them” attitude which is being implemented, in particular, through a specific approach to the selection of personnel, their training and performance. By

“us” officers imply colleagues equal or somewhat higher / lower in rank, while “they” can mean “society as a whole”, “criminals” or “senior officials”. This is realized in metaphors with the original conceptual sphere “*Brotherhood, unity*”.

3. The culture of the police is characterized by a correct, trustworthy attitude towards their colleagues, loyalty and social solidarity, feelings that go beyond what is usually found among other specialists due to the specifics of work in law enforcement agencies: unpredictability and danger, high risks in the performance of official tasks, long shifts, the need to fulfill their duties and after hours, the willingness to enter the service on demand, etc. Similar features of the corporate culture of the police are presented in the metaphorical usage of the “*Family bonds*” group.

Thus, in the eyes of the public, the interpersonal relations of US police officers are identified with the institution of a family. Its members are connected not only by blood (in this case, they mean belonging to law enforcement), but also by spiritual kinship, as well as values and world outlooks, the need for close-knit work in the face of danger and social critics.

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