If Arizona is a Neighborhood; Immigration the Natural Disaster:

Unveiling the Metaphors of the Arizona SB1070 Immigration Bill

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Abstract

“Every cloud engenders not a storm” – William Shakespeare

“In times of storm, the shallowness of the root structure is revealed.” – Grant Bright

The Arizona SB1070, is a senate bill that was passed in Arizona, as signed by Governor Jan Brewer, which enforces the capturing and deporting any suspected illegal aliens, within the state. In the months following the passing of this bill, this subject has been spotlighted in every form of media. In doing so, many journalists have written reports, much of which uses linguistic devices to give better details and perspective of what is taking place with the addition of SB 1070 passing the Arizona state legislature.

It is probable that the most common linguistic device used, is that of a metaphor. As Pradeep Sopory (2006) states, “Metaphor is ubiquitous,” and especially within the two TIMES magazine articles discussed in this paper, “Arizona Gears Up for a Protracted Immigration Fight,” and “Arizona Police Split on Immigration Crackdown” (p. 251). Sopory (2006) quotes Bowers & Osborn (1966), in saying that, “the use of metaphors in a message leads to more attitude change in the desired positive or negative direction.” The following is a dissection of the metaphoric speech used within the Arizona articles, that aim to provide evidence showing that the language used is in a negative context, and supports the metaphoric claim that, “If Arizona were a neighborhood; Immigration would be the natural disaster.”

*Keywords*: Arizona, SB 1070, Immigration, Metaphor, Metonym, and Natural Disaster.

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As humans, it is natural for us to relate things we have once experienced, to the things we are experiencing now, and label them for easy access next time we are picking at our brains and trying to remember, or relate something of our past, to another something in our present. By making these comparisons, we naturally compartmentalize and label these thoughts, giving these new experiences significance to us, by having something to relate them to from our previous occurrence. These comparisons you have made between your present and past experiences are what we called a *metaphor*. Sopory (2008) states, “A metaphor induces a greater number of semantic associations, such that the different arguments in a persuasive message get connected together more effectively as a coherent whole” (p. 165).

Sopory (2008) also states, that metaphor was formed from the Greek words “meta” and “pherein,” translating to, “carried over” (p. 164). A *metonym* is very similar, because it involves relating two things, but instead, you are relating something to an object, or “carrying over” something’s characteristics to an item. For the example, “The White House said…,” the “White House” obviously didn’t say anything at all, since a house cannot speak. However, it is understood that the “White House” means the “Government,” which did “say” something, and because of this relation, we could easily switch it out in the sentence. Asa Berger (1999) states that a metonymy, “transfer[s] information we have about one thing, to something else” (p. 33)

Metaphors and metonyms are commonly in broadcasted news, print articles, and the internet. *The purpose of this paper is to show the relationship between the metonym/metaphor “Arizona is a house; Immigration is the Natural Disaster” in relation to the articles, “Arizona Gears Up for a Protracted Immigration Fight,” and “Arizona Police Split on Immigration Crackdown.”* The imagery of the quoted metaphors from the articles that represent the idea that “Immigration is a natural disaster” is broken down into three main categories of metaphors: 1.) will show relation of how the immigration bill, as well as immigrants, are moving like a storm across the nation; how community has been affected by the issues created due to the immigration bill, like a neighborhood recovering from a storm; and finally, the action taking place to recover from the changes the immigration bill has created, like in the recovery process of a storm.

**Moving Across America**

American Biologist, Paul Ehrlich once said, “[The fluttering of a butterfly's wings can effect climate changes on the other side of the planet](http://thinkexist.com/quotation/the_fluttering_of_a_butterfly-s_wings_can_effect/162795.html).” Essentially saying, the problems that start here at home (in “Neighborhood- Arizona”), evaporate and precipitate onto other American states, and may even develop further, snowballing into an international crisis. In this section, the following quotes from the TIME magazine articles, display how the metaphoric language within the text, forms imagery that represents the idea, that the issues that have surged from the passing of SB 1070, in conjunction with the migrating immigrants, are relatable to a “natural disaster,” in that the subject of concern is moving away from the “eye of the storm” in Arizona, and blowing over, into other American states.

The first example from, “Arizona Police Split on Immigration Crackdown” (states, “Some of those **same concerns**…have been **echoed outside Arizona**”( p. 1). In the same way that natural disaster, Hurricane Katrina struck the coast of New Orleans, in 2005 and caused enough devastation for the communities to drift to other nearby cities and states; the passing of SB 1070 is producing the same effect, with gusts of immigrant families wafting across the country, in attempts to find calm winds somewhere else.

The next quote from, “Arizona Gears Up for a Protracted Immigration Fight,” which states, “….groups…[are] **taking their business elsewhere**…‘**If people leave, then every store, every business [will] suffer immensely”**(p. 1).When a natural disaster, such a cross-wind Texas tornado, spirals across a populated region (“Neighborhood-Arizona”), all that makes up that community is swallowed in a powerful plume of debris. As the twister coasts across the region, it sucks up the homes and businesses of the inhabitants, forcing most to move, and taking what’s left of their businesses with them. The few businesses that stay, as well as the individuals who remain with nowhere else to go, are left devastated and with inadequate resources to maintain their usual thriving lives.

These metaphors from the quote, as you can probably already see, can easily be a representation of the situation in Arizona. With the illegal immigrants leaving the state, many businesses are suffering because so many of their workers where illegal immigrants, whether knowing it or not. Instead, families who have yet to be caught are traveling to neighboring states, leaving afflicted employers to hire new people, who are probably not willing to work nearly as hard and for as little money, as some of these immigrants have.

My final quote for this section, also taken from “Arizona Gears Up for a Protracted Immigration Fight” reads, “Even if Arizona is successful… illegal traffic will **move to other border states, shuffling the burden elsewhere** without solving the national problem” (p. 2). Implying in “tornado-talk,” that even if the figurative twister comes to a stop, the residence still leave their neighborhoods because the damage done, is done. Their weight pores onto the next community they reside in, or “shuffling the burden elsewhere” (p. 2).

**Community Conflicts**

J. David Cisneros (2008) stated, “Though the country collectively celebrates the brave souls who populated on the nation, America’s inhabitants remain suspicious of the hundreds of thousands of individuals that cross into the country on a yearly basis” (p. 569). These “individuals,” or immigrants, in addition to the remaining people that make up this country- whether legal or not- still form a community. This section will explore how natural disasters leave conflict within these communities we live in, particularly “Neighborhood-Arizona,” in comparison to how the passing of SB 1070 has created issues among immigrants in America. All of the quotes for the following quotes are excerpts, can be found in “Arizona Gears Up for a Protracted Immigration Fight.”

Read the following statements slowly to yourself, really letting them really sink in and ask yourself- how you would feel if these things were being said about your community? “There’s **panic in the community,**” “**…it is unclear what immediate impact** the law **will have on the streets,”** and may even, “…**Irrevocably damage** relations between police and Latino community.” Would you feel safe in a neighborhood where the implications of a new law could be easily misinterpreted, yet be so forcefully applied; causing panic for people to flee, and ultimately creating irreversible damage within the relationships that make up that community? This wretched feeling you just experienced, in the pit of your stomach, is very much comparable to the aftermath of a community that has been wounded by a natural disaster. When a storm wrecks the only home you have, and your insurance doesn’t care to help you any more than the U.S. government cares to help illegal aliens; along with the additional lack of resources and limited protection- not only has your home fall apart, but your community has crumbled too.

**Taking Action**

If you have ever experienced a golf-ball size hail storm, you know how quickly such tiny objects can create an outstanding amount of dents in your car. But how do you resurface a foundation that has been dented so much? Or, if you have experienced an earthquake that broke all of your belongings, how do you start from scratch? These are some of the mindsets behind what gives the following metaphors from “Arizona Police Split on Immigration Crackdown” importance, because it shows the immigration situation needs a lot of help. However, just like the recovery from a natural disaster, you have to start small with the “pick up” process; the real question remains, “What to pick up first?”

The quotes from Thornberg’s (2010) articles read, “…the real question should be ‘**how do we help [Mexico] reduce the violence?**” because, “…police already have **‘manpower and budget issues’** that will **only get worse** under the law,” which, “…argued for a ‘holistic’ approach that includes **a lot of help for America’s neighbor to the south.”**

As these quotes suggest, violence, manpower, and budget are the three things that need “picking up” in “Neighborhood-Arizona.” These three things can easily be expressed as a comparison with another kind of natural disaster: a severe, dessert-like drought. When your sources run scare, it causes aggression toward your neighbors who have more that you. Those who still manage to have some food and resources, now have the manpower and upper hand in that community. Those same people also have all the money, because they have the materials, in which we use to survive.

What we need is for Mexico to be in a position to where they can better help their own citizens. America is well-known internationally as being the first one on the scene, of any natural disaster that takes place in the world, yet when it comes to our own relief- though we all help to the best of our abilities- we still run short. Just think, it’s five years after Hurricane Katrina and there are still parts of New Orleans that are boarded up. It needs to be understood that this “picking-up” and recovery process, in relation to natural disasters, but more importantly, *immigration-* takes a long time, before major changes seem to show the intensity of their full-effect.

**Summary**

As you can see, the language that we use to describe our thoughts and perspectives of a multitude of experiences, can put extra meaning into our descriptions (like metaphors), that transcends a totally new message to decode. *By observing the use of linguistic devices in media (such as the articles presented), we may perceive many different meanings of words/phrases, because the use of metaphors and metonyms, which relates one “thing,” to another, and based on the word’s used to for these comparisons, make alter our perception of the description of the thing’s being compared and described.* Cisnero (2008) quotes Otto Santa Ana (2002) in stating, “…individuals approach immigration through the perspective of metaphor to clarify the topic and to connect it with their personal experience.” (p. 569). Now having reviewed this paper, I hope that you have been able to use my personal experience, in relating natural disasters to the effects of SB 1070 immigration, in order to shed new light, on such a controversial subject.

Resources

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