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## **Framing Dialogue on Immigration in *The New York Times***

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### ABSTRACT

This article argues that when mainstream journalists write about “undocumented workers” or so-called “illegal immigrants” they rarely address them as the implied audience of their stories. The argument is demonstrated with a dialogic framing analysis of a sample of reportage on immigration and on the tensions in American citizenship issues from the 2005-06 *New York Times*. In the conclusion propositions from the public journalism movement are revisited to make suggestions as to how journalism might reduce the gap between the implied audiences and the subjects of reports without diminishing its capacity to advance as a rigorous craft worthy of its constitutional protections.

“all of us are immigrants”

Steve Earl. *Washington Square Serenade*, 2006.

“A nation of immigrants is holding another nation of immigrants in bondage, exploiting its labor while ignoring its suffering, condemning its lawlessness while sealing off a path to living lawfully. The evidence is all around that something pragmatic and welcoming at the American core has been eclipsed, or is slipping away.”

*New York Times* Editorial, June 3, 2008.

## INTRODUCTION

CONTEMPORARY JOURNALISM IS CONFRONTED DAILY with challenges of covering a growing list of immigration controversies that put into question assumptions about citizenship. Although the post-9/11 debate over immigration reform in the United States has its own distinct history and peculiar set of politics and phobias, it nonetheless fits a common pattern in this wider global malaise over the meaning of citizenship (Isin & Nielsen 2008). In the U.S., comprehensive legal reform has so far failed to achieve consensus that would “naturalize” more than 11 million undocumented inhabitants. While those who favor comprehensive reform continue to argue for a compromise process that would allow many to be gradually integrated into legal status, social movements growing up from the communities along with those who support them are demanding a more radical amnesty or unconditional hospitality. Opponents argue vigorously against “amnesty” and pleas are repeated almost daily for more checkpoints, border patrols, fences, deportations, fines, arrests and prison terms for “illegal aliens” and their accomplices.

This article examines tensions around citizenship in American public culture through the dialogic framing analysis of immigration issues in the 2005-06 daily reportage in *The New York Times*. It illustrates the paradox by which journalists express an often positive and supportive, but generally conditional, hospitality toward undocumented immigrants in the U.S., notably in the context of New York City. A critical dialogic analysis of this paradox of both conditional and positive journalism examines how articles are framed dialogically. It asks how the emotional and moral tones expressed in the articles imply or address an audience that is imagined by the journalist and what kind of response or rejoinder is anticipated. Analysis focuses on the implied or imagined, rather than the empirical, audience in order to show how journalists discuss subjects who themselves may only be rarely addressed as audiences. The critique looks to illustrate journalistic constructions of the immigrant as “other” by exposing the gap between the general audience of citizens implied by the reports, with the immigrant non-citizens who live in the city and are the subjects of the reports and controversies. In the conclusion, suggestions are revived from the reform movement in civic or public journalism that could improve journalism’s capacity to address the position of marginal groups in the context of the malaise over the meaning of citizenship that defines the present context.

I argue that immigrants themselves are rarely the audience implied by the articles’ framing of emotional and moral tones and that conditions attached to a wide variety of journalistic pleas for hospitality toward them need to be evaluated. As will be seen in the following sections, this critical approach leads to the development of a typology from the strongest themes discussed in the newspaper and the different levels of support or hospitality they express as well as the conditions they infer or direct toward the implied audiences regarding the subjects of immigration. Several themes are conceptualized: 1)

just, unjust and extreme cases regarding immigration in New York City; 2) multicultural practices and changing faces in New York City; 3) political shock and official polemics over policy; and 4) astonishment at the depth of social solidarity among immigrants as a new force in the American polis. Before developing descriptions of these themes, I will define dialogical frame analysis in more depth, present the logic of the articles' selection from the *New York Times*, and give a brief background to the context of the debate.

New York is an ideal city in which to analyze press coverage and debates over conditional hospitality for immigration in the United States. Current discussion around the revision of federal immigration policy is closely aligned to tense events unfolding daily. Just over thirty-five per cent of New Yorkers are foreign-born (U.S. Census Bureau 2006) and both citizenship status and practices traditionally inform divisions in the city over language, race, gender, class and ethnicity in ways that distinguish neighborhoods and quality of life options, including options for access to schools, social services and employment. New York City is both the leading cultural center of the United States and at the same time widely considered to be completely unlike the rest of the U.S. It is a premier global city and a world media capital that is fully implicated in current debates over the undocumented.

*The New York Times* is selected for analysis as it is one of the most likely global, national and local mainstream newspapers to engage the theme of immigration through traditional "fact-centered" journalistic practices and commitment to "balance, accuracy, accountability, checks on profit motives, and editorial separation" (Entman 2005, 54; Hallin & Mancini 2004). The assumption here is that mainstream journalism is less likely to engage in metaphors or language that is overtly discriminatory against immigrants than other kinds of partisan press or media, especially those that invite extremist views (Santa Ana 2002; Chavez 2001). This principle of balance, though, means that mainstream newspapers are also more likely to have a double discourse compared to that of minority, alternative or politically engaged media (Schudson & Tift 2005; Newkirk 2005). On the one hand, mainstream newspapers offer counter-polemics against anti-immigrant legislation by employing positive or neutral naming like "the undocumented." On the other hand, the more they seek balance from all sides of the issue, the more negative labeling from the opposite position leaks into their reporting (Gans 1995). As journalists quote both sides of a given debate, they are in a position to gradually shift vocabulary from more neutral expressions to more emotionally and morally charged ones (like "illegal aliens") that might have been avoided in previous news cycles (Feagan 2002). In this process of shifting terms, different conditions arise and become linked to the hospitality expressed toward immigrants through the dialogue with implied audiences.

#### **IMPLIED AUDIENCES: FRAMING AND THE DIALOGICAL METHOD**

The research approach that looks to contrast the implied audience with the subjects of

the reports for this study is derived from literature on qualitative framing analysis as developed in the political communication literature (Reese 2001; Entman 2004; Pan & Kosicki 2001) and from a dialogic approach to audience research as found in the humanities (Bakhtin 1984; Booth 1961; Livingstone 1998; Nielsen 2002). For a long time now quantitative research into news audiences has delivered reliable aggregate data at both domestic and global levels regarding the consumers of newspapers and other media (Jeffrey 1994). Audiences have long been studied as media commodities (Smythe 1994) and some researchers go so far as to reject the category of audiences as anything more than an economic invention of media themselves (Mosco & Kaye 2000). Conversely, in feminist media studies, audiences continue to be studied as agents of resistance (Radway 1984; Gallagher 2003) while the ethnographic turn in communication studies has also theorized the audience in active rather than passive terms for more than a decade (Nightingale & Ross 2003; Livingstone 2005; Brooker 2003). News theorists discuss how media both criticize and reproduce values of citizenship and exclusion of audiences (Curran 2005; Keane 2005). Finally, critical discourse analysis and labeling theory applied to research on print and visual media demonstrate how entire segments of populations become stigmatized through normalizing linguistic practices (Santa Ana 2002; Chavez 2001; Gans 1995). The concept of a dialogue between the journalist and an implied audience helps pinpoint the relationship of exclusion and inclusion in a way that complements each of these approaches.

The analytic approach to communication is drawn from the Russian culturologist Mikhail Bakhtin, who defines dialogue as the active process that takes place in the imagination of the writer whose idea for the story is drawn from multi-voiced contexts and then shared through an implied address toward a civic audience (Bakhtin 1984). Participation in dialogue means that words and phrases anticipate rejoinders from an animated other and that they are, as Bakhtin notes, “half someone else’s.” This answerability suggests a two-sided process in which a journalist anticipates a general or objective response to an idea as well as a unique subjective rejoinder. A dialogic approach to a news article locates the journalist’s axiological position in the tonality of the utterance over and against an implied addressee. As Bakhtin notes: “emotional-volitional tone...is a certain ought-to-be attitude, an attitude that is morally valid and answerably active” (1993, 36). In other words, treating journalism texts as dialogical, rather than as transmissions of information toward a passive receiver, means that journalism can be treated as participatory in orientation. Although newspapers appear non-participatory in the sense that most of their actual or empirical audiences are not involved in any direct question-and-answer exchange (other than a financial one in terms of buying newspapers, or through letters to the editor), the fact that journalists themselves anticipate rejoinders means they also imply what an audience “ought to feel” through the emotional and moral tones of address.

Framing analysis helps illustrate the participatory orientation of journalism by showing how news reporting involves actively “selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and solution” (Entman 2004, 5). At the substantive level of framing, analysis looks to establish whether the journalists’ emotional and moral tones and judgments tend to support the status quo, provide an alternative, or are critical of the event, issue and agents that are the focus of the story. At the procedural level, framing analysis shows that when newspapers seek authority in their reports about the most extreme forms of exclusion, debate turns around either sensationalist individual cases or the construction of social facts and implications for external variables such as policy, legislation or community lobbying. What is most important at both the substantive and procedural levels of framing is that the implied audiences most often remain quite separate from the subjects of discussion. Usually we read about those subjects in the third person, via agencies, groups or individuals who speak for them. The emotional and moral tones that reporting frames are legitimated through reference to independent data, official statements, ethnography or opinions from scholarly sources. Journalists refer to immigrants, but rarely address them directly.

Applying the dialogic and frame analysis together allows an examination of the ‘cascade’ of information from external sources (descent from policy, legislation, public officials, community organizations, street informants) toward journalists and back to the civic audience most directly implied by their address. At the same time, discussion of the articles is less focused on the frequency of categories and more focused on thicker descriptions of strong themes drawn from the articles.<sup>1</sup> Combining dialogic and framing analysis allows for more in-depth description of the active relation between the articles’ reference to external authority employed to legitimate stories, the emotional-volitional tones used to infuse intensity in the story, and the counter-point view or testimony employed to establish balance. The dialogic approach to framing thus focuses its description on the triadic relation between the journalist and the subjects of the report, and the framing of emotional and moral tones that indicate an implied audience.

Newspaper articles are selected for their exemplary rather than representative qualities. This means that the selection of extracts is chosen to illustrate the way in which implied audiences are framed within the articles. The strategy of developing thicker descriptions of strong themes outweighs the risk of a skewed explanation—provided the analysis can illustrate coherence in the argument that each article imposes conditions on hospitality toward immigrants and then excludes them as an implied audience. I drew the selection of articles for analysis from a key-word search using the Factiva engine for *The New York Times*. A wild card was used here to cover all possible innovations for immigration (immigra\*). One hundred and two articles were selected as relevant to debates over immigration with reference to New York from June 1 to December 31, 2005 and sixty-three others from March 1 to May 8, 2006. In the two years prior to 2005, *The*

*New York Times* averaged around 200 articles per year on the theme of immigration and New York City.

The majority of articles from June to December 2005 and from March to May 2006 can be regrouped under several strong themes: reports on crime related to immigration (19); extreme cases of injustice against immigrants or committed by them in the city (15); comments of studies on changing “faces” in New York City (25); opposition to legislation through mass demonstration and polemics about, or by, politicians (33); personal stories and mixed voices for and against immigration (20); and articles that concern multicultural practices with a generally celebratory emphasis on ethnic diversity (28). A small number of articles cross a variety of sub-themes and use either positive or negative tones to express individual and collective practices, or cultural differences. The more extreme categories of injustices, for example, tend to address the implied audiences either by supporting immigration or by placing conditions on amnesty for the undocumented. The search was done in a way that ensured results would contain the city and one of the keywords in the same paragraph so as to focus the preliminary selection on New York City as much as possible. About forty per cent of the articles were eliminated because they were not relevant to the research; either they had a national or international, rather than urban, focus, or because the level of significance to the keyword theme of New York City and immigration together was too low. The remaining articles from the selection are evenly spread across the themes treated below. Only articles from columns, editorials, news reports and feature articles were selected.

#### **ON IMMIGRATION IN NEW YORK CITY 2005-06**

Debate over immigration has been a cornerstone of public discussion throughout the history of the United States. Since the 1960s, the intensification of emotional and moral tones in the infamous American culture wars suggests a widening gap between two camps. While one side laments the loss of a unified civic culture built from common European origins, the other argues for a celebration of difference and tolerance, of a more asymmetric federalism and for reparations of past wrongs visited on groups outside the “national imaginary.” A lengthy quote from the following opinion article published in 2005 sums up these different sides:

Supporters of immigration and its foes tend to insist that the issue is simple. American critics of open borders speak in terms of national sovereignty and cultural cohesion. The ideal of the melting pot, they insist, has become obsolete in an age marked by the anti-assimilationist doctrines of multiculturalism and the hard facts of globalization. If the United States is to retain its cultural identity, the argument goes, it cannot accept everyone who wants to come here. And on one level, this is simply a statement of fact. A recent poll showed that more than 40 percent of Mexicans said they would move to the United States if given the opportunity—that is, some 42 million

people. And Mexico is doing better economically than many Central and South American countries.

Pro-immigration activists, for their part, speak in terms of globalization and justice. Globalization, they argue, cannot mean the free movement of capital and of middle-class professionals alone (American bankers in Hong Kong, French software designers in Silicon Valley). Like it or not, it also implies the free movement of peoples. ...Rich societies need laborers to do jobs that native-born people are no longer willing to do, and they need skilled immigrants to make up for shortfalls of nurses, doctors, engineers and other professionals. (*NY Times*, SECT 6, 6 November 2005, 15)

In the U.S. today, millions of undocumented migrants are threatened with exemption from social assistance, including welfare and education, and increasingly intimidated with rumors about crackdowns and deportations without appeal. The current anti-immigration climate began in the policy shift away from European ethnic quotas that were enforced until 1965 (Chavez 2001). The 1996 reform to family and economic-based programs provided amnesty for 3 million mostly non-European undocumented migrants. The same reform also put in place severe restrictions on the civil rights of the undocumented. In the U.S., the prevalence of an anti-immigration climate took hold more aggressively following three referendums in California on the status of the Latino population in the state: Proposition 187 (which denied public benefits to the undocumented, adding teeth to the federal reform of immigration law in 1996); Proposition 209 (ending affirmative action); and Proposition 227 (against bilingual education). Other contributions to the growing anti-immigrant atmosphere since 2000 include: a series of anti-affirmative action referendums in several states; the post-9/11 federal crisis over border security; and finally, the ongoing debate, several years in the making, under the George W. Bush regime, over the remaking of federal immigration law.

In the spring of 2006, protests and mass mobilization of more than 11 million undocumented migrants erupted against the background of a decade of anti-immigration legislation and public political discourse. Articles on immigration between June and December 2005, and the spike that occurred between March and May 2006, need to be understood in this historical context. While a relative decline in coverage on immigration followed the May 2006 boycott against anti-immigration legislation, the issue has re-emerged several times in the U.S. House of Representatives with tentative bipartisan proposals that are aggressively debated on both sides for brief periods and then set aside again for more pressing issues.

The first section below considers articles published in 2005 that present a series of just and unjust cases related mainly to crime and immigration. The articles address "worst-case" scenarios for undocumented immigrants and report on the most extreme cases of injustice against immigrants or committed by immigrants. The next section shifts to discussions of the changing faces in the city that immigration has generated,

and then reviews the implied audiences for official political debates that both support the cause of immigration and add conditions to its future status. Finally, I examine the heated March to May 2006 period and how implied audiences are addressed in tones of astonishment regarding the new solidarity of immigrants and activist demands for unconditional hospitality that developed along with, and to provide counterpoint to, the official political debate.

### **JUST, UNJUST, AND EXTREME**

One of the most obvious conditions for hospitality toward immigrants is that they be law-abiding. Yet, being law-abiding can also be distinguished from being treated justly. Immigrants are variously portrayed as illegal and committing crimes as well as having been legal and suffering from injustice. Articles on crime most often involve either a penal or a civil violation alleged against an undocumented immigrant or an official such as a New York City police officer or government employee. A straightforward example of the latter type of story is the report of a rookie police officer put on probation for killing an unarmed African immigrant during a botched raid in Chelsea on a CD and DVD counterfeit ring. According to the Judge: “Mr. Conroy, who was relatively inexperienced, was insufficiently trained, insufficiently supervised, insufficiently led on the day in question, by people who had the responsibility to make sure he did nothing but protect and serve rather than end up taking a life” (*NY Times*, 10 December 2005, 1). Reports like these derive their authority by quoting the external authority of the judge’s decision. They establish balance by quoting the official police spokesman’s response in contrast to the judge’s decision and then add intensity with emotional and moral tone through a quote from the victim’s family. This tripartite authority frames the implied audience in terms of an emotional sympathy and moral plea for justice tempered against legal realism. That the rookie police officer killed an unarmed immigrant “other” is still evidence of the city’s unjust shootings and massive arrest incidents of people of color in New York. The implied audience is not the immigrant or African-American minority, but a more general audience of citizens who are assumed to share a horizon of understanding and expectation about violence in the city whenever a questionable shooting involving a police officer occurs. In other words, New York City itself, along with its crime problems, racial tensions and widely publicized incidents of police misconduct, is an unsaid mediating element shaping the meaning of conditional hospitality toward undocumented immigrants.

Sometimes civil and penal components of a crime and the relation to immigration in New York City are mixed together. The story of an undocumented immigrant who commits a heinous crime is found in a report about the arrest of a police sergeant for shooting his wife. It is not immediately clear from the headline, “Officer Arrested in Killing of His Children’s Mother,” that this is a story that links crime with immigration in New York City. Initially, the story is framed in a moral tone that is against an estranged

violent husband who brutally kills his wife to escape spousal support payments and regain custody of his children. The tripartite framing structure in this case does not become clear until much further in the story. The first part of the article mentions that the wife just got a job as an Immigration and Customs agent. Three-quarters of the way into the article we learn that the sergeant himself was an “illegal immigrant” who “fraudulently obtained United States citizenship through a sham marriage.” The framing technique that links the crime to illegal immigration uses emotional quotes from the wife’s family who is celebrating the justice of the sergeant’s arrest and then regains balance by referring to expert testimony from the New York Cold Case Squad and a Department of Immigration official (*NY Times*, SECT B, 15 JUNE 2005, 4).

An example of a civil case involving criminal elements, in which officials are charged for violating immigrants’ rights, is seen in the report on a lawsuit brought against the then-Attorney General and the head of the FBI for violating the rights of two Muslim immigrants. Here the plea for hospitality is not couched in condition. The two plaintiffs were held in a federal detention center in Brooklyn for eight months where they claim to have been seriously abused. On the issue of journalistic balance, the article provides an interesting illustration of how references to an external context, along with a mixture of varied emotional and moral tones from the subjects of the story, frame the article for the implied reader. The journalist constructs the event within a critique of the state’s post-9/11 moral authority as a rationale for abuse. He quotes expert testimony from the judge’s decision to deny the accused motions for dismissal as well as the plaintiffs’ emotional and graphic descriptions of the abuse: “They said they were kicked and punched until they bled, cursed as ‘terrorists’ and ‘Muslim bastards,’ and subjected to multiple unnecessary body-cavity searches, including one in which correction officers inserted a flashlight into Mr. Elmaghraby’s rectum, making him bleed.” After getting a statement from the detention center to establish journalistic balance, the framing is completed with a quote from an expert constitutional lawyer who braces the implied audience for the political struggle needed to combat extreme measures and attitudes of repressive state institutions against innocent victims: “The Judge understood that this isn’t just a case about individuals being abused in detention. These are people who were singled out according to a policy created on the highest levels of government” (*NY Times*, SECT B, 15 JUNE 2005, 4).

A similar case maintains a conditional hospitality in its reporting. It also crosses from themes of injustice committed by the legal system toward the most extreme forms of injustice committed against immigrants in the post-9/11 moral-authority context of New York City. Two teenaged Muslim girls from Queens were reported in *The Times* as suspects in planning suicide bombings. One of the girls grew up in Queens but was not born in the U.S. and was not a citizen. Following a request to the police from her despondent father, who discovered she ran away with a young man, the girl was arrested and held on evidence from Internet chat lines, school diaries, and questionable

FBI interrogation tactics. This led to information regarding her alleged consumption of Islamic clerical broadcasts from London. After her unexpected arrest her father went into hiding while the mother left the country. The second girl was released much earlier, while the undocumented teenager was detained for seven weeks before being released with the condition that she leave the country.

The framing of this story provides a good example of how *The New York Times* opposes anti-immigration acts by the legal system but at the same time, in the interest of balance, also establishes the “understandable” guise of necessary security in the post-9/11 context used by the FBI in defense of its tactics. At the same time, the first sentence frames the story in ironic tones by describing the utter bewilderment of this young girl. The context is framed in the contrasting figure of an encultured but undocumented New York teenager who is suddenly displaced from her life in New York City to a third-world city where she has been exiled. The opening paragraph reads: “DHAKA, Bangladesh—Slumped at the edge of the bed she would have to share with four relatives that night, the 16-year-old girl from Queens looked stunned.” This is quickly juxtaposed with a description of the pastoral but urban setting the teen was forced to leave in Queens—“a neighborhood of tidy lawns and American flags.” The second ironic layer is the framing of an emotional tone of sympathy toward the protagonist that is set by the article’s clash over the implication linking teenage angst with radical Islamic suicide bombers. “She is a made-in-Queens mix of devotion and defiance, this slim, dark-eyed adolescent who arrived in Astoria with her family at age 5. In her round schoolgirl handwriting, she has compiled lists of favorite prayers and pious resolutions... But when she recalls how FBI agents questioned her religious lifestyle, her voice drips typical teenage scorn: “Like, I’m supposed to live for you guys?” (*NY Times*, 17 June 2005, 1).

Stories about the extreme abuse of basic civil rights in the post-9/11 context of moral-authority include: the arrest of other Muslims under similar conditions as the teenagers from Queens (*NY Times*, SECT B, 21 July 2005, 1); polemics against random searches in New York City subways after the London bombings (*NY Times*, SECT A, 26 July 2005, 16), and the plight of 60,000 undocumented high school students in the New York area (*NY Times*, SECT A, 19 June 2005, 1). Two other stories about extreme abuse include a man who had his green card revoked because he could not read English and a family of homeless immigrants who ride the bus shuttle back and forth all night between JFK airport and Manhattan to stay warm in the winter (*NY Times*, SECT B, 14 November 2005, 6; *NY Times*, SECT A, 14 November 2005, 20).

Two shocking extremes on the theme of severe immigrant abuse involve cases of Chinese immigrants who constitute the highest number of those undocumented in the New York region. One case is the abuse against undocumented citizens by another immigrant. In 1993, Sister Ping was charged as a ringleader in a human smuggling operation that led to the death of ten immigrants from drowning as they attempted to swim ashore to the United States. Human trafficking in the Chinese community often

involves a “snakehead, or immigrant smuggler [who] charges as much as \$40,000 per passenger for a trip to New York from Asia” (*NY Times*, SECT B, 23 June 2005, 3). Once landed, the immigrant is then often indentured to the handler for many years until the fee is paid off, with interest.

One of the worst cases of abuse against an undocumented immigrant was the tragic fate of a Chinese-food deliveryman stranded in a jammed Manhattan elevator for 81 hours. He was afraid to call out for fear he would then be exposed as an undocumented worker. Once rescued, he received psychiatric care to help him cope with his fear of immigration officials, of the dark and of closed spaces: “Psychiatrists call such symptoms classic hallmarks of post-traumatic stress disorder, and spoke of barriers to treatment like language, culture and money. But for Mr. Chen, who is deeply indebted for his passage to the United States..., his illness mainly represents a disastrous obstacle to delivery work in the nationwide network of Chinese restaurants where illegal immigrants like him are dispatched from New York to toil night and day, six days a week” (*NY Times*, SECT B, 17 August 2005, 1).

Each of the above stories is framed in similar procedural and substantive processes that cascade from external referents of authority and balance both hospitable and conditional tones. As described above, each framing in turn addresses implied readers in sympathetic emotional tones of hospitality toward the immigrant while at the same time underlining the exceptional conditions that have led to the event. In this way, a context of public suspicion is maintained and the suspension of civil liberties becomes a partially normalized condition placed on hospitality toward immigration.

### MULTICULTURAL PRACTICES AND CHANGING FACES

Articles on multicultural practices and the changing faces of New York include stories on the various waves of legal and illegal immigration in the city (*NY Times*, SECT A, 29 July 2005, 1; SECT B, 6 August 2005, 7); the changing ethnic and racial make-up of neighborhoods (SECT B, 30 June 2005, 7; SECT B, 9 October 2005, 7); evolving economic and demographic variables in housing, labor, and business (SECT A, 31 July 2005, 4; SECT A, 4 August 2005, 1; SECT C, 20 July 2005, 1; SECT B, 13 December 2005, 1; SECT B, 25 December 2005, 14; SECT B, 18 December 2005, 14); and densities of cultural diversity (SECT B, 30 December 2005, 1). Several of these articles reporting on the theme of new immigrants changing the face of New York City offer a particular focus on the relation between race and immigration.

The first article in the heightened period of immigrant protest from April to May 2006 is a pro-immigration piece that makes a counter-intuitive argument about the likelihood of crime increasing as the number of immigrants coming into New York City declines. Citing a Pew Hispanic Center study, the reporter points out that immigrant flows to New York City have receded since 2001, “while the homicide rate has leveled off and seems now to be creeping up” (SECT A, 11 March 2006, 15). The argument announces

the complexity of the issue of race and ethnicity in New York and at the same time the special status New York holds in the history of world immigration. “It is no longer tenable to assume that immigration automatically leads to chaos and crime. New York is a magnet for immigration, yet it has for a decade ranked as one of America’s safest cities” (SECT A, 11 March 2006, 15).

A second, longer essay also refers to a similar conflux of the theme of changing faces and crime. This article challenges the implied audience’s allegiance to political correctness by evoking an emotionally volatile tone against cultural explanations of young African-American males that might explain how they lost out on jobs to ambitious immigrants during the 1990s boom. The byline tells readers that the author is a Harvard sociologist, which leads the implied audience into the familiar terrain of the expert social scientist who often frames narrative with expressions like “several recent studies say.” The article states that African-Americans need to re-examine their rates of exclusion in the city and begin to take responsibility for their own self-determination. It first demonstrates the correlation between low education and poverty, and poverty and the disproportionately high rates of homicide, incarceration, and absent fathers among African-American males. Missing out on “the economic boom years of the 90’s makes it impossible to ignore the effects of culture.” But what does this mean? Is the failure to compete with immigrants for low-paying jobs caused by a misguided African-American hip-hop culture as he would seem to suggest? The author counters he is not “blaming the victims” but rather pleading for an understanding of historical conditions in the African-American community in order to expose the abusive behavior that victims themselves exert in order to change them. “The tragedy unfolding in our inner cities is a time-slice of a deep historical process that runs back through the cataclysms and deluge of our racist past. In academia, we need a new, multidisciplinary approach toward understanding what makes young black men behave so self destructively.” (SECT D, 26 March 2006, 13, 168).

The long essay is a form that can address an issue more directly to the excluded group, especially if the author focuses on the perspective of the group’s ethos. Framing an article in the complex language and citations of the expert lends legitimacy to the story, while the direct address of the author to an excluded group lends an intense emotional and moral tone. The example is unique in the sense that the implied audience is the insider African-American, but also the non-insider who looks on from an outside life-world. Although the article is focused on the African-American minority and not on immigration, it references immigration as a measure of how well the community is doing, suggesting the thorny hierarchy of race and ethnicity is never far from the surface in discussions about immigration in New York City.

In addition to the two examples of extremely degrading conditions experienced by “illegals” described above, there are only two other articles about the Chinese immigrant community in 2006 (SECT B, 13 March 2006, 1; SECT B, 17 March 2006, 1). At first glance

the low number of articles on Chinese immigration is a bit surprising given that they are the largest undocumented immigrant group in the New York region. In reporting on immigration, the point that returns most often is that no single group dominates statistically in New York City and that there is a finely balanced sense of equitable pluralism. This is a condition that in part defines New York's special historical hospitality toward immigration. Several articles describe the strength of cultural pluralism among immigrants in New York City that serve to make the city unlike any other metropolitan center of similar stature.

One example stands out: the influential march by illegal Irish immigrants in Yonkers in April 2006. The illegal Irish constitute only a tiny minority of the more than 700,000 estimated illegal immigrants in New York State, but their presence in the city generates major interest. "Some in the immigrant coalitions resent being passed over," says the *New York Times* journalist, "and worry the Irish are angling for a separate deal... Others welcome the clout and razzmatazz and extraordinary track record they bring, like the creation of thousands of special visas in the 1990's that one historian calls 'affirmative action for white Europeans'" (SECT A, 16 March 2006, 1). The fascination also seems disproportionate because the overall number of illegals in the U.S. is usually pegged at 11 million, of which seventy-eight per cent are Hispanic.

Articles on the changing faces in the city do not address immigrants directly, nor do they record their voices in any significant way. They are, however, mainly hospitable toward the undocumented. The first article, which linked crime and declining rather than ascending immigration levels, addresses its implied audience by challenging the conditional assumption on ideal immigration limits for New York City. The argument neatly removes the stigma applied to the "foreigner," which gives immigrants a negative impact upon arrival in the community but at the same time puts a stigma back on the indigenous African-American minority and poor whites. Now these are the "new" rising and most criminal "Others," not the immigrants. The articles on African-Americans, the situation with Chinese illegals and the special clout of the Irish all link class and race as conditions that need to be considered when weighing the benefits of immigration. When thinking about the implied audiences these articles address, it is important to recall the heated context in which they were written. The unexpected rise of a massive social movement from immigration that was sparked by a sense of intense political reactions reverberated throughout the U.S., and in New York City in particular, as described in the next two sets of examples.

#### **OFFICIAL DISCOURSE: POLITICAL SHOCKS**

Here the dialogic framing of immigration concerns the sense of shock that government policy and debate among politicians evoke in the way they formulate the problem of illegal immigration and in the solutions they propose. Each side is framed as if overwhelmed by the scope of the illegal immigration debate, and each side is framed

as astonished by their opponents' proposed solutions. Debates in the government and among politicians over the definition of the problem of undocumented immigrants and the possible solutions that might bring about a consensus for resolving it are mirrored almost step-by-step through events unfolding daily in the streets. In the tripartite framing of these articles, one official side is constructed in a way that cannot help but define itself in relation to the other. These two official discourses are balanced against one another while they also cross over and/or draw from the emotional-volitional currents of popular demonstrators.

From the beginning of this current debate, most Republicans as well as some Democrats were officially divided over the criminalization of undocumented immigrants, a division that would eventually give way to a crackdown against illegal immigrants (SECT A, 29 March 2006, 17, 152). They were also divided over exactly how to go about integrating illegals into programs that would eventually lead to citizenship. The minority of hard-core anti-illegalists (SECT A, 11 March 2006, 15) continue to argue for deportation and even imprisonment of illegals, and would prefer to make it a crime for any organization or individual to assist them. These anti-illegalists also argue for massively increased Customs patrols, a complete barrier fence on the Mexican border, and no amnesty or possibility to apply for citizenship for illegals already residing in the United States. The sense of shock in their statements at the numbers of illegal passages at the border is especially acute and the provocative language of fencing is often framed as a proportionate, if not responsible, response.

The Catholic Church in 2006 was one of the first mainstream forces in civil society reported to oppose the anti-illegal immigrationists. Cardinal McCarrick of Washington "said he and other leaders decided they could not stay silent after witnessing the hardships endured by illegal immigrants....This is a justice issue." In response, Republican Tom Tancredo takes issue with Catholic leaders for "evoking God when arguing for a blanket amnesty" while others "question whether the church should maintain its tax exempt status" (SECT D, 19 March 2006, 4). Pro-immigrant rights figures like New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and then-New York Senator Hillary Clinton are against the proposed immigration law on criminalization and look to return the legal status of those who are undocumented to a civil violation (SECT B, 23 March 2006, 5; SECT B, 31 March 2006, 6). They both oppose increased border controls and promote amnesty or some similar version to provide a path to citizenship for undocumented individuals residing in the United States. One article satirized the two extremes this way: "self described patriots call them 'terrorists'; on combative talk shows the term is 'illegal aliens'; and advocates for immigrants prefer the Emma-Lazarus-evoking 'economic refugees'" (SECT A, 26 March 2006, 5).

In April 2006 *The New York Times* reported how the logjam to offer a solution to illegal immigration in the Republican and Democrat dispute broke in Congress, and a compromise was on the verge of acceptance that favored the Bush administration

plan (SECT A, 6 April 2006, 21). It included two main categories for immigration: the immediate deportation of any illegal immigrant living in the U.S. for less than two years; and an increase in border security, including the construction of a partial fence. The compromise soon evaporated, but a year later the debate returned in a framing similar to the one in which it was first conceived (SECT A, 7 April 2006, 1).

The framing of the official government voices of pro- and anti-immigration sentiment address the implied national and urban audience as if they should expect a clear-cut debate between the right and the left over the status of the undocumented with varying shades of compromise in between. Each side is presented as if it symbolically embodies the emotional and factual orientations of its constituencies. Each side stands for justice, the law and the national good. Each side assumes it is acting as responsibly as possible toward reinforcing the regime of citizenship. In the dispute, the implied audience is caught up in the need for solutions and the variety of proposals: no fence, complete amnesty, porous borders, or conversely, more fence, arrests, and closed borders with military and paramilitary controls. To summarize, stories are mainly framed through a bifurcated official sense of political shock concerning the dimensions of the problem and the proposed solutions from each side.

#### **POPULAR REJOINDERS: THE ASTONISHMENT OF SOCIAL SOLIDARITY**

My final example concerns the sense of astonishment addressed toward the implied audiences regarding the show of solidarity in civil society that opposes the government and political class. This is the second most common theme during the period that led to the national one-day strike on May 1, 2006 by the undocumented and their supporters. The event serves as an emotional and volitional rejoinder to themes that are on opposing sides in the official debate. Popular rejoinders appear mainly in the form of reports on the scope of the demonstrations during or leading up to the strike that are framed using quotes or reports from their organizations and from the variations between cities in terms of their meaning. Reports address implied audiences with a sense of astonishment at the new popular awareness of diversity in the American polis on the one hand, and fear of the hostile backlash and crackdown that rejects claims to citizenship and threatens the undocumented with imprisonment or deportation.

The immigration rallies of recent weeks have drawn an astounding number of people around the country...the immigrants and their allies have carried off an amazing achievement in mass political action even though many of them are here illegally and have no right to vote. Whether the rallies leave you inspired or unnerved, they are impossible to ignore (SECT A, 12 April 2006, 20).

Reports on massive demonstrations not seen since the days of the civil-rights movement and the anti-Viet Nam War protests give another sense of justice than the one debated in the Congress and among politicians through the media. "No human being is illegal"

they argue, and all favor complete amnesty, political recognition and full citizenship: “We are inseparable, indivisible, and impossible to take out of America,’ Chung-Wha Hong, Director of the New York Immigration Coalition, told the crowd, which she greeted in English, Spanish, Chinese, French and Korean” (SECT B, 11 April 2006, 1).

Numerous sub-genres of tragic life histories of mainly individual undocumented Latino immigrants either accompany or appear alongside articles on the mass demonstrations leading up to the May Boycott. Undocumented workers tell their compelling stories in the form of moral counterpoints to the crackdowns against them. One commentator noted: “Imagine turning more than 11 million people into criminals and then add five year sentences to anyone that helped them” (SECT A, 26 March 2006, 1). Leading up to the May 1 strike about two thousand undocumented people were detained, one hundred and seventy-five mostly violent criminals were imprisoned and another small number were deported (SECT A, 21 April 2006, 1). The disproportionate panic and fear spread quickly among the undocumented who were in turn depicted as driven by opposition to rhetoric from the official discourse discussed above, but also from the reactions of the immigrant organizations themselves. The internal dialogue between the journalist and the implied audiences thus follows a series of tightly-wound rejoinders between the voices of the popular coalition to official announcements and official debates.

The implied audience is captivated by the excitement of people rising up against conventions of justice that have become unjust. But another side of the journalist’s implied audience is explicitly hostile toward the idea of “no one is illegal.” The political subject in the phrase “no one is illegal” sees the conditional barrier of citizenship as based in the nation-state and the rule of law. Mass demonstrations in favor of the peoples caught in the interstices of various symbolic and physical boundaries mark the U.S. and global contexts and yet, as these stories suggest, it is not the rule of law or status that draw our attention to injustices. It is, rather, “acts that enact us/them as citizens, strangers, outsiders or aliens” (Isin & Nielsen 2008, 3). Can it be concluded that the press is covering this kind of political subject? Of the acts themselves that are claiming, questioning, resisting or demanding these mass demonstrations and the resulting debates? Does the mainstream press have any of the right concepts to begin to explain how experiences are transformed into these kinds of acts?

## CONCLUSION

Dialogic frame analysis asks what happens when newspapers seek to be authoritative in their reports on immigration, what emotional and moral tones frame the implied audience, and what response is anticipated. The purpose of presenting the examples above is to get at the image of otherness, which the authors frame, in their dialogue with implied audiences about the subject of immigration. It is important to recall that this dialogue on otherness is not a simple conversation but a broader exchange that

takes place in the anticipation of an implied audience's imaginary response to the subject matter. Journalists actively frame their texts to meet that anticipation and framing builds an understanding through the dialogic relation between the journalist, the implied audience and the subject of the report. The unsaid acknowledgement here is that the implied audience has no immediate experience of immigration.

Reading the American debate about immigration through *The New York Times* leaves a sense of informed familiarity with issues but without the depth of having entered more directly into the conversation with the immigrants being discussed. We get a New York sense of urban citizenship and the extraordinary tensions around extreme forms of injustice, the changing faces in the city brought about by immigration, the New York bias in the two-sided national debate over legal and illegal immigration, and the astonishment of a new social solidarity in the heart of the American polis. Portraying shock on both sides of the argument over the undocumented frames a set form of legal conditions for hospitality on one side, and pleas for limiting conditions and expanding hospitality on the other. We learn about the extremes between law and justice, racial hierarchy and multiculturalism in the city, and popular forces from New York that are for and against anti-immigration legislation, but we never get all the way through to the life-worlds of the subjects in the reports.

Journalists often perform acts of citizenship by claiming the right of immigrants to have rights through direct and indirect discussions they have about non-status citizens with their implied, have-status audiences. Mainly, however, journalists do not address the subjects as their implied audience and in so doing also reinforce social division by constructing their subjects' voices as "Other." Taken together, these stories provide what might be called a detached and partial image of New York City's imaginary urban Otherness. We learn about this otherness through balanced framing and emotional reminders to implied audiences about the just or unjust conditions attached to immigrants themselves. In addition, most of the articles present positive emotions in their framing to support agencies or actors that lobby agencies to display a greater hospitality toward immigrants. The assumption between the journalists and their implied audience is therefore hospitable, but is also conditional and even hostile toward immigrants under certain circumstances. We are reminded of the extraordinary circumstances of 9/11 that need to be considered and of the criteria of authenticity as strict conditions measured against hospitality toward immigrants.

A final question can be posed. Given that stories often quote undocumented immigrants while rarely addressing them directly, how might they shift their dialogic framing to include a broader diversity of cultural expressions of the subjects they report on? On the one hand, social formations like urban immigrants transmit diverse cultural expressions in the city. My question asks: if the press has the democratic mandate to include as much diversity of opinion and culture as possible, then should this not also include more direct address toward "Other" non-status-citizens who live in New York

City, since they are often the subjects of news stories but are almost never directly addressed by them? In other words, can it be enough to provide accurate and balanced reports about just or unjust crimes committed by immigrants or against them; about the shifting cultural practices and hierarchy of race in the city; about official debates over the rights and wrongs of immigration, or mass refusals of the rule of law? Or should the mainstream press engage itself more directly with the habitus and practices it reports on, but also with the acts of citizenship or ruptures from habitus where non-citizens rise up to claim rights to have rights? If journalism could begin from there, would it not engage more diverse claims for justice and cultural expression within these formations that would not only increase the audibility of have-not voices in public culture, but also participate in their demands for recognition? And if so, then what would this mean?

The dialogic framing analysis has shown that the journalist does not innocently report on or comment on an ongoing event without being selective and actively orientating the story toward an implied audience. Would journalism necessarily be less rigorously veridical, accurate and balanced if the craft were turned into a commitment to the story rather than to abstract principles of objectivity? According to advocates of public journalism (Lambeth *et al.* 1998; Rosen 1999; Esterowicz & Roberts 2000), shifting to a commitment to the story can still be consistent with traditional benchmarks of good journalism. Following their lead, I argue that in order to reduce or re-address the gap between groups being reported on and the journalist's implied audience, the journalist needs to derive reporting from where acts of citizens or non-citizens are actually carried out. This does not mean abandoning accuracy, balance or fairness in reporting, but rather making assumptions about bias and framing more explicit. Balance and accuracy in journalism provide deontological guidelines to prevent the 'serious' press from falling into a "pack mentality" or from becoming an instrument of "mass mystification" as classical critiques have accused. If balance, however, means simply not 'taking a side,' it may not be enough of a guideline; it would simply mean another innovation on the principle of neutrality that reinforces the false assumption of the passive transmission of a message toward an equally passive receiver.

This does not mean sources do not have to be verified nor that rigor of procedure and accuracy should be loosened. On the one hand, the principle of reporting from where the subjects are is partially seen in *The New York Times*' articles on the changing faces of New York City and conflicts over immigration and work. On the other hand, there is less of a sense in these articles of provoking more conversation directly with the subjects and therefore less of a sense of gaining ideas about further rejoinders or solutions. If the journalist could reduce the gap between the implied audience and the subjects being reported on, it follows that public culture be understood as an ongoing conversation between speakers. But conversation means adding not only constative but also assertive propositions to keep the conversation alive. In other words, journalists would need to accept more responsibility to intervene in order to increase the qualities

of dialogue and the scope of inclusion. This is partially seen in reports that express shock about official policies proposed by governments or their oppositional counter-proposals. Yet, these reports frame the same distance between the implied reader and the actually excluded that are being discussed. The same is also the case in those articles that express hospitality toward the most excluded but is also committed to demonstrating the conditions of authenticity placed on them. Using strongly slanted emotional-volitional tones derived from where the subjects themselves are situated in their life-worlds provides an uncanny hook-effect, but it is usually not enough to provoke a civic dialogue. What is needed is to bring the interlocutors together into a deeper exchange in order to expand the criteria of inclusivity that haunts the present malaise around citizenship in order to begin to express a greater diversity of voices in the public conversation. To accomplish this, journalists would need to be more adversarial. This should not mean more one-sided, ideological or monologic writing. Their responsibility would rather be to openly and directly contribute to the deliberative, multi-voiced democratic process through exercising their skills of research and communicative action to provide balance and fairness in dialogue rather than neutral and passive detachment

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#### ENDNOTE

<sup>1</sup>Quantitative framing analysis most often focuses on frequency of tone and judgment at the level of content between different newspapers on the same themes in order to demonstrate bias (Maslog *et al.*, 2006; Dimitrova & Connolly-Ahern, 2007). Quantitative analysis alone leaves the relation between emotional and volitional tone in the utterance itself and an implied addressee unexamined.

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