

A Critical Discourse Study on Meghan and Harry's CBS Primetime Interview

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on Meghan and Harry's narratives in the CBS Primetime interview with Oprah Winfrey where they highlighted the issues they faced before moving to America. During the interview, the couple raised several bombshells ranging from the lack of freedom, to Archie's royal title and security, racism, and the lack of support and guidance from the Royal Family, which negatively portrayed the Royal Family and British tabloids. Using van Dijk's ideological square model and its discursive strategies as a framework, this study examines how the Duke and Duchess of Sussex linguistically construct the self-other representations that are evident in their interview via critical discourse analysis and narrative inquiry approach. Findings show that the couple most commonly employed discursive strategies such as victimisation, vagueness, disclaimers, comparisons, evidentiality, hyperbole, history as a lesson, generalisation, pseudo-ignorance, implications, distancing, openness, and polarisation of us versus them. In doing so, they represented themselves as positive, while portraying the British tabloids and the Royal Family as the negative-other. Consequently, the use of language in this interview narrative may legitimise the Duke and Duchess of Sussex while suppress the Royal family and British tabloids. This paper is timely as it is only through in-depth analysis of the linguistic features that we are able to unveil ideological presupposition and biases underlying the interview. It also serves to educate the public that there is always more than one side to a story. Therefore, we should avoid having any biases or ideological presupposition towards anyone in any event before the truth is revealed from both sides.

Keywords: Ideological square model; critical discourse analysis; narrative inquiry approach; self-other representation; discursive strategies

INTRODUCTION

Meghan and Harry's CBS primetime interview with Oprah Winfrey revealed the reasons they left Britain and moved to America. This primetime interview has created serious tension between the Royal Family and the couple as they released several bombshells regarding the family and the British tabloid. During the interview, Oprah questioned Meghan if she was the one who manipulated Harry into leaving the Royal Family.

I think what we really have got to clear up here is because one of the stories that continues to live, either through rumours or social media, out in the world, is that you, Meghan, are the one who manipulated, calculated, and are responsible for this Megxit? (Montgomery, Piotrowicz, & Wood, 2021)

Meghan denied such rumours and asserted that she sincerely wanted to serve the Royal Family as she left her career and life for Harry (Montgomery, Piotrowicz, & Wood, 2021). Nevertheless, there were positive and negative responses from the public regarding this interview, especially from the British and American respondents of the post-interview poll.

The couple became more popular in America but less favourable in the United Kingdom after this interview was aired (Durkee, 2021). Based on a survey conducted on 12,037 British respondents by Pipsley, half of the population believe that this interview will backfire on the couple while only 23% will be on their side (Kinane, 2021). Interestingly, the YouGov poll reported that more Americans than British support and agree with the couple's decision to take part in this interview (Ballard & Sanders, 2021). The YouGov poll revealed that out of 164 survey respondents in the United Kingdom, 48% of respondents had a negative view and 45% had a positive view on Harry; while 58% had a negative view and 30% had a positive view on Meghan (Holden, 2021a). Additionally, there were also differences in terms of age group. The younger generations seem to have a more positive view on the couple than the older generations (Holden, 2021a). In general, American respondents showed more sympathy towards the couple than the Royal Family (Ballard & Sanders, 2021). Two-thirds of American respondents from the survey believe the Royal Family is racist for having concern over Archie's skin colour. Many also believe that the race factor has an impact on how Meghan was treated by the Royal Family and British tabloids (Ballard & Sanders, 2021). In such instances, the polarisation of American as 'us' versus British as 'them' was obvious. Contrary to Meghan's claim about the Royal Family not providing her with sufficient support as a family, the British monarchy emphasises uniting both nation and family and centralises the notion of domesticity to create "a sense of harmony in national heritage" (Brunt, 1992, p. 295). Clearly, there are two sides to the story.

Although it was just a two-hour media interview by the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, the post-interview poll results indicated that the language used in this interview narrative may create a breach between the two nations (i.e., Britain and America) as there were those who supported the couple and against the Royal Family. In other words, the language used in the interview may legitimise one party (i.e., Duke and Duchess of Sussex) and suppress the other party (i.e., Royal family and British tabloids). In light of this, there is a need to analyse this particular CBS primetime interview.

According to Hansson (2015), governments or politicians often influence the way people judge, decide or act based on their language use. This same concept could also apply to popular figures such as Meghan and Harry when their words spread through media discourse. Previous studies have analysed the construction of 'self' and 'other' on political discourse such as Trump's islamophobia statement in the 2016 presidential election speech (Khan et al., 2019), manipulation in Persian political discourse translation (Daghighi et al., 2018), and Pakistani political discourse in Twitter (Masroor et al., 2019). Hence, this study adds on to the literature by analysing the construction of 'self' and 'other' in a media discourse.

There were several studies conducted on Meghan and Harry. For instance, Mahfouz (2018) explored how Meghan was represented in Facebook posts via linguistic features by applying Wodak's discourse historical approach for analysis. However, the collected data were comments from social media users, not narratives from the Duke and Duchess themselves. Additionally, Ahmed (2020) applied Fairclough's CDA framework to examine the discursive strategies used by British and American newspaper headlines on Meghan and Harry's decisions to step away from their roles as working royals. Nevertheless, his focus was on newspaper headlines and the narrative inquiry approach was not employed in his study. Furthermore, Dewangga (2021) did a study on

Harry and Meghan's interview in Australia on 28 November 2017 by examining the violation of Grice's maxim in the interview. In a more recent study, Pramaggiore and Kerrigan (2021) studied the media representation of Meghan Markle's intersectional identities and emphasised more on the notion of feminism. Still, neither study has analysed the self-other representation in Meghan and Harry's CBS primetime interview from both CDA and narrative inquiry perspectives.

Meghan's denial of manipulation and the mixed perceptions from the public have motivated this study to explore how the Duke and Duchess of Sussex raised the issues they faced during their life as working royals and how these issues were constructed from their discourse. Specifically, this study aims to examine the way Meghan and Harry construct themselves, the British Royal family and British tabloids based on ideological conflicts.

This study is significant for teaching and learning critical discourse studies. It could instil one's awareness of the importance of not judging someone based on only one side of the story, but to consider both sides. This study is also timely as it serves to contribute to this area of research. We can only uncover any ideological presuppositions and prejudices underpinning the interview by doing a thorough examination of the linguistic aspects.

MEGHAN AND HARRY'S TIMELINE

Prince Harry met Meghan Markle on a blind date in July 2016. After dating for more than a year, they got engaged in November 2017. The couple got married in May 2018. Instead of Meghan's father, it was Prince Charles, her then about-to-be father-in-law who walked her down the aisle during the Royal wedding ceremony (Holden, 2021b). Together as a married couple, Harry and Meghan carried out royal duties in countries such as Australia, Fiji, Tonga and New Zealand (Collie, 2018). After five months as a married couple, they announced that they were expecting their first child in October 2018. The couple welcomed their son, Archie Harrison Mountbatten-Windsor, in May 2019. Despite that, Meghan privately struggled with mental health issues. The couple announced their decision to step back from their senior roles as working royals in January 2020 where later they moved to Canada with their son (Taylor, 2020). However, when they were told that security would not be provided to them, the couple and their son moved to America. They carried out their final royal engagement in March 2020. Later in September 2020, they signed a deal with Netflix (Holden, 2021b). On 7 March 2021, CBS released the premiere of Oprah Winfrey's interview with the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, which took place in Santa Barbara, California, United States (Holden, 2021b). The interview was aired by ITV in the United Kingdom on 8 March 2021.

IDEOLOGICAL SQUARE MODEL

According to van Dijk (2006), there are three components that are significant in reflecting ideologies, namely discourse, cognition, and society. Discourse is used as a means to convey messages via interaction or communication as a medium (van Dijk, 2006). Through their discourse or language use, speakers cognitively influence the recipients' minds, particularly their knowledge, opinions, and ideologies. This involves the recipients' opinions and emotions associated with the event he or she hears about, apart from comprehending the discourse (van Dijk, 2006). Therefore, it is also important for this study to explore the reaction of the interviewer, Oprah Winfrey, towards Meghan and Harry's narratives. Simultaneously, society will relate to discourse and cognition because it encompasses social interactions with people for the speakers to spread their messages

across (van Dijk, 2006). In this instance, the couple used CBS as a platform to publicly voice their dismay on the British tabloids and Royal Family. Their access to such a public discourse platform enables them to socially reproduce their power by “influencing the knowledge, beliefs, and indirectly the actions of the recipients” (van Dijk, 2006, p. 363). Furthermore, Harry’s position as a British royal prince, Meghan who is a former Hollywood actress, and the couple’s status as Duke and Duchess of Sussex, do play a vital role in making society believe their words. Additionally, Meghan’s identity as a mixed-race woman also contributes to influencing others as she represents the non-white community, especially women. Meghan is also a well-known feminist (Pramaggiore & Kerrigan, 2021) who always believes in equal rights among women and people of colour (Adam, 2018; Young, 2019). In light of this, the couple’s well-known high profile celebrity status enables them to influence others with their words as they have supporters around the world, thus giving them a sense of social domination in discourse.

In the post-interview poll, there were positive and negative views on the Royal Family. The positive views were the ones who did not buy into the couple’s stories and stood by the British monarch. Meanwhile, the negative views were those who believed and stood by the couple and formed negative perceptions towards the Royal Family. To influence someone’s beliefs, it requires speakers to apply discursive strategies in their discourse.

Van Dijk (1998) proposed the Ideological Square Model to examine the self-other representations in a discourse. In this model, positive aspects are always highlighted in the representation of ‘self’, whereas negative aspects are highlighted in the representation of ‘other’. To simplify, van Dijk proposed four principles:

1. Emphasise positive things about Us.
2. Emphasise negative things about Them.
3. De-emphasise negative things about Us.
4. De-emphasise positive things about Them.

Van Dijk’s (1998) ideological model emphasises the positive representation of ‘self’ and negative representation of ‘other’ via lexical choices. The lexical choices may indicate either positive or negative features on someone or a situation. In other words, it portrays the concept of “we are good and they are bad” (Shojaei et al., 2013, p. 859) where the ingroup (US) will be portrayed positively while the outgroup (THEM) will be portrayed negatively. To illustrate, the self-other representation appears to be prominent when the issue of racism was highlighted in Meghan and Harry’s CBS interview.

Example 1

Harry: Yeah, I think, you know, as we talked about, she was very much welcomed into the family, not just by the family, but by the world.

Oprah: Yeah.

Harry: Certainly, by the Commonwealth. I mean, here you have **one of the greatest assets to the Commonwealth that the family could have ever wished for.**

As shown in the conversation above, Harry positively portrays Meghan as “*one of the greatest assets to the Commonwealth that the family could have ever wished for*”. The lexical choice ‘*greatest assets*’ further reinforces the positive representation of Meghan as the first mixed-race person to be married into the Royal family, thus projecting the idea of the anti-racism.

Example 2

Meghan: Well, see, I think there's a reason that these tabloids have holiday parties at the Palace. They're hosted by the Palace, the tabloids are. You know, there is a construct that's at play there. And because from the beginning of our relationship, **they were so attacking and inciting so much racism**, really, it changed our . . . the risk level, because it went . . . it wasn't just catty gossip. It was bringing out a part of people that was racist in how it was charged. And that changed the threat. That changed the level of death threats. That changed everything.

In another example, Meghan negatively portrays the British tabloids as 'the other' when she claims that "*they were so attacking and inciting so much racism*". The intensifiers '*so attacking*' and '*so much racism*' could also strengthen the issue of racism and present the negative character of the tabloids. Additionally, the pronoun '*they*' was used to present the tabloids as 'the other'.

In addition, van Dijk (2000) also listed the 42 categories of ideological analysis as discursive strategies (see Table 1).

TABLE 1. van Dijk's (2000) Categories of Ideological Analysis

1. Actor description	22. Illegality
2. Authority	23. Interaction and context
3. Burden	24. Irony
4. Categorisation	25. Legality
5. Comparison	26. Lexicalisation
6. Consensus	27. Metaphor
7. Counterfactuals	28. National self-glorification
8. Disclaimers	29. Negative other-presentation
9. Distancing	30. Norm expression
10. Dramatization	31. Number game
11. Empathy	32. Openness, honesty
12. Euphemism	33. Polarisation, us-them categorisation
13. Evidentiality	34. Positive self-presentation
14. Example/illustration	35. Populism
15. Explanation	36. Presupposition
16. Fallacies	37. Pseudo-ignorance
17. Generalisation	38. Reasonableness
18. History as lesson	39. Repetition
19. Humanitarianism	40. Situation description
20. Hyperbole	41. Vagueness
21. Implication	42. Victimisation

Studies have used the ideological square model and its discursive strategies (e.g., Daghigh et al., 2018; Khan et al., 2019) to analyse political discourse. Hence, it is deemed appropriate for this study to adopt this model in order to analyse this media discourse on how Meghan and Harry represent themselves, the British tabloids and the Royal Family in the CBS Primetime interview with Oprah Winfrey.

METHOD

This study only draws on Meghan and Harry's two-hour CBS Primetime interview session with Oprah Winfrey as data. To collect the data, I retrieved the interview transcript online from the Sun Reporter (2021) and watched the interview twice to check the accuracy of the transcription.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) and narrative inquiry approach were employed to analyse Meghan and Harry's interview narratives based on their use of linguistic features. This study first draws on the narrative inquiry approach to examine the way Meghan and Harry narrate their stories. According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), people narrate by representing themselves and others as characters where there will be protagonists and antagonists in their stories. For instance, Meghan and Harry portray themselves as protagonists and the Royal Family and the British tabloids as antagonists when they tell stories about their life experiences as working royals through this interview. For the purpose of analysis, the issues they raised from their stories were categorised into topics, specifically based on their discourse structures.

Apart from the couple, Oprah's reaction and response towards the couple's narratives and the way she phrases her questions were also analysed whenever necessary. This is because whatever that was brought up during the interview by the couple will affect the understanding of the interviewer, including her personal opinions and reactions. These opinions and reactions are deemed important because they reflect not only Oprah's understanding and perception, but also that of the public's. Since the aspect of self-other representation is salient in the interview narrative, their lexical items (i.e., words, phrases, utterances) were identified and critically analysed based on van Dijk's ideological square model and its discursive strategies.

As the narrative inquiry approach per se is not sufficient enough, CDA could assist this study to explore how issues such as racism, identity or ideology are constructed and reflected from speakers' language (Paltridge, 2006). CDA could also assist researchers to analyse and unveil any concealed meanings, norms and values (Paltridge, 2006). Therefore, the narrative inquiry approach and CDA approach are suitable for this study to analyse the way the Duke and Duchess of Sussex construct (Jonassen, 1997) and reconstruct their stories (Webster & Mertova, 2007). The ideological square model also allows this study to highlight the way Harry and Meghan portray themselves as positive while the Royal family and British tabloids as negative.

ANALYSIS OF SELF-OTHER REPRESENTATION

This section provides six excerpts with random topics of discussion as samples of analysis. The topics in the selected excerpts for this paper are the lack of freedom, Archie's royal title and security, racism, and the lack of support and guidance from the Royal Family.

THE LACK OF FREEDOM

In this excerpt, Meghan employs the discursive strategies of distancing, polarisation of us versus them, examples, and victimisation to narrate how she was restricted in the palace when trying to get help for her mental health.

Excerpt 1

- Meghan: You couldn't just go. You couldn't. I mean, you have to understand, as well, **when I joined that family, that was the last time, until we came here, that I saw my passport, my driver's licence, my keys. All that gets turned over.** I didn't see any of that anymore.
- Oprah: Well, the way you're describing this, it . . . it's like you were trapped and couldn't get help, even though you're on the verge of suicide. That's what you are describing. That's what I'm hearing.
- Meghan: **Yes.**
- Oprah: And that would be an accurate interpretation, yes?
- Meghan: **That's the truth.**

The polarisation of us versus them can be seen in Meghan's narrative. She implies her distance between the Royal Family when she refers to the family as '*that family*'. Obviously, '*that family*' represents the Royal Family as 'them' and the pronoun '*I*' represent Meghan as 'us'.

Furthermore, she describes her then situation with concrete examples based on her experience to make the hearers understand what she had to go through when living with the Royal Family ("*when I joined that family, that was the last time, until we came here, that I saw my passport, my driver's licence, my keys. All that gets turned over*"). This description marks van Dijk's (1998) second principle of the ideological square model 'emphasise negative things about them' as it negatively reflects the Royal Family for not only disregarding Meghan who was in need of help, but also restricting her freedom. Moreover, it also gives the impression that she was trapped in the palace although she did not explicitly use the word '*trapped*' unlike Harry. When Oprah interprets Meghan's situation as being 'trapped', without any hesitation, Meghan affirms with the word 'yes' and the utterance '*that's the truth*', thus portraying herself as the powerless victim.

ARCHIE'S ROYAL TITLE AND SECURITY

The representation of self and other is shown in Excerpt 2 when Meghan employs evidentiality, polarisation of us versus them, distancing, explanation, hyperbole, and victimisation in her narrative about Archie not receiving his royal title and security.

Excerpt 2

- Meghan: Separate from that, and what was happening behind closed doors was, you know, we knew I was pregnant. We now know it's Archie, and it was a boy. We didn't know any of that at the time. We can just talk about it as Archie now. And that was when **they were saying they didn't want him to be a prince or a princess** — not knowing what the gender would be, which would be different from protocol — and that **he wasn't going to receive security.**
- Oprah: What?
- Meghan: **It was really hard.**
- Oprah: What do you mean?
- Meghan: **He wasn't going to receive security.** This went on for the last few months of our pregnancy, where I'm going, 'Hold on a second'.
- Oprah: That your son — and Harry, Prince Harry's son was not going to receive security?
- Meghan: That's right, I know.
- Oprah: How . . . but how does that work?
- Meghan: How does that work? It's like, "no, no, no. Look, because if he's not going to be a prince, it's like, OK, well, he needs to be safe, so we're not saying don't make him a prince or a

- princess — whatever it's going to be. But if you're saying the title is what's going to affect their protection, we haven't created this **monster machine** around us in terms of clickbait and tabloid fodder. You've allowed that to happen, which means our son needs to be safe".
- Oprah: So, how do they explain to you that your son, the grandson, the great-grandson of the Queen is not going to have ... he wasn't going to be a prince? How did they tell you that? And what reasons did they give? And then say, 'And so, therefore, you're not ... you don't need protection'.
- Meghan: **There's no explanation.** There's no version. I mean, that's the other piece of that ...
- Oprah: Who tells you that?
- Meghan: **I heard a lot of it through Harry and then other parts of it through conversations with family members.** And it was a decision that they felt was appropriate.

Meghan begins with an evidentiality strategy to reveal what she heard "*behind closed doors*" in the palace ("*They were saying they didn't want him to be a prince or a princess*"). The polarisation of us versus them is evident in this excerpt when she employs the pronouns 'we' and 'our son' to represent us and the pronouns 'they' and 'you' to represent them, which also shows distancing. She demonstrates the consequence of Archie not being given the Royal title by repeating the utterance "*he wasn't going to receive security*" twice to emphasise that not having the title will affect Archie's safety. Oprah's shocked reaction is obvious when she utters "*what?*" and expresses her disbelief "*what do you mean?*", "*Prince Harry's son was not going to receive security?*" Meghan further enhances Oprah's shocked reaction "*that's right, I know*", similar to the expression "*I know, right?*" which serves to reinforce the disbelief of the unfair treatment she received from the Royal Family.

Subsequently, Meghan explains the significance of Archie's Royal title towards his safety. In her explanation, she uses hyperbole to describe the British tabloids as the '*monster machine*', which enhances their depiction as the bad other and the victimiser. She regards the Royal Family responsible for the media twist and for putting her son in danger ("*we haven't created this monster machine around us in terms of clickbait and tabloid fodder. You've allowed that to happen, which means our son needs to be safe*"), thus once again portraying herself as the victim ("*it was really hard*").

Furthermore, Meghan states that the questions as to why Archie did not receive his Royal title and security, plus the Royal Family's plan of changing the convention for him, were not answered by the Royal Family ("*There's no explanation*"). This reflects the second principle of the model as "emphasise negative things about them" by making the Royal Family seem like a dictator while presenting Meghan as vulnerable. When Oprah further seeks to confirm who told Meghan about this matter, Meghan once again employs evidentiality strategy through the line "*I heard a lot of it through Harry and then other parts of it through conversations with family members*".

RACISM

In Excerpt 3, Meghan highlights how racism occurred in the Royal Family with several discursive strategies including vagueness, positive self-presentation, negative other-presentation, evidentiality, and pseudo-ignorance.

Excerpt 3

Oprah: You certainly must have had some conversations with Harry about it and have your own suspicions as to why they didn't want to make Archie a prince. What are . . . what are those thoughts? Why do you think that is? Do you think it's because of his race?

Meghan: (*Sighs*)

Oprah: And I know that's a loaded question, but . . .

Meghan: **But I can give you an honest answer.** In those months when I was pregnant, all around this same time . . . so we have in tandem the conversation of 'He won't be given security, he's not going to be given a title' and also concerns and conversations about how dark his skin might be when he's born.

Oprah: What?

Meghan: **And . . .**

Oprah: Who . . . who is having that conversation with you? What?

Meghan: **So . . .**

Oprah: There is a conversation . . . hold on. **Hold up. Hold up. Stop right now.**

Meghan: **There were . . . there were several conversations about it.**

Oprah: There's a conversation with you . . . ?

Meghan: With Harry.

Oprah: About how dark your baby is going to be?

Meghan: **Potentially, and what that would mean or look like.**

Oprah: Whoo. And you're not going to tell me who had the conversation?

Meghan: **I think that would be very damaging to them.**

Oprah: OK. So, how . . . how does one have that meeting? There were conversations . . . about no security, no title . . . and how dark his skin might be when he's born.

Meghan: **That was relayed to me from Harry.** Those were conversations **that family** had with him. And I think . . .

Oprah: Whoa.

Meghan: It was really hard to be able to see those as compartmentalised conversations.

Oprah: Because they were concerned that if he were too brown, that that would be a problem? Are you saying that?

Meghan: **I wasn't able to follow up with why, but that — if that's the assumption you're making, I think that feels like a pretty safe one,** which was really hard to understand, right?

When Oprah asks Meghan if Archie's race is the reason that he is not given the Royal title, Meghan sighs. Assuming that Meghan is reluctant to answer the question, Oprah then uses the disclaimer "*I know that's a loaded question, but...*" to anticipate Meghan's thought in order to avoid any criticism ahead as the question might be uncomfortable for the Duchess of Sussex. Yet, Meghan does not seem to be uncomfortable with the question as she interrupts with "*but I can give you an honest answer*" before Oprah finishes her sentence. This denotes that she is ready to share her point of view. Meghan states that Archie would not be given security and royal title. Additionally, she claims that there was a concern about his skin colour. Oprah's reactions ("*What?*", "*Whoo*", "*Whoa*") once again denote her disbelief about what was raised by Meghan. When Oprah asks her about the person who was having the conversation regarding Archie's skin tone, Meghan attempts to evade answering the question by continuing with her narrative ("*and...*", "*so...*") until Oprah stops her ("*Hold up. Hold up. Stop right now*"). This depicts her reluctance in revealing the identity of the person.

Subsequently, there appears to be vagueness in Meghan's narrative such as "*there were several conversations about it*" and "*potentially, and what that would mean or look like*". When Oprah tries to get a clearer and more specific answer from Meghan, she resists revealing the information by stating "*I think that would be very damaging to them*". By concealing the information, she appears to be protecting the identity of the particular member of the Royal Family. Such a move portrays her kindness and loyalty to the Royal Family and emphasises her positive self-presentation, while representing the Royal Family as the negative-other.

To make her claim more plausible, Meghan employs an evidentiality strategy to reveal how she got the information, which is from her husband, Harry ("*That was relayed to me from Harry*"). Also, distancing can be seen when Meghan refers to the Royal family as '*that family*' despite being married into the Royal family.

As the identity of the particular Royal Family member is not explicitly stated, Oprah questions Meghan if the concern is whether Archie's skin will be too brown. In response, Meghan tries to safeguard her position by using pseudo-ignorance strategy ("*I wasn't able to follow up with why, but that — if that's the assumption you're making, I think that feels like a pretty safe one*").

Apart from the Royal Family, Meghan and Harry also highlight how racism occurred in the British tabloids.

Excerpt 4

Meghan: Well, see, I think there's a reason that these tabloids have holiday parties at the Palace. They're hosted by the Palace, the tabloids are. You know, there is a construct that's at play there. And because from the beginning of our relationship, **they were so attacking and inciting so much racism**, really, it changed our . . . the risk level, because it went . . . it wasn't just catty gossip. It was bringing out a part of people that was **racist** in how it was charged. And that changed the threat. That changed the level of **death threats**. That changed everything.

Oprah: So, tell me this: You said a moment ago, it hurts that your family has never acknowledged the role that racism played in here. Did you think she was well received in the beginning?

Harry: Yes. Far better than I expected. (Laughter) But, you know, my grandmother has been amazing throughout. You know, my father, my brother, Kate and . . . and all the rest of the family, they were, they were really welcoming. **But it really changed after the Australia tour, after our South Pacific tour.**

Meghan: That's when we announced we were pregnant with Archie. That was our first tour.

Harry: But it was also . . . it was also the first time that the family got to see **how incredible she is at the job**. And **that brought back memories**.

Several discursive strategies are found in Excerpt 4, namely positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation, polarisation of us versus them, implication, disclaimers, and history as a lesson. Meghan starts her narrative by claiming that in order to get better press, the Palace hosted parties for the tabloids and gave in to the reporters. Such claims negatively depict the Royal Family as working with the tabloids. To put it in another way, it implies that the couple was bullied by the press because they did not give in to them. Moreover, the polarisation of us versus them is explicit when Meghan employs the pronoun '*our*' to represent her and Harry, and '*they*' to represent the British tabloids. She enhances the seriousness of racism created by the tabloids with the intensifiers '*so*' and '*really*' as well as the words '*racist*' and '*death threats*' in the utterance "*they were so attacking and inciting so much racism*", thus portraying the tabloids as the

victimisers and the negative-other. This denotes the second principle in van Dijk's (1998) model, which is the emphasis on negative things about 'them'.

Furthermore, when Oprah asks the couple if Meghan was well-received by the Royal Family at the beginning of their relationship, Harry employs disclaimers when he presents the positive attributes of his grandmother as being amazing and his father, brother, Kate and the rest of the family as being very welcoming to Meghan at first. Subsequently, the contrastive marker 'but' is used to denote a denial of the attributes ("*but it really changed after the Australia tour, after our South Pacific tour*"). Meghan further adds on to support Harry's statement by stating that the change took place after they announced her pregnancy with Archie, implying that there is racism among the Royal Family.

Finally, Harry positively presents Meghan as being incredible at the job during their first tour as working royals. Subsequently, he links it with the past event to indicate the similarity of what his parents especially his mother had experienced during her first tour as a working royal, thus indicating such a history as a lesson ("*that brought back memories*"). In other words, it denotes his concern of history repeating itself. Ultimately, this also explains the reason they decided to step back from their roles as senior working royals.

LACK OF SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE FROM THE ROYAL FAMILY

Meghan and Harry narrate the lack of support and guidance from the Royal Family while they were going through difficulties. This can be seen in the following excerpts.

Excerpt 5

Harry: You know, we've got some very close friends that . . . that have been with us through this whole process **but for the family, they very much have this mentality of, 'This is just how it is. This is how it's meant to be. You can't change it. We've all been through it'**.

Oprah: We've all been through the pressure. We've all been through being exploited?

Harry: Yes. But what was different for me was the race element, because now **it wasn't just about her, but it is about what she represents**. And therefore **it wasn't just affecting my wife. It was affecting so many other people as well**. And that's . . . **that was the trigger for me to really engage in those conversations with Palace** . . . senior Palace staff and with my family to say, 'Guys, this is not going to end well'.

In Excerpt 5, Harry compares the support he received from his close friends and the Royal Family when he and Meghan were planning to step back from their roles as senior working royals and move out from Britain. Based on Harry's description, it denotes that he and his wife received more support from his close friends than his nuclear family. On the contrary, the Royal Family were portrayed as not ready for a change ("*they very much have this mentality of this is just how it is. This is how it's meant to be. You can't change it. We've all been through it*").

When Oprah acknowledges that everyone has been through the pressure of being exploited at some point in life, Harry explains to her that there is a difference for him and Meghan. Harry associates his claim with the race factor as Meghan represents the colour community ("*it wasn't just about her, but it is about what she represents*"). At the same time, he emphasises the seriousness of the issue in the utterance "*it wasn't just affecting my wife. It was affecting so many other people as well*". In other words, it could imply that the people of colour especially those in the UK might be at risk of being racially discriminated against due to the way Meghan was treated by the British tabloids. It could also serve to reach out to the public for support on his statement.

Harry continues his positive self-presentation by emphasising his concern on racism in the UK and defending the non-white community when he took action by voicing out his concern about this matter with the Royal Family (“*that was the trigger for me to really engage in those conversations with Palace*”). This marks the first principle of van Dijk’s (1998) model as “emphasise positive things about us”. On the contrary, it also marks the second principle as “emphasise negative things about them” as it depicts a negative image of the Royal family for not rendering the couple with support or protection when they needed it the most.

The lack of support and guidance from the Royal Family is also perpetuated by Meghan when she states that no one prepares her on how to be a member of the Royal Family.

Excerpt 6

Meghan: Our plan . . . for me, I mean, I wrote letters to his family when I got there, saying, ‘I am dedicated to this. I’m here for you. Use me as you’d like’. **There was no guidance**, as well, right? There were certain things that you couldn’t do. But, you know, unlike what you see in the movies, **there’s no class on how to** . . . how to speak, how to cross your legs, how to be royal. **There’s none of that training**. That might exist for other members of the family. **That was not something that was offered to me**.

. . . even down to, like, the National Anthem. **No one thought to say**, ‘Oh, you’re American. You’re not going to know that’. **That’s me late at night, Googling** how . . . what’s the National . . . I’ve got to learn this. I don’t want to embarrass them. I need to learn these 30 hymns for church. All of this is televised. We were doing the training behind the scenes, because I just wanted to make them proud.

Meghan begins with her positive self-presentation by emphasising her dedication to serve the Royal Family when she first joined them (“*I am dedicated to this. I’m here for you. Use me as you’d like*”). However, she claims that despite her dedication, guidance was not given to her (“*There was no guidance*”, “*there’s no class on . . .*”, “*There’s none of that training*”, “*That was not something that was offered to me*”, “*No one thought to say*”). These claims emphasise the negativity on the Royal Family. To strengthen her claim, she exemplifies the types of guidance which were not given to her such as “*how to speak*”, “*how to cross your legs*”, “*how to be a royal*”, or how to sing the British national anthem. Not only does Meghan claim that there is no guidance or training for her on the royal protocol, but she also claims “*That might exist for other members of the family. That was not something that was offered to me*”, which clearly aims to compare and indicate discrimination in the Royal Family.

She further stresses her positive self-presentation when she describes her effort “*That’s me late at night, Googling how . . . what’s the National . . . I’ve got to learn this*”, “*I need to learn these 30 hymns for church*”, and portrays her loyalty to the family “*I don’t want to embarrass them*”, “*I just wanted to make them proud*”. This description marks the first principle of the model as “emphasise positive things about us”. Simultaneously, it also marks the second principle as “emphasise negative things about them” when Meghan portrays the Royal Family as the negative other who did not give her the support she needed.

Moreover, the polarisation of us versus them is evident when she represents herself with ‘I’, ‘me’ and the Royal Family as ‘his family’, ‘them’. However, the polarisation is not only about the couple versus the Royal Family, it has also extended to the nation when Meghan highlights her original nationality of being an American, not knowing the British national anthem. Indirectly, this represents Americans as ‘us’ and British as ‘them’.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study shows how Meghan and Harry represent themselves, the Royal Family and the British tabloids through their discourse when they voiced the issues they faced before they moved to America. The issues raised in this interview which were highlighted in this study include the lack of freedom, Archie’s royal title and security, racism, and the lack of support and guidance from the Royal Family. These highlighted issues show prominent patterns of self-other representation in their narratives.

The analysis of this CBS primetime interview reveals that the couple constantly employed the polarisation of us versus them. They represented themselves as positive while the Royal Family and British tabloids as the negative-other. The polarisation is evident through their use of lexical items (portraying the good ‘us’ and bad ‘others’).

Victimisation appears to be prominent in their interview responses. Meghan and Harry expressed strong emotions when narrating about issues such as how she was restricted in the palace and how she was bullied by the tabloids due to her race to impact the public’s belief about the unfair treatment she received in the UK.

At times, the couple also tried to reach out to the public by relating or using Meghan’s identity as a mixed-race individual to represent the women of colour. When Harry mentioned Meghan representing the Commonwealth countries, it instantly created socially shared beliefs that the public can relate to, especially those from the Commonwealth countries (see Example 1). Such an expression was generalised to instil more general and shared fears, attitudes and ideologies about the racism and biases of the Royal Family and the British tabloids.

Furthermore, the couple used implications to briefly express their point of view without them being explicitly stated in their interview response. They also produced various vague expressions when they either did not or could not specify the referents. Although Oprah managed to capture the unclear responses and repeated those questions to get more specific answers, the couple at times did not reveal the answer due to confidentiality, such as the question on who brought up the topic on Archie’s skin tone. By keeping that information confidential, it could positively portray the couple’s loyalty in protecting the Royal Family.

The couple also resorted to using disclaimers as a strategy to ideologically describe the Royal Family in a positive manner. For instance, Harry mentioned how Meghan was given a good welcome by the Royal Family when she first joined them (see Excerpt 4). Thus, such a move creates a positive image of them. Subsequently, they negatively portrayed the Royal Family using contrastive markers like ‘but’. This strategy also serves to safeguard their position as celebrities and as perfect examples for the public as whatever they said will be scrutinised and taken into account. Hence, they were cautious in choosing their words to avoid any unwanted conflict.

Table 2 summarises the discursive strategies from the categories of the ideological analysis found in the interview with examples of responses from the data.

TABLE 2. Categories of ideological analysis in Meghan and Harry’s narratives

Categories of ideological analysis	Examples from data
Comparison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There’s none of that training. That might exist for other members of the family. That was not something that was offered to me.
Disclaimers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ...all the rest of the family, they were, they were really welcoming. But it really changed after the Australia tour, after our South Pacific tour.
Distancing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Those were conversations that family had with him.

Evidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• when I joined that family• I even wrote letters to his family...• I heard a lot of it through Harry and then other parts of it through conversations with family members.
Generalisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It wasn't just affecting my wife. It was affecting so many other people as well.
History as lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• That brought back memories.
Hyperbole	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ... we haven't created this monster machine around us in terms of clickbait and tabloid fodder.
Implication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• That's when we announced we were pregnant with Archie. (<i>Implying the notion of racism among the Royal Family as changed took place after Meghan's announcement of pregnancy</i>)
Negative other-presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• they were so attacking and inciting so much racism, really, it changed our ... the risk level• It was bringing out a part of people that was racist in how it was charged. And that changed the threat. That changed the level of death threats
Openness, honesty	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• That's the truth.• But I can give you an honest answer
Polarisation, us-them categorisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Us: we, us, me, I, my family, my wife, our son, American,• Them: monster machine, his family, that family
Positive self-presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• she was very much welcomed into the family, not just by the family, but by the world• here you have one of the greatest assets to the Commonwealth that the family could have ever wished for.• it was also the first time that the family got to see how incredible she is at the job.
Pseudo-ignorance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I wasn't able to follow up with why, but that — if that's the assumption you're making, I think that feels like a pretty safe one.
Vagueness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There were several conversations about it.• Potentially, and what that would mean or look like.
Victimisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• when I joined that family, that was the last time, ... that I saw my passport, my driver's licence, my keys. All that gets turned over. I didn't see any of that any more.• It was really hard.

Apart from that, this study also shows how the couple's discourse can influence the interviewer's beliefs and knowledge, for example, Oprah's shocked reaction towards Meghan's revelation about the concern of Archie's skin colour in the palace, which in some way represents the public's reaction. This is why there appears to be mixed perceptions from the public about this CBS interview. Since there are mixed perceptions from the public, the couple's discourse has formed social persuasion to the public.

According to van Dijk (2006), these are the factors to consider when speakers influence the recipients' beliefs. Some support and believe in the couple possibly due to several reasons, namely the status or position of the speakers (i.e., the Duke and Duchess of Sussex), the public's lack of information or knowledge about the truth (i.e., no clarification or confirmation from the palace about the truth of what have been said in the interview thus far), the strong emotion or trauma expressed by the couple that makes them seem vulnerable (e.g., Meghan's suicidal thought), norms, values and ideologies that cannot be denied (e.g., the value of freedom and equality).

FINAL REMARKS

Meghan and Harry have created a view of themselves and the lives they had formerly lived in (i.e., as working royals) that they want the public to see and understand through this interview. Meghan frequently employed the word ‘truth’ to emphasise that what she said during the interview was the truth (see Table 2 & Excerpt 1). Nevertheless, it was reported that there were some disputable and false claims. For instance, the couple’s claim of secretly marrying each other three days before the wedding was denied by the Archbishop of Canterbury (Kiek, 2021). They later admitted that they were not officially married before the real wedding (Sykes, 2021). Furthermore, Harry claimed that he has never had the chance to ride a bicycle with his father when he was young, unlike Archie. Yet, this claim was also false as there were pictures of him riding one with his father, Prince Charles when he was a young boy (Osborne, 2021).

To date, the other members of the Royal Family such as the Queen, Prince Charles, Prince William or Duchess Kate have yet to confirm if what was said in this interview are true. The only feedback that the public has thus far is when Prince William informally stated that they are “*very much not a racist family*” while being asked by a reporter during his visit to a school (Adam, 2021). Here, William’s statement contradicts Meghan and Harry’s interview narrative. Though we might not be able to know the real truth at the moment, by critically analysing Meghan and Harry’s discourse, we can identify any ideological presupposition and biases underlying the interview.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the field of CDA by applying the ideological square model and its discursive strategies to analyse this interview narrative. Practically, it serves to educate the public that there is always more than one side to a story. Further studies could explore this interview from a different perspective or aspect such as gender, evasion, power relations, or identity.

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