

CALLING OUT LXS CULPABLES: CRITICAL DISCOURSE STUDIES AS LANGUAGE ACTIVISM

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BACKGROUND: COVID-19 IN ICE DETENTION CENTERS

- **27,546 total positive Covid-19 tests; 9 deaths** (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2021)
- Courts intervened due to egregious behavior towards / against detainees (cf. Chicago Tribune en Español, 2020; El Excélsior California, 2020).
- Deportation of individuals with Covid-19 = spread of Covid-19 to seven other countries (cf. Madan and Charles, 2020; Sheridan, 2020).

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Media use ideology to perpetuate hegemonic structure (Hall, 1997)

Discourse is the favored vehicle for communicating ideology (Fairclough, 2001)

Study media discourse to understand how society perpetuates hegemonic structure



CRITICAL DISCOURSE STUDIES

- Identify a social problem as the object of study, rather than a particular text or discourse; **analysis = means of social change** (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999)
- “[...] identify and analyze the roots of social problems [...] discern feasible ways of alleviating or resolving them,” (Fairclough et al., 2004, p. 1).
 - Current study: social problem = **immigrants in detention centers at higher risk for contracting and dying from Covid-19 due to ICE's behavior**

A group of border patrol agents in full riot gear, including helmets, face shields, and green uniforms, are marching in formation across a dry, dusty landscape. They are carrying wooden batons. The word "HOW?" is overlaid in large white letters in the center of the image.

HOW?

EXAMPLES

- Immigrants are **natural disasters** (cf. Chavez, 2001; Crespo Fernández, 2013; Mohd Don and Lee, 2014; Rasinger, 2010; Strom and Alcock, 2017)
- Immigrants are **criminals** (cf. Catalano, 2017; Leach and Zamora, 2006; Mohd Don and Lee, 2014; O'Doherty and Lecouteur, 2007)
- ICE is **blameless** (Strom, 2015; Strom and Alcock, 2017)

Recognizing these patterns constitutes the first step in dismantling them

RECOGNIZING PLACES AND PRACTICES OF RESISTANCE

- Third spaces (Bhabha, 2004)
 - Spanish-language media in US have strategic position in the “belly” of the empire (Lomas, 2008); deconstruct hegemonic structure by inhabiting the structures of dominance (Derrida, 1974)
- Discourse practices that challenge anti-immigrant ideologies
 - Latinx social actors are “Us”, are agentive, stand up to major groups to fight discrimination (e.g., Latinx janitors vs Target, undocumented Latinx immigrants vs Minnesota House of Representatives) (Strom, 2015)

PLACES OF RESISTANCE (¿?) SPANISH-LANGUAGE MEDIA IN US

- 77 news articles published in 25 different Spanish-language news outlets published in US
- March - December, 2020



PRACTICES OF RESISTANCE (¿?)

Ideology represented through:

- Sociosemantic construct: differentiation
- Grammar: passive voice



DISCURSIVE RESISTANCE: DIFFERENTIATION

DIFFERENTIATION

What it is

- How social groups are represented from the author's point of view
- Creating specific groups and pitting them against other groups
 - Creates an "us" vs. "them"

DIFFERENTIATION RESULTS

N=944

Everyone (n=470)	DHS (n=474)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Activists• Medical personnel• Politicians (local and national)• Attorneys• Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)• Unión Americana de Libertades Civiles (ACLU)• <i>Emplead@s de ICE</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ICE• Las empresas de prisiones• Border Patrol• El servicio médico de ICE (IHSC)• CoreCivic

The US government was reliably never part of DHS but never against it

EVERYONE VS DHS

- (1) Una investigación de [The New York Times](#) y [The Marshall Project](#) revela cómo **el Servicio de Inmigración y Control de Aduanas** se convirtió en propagador del virus. ([The New York Times en Español, 13 July 2020](#))
- (2) Tanto **ICE** como **CoreCivic** se han defendido contra las críticas de **los detenidos, abogados e incluso algunos miembros del personal de CoreCivic** sobre su manejo de un brote en las instalaciones en la primavera que infectó a más de 200 detenidos y reclusos ([San Diego Union-Tribune en Español, 21 December 2020](#))



REIFYING THE HEGEMONIC STRUCTURE: PASSIVE VOICE

PASSIVE VOICE

How it works

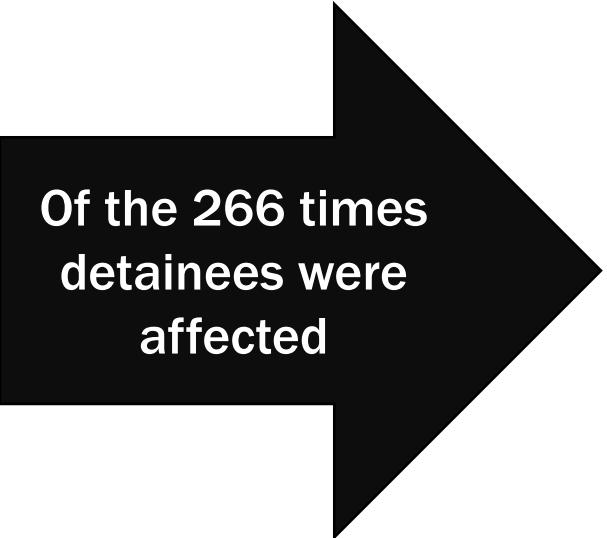
- Omits the agent of the action
 - Hides the negative actions of powerful US groups
- Puts emphasis on the affected object (detainees)
 - Victimizes detainees

PASSIVE VOICE RESULTS

TOTAL: N=489

Who is affected?

- Detainees (n = 266)
- All else (n = 223)



Of the 266 times
detainees were
affected

Who are the hidden agents?

- Large government body, e.g., ICE, DHS, the prison system (n = 249/266 → 93.6%)
 - ICE (n = 190)

DETAINEES AFFECTED (N=266)

Term	Frequency
Liberar	34
Deportar	23
Trasladar/transferir	21
Detener	14
Arrestar	11
Llevar	10
Poner	10

- Negative actions (n=210) most common in passive voice against detainees.
- Others include *castigar*, *encerrar*, *procesar*, and *amenazar*.

ICE IS BLAMELESS

(3) Algunos fueron enviados a centros de detención para esperar los casos de la corte de inmigración o las deportaciones, y otros ya fueron deportados. (San Diego Union-Tribune en Español, 2 September 2020)

(4) Villalonga, cuyo hijo, activista político, fue separado de su familia y deportado de regreso a su país de origen, donde temió por su vida. (El Nuevo Herald, 31 October 2020)

(5) Las mujeres en una de las unidades de vivienda dijeron que fueron amenazadas con gas pimienta, y algunas dijeron que en realidad fueron rociadas. (San Diego Union-Tribune en Español, 16 June 2020)

CRITICAL DISCOURSE STUDIES AS LANGUAGE ACTIVISM



CONCLUSIONS

- ICE is culpable
- CDS approach/framework needed to uncover how language systematically reproduces hegemonic structure
- Spanish-language media: sometimes a place of resistance, sometimes a place of perpetuation of hegemonic structure
- Sociosemantic constructs are more likely to be practices of resistance than grammatical constructs

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