Spanish-Language Print Media in the United States: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Ideological Representations

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1. Introduction

As of 2010, there were 50.5 million people of Hispanic or Latino origin in the United States (Ennis, Ríos-Vargas and Albert, 2011, p. 2). The analysis of discourse about Latinos as a minoritized group is typically carried out on texts produced by majority groups (cf. de Beaugrande, 2008; Martín Rojo and Gómez Esteban, 2005; Martín Rojo and van Dijk, 1997). In other words, while critical discourse analysts know a great deal about the discursive construction of minoritized groups in discourse created by majority groups (e.g., how the United States mass media represent Latinos), it is not known how such groups create their own discourse (cf. Delbene, 2008; Strom, 2013). Moreover, while critical discourse analysts have observed that discourse created by majority groups often contains racist ideologies concerning minoritized groups (cf. van Dijk, 1988, 1991), they do not know what kind of ideologies are represented in discourse created by minoritized groups, leading to an incomplete understanding of the discourse created by such groups and, more importantly, its potential to challenge the negative discursive practice of majority groups.

There is no doubt that media have the potential to reach enormous audiences and, consequently, communicate particular ideologies to their readers, listeners, and viewers. Regarding Spanish-language media in the United States, most studies have focused on the consumption patterns of these media and, to a degree, their role in the Spanish-speaking community. In one such study, Carreira (2002) reviews the current state of Spanish-language media in the United States (the print industry, radio, and television) and concludes that there are several functions they carry out, such as contributing to a sense of community. This observation is corroborated by Suro (2004), who conducted phone surveys of 1,316 Latinos to determine their language preferences for media consumption. His findings point to Spanish-language media as a valuable ethnic institution: "The Spanish-language media play an esteemed role as spokesmen [sic] for the Latino population and…have a significant influence in the formation of Hispanic identities," (p. 2). From these studies, one can infer that media in Spanish contain ideologies that represent and promote the Latino community. However, what still remains to be seen is how the linguistic characteristics of these media lead to the establishment of ideologies and, more importantly, how such ideologies may afford the Spanish-speaking community the opportunity to challenge stereotypical discursive practices in the United States.

2. Literature Review
2.1. Critical Discourse Studies

Critical discourse studies is not interested in analysis for the sake of analysis; rather, it is interested in analysis for the sake of social change. Thus, studies in this field start by identifying a social problem as the object of study, rather than a particular text or discourse (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999). What all approaches to critical discourse studies have in common is the "critical" in its name: "The critical objective is not only to identify and analyze the roots of social problems, but

also to discern feasible ways of alleviating or resolving them," (Fairclough, Graham, Lemke and Wodak, 2004, p. 1). The alleviation or resolution of problems leads to what some call the emancipatory nature of critical discourse studies (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997).

Wodak and Meyer (2009, pp. 18-32) outline six of the most prominent approaches in critical discourse studies. The two that most closely relate to the research goals of analyzing ideology in Spanish-language print media are outlined here. Norman Fairclough's (1992) dialectical-relational approach is three-dimensional, including text, discourse, and social practice. Fairclough (2001) holds that "social structures not only determine social practice, they are also a product of social practice…social structures not only determine discourse, they are also a product of discourse," (p. 31). For this reason, one can study social constructs, like ideology and power, through language. Similar to Fairclough's dialectal-relational approach, van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach (2008a) is three-dimensional, consisting of discourse, cognition, and society. While both scholars agree that there is a dialectal relationship between society and discourse, Fairclough (2001) holds that the relationship is direct, while van Dijk (2008a) holds that the relationship is mediated by a cognitive interface. This cognitive interface consists of schemata and scripts (van Dijk, 1991, 1997). Schemata, on the one hand, describe the general architecture of the mind. They are networks or collections of propositions that can be ideal, abstract, or prototypical; they are mental structures or representations of socially shared knowledge that is conventional and cultural (1998, pp. 80-81). Scripts, on the other hand, consist of knowledge that people have about stereotypical events in their culture (p. 82). Thus, a general mental framework consists of schemata, with scripts accounting for specific events.

Only two studies using critical discourse analysis have addressed the linguistic characteristics of Spanish-language media in the United States. Delbene (2008) collected over 150 news articles from two Spanish-language newspapers in the Washington, DC metropolitan area, Washington Hispanic and El Tiempo Latino, which contained the word "illegal" or "undocumented". The author, following Fairclough's dialectal-relational approach, analyzed the ideological effect of these terms, finding that illegal and undocumented were indicative of dehumanizing and humanizing practices, respectively. Moreover, Delbene found that while the Spanish-language newspapers were loyal to Latino immigrants with regards to their content, they were grammatically loyal to anti-illegal immigrant ideologies. From this, she concludes that the newspapers likely confront editorial decisions based on their readership: most readers are unauthorized immigrants, for whom the author suggests that newspapers must adopt a humanizing discourse. On the other hand, Latinos who are U.S. citizens comprise part of the readership, and it is for these readers that Delbene posits that the newspapers adopt a dehumanizing position.

Strom (2013) studied two local news articles from Spanish-language newspapers in Minnesota, La Prensa/Gente de Minnesota and La Conexión Latina. Following the approaches of Fairclough and van Dijk, the author analyzed the construction of identity and the reproduction of ideology and power. In one news article, unauthorized Latino immigrants were agents of transitive verbs; however, their agency was undermined because the content of the article indicated that they were either agents in negative situations or were being acted upon by more powerful forces. In a second news article addressing Minnesota's business sector, the author noted that the absence of unauthorized Latino immigrants served to obfuscate their success, while the presence of highly successful American companies established an ideology based on a hierarchy of successful Americans holding more power than unsuccessful Latino immigrants. Strom concluded that both articles reproduced stereotypical ideologies and power structures by presenting Latinos as non-agentive social actors.

2.2. Spanish-language media in Minnesota

The Spanish-language media boom in the United States noted by Otheguy, García and Roca (2000) at the turn of the twenty-first century has impacted Minnesota: the state currently has five newspapers, three radio stations, and one television station written and broadcasting entirely in Spanish. The growth of Spanish-language media in this state reflects Minnesota's Spanish-speaking population: as of 2011 in Minnesota, Latinos accounted for over 261,000 of the state's 5.3 million total population, up from just over 53,000 of a total 4.3 million in 1990 (Pew Hispanic Center, 2012). Forty-two percent of Minnesota's Hispanic population is foreign-born; of this population, 80 percent cite speaking a language other than English, presumably Spanish, at home (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009).

Perhaps most significant is the year when foreign-born Hispanics arrived in the United States: 20 percent arrived before 1990, 34 percent arrived between 1990 and 1999, and 40 percent arrived in 2000 or later (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009). From this data, one can conclude that although over 50 percent of Hispanics in Minnesota are native-born, those who are foreign-born are likely to have arrived within the last decade, and appear to speak mostly Spanish. At the time of carrying out the investigation, there were approximately 84,000 foreign-born Hispanics in Minnesota whose predominant language at home is Spanish. Thus, it is not surprising that Spanish-language media in Minnesota include five newspapers, three radio stations, and one television station.

Two local Spanish-language print newspapers served as the object of analysis for the current study: La Prensa/Gente de Minnesota and La Conexión Latina. La Prensa/Gente de Minnesota began in 1991, and assumed its current format in 2005. It is a free weekly publication that has a circulation of 10,000 and a total estimated readership of 70,000 per edition (Latino Communications Network, n.d.). Of the 32-page newspaper, four pages are dedicated to local news, which serves as the object of study in the current investigation. La Conexión Latina began in 2004 and is currently a free bi-weekly publication with a circulation of 5,000. Two to four pages of each 32-page publication contain local news, which constitute the object of the current investigation. While each newspaper had historically focused on more specific communities in Minnesota (La Prensa/Gente de Minnesota focusing on the Mexican community; La Conexión Latina focusing on the Ecuadorian community), recently they have shifted to a more general Latino focus, reflecting changes in the immigrant community in Minnesota. Consequently, the goals of the newspapers are similar in that they both propose to inform the Latino community in Minnesota about issues deemed important to the community.

3. Methods

The data include 24 news articles selected from March 2010 to July 2011: 13 from La Prensa/Gente de Minnesota and 11 from La Conexión Latina. The newspapers were collected from local Hispanic grocery stores, restaurants, *panaderías*, and clothing stores.

The analytical framework for the present study is based on the assumption that there is a dialectal relationship between discourse and society that is mediated by cognition. The concept being analyzed, ideology, is defined as fundamental social beliefs that organize and control the social representations of groups and their members (van Dijk, 2009, pp. 78-79). The research question that guides the analysis is: What ideologies are represented verbally in Spanish-language media? The overarching framework is based on Fairclough's (2001) three step approach: *Description* of text; *interpretation* of the relationship between text and interaction; and *explanation* of the relationship between interaction and social context (p. 91). The analysis is complemented by van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach throughout these three levels.

Four linguistic constructs were analyzed at the *description* level. The analysis of the first person plural pronoun included identifying the pronoun and its various manifestations: the pronoun itself, *nosotros*; first person plural verb conjugations (and the accompanying reflexive pronouns in the case of reflexive verbs); and the possessive adjective *nuestro/a*. With regards to agency, the subject and object of all transitive constructions were identified, followed by determining how many times Latinos were the subject and object of transitive verbs. Passive constructions were first identified, and then it was determined whether the construction obfuscated the positive actions of Latino groups or the negative actions of groups opposing Latinos. Finally, for individualization, all specific social actors (an individual rather than a group of people) to whom each article referred were identified, including the extent to which he/she was individualized, ranging from simply a given name to a full name plus a title.

At the *interpretation* level, the sociocultural and epistemic knowledge of the readers of the articles were analyzed by following van Dijk's Knowledge Device (2008a) (henceforth, the K-device). The K-device, which takes as input the current knowledge of speaker and calculates how much of this knowledge is already shared by recipients, consists of personal, interpersonal, group, institutional or organizational, national, and cultural knowledge (van Dijk, 2008a, p. 83). For the current investigation, two levels of the K-device were used: K-3 requires the identification of particular concrete events to which discourse refers, and K-4 requires the identification of the sociocultural knowledge necessary for the reader to make sense of the text (van Dijk, 2008a, p. 87).

To analyze K-3, all concrete events to which an article referred, such as the firing of more than 100 workers from Chipotle in early December, 2010, were identified. Then it was necessary to determine the extent to which each event was described for each reference, and finally, whether previous articles had mentioned this event. The analysis of K-4 involved identifying the sociocultural and epistemic knowledge that the Latino immigrant community would use to "fill in the gaps" to make a text coherent. To do this, the extent to which certain people, places, things, or events were glossed or explained was noted, thereby indicating to what extent they were assumed as part of the reader's sociocultural knowledge, or K-4.

At the *explanation* level, the following question was posed: Does the discourse contribute to sustaining ideologies or transforming them? (Fairclough, 2001, p. 138). In order to answer this question, it was necessary to operationalize the concepts of sustaining and transforming ideologies. The overarching goal of this investigation is to determine the potential for Spanish-language print media to challenge the negative discursive treatment of Latino immigrants in the United States. As such, the current study compares the ideologies represented in the English-language mass media with those represented in the Spanish-language media. Dávila's (2001) conceptualization of the representation of minoritized groups in the English-language media serves as the basis for sustaining ideologies. This author notes that all minoritized groups in these media are represented as "low-income, unskilled, uneducated, crime-ridden, unemployed," (p. 217). Thus, for this study, a sustaining ideology is one that perpetuates the aforementioned representations of Latinos in the mainstream media of the United States, while a transformative ideology is any ideology that challenges the aforementioned representations of Latinos in the English-language media.

4. Results
4.1. Description level
4.1.1. First person plural pronoun nosotros

Fairclough (2001) notes that the first person plural pronoun ("we") is either inclusive or exclusive, and communicates unity and solidarity, or division and distance, respectively. The use of the Spanish first person pronoun, *nosotros*, is analyzed to determine which social actors are included and excluded in local Spanish-language news. In example (1) below, the first person plural pronoun *nosotros* includes, and thus denotes solidarity with, unauthorized Latino immigrants. The article in which the example appears recounts the steps taken by Latinos who were fired from Chipotle to demand justice following several violations committed by Chipotle executives. While not noted explicitly, the articles imply that the workers were fired for not having the necessary documentation to work in the United States. This is corroborated by the fact that all the workers in the article are identified only by first name, a tactic used by the newspaper in question to protect unauthorized Latino immigrants from being identified and later deported. The voice that speaks in the following example is identified as "El trabajador José":

> (1) **Nos mantendremos** firmes en **nuestras** convicciones, estrictos con **nuestras** demandas y **lograremos** respeto (Dávila, 2011b; emphasis mine)

In this example, unauthorized Latinos are the only social actors included in the first person plural pronoun. Compared to the ideologies represented in the United States mass media, example (1) is distinct in that it includes social actors who are generally excluded: unauthorized Latino immigrants. Thus, this is one example of how local Spanish-language newspapers discursively represent ideologies that are different from, and in some ways opposite to, those found in the mainstream media. Moreover, this example illustrates how discursive representations of ideologies can inscribe a particular audience. In this case, the discourse inscribes unauthorized Latino workers, an audience that is rarely, if ever, inscribed in the United States mass media.

A variation on the use of *nosotros* to denote unauthorized Latino immigrants is the use of the first person plural pronoun to denote both authorized and unauthorized Latino immigrants. In example (2), the speaker is Verónica Méndez; it can be assumed that, since her full name is given, Méndez is a documented immigrant. Thus, she uses *nosotros* to refer to herself, a documented immigrant, as well as other social actors:

(2) Hoy, **nos levantamos** juntos para exigir que Supervalu tome el paso de establecer un código de conducta justo para **trabajadores de limpieza** en sus tiendas (Marchan trabajadores de limpieza, 2010; Trabajadores de limpieza, 2010; emphasis mine)

The other social actors included in *nosotros* are the janitors who were fired from Supervalu. While the reader is not told explicitly the migratory status of the janitors, this can be determined by following this story in later editions of La Prensa/Gente de Minnesota and La Conexión Latina. Mario Colloly, another janitor cited in the article, was later arrested and deported for entering the United States without documentation. Thus, at least one of the janitors in question was unauthorized. Because *nosotros* refers to the janitors who worked at Supervalu, one can infer that the first person plural pronoun includes both authorized and unauthorized Latinos immigrants. It bears noting that this pattern of inclusion, similar to that noted in example (1) above, is not typical of the mass media in the United States, which normally exclude social actors who are immigrants. By inscribing a reader different than that of the mainstream media, local Spanish-language media constitute a space from which Latino immigrants can challenge negative discursive practices.

The first person plural pronoun is also used to denote all immigrants, regardless of their country of origin, as in examples (3) and (4), which appeared in the same news article:

(3) Los Republicanos continúan con su hostilidad en contra de **nuestra** gente inmigrante (Villaruel, 2011; emphasis mine)

(4) **Seguimos** avanzando y confiando en la fuerza de **nuestra** gente trabajadora para exigir los cambios a este actual sistema que tanto **nos** oprime (Villaruel, 2011; emphasis mine)

Because these statements were not attributed to anyone in the article, it appears that the author, Cristian Villaruel, wrote these words to refer to himself. The various realizations of the first person plural verbal and possessive forms refer at least to Latino immigrants, as Villaruel is a Latino immigrant. However, the content of the article points to the inclusion of other social actors through the use of *nosotros* by referring to massive layoffs from 2009 by International Business Machines (IBM), a group that manufactures and sells computer hardware and software, which affected several different immigrant groups.

While many of the articles analyzed for this project inscribe readers who are immigrants, some articles employ the first person plural pronoun to include and inscribe social actors who do not align with the immigrant readership of the newspapers in question. One example concerns Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 26, which is "Minnesota's Property Services Union, uniting more than 4,200 janitors, 1,000 security officers, and window cleaners in the Twin Cities metropolitan area," (Morataya, 2012). The article in which example (5) appears applauds the ability of the aforementioned union to win several requests for the workers it represents, including the ability to work the day shift, better health care, and support for using only environmentally sound, or "green", products:

(5) "**Hemos** sido capaces de ganar un aumento de sueldo, así como un plan de salud mucho más fuerte en un momento de problemas económicos. Estoy muy orgullosa de estar de pie con mis hermanas y hermanos en nuestra victoria de hoy," dijo Rosalina Gómez, una trabajadora de limpieza ("La unión hace la fuerza", 2010; emphasis mine)

Following the same deductive reasoning given above, Rosalina Gómez is a documented Latina immigrant. However, her use of the first person plural pronoun also includes members of SEIU Local 26, which is a heterogeneous group comprising a large range of ages and several ethnicities. Examples (1-4) above are similar to example (5) in that they included immigrant social actors and, therefore, inscribed readers who are immigrants. However, in contrast to examples (1-4) that inscribed *only* immigrant social actors, the use of *nosotros* in example (5) also includes and inscribes non-immigrant social actors, or the members of SEIU. The use of the first person plural pronoun in (5) more closely approximates the ideologies seen in the English-language mainstream media by representing non-immigrant social actors while simultaneously representing immigrant social actors, a group not commonly included in the mainstream media.

One example where the function of the first personal plural pronoun most closely approaches its function in the mass media is found in an article that addresses the case of eight Latino commercial drywall workers who sued, under the representation of the law office of Miller O'Brien Cummins, their employers for unpaid or not fully paid wages. After 16 months of litigation, an agreement was reached in which between $2.5 and $6 million would be paid to the workers. This settlement enacted changes that would ensure fair payment and treatment of all construction workers. The person who spoke the following passage was either Brendan or Justin Cummins, both of whom were attorneys with Miller O'Brien Cummins, in response to the outcome of the trial:

> (6) **"Nosotros creemos** que la resolución de este caso va a servir como un aviso justo que los empleadores deben tener presente los derechos de los trabajadores latinos y otros inmigrantes," dijo Cummins (Shore, 2010; emphasis mine)

Here Cummins uses the first person plural pronoun to include only the attorneys with Miller O'Brien Cummins. Because this law firm has since changed names, it is unclear who the attorneys were that represented this firm at the time of this case in 2010. From the information available online, the attorneys for whom the firm was previously named (Richard Miller, M. William O'Brian, and Bredan and Justin Cummins) are all non-immigrant Anglo males. The use of *nosotros* in example (6) is different from examples (1-5) because it represents ideologies most common in the United States mass media, where non-immigrant Anglos are most often included in the use of "we", and are most often inscribed as readers. Of note is the fact that this example does not align with the typical readers of La Prensa/Gente de Minnesota and La Conexión Latina; in other words, there is a misalignment between the social actors included in and inscribed by *nosotros* and the typical readers.

To summarize, the first person plural pronoun *nosotros* communicates inclusion and solidarity, thereby inscribing several different social actors. Examples (1-6) have shown that the social actors included by *nosotros* can be unauthorized Latino immigrants, all Latino immigrants, all immigrants (regardless of nationality), immigrant and non-immigrant members of a local union, and non-immigrants. While there are several possible explanations for the heterogeneous nature of the social actors included in and inscribed by La Prensa/Gente de Minnesota and La Conexión Latina, the most plausible seems to be that the use of *nosotros* to inscribe a heterogeneous audience is likely a reflection of the equally heterogeneous group of writers who contribute to La Prensa/Gente de Minnesota and La Conexión Latina. While this requires the unlikely stipulation that journalists only write about themes and topics of the groups of which they are members, it is plausible that a heterogeneous group of writers will be familiar with a wider array of themes and topics. Given that La Prensa/Gente de Minnesota and La Conexión Latina accept most any article they receive (as long as it pertains to the Latino community), one may assume that the ideologies represented in the writing of each contributor will be just as varied as his/her background and experiences.

4.1.2. Agency

Following Fairclough (2001), the expression or obfuscation of agency is indicative of ideology, where participants who are agents in transitive constructions are afforded more power than participants who are agents of intransitive constructions, or of participants who are recipients of the actions of a transitive verb. Thus, determining the agents and recipients of transitive constructions is indicative of ideology. In eight of the 13 La Prensa/Gente de Minnesota articles analyzed, Latinos were agents of a greater number of transitive verbs than any other group; this was the same outcome for six of the 11 La Conexión Latina articles analyzed. From this, Latinos are agents of a greater number of transitive verbs than any other social actors in more than half of the articles analyzed. A cognitive linguistic approach to agency holds that "The grammatical and semantic prominence of Transitivity is shown to derive from its characteristic discourse function: High Transitivity is correlated with foregrounding, and low Transitivity with backgrounding," (Hopper and Thompson, 1980, p. 251). Following this line of thought, because they are often agents of transitive verbs, Latinos are frequently foregrounded in local news articles in La Prensa/Gente de Minnesota and La Conexión Latina.

In analyzing the transitive verbs found in 24 local news articles from La Prensa/Gente de Minnesota and La Conexión Latina, two categories resulted: high transitivity and low transitivity. Those verbs categorized as belonging to the high transitivity category demonstrated the prototypical

characteristics of transitivity, where a "transfer" (Hopper and Thompson, 1980, p. 251) occurred from the subject of the verb – or the agent – to the object of the verb – or the patient:

> (7) trabajadores de limpieza en tiendas de CTUL **mandaron** una carta (Marchan trabajadores de limpieza, 2010; Trabajadores de limpieza, 2010; emphasis mine)

> (8) El equipo SWAT **rompió** la puerta de entrada de la casa (Arévalo, 2011; emphasis mine)

Example (7) contains the ditransitive verb *mandaron.*[1] This verb is highly transitive because there is a transfer of action to a direct and an indirect object. Thus, the subject of the verb, "trabajadores de limpieza" are highly agentive in (7). In the same way, the SWAT team is agentive in (8) because it is the subject of the highly transitive verb *rompió* whose action transfers to a direct object. Of a total of 102 highly transitive verbs analyzed, Latinos were agents of 57, indicating that not only were they agentive in a majority of the texts analyzed for the current investigation, but that they were also the most highly agentive social actors in the majority of highly transitive verbs. In this way, Latinos are the social actors who are most foregrounded because they are most often the agents of highly transitive verbs.

These results stand in contrast to verbs of low transitivity, in which the "transfer" from the subject of the verb to the patient of the verb is not as strong. Similar to the example of *imaginar* above, following are two examples of verbs of low agency, whose subjects would thus be said to be agentive, although with low agency:

> (9) un grupo de nueve trabajadores y aliados, unidos por la organización de derechos laborales, CTUL, **anunciaron** una huelga de hambre sin límite (Méndez, 2011b, c; emphasis mine)

> (10) Chipotle **dijo** el miércoles que los representantes de la cadena de tiendas de 1000 se reunirían con los trabajadores en enero (SBJ, 2010; emphasis mine)

In example (9), Latinos are the subject of the verb *anunciaron* which has relatively low transitivity compared to *comer*, for example, because the former does not necessarily indicate the "transfer" of an action, whereas the latter does. Thus, the subject of this verb, "un grupo de nueve trabajadores y aliados", has low agency in this construction. Similarly, (10) gives the case of the verb of low transitivity, *dijo*, whose subject, Chipotle, has low agency.

Verbs of low transitivity were the most numerous in the 24 articles analyzed for the current investigation. Of the 120 verbs of low transitivity, Latinos were agents of 65. Thus, Latinos were again the social actor with the greatest number of agentive constructions in verbs of low transitivity. Curiously, from a cognitive approach, this indicates that Latinos were most often backgrounded, directly contrasting the idea set forth earlier where Latinos were the most foregrounded social actors. This may be explained by the fact that Latinos constituted the majority by only a few occurrences, meaning that other social actors had nearly as many high and low agentive constructions as did Latinos. From this, a critical conclusion can be drawn: Because Latinos are typically backgrounded in the United States mass media, their backgrounding as a result of being agents of verbs of low transitivity is not as surprising as the nearly equal backgrounding of other social actors who are typically foregrounded in the aforementioned media. What is more, Latinos as the most frequent highly agentive social actors in La Prensa/Gente de Minnesota and La Conexión Latina serves as a stark contrast to the mainstream English-language media where the foregrounded position of Latino immigrants would be rare. In other words, agency serves to present Latinos as social actors whose potential for appearing at the foreground of discourse is the same as those social actors who most often appear in this position in the mass media.

To conclude, Latinos were the most agentive social actors in the majority of articles in both La Prensa/Gente de Minnesota and La Conexión Latina. Moreover, Latinos constituted the greatest number of instances of verbs of high and low agency, thus leading to the conclusion that agency challenges ideologies found in the English-language mass media, where Anglo Americans would

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[1] *Mandar* has several meanings; In this particular context, the meaning is "to send".

traditionally be the social actors allotted the greatest number of instances of high and low agency. The following analysis demonstrates a discursively opposite function of agency.

4.1.3. Passive constructions

Passive constructions, which are achieved by maintaining the transitive verb and deleting the agent phrase, serve the opposite function of agency by hiding, rather than emphasizing, the actions of social actors. Considering both newspapers, 17 total articles contained passive constructions: in four articles a greater number of passive constructions hid the positive actions of Latinos; in thirteen articles a greater number of passive constructions hid the negative actions that groups carried out against Latinos.

Examples (12a) and (13a) demonstrate how the process of creating passive constructions has the ability to hide Latino agency. In (12a), the process of carrying out a protest hides the fact that Latinos were the social agents who carried out the protest. Similarly, in (13a), the process of organizing the protest takes precedent over the Latino and Latino-supporting members of the groups that organized the protest. These may be contrasted with (12b) and (13b), the active alternates to (12a) and (13a), respectively, which hide the agency of Latinos and Latino-supporting groups to a lesser degree.

(12a) **se llevó a cabo** una manifestación en el Capitolio de Minnesota en Saint Paul (Rodríguez González, 2010; emphasis mine)
(12b) [los manifestantes] **llevaron a cabo** una manifestación en el Capitolio de Minnesota en Saint Paul

(13a) La protesta **fue organizada** por el Derechos de los Inmigrantes de Minnesota Comité de Acción (MIRAc) y el Boicot Arizona Minnesota (BAM) (Rodríguez González, 2010; emphasis mine)
(13b) El Derechos de los Inmigrantes de Minnesota Comité de Acción (MIRAc) **organizaron** [sic] la protesta

Passive constructions also served to hide the negative actions of groups opposed to Latinos. In (14a), (15a), and (16a) below, passive constructions hide the negative actions of groups opposed to Latinos. In this way, the author does not emphasize the fact that Lunds (14), Chipotle (15), and Cub Foods (16) fired Latino workers and, in the case of Cub Foods Security (16), physically assaulted the allies, but rather focuses on the processes of firing and assaulting. In fact, unlike (12) and (13) above, the constructions in (14-16) do not provide the agent of the verb. Thus, although the agents in (14-16) can be retrieved from context, the function of these passive constructions is to facilitate the forgetting of the agent and shift the focus of the reader to the process.

(14a) Como resultado, trabajadores quienes antes limpiaban sus tiendas **fueron despedidos** (Méndez, 2011a; emphasis mine)
(14b) Como resultado, **[Lunds] despidió** a trabajadores quienes antes limpiaban sus tiendas

(15a) estos trabajadores quienes **fueron despedidos** a finales del 2010 (Dávila, 2011a; emphasis mine)
(15b) **[Chipotle] despidió** a estos trabajadores a finales del 2010

(16a) un trabajador líder de la campaña **es despedido** y aliados **son asaltados** físicamente (Trabajadores exigen, 2011; emphasis mine)
(16b) **[Cub Foods] despidió** a un trabajador líder de la campaña y **[la seguridad de Cub Foods] asaltaron** [sic] físicamente a los aliados

Of note is the fact that the newspapers in question do not have style sheets; thus, writers have the freedom to (not) use passive constructions. To summarize, La Prensa/Gente de Minnesota and La Conexión Latina tend to use passive constructions to hide the agency of Latinos and their supporters, while also hiding the negative actions of those who do not support Latinos. These findings are suggestive of those ideologies present in the mass media of the United States and other European

countries (cf. KhosraviNik, 2009; van Dijk, 1988; van Dijk, Ting-Toomey, Smitherman, and Troutman, 1997) that are controlled by majority groups and therefore perpetuate ideologies that underscore their positive actions and hide their negative actions. Conversely, the same media attempt to hide the positive actions and emphasize the negative actions of minoritized groups.

4.1.4. Individualization

The analysis of individualization supports a critical approach to discourse because certain groups, such as immigrants, are subject to backgrounding in the mass media (van Leeuwen, 2008). In the current investigation, individualization encompasses van Leeuwen's (2008) notions of specification, determination, nomination, and functionalization, all of which center about the concept of inclusion through the use of titles, credentials, or institutional affiliations.

In general terms, four of the 13 articles from La Prensa/Gente de Minnesota did not afford any individualization to Latinos. In the remaining nine articles, two afforded Latinos a full name, but no title, while seven afforded Latinos a full name and a title. From La Conexión Latina: Four of the 11 articles had no individualization for Latinos, although, notably, three of those four articles had no individualization for anyone. Of the seven articles that afforded Latinos individualization, all included the given and surname, as well as a title.

Examples (17-19) below are instances of low individualization where the social actor is afforded only a given name (17), or a given name and a "pseudo title" (18-19):

(17) Juan dijo (Dávila, 2011b)

(18) La ex-trabajadora María (Dávila, 2011b)

(19) El trabajador José (Dávila, 2011b)

The first item to note is that, short of not mentioning these social actors at all, this type of individualization does little to foreground them. Initially, then, it seems that the author employs low individualization to maintain Juan, María, and José in the background. The second item to note is that full names of social actors are included in local news articles only in the case that the person is a documented immigrant so as not to jeopardize his/her safety. Thus, instead of purposefully backgrounding Latinos in his stories, the author may simply be protecting them by providing only their given names.

At any rate, it is worthwhile to compare and contrast these findings with van Leeuwen's (2008) observations regarding individualization. It appears that individualization in La Prensa/Gente de Minnesota and La Conexión Latina functions in line with van Leeuwen's (2008) idea of working-class newspapers referring specifically to "ordinary people", in this case, unauthorized Latino (ex)workers. However, these findings contrast with van Leeuwen's (2008) observation that newspapers tend to background minoritized groups such as immigrants. Examples (20-22) below show constructions that afford Latinos full individualization, consisting of full names and titles (both "pseudo titles" in the case of (20-21), and "real titles" in the case of (22)):

(20) Mario Colloly Torres, ex-trabajador de limpieza (Méndez, 2011a)

(21) Silvia García Roque, trabajadora de limpieza (Méndez, 2011b, c)

(22) Senadora estatal, Patricia Torres Ray (Méndez, 2011b, c)

These examples of individualization contrast with van Leeuwen's (2008) observation that minoritized groups are rarely afforded any individualization. Initially, it appears that La Prensa/Gente de Minnesota and La Conexión Latina present ideologies different from those found in the English-language mainstream media by representing Latinos as social actors at the fore of the social arena, rather than in the background.

However, Latinos are not the only social actors afforded individualization in La Prensa/Gente de Minnesota and La Conexión Latina. In fact, every mention of a non-Latino was accompanied by full

individualization (a full name and a title), save one case where the title was omitted, which was easily identified from the context. Examples (23-24) below illustrate full individualization for non-Latino social actors:

(23) Pastor Grant Stevenson, Pastor de Spirit of Truth Lutheran Church (Méndez, 2011b)

(24) el candidato Republicano [sic] para el gobernador Tom Emmer (Sigal, 2010)

A point that arises from the analysis of individualization is that the inclusion and exclusion of certain social actors could potentially create a social hierarchy where those who are afforded more individualization are at the forefront of society and those who have less individualization are backgrounded in society. For example, although many Latinos are afforded individualization (indeed, more than may have been expected, given van Leeuwen's (2008) observations), these Latinos are, more often than not, documented Latinos. What is more, as stated above, non-Latinos are always afforded full individualization, except in one case. However, given that in some articles unauthorized Latinos were afforded the same amount of individualization as documented Latinos and non-Latinos, the social hierarchy collapses because there are no differences between the individualization of social actors. Consequently, this situation represents an ideology of equality between unauthorized Latino immigrants, documented Latino immigrants, and non-Latinos that the English-language mass media in the United States rarely present.

4.2. Interpretation level

For van Dijk (2008a), "Shared sociocultural knowledge is a crucial condition for the production and understanding of discourse," (p. 83). The analysis of contextual features has as its purpose the identification of discursive structures that are indicative of what the creator assumes the recipient knows. The analysis of context includes two different levels: the level of particular events, or K-3, and the level of sociocultural, or epistemic, knowledge, or K-4.

In general, the analysis of K-3 indicated that the concrete events with which the authors of local news articles assumed the readers were familiar centered around three topics: Chipotle, janitors, and government-related events. Due to space restrictions, this discussion is limited to contextual references to Chipotle.

Four articles were dedicated to events pertaining to Chipotle Mexican Grills, a fast food chain with headquarters in Denver, Colorado. The catalyst for the events covered in the articles was the firing of more than 100 workers from Chipotle in early December, 2010. These articles, published within a one-month period, covered a great amount of detail by calling upon reader's knowledge of particular concrete events that were communicated in previous articles. These specific references to previous events included the injustices committed by Chipotle against Latino employees, and were indicative of an overarching ideology where Latinos are victims of a large, national corporation. The protests referred to in the articles that occurred as a result of these injustices were indicative of an overarching ideology where Latinos resist and protest poor treatment by a majority group. Although such ideologies work in opposition in these articles, they are not typically presented in this fashion in the English-language media in the United States. For example, it is common for majority groups to be portrayed in the mass media as powerful; their positive actions are emphasized and their negative actions are de-emphasized (cf. van Dijk, 1988; van Dijk, Ting-Toomey, Smitherman, and Troutman, 1997). While the articles referencing the events that occurred at Chipotle draw upon ideologies where Chipotle is powerful, they also draw upon ideologies where the negative actions of a powerful majority are emphasized. Similarly, the mass media rarely portray minoritized groups as organizing to create powerful groups who speak out and exact change from majority groups. In this way, the particular concrete events that are referenced in these articles, while reenacting some ideologies common in the United States mass media, also represent ideologies that challenge those ideologies represented by the mass media.

The analysis of K-4, or sociocultural knowledge, indicated that knowledge of groups and entities related to activism was necessary to make sense of the local news sections of La Prensa/Gente de Minnesota and La Conexión Latina, thereby inscribing an audience familiar with local activist groups who support the Latino immigrant community. Authors referred to these groups and entities with

differing levels of detail, from full disclosure including explanations of acronyms and background information to no disclosure besides the use of an acronym. The group to which authors referred the most was the Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en la Lucha (CTUL), which was afforded different levels of disclosure, from simply giving the acronym (25), to explaining the acronym (26), to providing background information about what the group is and its goals (27-29):

> (25) **CTUL** anuncia planes para una huelga de hambre (Trabajadores exigen, 2011; emphasis mine)

> (26) **CTUL** (**Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en la Lucha**) (Méndez, 2011a; emphasis mine)

> (27) Alrededor de 25 trabajadores y extrabajadores de Chipotle se reunieron en las oficinas de **CTUL, ubicada en la Calle Franklin y Avenida 25** (Trabajadores de limpieza iniciarán huelga de hambre, 2011; emphasis mine)

> (28) un grupo de nueve trabajadores y aliados, unidos por **la organización de derechos laborales, CTUL** (Méndez, 2011b; emphasis mine)

> (29) **el Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en la Lucha (CTUL) – la organización que organizo [sic] la marcha el sábado…CTUL es una organización basada en las Twin Cities adonde [sic] trabajadores construyen poder para dirigir la lucha por sueldos y condiciones justas, respeto básico y una voz en el trabajo (**Marchan trabajadores de limpieza, 2010; Trabajadores de limpieza, 2010; emphasis mine)

Examples (25-29) inscribe a range of epistemic communities through their references to CTUL. In (25), the author assumes shared sociocultural knowledge with the audience; in (26) the author assumes some overlap in sociocultural knowledge, but provides further explanation where he/she assumes a gap in the audience's knowledge which is filled in by providing limited details regarding CTUL; finally, in (27-39), the author assumes no shared knowledge with the audience by providing the most detailed explanation of CTUL.

The contributors to La Prensa/Gente de Minnesota and La Conexión Latina are members of both the same epistemic community as their audience and epistemic communities of which the audience is likely not a member. In this way, K-4 is indicative of varying assumptions by contributors as to the sociocultural knowledge held by the audience. Consequently, local news articles may inscribe a reader that is very close to the actual audience; however, they may also inscribe a reader distinct from the actual audience. This may discourage readers by causing them to feel that "their" newspaper speaks to another audience, or it may encourage readers to become involved and mirror in their own lives the protesting and activism they see in the newspapers. If the latter is the result, it points to a weak version of opinion of thought in the field of communication studies termed "the spiral of silence", whereby the media privilege certain ideas which in turn are perceived by the audience as being the prevailing opinion. As a consequence, the ideas presented in the media are strengthened and gain more followers, whereas other ideas weaken and lose assenters (Noelle-Neumann, 1974). In this case, by assuming shared knowledge of certain groups and entities, readers may believe that these groups and entities are more prevalent than they actually are, and may take up their cause so as not to fall in disaccord with the rest of the community, whom they believe to already be familiar with the aforementioned groups and entities.

4.3. Explanation level

The *explanation* level seeks to answer the question: Does the discourse contribute to sustaining ideologies or transforming them? (Fairclough, 2001). By compiling the results of the previous analysis for each article and considering these results holistically, 13 out of 24 articles presented overall transformative ideologies, nine presented sustaining ideologies, and two presented equally transformative and sustaining ideologies. In other words, in 13 articles, more than half of the discursive constructions were transformative. More importantly, every article save one had at least one

discursive construction that transformed typical ideologies. Thus, while local news articles in La Prensa/Gente de Minnesota and La Conexión Latina present ideologies that challenge stereotypically negative ideologies towards Latinos, each article does so to a differing degree. The effects of the representation of these outcomes are discussed in the section that follows.

5. Conclusion

This section addresses the implications of the three ideological outcomes observed in the present study (perpetuating ideologies, transformative ideologies, and the combination of perpetuating and transformative ideologies) and the ways in which these outcomes contribute to sustaining or challenging the negative discursive treatment of Latino immigrants in the United States.

Perpetuating ideologies in local news articles in La Prensa/Gente de Minnesota and La Conexión Latina patterned around the concept of the presence and absence of Latino immigrants from United States society. Ideologies in which Latino immigrants were present portrayed them as victims of negative and oppressive treatment by Anglo Americans, thereby perpetuating the ideologies found in the English-language mass media. The other type of perpetuating ideology was based on the exclusion, or absence, of Latinos from United States society. Given that this ideology was accompanied by or implied the inclusion and presence of Anglo Americans, it also reinforced similar ideologies found in the mainstream media where Anglo Americans are at the forefront of society and Latino immigrants are in the background or nonexistent.

A possible function of these perpetuating ideologies in local Spanish-language news articles is to lend to the existing hegemonic structure in the United States. Many scholars have noted that the mass media use ideology to promote a hegemonic system (cf. Fairclough, 1995, 2001; Grossberg, 1984; Hall, 1985; van Dijk, 1988, 2008b). Grossberg (1984) defines such a system as follows: "Hegemony…involves the colonization of popular consciousness or common sense through the articulation of specific social practices and positions within ideological codes or chains of connotational significance," (p. 412). From this position, a hegemonic structure in the United States concerns the relegitimation of power by the majority group that consists of Anglo Americans. In this way, one would expect that those ideologies present in the United States mass media would portray Anglo Americans in a way that allows them to maintain their position of power. Indeed, the perpetuating ideologies observed in the current study served to help Anglo Americans colonize popular consciousness and thereby implicitly reinforce their position of dominance by representing Latino immigrants as victims of negative actions and by representing Anglo Americans as those at the forefront of society while simultaneously backgrounding and excluding Latinos. However, the aforementioned scholars have argued that hegemony is promoted through the mass media without noting the role of minoritized media in this process. From this investigation, it seems that, as Grossberg (1984) remarked, ideologies that promote the hegemonic structure have infiltrated the popular consciousness of not only the mainstream media, but also of the minoritized media. In this way, it would appear that local Spanish-language media is yet another mouthpiece through which Anglo Americans can implicitly propagate their position of dominance over Latino immigrants. Undeniably, the ideologies represented in La Prensa/Gente de Minnesota and La Conexión Latina contribute to a limited extent to the negative discursive treatment of Latino immigrants; however, because these ideologies were in the minority, local Spanish-language newspapers in fact do more to challenge the negative discursive treatment of Latino immigrants.

Perhaps the most surprising outcome in the current study was the greater presence of transformative ideologies than perpetuating ideologies. The observed transformative ideologies carry out three functions: they establish and sustain a Latino immigrant community in the Twin Cities; they inform and teach the audience; and they help dismantle the United States hegemonic structure, thereby leading to more activism by the audience.

Much as what Suro (2004) found in his study, one of the functions of transformative ideologies (e.g., those that refer to the protests carried out by Latino immigrants in response to their mistreatment by Chipotle) in La Prensa/Gente de Minnesota and La Conexión Latina is to build and sustain the Spanish-speaking community in Minnesota. For example, analysis at the *description* level of the verbal mode showed that the linguistic constructs first person plural pronoun *nosotros*, agency, and individualization functioned as inclusive devices, thereby inviting the audience to be a part of the

community the articles inscribe. What is more, the articles dedicated to protests and marches function to strengthen the Latino immigrant community in Minnesota by communicating that Latinos in the Twin Cities metropolitan area support each other.

The representation of transformative ideologies also serves to inform and teach the audience. Newspaper personnel emphasized that their publications aimed to inform and teach the Spanish-speaking community in Minnesota about issues and events of importance. In other words, these media keep audiences abreast of issues happening in the "Old World" (Latin America), national issues, and local issues directly affecting the local Latino immigrant community. Indeed, this analysis has shown that these newspapers inscribe a hybrid community by referring to sociocultural knowledge from Latin America, the Latino immigrant community in the United States, and the local immigrant community. In this way, local Spanish-language media serve an educational role in which pre-existing knowledge about Latin America is reinforced and new knowledge about national and local issues that affect the Latino immigrant community is added to ultimately establish a hybrid epistemic community.

Although the perpetuating ideologies represented by La Prensa/Gente de Minnesota and La Conexión Latina served to relegitimate the hegemonic structure in the United States, the repetitive representation of ideologies that challenge traditional ideologies may begin to break down the hegemonic structure, serving in this manner as a form of activism in and of itself. In other words, the greater occurrence of transformative ideologies in local Spanish-language newspapers indicates a recolonization and deconstruction of the audience's consciousness. In this way, the greater presence of ideologies that present Latino immigrants as agentive social actors who stand up to unfair treatment by Anglo Americans plays a part in dismantling and shifting the hegemonic structure in the consciousness of those who read La Prensa/Gente de Minnesota and La Conexión Latina. As such, the discursive and semiotic representation of activism also serves as activism by creating alternative realities for the audience in which Latinos are represented in a non-stereotypical fashion.

Transformative ideologies also function to dismantle the current United States hegemonic structure by means of a variation on the original understanding of the spiral of silence (Noelle-Neumann, 1974). In the context of my study, the repeated representation of transformative ideologies may lead the audience to believe that such ideologies are the prevailing opinion, at least among the audience of La Prensa/Gente de Minnesota and La Conexión Latina. These transformative ideologies may begin to colonize the consciousness of the audience, causing perpetuating ideologies to appear less common and to lose favor with this group. As a consequence, if the audience shifts their consciousness to believe that activism and Latino agency is more common than the English-language mainstream media would have them believe, they may begin to participate in activism so as to be part of the norm. In other words, following the spiral of silence, the prevalence of activism in local news articles could result in the mobilization of support for pro-immigrant causes, thereby further breaking down the hegemonic structure in the United States. As such, it seems appropriate to rename the spiral of silence as the spiral of activism because the repetitive mention of certain ideologies in this case does not lead audiences to silence; rather, it leads readers to perceive activism as normal and something in which they should partake.

To conclude, the present study constitutes one of few analyses of ideology in discourse created by a minoritized group. By indicating the potential for local Spanish-language media to challenge the negative ideologies commonly represented in the English-language mass media, this study underscores the impact local media may have on changing oppressive discursive practices against minoritized groups in the United States.

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