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**Gendered Discourse: Latina Immigrant Identity  
Representation in American News Reports**

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## **Declaration**

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on 30.4.2024

Emmalynn Hansen

## **Title**

Gendered Discourse: Latina Immigrant Identity Representation in American News Reports

## **Keywords**

Neoliberalism, feminism, United States, Latin America, immigration, discourse, hegemony

## **Abstract**

The increased omnipresence of capitalism in a more globalized world includes increasing transnational relations, heightened global inequalities, and polarized politics, all factors that impact migration flows and results in differential conditions for immigrants. The thesis attempts to understand the representation of the identity of female immigrants from Latin America to the United States to see how discourse can uphold subjugation based on migration status, race, and gender, ultimately seeing how this is reinforced by an increasingly powerful and pervasive system of neoliberal capitalism and globalization. Through a Critical Discourse Analysis on the identity of women from Latin America who immigrate to the United States, the thesis explores how the increasing phenomenon of globalization and the neoliberal capitalist order affect the Latina immigrant identity by looking at news articles from the popular American news outlet *The New York Times*. The thesis is rooted in critical theories of hegemony, power, and femininity, departing from a classic neoliberal approach which sees global hegemony as naturalized by the unbiased mechanisms of the free market and globalizing forces. The thesis takes a post-structural, intersectional feminist approach to show the gendered, racialized, and colonial impacts of immigration on female migrants. The goal is to demonstrate that by studying the discrimination of female immigrants, it can be explored how the globalized neoliberal order acts to intentionally reproduce this group as marginalized subjects, ultimately rendering them the byproduct of the persistence of globalization and perpetuity of the neoliberal system.

## **Název práce**

Genderovaný diskurz: Reprezentace latinské imigrantské identity v americkém zpravodajství

## **Klíčová slova**

Neoliberalismus, feminismus, Spojené státy, Latinská Amerika, imigrace, diskurz, hegemonie

## **Abstrakt**

Zvýšená všudypřítomnost kapitalismu v globalizovaném světě zahrnuje rostoucí nadnárodní vztahy, zvýšené globální nerovnosti a polarizovanou politiku, což jsou faktory, které ovlivňují migrační toky a vedou k rozdílným podmínkám pro přistěhovalce. Práce se pokouší porozumět reprezentaci identity imigrantek z Latinské Ameriky do Spojených států a zjistit, jak může diskurz podporovat podřízenost na základě migračního statusu, rasy a pohlaví, a nakonec sledovat, jak ji posiluje stále mocnější a všudypřítomnější systém neoliberálního kapitalismu a globalizace. Prostřednictvím kritické diskurzní analýzy identity žen z Latinské Ameriky, které imigrují do Spojených států, práce zkoumá, jak rostoucí fenomén globalizace a neoliberálního kapitalistického řádu ovlivňuje identitu latinskoamerických imigrantek, a to na základě zpravodajských článků z populárního amerického zpravodajského deníku *The New York Times*. Práce vychází z kritických teorií hegemonie, moci a ženství a odklání se od klasického neoliberálního přístupu, který považuje globální hegemonii za přirozenou díky nestranným mechanismům volného trhu a globalizačním silám. Práce využívá poststrukturální, intersekcionalní feministický přístup, aby ukázala genderové, rasové a koloniální dopady imigrace na migrantky. Cílem je ukázat, že studiem diskriminace imigrantek lze prozkoumat, jak globalizovaný neoliberální řád působí na záměrnou reprodukci této skupiny jako marginalizovaných subjektů, což z nich v konečném důsledku činí vedlejší produkt přetrvávání globalizace a perpetuity neoliberálního systému.

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## INTRODUCTION

For decades, the 2000-mile-long border between the US and Mexico has been wrought with tension and violence. The decades-long continuous migration pattern from Latin America to the United States has formed the way that Americans view immigration, and it is a topic that evokes a complicated set of emotions, fear, and divisiveness in the American populace. Immigrants from Latin America are a diverse group of people with different cultures, nationalities, sexualities, genders, and reasons for migrating, yet they are often referred to as a homogeneous group. To intervene in the essentialist discourse surrounding immigrants, the thesis will focus on one migrating group: the Latin American woman (from now on referred to as Latina immigrants).

In part because the current move toward a globalized society results in transnational movement to an unprecedented degree, new tensions surrounding national identity, state sovereignty, and attitudes toward immigration occur. Adding to these tensions are the already complicated social conditions of the world in which an immigrant's race, gender, and class impact their experience and representation. Political discourse on migration is tied to nationalism, power, and hegemony. One way this is disseminated is through media coverage of the situation. To demonstrate these impacts and explore these tensions, the thesis will study discourse on Latin American migration to America and how women who make the journey are represented in a manner that is different from their male counterparts. Through an intersectional feminist perspective, the thesis will be a post-structural Critical Discourse Analysis on the identity construction of migrant women from Latin America in *The New York Times* (abbreviated as the NYT), which reaches an audience of millions.

The thesis will focus on two main research questions:

1. How is a Latina immigrant identity constructed in written discourse when viewed through the lens of intersectional feminism?
2. How does coverage of Latina immigrants in liberal media uphold or interrupt racial, patriarchal, and xenophobic ideals in the United States, and who benefits from the maintenance of those ideals, particularly in reference to globalization and neoliberal forces?

The research relies on a discursive analysis of an internationally renowned newspaper, *The New York Times*. The thesis will analyze the discourse used in NYT articles during 2019, a year of rising tensions and conversations regarding immigration to the United States from Latin America, to demonstrate how discourse on their experience constructs identity and interacts with gender norms, hegemony, and neoliberalism in the United States. The goal is to see how the media discourse surrounding Latina immigrants allows for the exploration of how even liberal forces uphold neoliberal hegemony and intentionally reproduce the group as marginalized, ultimately seeing how that interacts with subordinating ideologies in the United States.

The thesis will begin with background information introducing the history of the immigration flow and how it interacts with globalization and neoliberalism. It will then discuss the theoretical frameworks that frame the analysis and the relevant literature related to the topic. In the methodology section, I will introduce and explain my choice to perform a Critical Discourse Analysis, emphasizing the intersectional feminist framework within which it is situated. Finally, the data analysis will have two sections. The first section will analyze the first research question, how the Latina immigrant identity is constructed within the articles, and what that portrays to the reader. The second will explore how US hegemony is portrayed in the articles



and how that interacts with Latina identities. The discussions will synthesize the two sections to explain how the Latina immigrant identity representation upholds neoliberal ideals, which depend upon the subjugation of marginalized immigrant populations in the United States. Finally, the conclusion will explore how the field of International Relations lacks a comprehensive feminist perspective and propose opportunities for future research.

## **1. BACKGROUND**

### **1.1 Neoliberal Globalization, Patriarchy, and Migration**

With neoliberalism increasingly defining the functions of the international economy, the world has shifted to policies that promote economic practice on a global level. The nation-state, which in the mid-20th century defined capitalist development, is challenged by the post-Cold War acceleration of neoliberal globalization (Berger 2001, p. 891). Neoliberalism and globalization decenter the state's role, instead centering multinational corporations and the international flow of goods, services, and capital. An essential restriction to this free international flow is that human bodies are not included. While corporations and financial actors are free, even encouraged, to move property and capital across borders, individuals are meant to stay put, tied to the state where they are born (Kotz 2016, p. 65).

Despite the expansion of globalization, the nation-state still plays a vital role in identity and policy, particularly regarding immigration policy. In some ways, globalization can increase ties to one's nation-state, causing a resurgence of nationalist backlash to the perceived dangers of globalization – like uncontrolled immigration (Bloor 2023, p. 7). With globalization changing what it means to be a state, nativist and protectionist dissent is provoked. Resisting the decreased

state sovereignty that globalization brings, these pressures are the focus of much of the international debate on globalization. However, they have a minor impact on the global trend toward international openness (Cerny 2008, p. 31). Adding to these pressures, increasing transnational capital flows and delegitimized borders lead to increasing human mobility (Tacoli & Okali 2001), which many nativist voices attempt to restrict with increased border control and stricter immigration policies. Despite the strong resistance to immigration, particularly toward movement from the Global South, migration still occurs on a massive scale. People still migrate for many reasons, including searching for better job opportunities, escaping violence or persecution, or attempting to provide a better life for themselves or their families. In the United States, since the 1980s, most of these migrants have come from Latin America, constituting 6.5% of the total US population as of 2019 (American Economic Association 2023).

It is not only the quantity of migrants that has changed, but also their demographic makeup. As the world globalizes, the number of women migrating grows. Now, they are more likely to migrate independently rather than for marriage or because of male authority (Tacoli & Okali 2001). The study of migration demographics is complex, as migration data is challenging to capture, often not aggregated by sex, and based on a narrow definition of gender, which equates sex and gender as identical (“Gender and Migration” 2023). Therefore, quantitative studies on how women are impacted by migration in ways that are different from men are limited, obscuring how gender norms interact with the migration process. What can be inferred, regardless, is that women experience migration differently than men, experiencing a kind of *“double discrimination as both migrants and women in their host country in comparison to male migrants”* (“Gender and Migration” 2023).

The ties between neoliberalism and patriarchy run deep to the point where one does not exist in its current form without the other. Patriarchy is challenging to define and varies across cultures, religions, and societal lines. The thesis uses a broad definition of patriarchy, where patriarchy is a “*system of social, legal, economic, political, and cultural structures and practices, which position men as the dominant social group and as able to marginalize, and exploit women*” (Nash 2009). But beyond this more traditional definition, the thesis looks at patriarchy on a systemic and global level, intertwined with neoliberal capitalism, where “*women are located in subordinate positions by both structural discrimination and ideologies that legitimate and rationalize that situation*” (Strid & Hearn 2022).

The core of globalization and neoliberal capitalism is to maximize capital gains through the extraction of human and natural resources, regardless of the degradation of the Earth and its people. Intensive resource extraction occurs up to its physical limit, and when that resource is used up or destroyed, capital looks elsewhere to replenish its supplies. Labor is one of the resources that capital depends on; without labor, capital doesn't reproduce. As institutions liberalize trade and capital flows, domestic economies suffer currency devaluation, decreased production, and high unemployment. These countries are forced to become export-oriented industries, and as a result, women are added to the “*arsenal of exportable goods*” (Hart 2005, p. 2). Being mainly from the Global South, these women are often non-white, therefore given little attention and overlooked in media and scholarly research.

Women are migrating increasingly, mostly going from countries in the Global South to the Global North, taking jobs as nannies, caretakers, and even sex workers – in other words, “*women's work*” that more affluent women do not want to do (Ehrenreich & Hochschild 2002, p. 23). Their work is not usually seen as valuable, not only as low-level laborers but also due to the

gendered nature of their work. They are also often working in secret, enhanced by the vulnerability of their immigration status. Therefore, they are, in many ways, invisible members of society. Yet, they are essential to the workings of a globalized society. Societies in the Global North have started to offer more opportunities for women – especially affluent white women – and men continue to be unwilling to take on childcare responsibilities and what has traditionally been women’s work. As a result, Northern countries increasingly rely on a global transfer of services that fills not only gaps in manual labor but also emotional labor, given the caretaking nature of much of the work (Ehrenreich & Hochschild 2002, p. 24). This mass movement of women is often not an achieved opportunity but a material necessity that has important implications for their identity and place in society. Women are forced to be in constant transition as economic necessity takes them to a new society where “*their lives are regulated, controlled, and supervised in bearable or unbearable ways*” (Hart 2005, p. 12).

## **1.2 Origins of the Latin American migration flow**

Immigration policy in the United States has a racist and discriminatory history. The first immigration act in 1882 – the Chinese Exclusion Act – barred Chinese immigrants from the United States. Another act in 1917 added literacy tests as a requirement for immigration and excluded all immigrants from a geographic area called the “Asiatic Barred Zone.” In 1924, the Border Patrol was established, and immigration quotas were added to the Eastern hemisphere. Important to note is that these quotas did not restrict those born in the Western Hemisphere and specifically exempted independent countries in Central and South America – including Mexico and the Dominican Republic (Tienda & Sánchez 2013). These quotas were overtly racist, attempting to restrict immigration first from Asia and then from Southern and Eastern Europe. Following these restrictive immigration acts, U.S. immigration lowered significantly, with

immigrants composing almost 15% of the population in 1910 to just 5% in 1965 (Budiman 2020). This history of racist policies against non-Western immigration set the tone for the coming decades of immigration policy that would continue to attempt to control the socio-economic and racial makeup of the United States citizenry.

Modern flows of Latin American unauthorized migration were entrenched with the Bracero Program, established in 1942 and ending in 1964. During this period, short-term labor contracts were issued to millions of Mexican men, allowing them to work in the United States legally. The United States needed labor to compensate for World War II shortages, and Mexican laborers were a cheap replacement. Although the program ended, the demand for cheap labor did not. The program resulted in an influx of documented and undocumented laborers (Library of Congress n.d.). However, the end of the program did not stop unauthorized immigration. Laborers continued to travel for the opportunity of higher pay and seasonal work. Due to the economic benefits of the migration stream, the government largely ignored the undocumented fashion of migrant labor (Justice for Immigrants, 2023). In addition to the irregular migration, a 1970 law instated quotas for the Western hemisphere, leading to a further rise in unauthorized immigration (Tienda & Sánchez 2013, p. 50).

In 1965, a batch of immigration policies called the Immigration and Nationality Act was passed, helping to shape modern migration flows into what they are today. While it removed the racist quotas of the 1920s, it instated a preference for skilled immigrants and immigrants with families already established in the United States. It was the latter that had profound implications for Latin American immigrant populations. The family member exception came from a place of nativism and racism: some (primarily conservative) congress members hoped it would help to maintain the Anglo-Saxon makeup of the United States, with Senator Ted Kennedy of

Massachusetts making a point that “*it will not upset the ethnic mix of our society*” (Chishti et al. 2017). But the bill backfired: with less interest in European immigration to the states, non-European and post-colonial countries dominated the immigration profile (Chishti et al. 2017). These immigrants could use their skills to obtain a visa to the United States, where they would establish themselves and then use the family member immigration provision to bring over their families. Contrary to the intention of the bill, since 1965, more than half of the immigrants to the United States have been Latin American, with an additional one-quarter from Asian countries, altering the racial demographics in the United States to an unprecedented degree (Chishti et al. 2017). The increasing immigration from Latin America that came with the 1965 Immigration Act, the rise of unauthorized immigration with the end of the Bracero program, and the new quotas on the Western hemisphere were all important historical moments that heightened the tensions we see on the border today.

The new provisions also shifted the demographic makeup of immigrants, as early immigrants during the Bracero era were more likely to be male, young, and uneducated (Hanson et al. 2023, p. 205). Through the family program, more women started coming to the United States and entering the workforce (American Immigration Council, 2023). As a more vulnerable population, these women experienced immigration differently. Along with instability in their home regions, women came to the United States to escape difficult living conditions and to reunite with their relatives who had already established themselves in the United States (Fix et al., 2022).

Mexican undocumented immigration continued to rise until the mid-2000s, and while it has more recently slowed, it continues to flow in part due to conditions in Latin America (Young, 2017 226). The conditions in Central America do not exist independently of United

States intervention. The U.S. has been intervening in Latin America for decades, often leading to deteriorating conditions and economic crises. For example, the U.S. continues to hold sanctions against Nicaragua, Cuba, and Venezuela with the goal of ousting corrupt leadership, but despite these stated intentions, those leaders are still in power, and the most prominent results of the sanctions are economic and public health crises in those countries (Main 2020). The sanctions represent a threat to governments in Latin America, proving that “*the United States has the power to devastate countries it disagrees with and has no qualms about deploying this power – even if thousands of lives are lost as a result*” (Main 2020, p. 35). Additionally, international institutions, large banks, and hedge funds are heavily influenced by the U.S. and push neoliberal policies onto Latin America, warping their historically state-interventionist systems and damaging their GDP and economic health (Main 2020, p. 35). As a result, the new capitalist modes of production have “*ruined the pre-existing socio-economic organization and intensified labor emigration from these societies*” (Onuki 2007, p. 128). This forced neoliberalism not only makes Latin America vulnerable to economic crashes and dependent on foreign capital but also damages the environment and strips citizens of domestic protections, leading to deteriorating conditions in the region. The actions of the United States government and other neoliberal actors and elites have directly contributed to the suffering of people in Latin America and can be said to be partly responsible for the dangerous conditions that encourage mass immigration out of the region and into the United States.

The conditions in Latin America have unique implications for women. A prominent example is found in the Northern Triangle, which consists of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. The countries in this region suffer from high levels of political instability and difficult conditions. Women and children are vulnerable to violence in these countries, where gender-

based violence goes unpunished, femicide rates are some of the highest in the world, and women are largely unprotected as a social class (Fix et al. 2022). Yet despite the grave conditions of their lives in their home countries, these women face a disproportionately dangerous immigration process and are subject to punishment by border control. The increase in migrants from the Northern Triangle seems to be driving the increasing apprehension of women, and migrants from this region now make up most border apprehensions (Fix et al., 2022).

In this modern era, immigration from Latin America is an everyday topic and an important talking point for political campaigns. With former president Donald Trump's focus on immigration, the conversation on undocumented immigration became an even more prominent and political topic. Nativist and racist ideas that were sparked by the new immigration waves of the late 19th century have been revived, this time focused on the biggest immigration flow to the United States, Latin America. Yet in immigration policy and discourse, both historically and presently, one important group goes unrecognized. The plight of the Latina immigrant is often ignored.

## **2. DEFINITIONS**

For the purposes of the thesis, the term woman and female will be used interchangeably to represent any individual with the gender identity of a woman, regardless of biological sex. While transgender women may have a unique experience and identity construction in discourse, the thesis will not address that experience in depth. The identity representation of transgender and gender non-conforming peoples in media is an interesting opportunity for further study in intersectional feminist studies of immigration and international relations.



Additionally, the terms neoliberalism and globalization, while unique phenomena, will be used interchangeably to refer to the current era of neoliberal capitalism and globalization, which prioritizes the deregulation of markets and increased economic transnational flows. The project of the thesis is not to define these terms and evaluate them in and of themselves but rather to see how together they interact with hegemony, patriarchy, and discourse.

Finally, the thesis does not distinguish between “legal” and “illegal” immigration procedures. Instead, occasionally, the words “undocumented” or “unauthorized” immigration and “traditional” immigration will be used. This is for a variety of reasons, namely that these categories are not necessarily binary or helpful and are often problematic terms used in discourse to marginalize immigrant populations. When using the term “immigrant” or “migrant,” I am referring to immigrants who attempt migration to the United States, with a particular emphasis on asylum seekers and unauthorized migrants.

### **3. RELEVANT THEORIES OF HEGEMONY AND DISCOURSE**

The theoretical backbone of the thesis is based on two main theorists, Antonin Gramsci and Michel Foucault. These theorists have made lasting impacts on the international relations field when it comes to power relations in political systems, which has important implications for the power of discourse as a political tool to manage immigration. Beyond the more abstract theoretical background, the thesis will draw on theorists like Edward Said to conceptualize the Self/Other relationship between the USA and Latin America and to show how Otherizing periphery populations reinforces and disguises hegemonic power. Along with Chandra Mohanty and Raewyn Connell, who offer expansions on these ideas into the field of gender, these theories

help understand the ways that the subjugation and control of migrant bodies come from hegemonic power structures and the Otherizing of subordinate populations.

### **3.1 Gramsci**

Antonin Gramsci's intervention in international relations was, in part, his concept of cultural hegemony relating the coercion of the ruling class to the consent of the proletariat. Hegemony in Gramscian theory is that, by disseminating its worldview to the masses, the ruling class derives leadership power through the consent of its population. The bourgeoisie "*hegemony*" that Gramsci describes is an "*ideological leadership or domination*" over the proletariat, a process in which the state indirectly plays an essential role (Heywood 2004, p. 81). Gramsci broke down society into two levels: "*civil society*," which referred to the private sphere where public organizations like schools, churches, clubs, etc. form socio-political consciousness, and "*political society*," which is composed of public institutions like the government, courts, military, and police that exercise a "*direct dominion*" over the public (Bates 1975, p. 353). The dominant class can influence both levels of society, with power over both intellectual thought and state function, which can be used to transfer the ruling class ideology to the masses. In the civil sphere, intellectuals spread ideas that form a public consciousness separate from the state. However, intellectuals are not abstracted from the political reality of the ruling class, and those who dominate the intellectual sphere are usually those whose ideas are most closely related to those of the ruling class. In this way, hegemony can be exerted over a population without an obvious exercise of force. The ability of the ruling class to engineer consent amongst its ruled populations conceals the forces at work due to the lowered visibility of coercion needed to maintain hegemony. As Bates (1975, p. 363) describes:

*Public opinion is strictly linked to political hegemony. It is the point of contact between civil society and political society, between consensus and force. The state, when it wants to initiate an unpopular action, preventively creates the adequate public opinion; that is, it organizes and concentrates certain elements of civil society.*

It is only when swaying public opinion through ideas fails that the state turns to coercion as a form of rule. In exceptional cases, when intellectuals fail to gain consent to push a hegemonic idea to transfer the ideology of the rulers to the ruled, the state falls back on coercive functions to force those who refuse to consent to succumb to its hegemony (Bates 1975, p. 353).

Through consent and coercion, the ruling class in a hegemonic society tries to maintain its power, control, wealth, and status. By pushing its dominant ideology to subordinates, the hegemonic state, as Gramsci describes, seeks to export a worldview that weaves their power so intricately into society that it seems like common sense to the governed population.

Gramsci was also the first to coin the word “*subaltern*” to describe any “*low rank*” person or group that is under the domination of the hegemonic class, who is deprived of participatory rights, and is excluded from “*the making of local history and culture as active individuals of the same nation*” (Louai 2012, p. 5). The term subaltern is contested and can be confusing in translations of Gramsci’s works to English, but he seems to use the term as synonymous with words like “subordinate.” Subaltern classes necessarily lack unity, belonging to a civil society in which hegemony is exercised. The subaltern is necessary for hegemony to exist, as Gramsci describes in *Prison Notebooks* (1971, p. 734):

*It is the conception of a subaltern social group, deprived of historical initiative, in continuous but disorganic expansion, unable to go beyond a certain qualitative*

*level, which still remains below the level of the possession of the State and of the real exercise of hegemony over the whole of society which alone permits a certain organic equilibrium in the development of the intellectual group.*

So, the hegemonic class has an interest in maintaining the subaltern. Part of this maintenance is to emphasize the inferiority of the subaltern group, which Gramsci compares to the relationship between a teacher and student, or one race over another, even referring to the hegemon acting as a protector of animals (Green 2002, p. 15). Gramsci studied how representations like these in literature worked to cement the subaltern's subordinated position vis-à-vis the hegemonic force (Green 2002, p. 15). What began as a term used in a specific instance within Gramsci's theories has now expanded into an entire field of Subaltern Studies in which applications of the term are used to describe modern political relations and hegemonic situations that are not situated exclusively within a state.

### **3.2 Neo-Gramscian Theories**

Introduced by Robert W. Cox, neo-Gramscian theories help widen the perspective of traditional Gramscian perspectives to better situate his theories in global politics. Cox emphasizes a historical reading of Gramsci, which roots hegemony not just in the will of the highest elites but in the historical and social structures that drive hegemonic order (Obamamoye 2023, p. 116). This means hegemony is driven by the elite and a cohort of non-hegemonic actors who have subscribed to the limitations of those historic structures as common sense. Through these structures, hegemony begins to reproduce itself without as much agency from hegemonic actors. It creates a sort of self-perpetuating hegemonic system. Through these ideas, neo-Gramscian approaches help to diffuse the top-down approach of Gramsci's work, which is common in International Relations scholarship. The risk of a top-down approach is that it is often

disjoined from the material reality of the governed. International politics is not just top-down and bottom-up but also a complicated web of relations at multiple levels. Through this lens, counter-hegemony is a more realistic concept, where social spaces can hold emancipatory potential, and the proletariat can act as agential political subjects who can influence the relations of global politics itself (Onuki 2007, p. 129).

Neo-Gramscian theories also help to situate Gramsci's theories into inter-state relations and as applicable to the forces of globalization. The transition of Gramscian theories from the national to the international level makes it more interesting in the context of modern society. Adam David Morton uses Cox and Gramsci to bring the international economy into the picture. Citing Cox, he explains how hegemony as a historical bloc, achieved domestically, can spread beyond the nation-state through the exportation of a mode of production (2003, p. 160). While hegemony initially depends on the hegemonic class of a state, it is not limited to that state and can find links in social forces across the world. Therefore, hegemony is not just power relations in the public and private spheres of national society but can transcend its national manifestation and become intertwined with the world order (Morton 2003, p. 160). This transcendence is achieved through a hegemonic mode of production pushed internationally, creating new global struggles as a global proletariat is impacted by hegemony beyond their own state (Morton 2003, p. 160). Globalization can, therefore, be seen as a restructuring of world order, where elite actors are unified to push the project forward with pro-globalization discourse without contributing to the everyday actions that are going to define the restructuring itself (Onuki 2007, p. 128).

### **3.3 Foucault**

Michel Foucault's perspective on power differs from Gramscian modes of thought in that he focuses his theory on dispersed and decentralized power and does not take such a historical

approach to analyzing hegemony. Although their perspectives differ, these scholars can be used to complement each other, with Foucault's theories enriching Gramsci's understanding of hegemony and power relations.

Foucault's development of the concept of bio-power is tied up with the control of human bodies and populations. Biopower is described as the "*power over life*" (Bustamante 2013, p. 77), where multiple political technologies "*are created to construct and control man*" (Bustamante 2013, p. 80). On a population level, this concept becomes bio-politics. Biopower and biopolitics are focused on bodies – they turn bodies into machines that can be controlled in space. Power is wielded through knowledge about human life that is made into regulatory practices that control populations (Bustamante 2013, p. 81). However, Foucault's focus was not on power itself but rather on the way that human beings are made subjects (Foucault 1982, p. 777). Bio-power is an important technique through which this occurs. His emphasis on techniques of power is one way that Foucault's subject of analysis differs from Gramsci's and can be used to enrich Gramsci's theory of hegemony.

Foucault's bio-power and Gramsci's hegemony create a view of society that exposes how dominant forces can use bio-political techniques to generate consent from their subordinates and control populations. With Gramsci's focus on the channels through which states exercise hegemony, Foucault's biopower reveals how that power can be yielded to control populations and other avenues through which domination can occur. Both scholars recognize the opportunities for contestation and resistance, but the entanglement of power relations and hegemonic ideology create a landscape where power is exercised in a covert manner, manufacturing a reality in which populations are controlled without obvious force or coercion.

An important aspect of power relations that Foucault emphasizes is the regulation of discourse. Discourse can come in many forms, mainly written and spoken, but also visual, digital, and any combination of multiple methods. As the base of social interaction and personal subjectivity, discourse consists of knowledge claims and systems of thought that exist independently of the speaker (Stoddart 2007, p. 203). The production and regulation of discourse then has a significant amount of power, given that it can shape social interaction, personal subjectivity and identity, and the production of truth. In *Orders of Discourse*, Foucault emphasizes that not everyone has access to discourse and that certain people cannot engage with discourse if they do not satisfy certain requirements (Foucault 1971, p. 19). And while discourse is kept guarded and regulated, doctrine is diffused widely, meaning that once discourse is determined by a certain set of people, their doctrines are given to society as accepted truths. This certain set of people described are those in the best position to have access to discourse, namely those most involved in government, academia, and religious organizations. This determined discourse forms the basis of truth and knowledge, which is essential for the exercise of power (Bustamante 2013, p. 81). Foucault relates discourse production and regulation to power relations and political conditions:

*There cannot be particular types of subjects of knowledge, orders of truth, or domains of knowledge except on the basis of political conditions that are the very ground on which the subject, the domains of knowledge, and the relations with truth are formed.* (Foucault & Faubion 1994(2000), p. 15)

Discourse is not something that can be analyzed independent of the context and social relations under which it occurs. Rather than being something that exists on its own, discourse is part of a system of practices that “*form the objects of which they speak*” (Foucault 1972, p. 49).

Therefore, Foucault makes knowledge political, constructed, and produced through different biopower techniques and the regulation of discourse.

Foucault's concept of discourse emphasizes the power that can be wielded through discourse, as the human's sense of "truth" is historically contingent and modifiable. This truth operates like a "*system of exclusion (historical, modifiable, and institutionally constraining system) in the process of development*" (Foucault 1971, p. 10). Because of the power of discourse to determine truth, it has the power to alter how reality is constructed in the population's consciousness. In this sense, publications that disseminate information to the public hold the power to alter the views of their readers, and hegemonic ideologies have a dominant influence on media.

### **3.4 The Self and the Other**

Edward Said is considered the founder of post-colonial studies. His theory of Orientalism, or, in brief, the study of the Orient (the East) by Orientalists (scholars of the West), is a powerful lens through which to see discourse on periphery populations. Applied primarily in reference to scholarship, Said's theory of Orientalism helped pioneer the relationship between the Self and the Other that defines periphery relationships with non-periphery countries. Orientalism, which refers to the way that the European West positions itself vis-à-vis the East, describes a process through which the Orient defines Europe as "*its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience*" (Said 1978, p. 2). Orientalism gives a name to the process that post-colonial studies often base their theories upon -- that the colonizing Self positions itself against a colonized Other (Moosavinia et al. 2011, p. 104). In this relationship, the Other is positioned as inferior, strange, and uncivilized. It creates an Us and Them binary that creates a vast space between the two, diminishing the latter's humanity and common personhood. Strengthening the



Self's superiority, this kind of discourse can justify colonization and mistreatment of periphery populations. "*The Self - whether it is conceived as male, white, European — is constructed as positive term. Conversely, the Other – be it female, black, non-Western — is constructed as its negative reflections*" (Moosavinia et al. 2011, p. 105).

Chandra Talpade Mohanty writes about the process of the Other and how it applies to subaltern women. She writes about the importance of discourse that emphasizes the heterogeneous experiences of women and especially how Western feminist discourse tends to flatten those differences and contributes to the Otherizing of non-Western women. Through a post-colonial lens, Mohanty describes how discourse often falls into a colonial trap that centers Western and white feminist values while universalizing non-Western women in ways that work counter to a true noncolonial agenda. She describes the "*Third World Woman*" as a singular monolithic subject that is described in Western feminist texts (Mohanty 1988, p. 62), which relies on the Otherizing of women in the periphery and the reduction of their experiences into a single reality. Under the guise of feminism, discourse like this is paternalistic, flattening nuance and thereby hindering true resistance. Mohanty's interventions on why it is important to intervene with even liberal feminist texts help reveal how scholarship that claims to promote feminist agendas can disguise power hierarchies that are central to the problem in the first place.

The term "the West" is defined loosely and differentially. The scholarly vision of the West is often referring primarily to dominant forces in the West, namely the United States and Europe. Whether Latin America belongs to the West is dependent on the utilization of the term. For clarity, the thesis does not position Latin America under the umbrella of the West. Despite its geographical positioning, its existence as a post-colonial region with heavy indigenous ties and distinct culture separates the region from the traditional concept of the West. The term will be

used as a theoretical tool to define relations between two regions that are interrelated but do not necessarily share a common interest or common values.

### **3.5 Gender Order**

Raewyn Connell coined the term “*hegemonic masculinity*” as the idealized and dominant form of what it means to be a man in current times, a standard to which other men exist in relation and which works to uphold men’s dominance over women (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005, p. 832). The concept recognizes varying masculinities and emphasizes how they exist within a gender order, with the dominant form as a normative concept dominating other forms. Connell’s hegemony, influenced by Gramsci, does not rely on violence and coercion but on how cultural beliefs, through discourse, practices, and relationships, institutionalize social hierarchies into common sense ideas (Hamilton et al., 2019, 317). The counterpart to hegemonic masculinity is what Connell describes as “*hegemonic femininity*,” or the updated name “*emphasized femininity*,” which is how different femininities also exist as a hierarchy in the gender order, holding the capacity to shape and change social gender dynamics (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, 848). Patricia Collins, whose research focuses on the interplays between race, gender, and class, describes a similar phenomenon with more of an emphasis on intersectionality than Connell. In *Black Sexual Politics* (Collins 2004, p. 187) she writes:

*It is important to stress that all women occupy the category of devalued Other that gives meaning to all masculinities. Yet, just as masculinities are simultaneously constructed in relation to one another and hierarchically related, femininities demonstrate a similar pattern. Within these crosscutting relationships, Latina, Asian, and Black women routinely inherit social scripts of marginalized and/or subordinated femininities.*

White women who embody hegemonic femininities receive socio-economic benefits in ways marginalized women do not, provided they perform them within the socially accepted parameters (Hamilton et al. 2019, p. 327). Intersectional feminism's insights on emphasized femininities allow for the conceptualization of ways that race and nationality place marginalized women in a lower rank of the gender order, preventing them from accessing some of the privileges that come with more dominant femininities from which they are excluded.

## **4. EXISTING RESEARCH**

### **4.1 Neoliberalism and the Nation-State**

The relationship between immigration and neoliberalism has been explored extensively in the IR field, some of it critical to neoliberal policies that restrict the movement of people. Research shows the ways that these two opposing phenomena can work together, with the territorial nation-state and resulting immigration control acting as a tool for powerful elites to balance the instabilities inherent in neoliberal capitalism (Heyman, 2012). Maintaining a powerful sense of the territorial nation-state and nativist ideals helps hegemonic countries maintain their hegemony while still taking advantage of the economic benefit of increasing transnational economic flows. Scholars often question the nation-state's role in globalizing economics. Immigration is a sphere where globalization and nation-states interact in conflicting ways. Migration policies and labor flows are not only an example of the importance of the state in influencing transnational economic relations but also of how the state can utilize domestic policies to adjust to the pressures of global economic relations (Onuki 2007, p. 127).

Research shows that globalization and economic policies are a bigger driver for immigration than war and persecution, with most international migrants coming from regions “undergoing rapid change as a result of their incorporation into global trade” (Massey 2009, p. 27). As a result, wealthier host countries that see a large amount of immigration feel the need to develop mechanisms to control immigration, and powerful forces have found ways to use punitive immigration control mechanisms to their benefit. Immigration detention and other punitive measures are meant to raise the cost of migration for immigrants and are said to be a way to deter mass migration to host countries. However, these policies have not demonstrated a profoundly restrictive effect on immigration deterrence: because circular migration is no longer a safe option, migrant communities are more likely to choose to remain in the host country if they manage to enter at all (Flynn 2016). Massey et al.’s study on border enforcement led to the conclusion that border control is more reasonably a response to a manufactured moral panic about undocumented immigrants pushed by politicians and elites looking to motivate voters and gain resources (2016, p. 1592). This is demonstrated when looking at the differential impacts policies have on different populations: While Latin American immigrants are subject to detention and deportation, privileged immigrants (e.g., Canadians) can move more freely. The result is one that works best for dominant forces at work in the United States, as Heyman (2012, p. 265) describes:

*The cost of societal reproduction to capital and wealthy taxpayers is reduced by not allowing too many poor Mexican and Central Americans into the pace of US state services (such as they are), while the red-meat politics of nationalist xenophobia is assuaged..., while the social inequality outcomes of capitalism are facilitated through the transnational mobility of the privileged.*

The differential manipulation of rights and movement is a form of biopolitics - a technique of wielding biopower - used to make certain populations more governable (Gilberto 2012, p. 102). Policies that manufacture binaries of race, sex, and class can be tools of control that states are able to utilize to govern populations deemed excludable. The border is a key place to exercise this power, as it is a site that is on the periphery, often overlooked and charged with xenophobia, racism, and classism.

#### **4.2 Border Securitization and Gendered Impacts**

From a security studies point of view, a border is a line that separates countries with a need for strategic policies of enforcement. This kind of border discourse is too narrow for the function of what a border represents and how it impacts the people trying to cross it. Increasingly, international relations (IR) scholarship has attempted to widen the view of the border as more than a line of separation between states (Amelung & Galis 2023), analyzing the ways that border research is not abstract from political agendas (Côté-Boucher et al. 2014) and how viewing the border as only a nation-state boundary obscures the way that borders are “*enacted*” and “*performed*” by state and non-state actors (Johnson et al. 2011, p. 62). Increasing securitization of the border has human impacts far outside of the geographical border region, impacting not only migrants in transit but also the lives of immigrants once settled in the host country (Valdez et al., 2013). These scholars and many others are working to defy the common narrative that the only function of a border is to secure the nation-state by keeping out unwanted peoples.

The securitization of borders and the role of the neoliberal nation-state have specific impacts on women. Migration is not a gender-neutral phenomenon, something international relations scholars have demonstrated by studying the differential impacts that women migrants

experience. With the spread of neoliberal globalization in the '90s, hopes for neoliberal multiculturalism did not come to fruition -- instead, neoliberal economics define society without the social protections meant to maintain the rights of people across borders (Speed 2016). This leaves women, and even more so poor and non-white women, vulnerable to and unprotected from violence. To immigrate, women must be invisible when in transit, exposing an already vulnerable population to intense violence, increased exploitation, disappearance, and death (Angulo-Pasel 2019). In the context of border areas, women who migrate are stripped of rights while violence against them goes uninvestigated and ignored by the state. For these women, their *“‘illegality’ does the work of state repression, while obscuring the state’s corrupt participation in illegality’s ultra violence”* (Speed 2016, p. 16). However, the female migration process is not homogeneous: migration can be an opportunity for women to renegotiate their positions in their families, find new financial opportunities, and have increased freedom. Research is mixed, some focusing more on the benefits of migration for women (Bachan 2018; International Organization for Migration n.d.), others on the ways migration is dangerous for women (Kerf et al. 2023; Women’s Refugee Commission 2022), and many which focus on the nuance between the two (Staab 2004).

### **4.3 Economized Femininity**

In the neoliberal society of the twenty-first century, hegemonic or emphasized forms of femininity can be said to be economized femininity. Adkins describes economized femininity as the economization of all social conduct, including prioritizing work, maintaining an entrepreneurial approach to appearance, household, children, and family, and aiming for self-transformation (2018, p. 7). The economic feminine subject is seen as having the choice to escape the boundaries of her gendered position through hard work and economic liberation. The

emphasis on this choice legitimizes the position of gendered stereotypes and contributes to the marginalization of women who do not fit the dominant mold, restricting the possibility of questioning the systemic structures that produce the expectations in the first place (Wilson 2015, p. 808). Economic femininity relies on the position of “*classed and race subjects outside its contours,*” whose attempts at self-transformation fail (Adkins 2018, p. 8). Marginalized women are placed outside the boundaries of economized femininity, putting them in a position that makes it extremely difficult to break in, cementing the subjugation of their femininity. Emphases on motivated young poor women from the Global South willing to work hard for entrepreneurial success (including through migration) is a trope of neoliberalism to make it look empowering (Wilson 2015, p. 809), benefiting colonial narratives that the market can provide liberation through hard work. This trope works to conceal the material exclusion that marginalized women experience regarding economized femininity and neoliberal capitalist success. Racialized immigrant women -- as deeply marginalized not only by gender but by race, class, and nationality – are rendered incapable of the self-transformation they are often cited as searching for in their relocation. At the same time, immigrant women still hold an essential role in the neoliberal workings of society. Paradoxically, poor women in the Global South are often seen as more efficient workers, willing to make extreme sacrifices and work tirelessly to provide for their families, often constructed as dedicated mothers, universally responsible for caring for their children (Wilson 2015, p. 811). Yet these women are inhibited spatially through restrictive immigration measures seemingly contradictory to globalizing ideals. The United States is posed as a place where hard-working women can find more opportunities for themselves and their families, glorifying what neoliberalism can do for impoverished women in the Global South. However, at its best, if immigration is successful, they are often cast into domestic and

caretaking roles, positions that are devalued under neoliberalism while being essential to its function. As a result, immigrant women are highly exploitable laborers, working long hours and maximizing their economic utility to maintain their position in the United States (Wilson 2015, p. 812). At its worst, these women are turned away or even killed in the process of immigration. Through the promotion of the opportunities provided by the United States while restricting immigration, immigrant women become disposable neoliberal vehicles for productive female labor without the economic success awarded to the economized feminine subject (Wilson 2015, p. 812). Under a neoliberal framework, poor women from the Global South are reduced to their capacity for hard work, only valued as deserving if, through a demonstration of immense effort and sacrifice, they can contribute to the United States economy (despite how difficult it is to do so). In post-colonial scholarship, this ignores the structural inequalities that put women in the Global South at a systemic disadvantage, as well as promoting neoliberal narratives that define lives in economic terms and promote exclusively forms of economized femininity.

#### **4.4 Migration in Discourse**

Despite the near impossibility of immigrating to the United States through legal channels (Bier 2023), humans who attempt to cross borders through undocumented methods are determined to be ‘illegal,’ ‘alien,’ or ‘criminal,’ all common terms used to describe immigrants in discourse. Terms like these dehumanize migrant populations, create a culture of fear amongst host populations, and justify treating immigrants as criminals. Language criminalizing immigrants is widespread in news media, and media discourse is a powerful way to disseminate ideas and opinions to the masses. A 2012 study on the impact of media stereotypes on attitudes toward Latinos found three main themes (Barreto et al., p. 1):



1. *News and entertainment media have a strong influence on non-Latino perceptions about Latinos and immigrants.*
2. *Most people attribute a mix of both positive and negative stereotypes to Latinos and immigrants.*
3. *Media portrayals of Latinos and immigrants can diminish or exacerbate stereotypically negative opinions about them.*

Studies like these are valuable ways to demonstrate the power of discourse on social issues and their impacts on immigration policy and perception. Anti-immigration rhetoric creates more fear and mistrust toward immigrants, increasing support for anti-immigration policies and showing the societally accepted “*differences and boundaries between the ingroup (natives) and the outgroup (immigrants)*” (Conzo et al. 2021).

Even humanitarian-oriented coverage can have negative impacts on the identity construction of migrants. Because of the negative portrayal of immigrants in discourse, access to citizen rights must depend upon the degree to which an immigrant is suffering. As a result, humanitarian aid campaigns and media outlets end up reinforcing the victimhood and subjugation of immigrants, concreting their position as gendered and racialized people only valuable as long as they remain lesser than their (white and/or male) citizen counterparts (Ticktin 2012, p. 4). Language of victimhood serves the dominant system by not only maintaining the lesser position of immigrants in society but also reproducing the immigrant as the native’s opposite, further entrenching the racialized and gendered lines that divide the immigrant population and the national citizen population.

A less explored strand of immigration discourse is how immigrant women from the Global South are represented in media. Language has a gendered impact, with labels like

“*criminal*” and “*fugitive*” generally gendered male (Golash-Boza & Hondagneu-Sotelo 2013, p. 281). This language contributes to the fact that, historically, women are deported more often than men, leaving many women behind to work multiple jobs and attempt to take care of their families alone (Golash-Boza & Hondagneu-Sotelo 2013, p. 279). This process of defining language has shifted over time as political campaigns have had to deal with an increasing female migrant population. The political campaigns of the 1990s constructed a new “*immigrant danger*” that relied on the feminized reproductive threat, impacting the identity of the Latina immigrant whose “*reproductive capacity*” was construed “*as a threat that might disrupt demographic homogeneity*” (Golash-Boza et al. 2013, p. 273). Building upon this research, the thesis will undertake a Critical Discourse Analysis focusing on the role of media discourse in shaping Latina immigrants’ identity and examining its relationship to gendered and racialized notions of nationalism in the United States.

## **5. METHODOLOGY**

The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) will draw largely on Lene Hansen’s post-structural conception of CDA and how it relates to security studies and political motives. It will start from a basic ontology that nothing is inherently fixed in politics, but that language constitutes how policy and attitudes form (Hansen 2006, p. 15). Hansen frames language as social and political and relates that to its importance in forming one’s own identity and that of other social groups. Different discourses can pose an event, identity, or logic differently, and that framing has political effects. Hansen’s discourse analysis process begins with analyzing how facts are strung together to constitute an event. She then challenges the identity representations

distributed through the resulting framing of the event (2006, p. 28). As she describes, post-structural research does not deny the existence of facts but recognizes that facts become politically important when they are (re)produced in discourse through the human agency of the individuals, media, and institutions who distribute them (2006, p. 28). Media is a major disseminator of discourse and has significant power and credibility to frame issues in various ways that serve different purposes, create different identities, and reproduce certain ideas about facts, truth, and subjectivity. Through a Critical Discourse Analysis of news media, I will focus on how these discourses legitimize, create, and reproduce power relations in society (Van Dijk 2015, p. 467).

Critical Discourse Analysis engages deeply with the theoretical concept of the Self versus the Other and how it is constructed through language. Norman Fairclough, one of the major names in CDA scholarship, describes the semiotic aspects of social order as the “*order of discourse*” (Meyer 2001, p. 8). Semiotics, or the investigation into how signs are used in context to convey meanings to audiences, goes hand in hand with CDA. According to Fairclough, finding a social problem with a semiotic aspect is a precondition for starting a CDA (Meyer 2001, p. 12). Signs have a triadic quality: they are the physical sign (in this case, a word or text), the entity written about (e.g., a person, group, or idea), and the meaning of the sign conveyed to the audience (Jaipal-Jamani 2014). These signs can be used to represent something in discourse in relation to something else. In other words, how signs are linked has important implications for how something is represented in discourse. As Hansen describes, in discourse, “*meaning and identity are constructed through a series of signs that are linked to each other to constitute relations of sameness as well as through a differentiation to another series of juxtaposed signs*” (2006, p. 23). Taking this approach as a starting point, the analysis I will perform will involve

looking for these signs in the text of articles and finding the meaning conveyed through the representation and linkages of that sign.

Post-structural research and Critical Discourse Analysis are sometimes criticized for lacking validity and even seen as a biased interpretation of unclear material (Meyer 2001, p. 4). The argument goes that CDA allows for pre-supposed judgments to support an ideological position based on texts chosen to support one's preferred viewpoint. Fairclough responded to this criticism by emphasizing the exploratory aspect of CDA and that part of the analysis is to be clear about one's own position and prior biases on the issue (Meyer 2001, p. 4). Additionally, a combination of semiotic, linguistic, and critical tools can be used as techniques to support the validity of discourse analysis (Jaipal-Jamani 2014). The CDA in the thesis will engage with semiotics by choosing keywords, themes, and signs to look out for based on recurring themes from the articles; it will engage with linguistics by analyzing the word choice and other linguistic patterns in the data set to see how they are used in relation to a social role; and finally, the data analysis rests on a rich theoretical background of critical tools that allows for the questioning of language and how it relates to broader socio-political structures and hegemony.

My methodology is heavily influenced by an intersectional and postcolonial feminist perspective, so to further specify, the method is influenced by the Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis Approach (FCDA). FCDA has similar aims to CDA – an emancipatory goal – but focuses explicitly on gendered social practices (Montiel McCann 2022). FCDA questions dominant narratives in discourse but focuses on how gender is represented – or not represented. When taken in an intersectional context, the FCDA focuses not only on gender but also how it also interacts with race, class, citizenship, and other social categories of marginalization. Tilley describes how FCDA can be used to apply a “*transnational feminist lens to analyze threats*

*posed by globalization, to illuminate connections between patriarchy and global metanarratives of economics, free trade, militarism, neoliberalism, and effects such as poverty, war, gendered violence, and climate change”* (2018, p. 1). Instead of focusing more broadly on how the discourse works in relation to the dominant hegemonic system, FCDA looks at how it disseminates meaning that interacts with the patriarchal hegemony inherent in globalization, nation-states, and neoliberalism.

Being an interpretive Critical Discourse Analysis, this study is exploratory and will not seek to prove a particular hypothesis. Rather, I hope that by analyzing this discourse, the role liberal media plays in producing a gendered and racialized migration process in the United States will reveal itself and will be able to be used to critically look at other immigration flows and the role of discourse and the state in the structuring of female and migrant subjects in foreign policy.

## **6. DATA AND ANALYSIS**

### **6.1 Data Selection Choice**

The thesis analyzes a single news publication, *The New York Times*. Identity construction is a subtle and complex process that takes an in-depth analysis to come to conclusions. The goal is not to show how all media constructs a Latina immigrant identity but to show an example of how a major news publication can construct an identity and how that identity is intertwined with national ideals and public ideas. Post-structural discourse analysis is applicable to many cases and topics, but due to the importance of understanding the object of analysis to an extensive degree to make meaningful conclusions, a single case will allow for a more thorough answer to the research questions (Hansen 2006, p. 10). Through a single publication, the research focuses

on how one powerful outlet can use certain discourses to form a specific approach to identity construction.

*The New York Times* is the publication of interest first because of its extensive readership and reputation. It has the ability to influence and shape immigration discourse and is a key player in the media landscape of the United States. The NYT is a long-standing American newspaper with over 10 million total subscribers (Lipka 2023). Even articles published by competing news outlets regard the NYT as the most influential paper in America (Samuelson 2001; Wolff 2012). The paper holds over one-third of the nation's ongoing news subscribers (Newman, 2023), providing access to many American readers seeking independent news media. Because of the NYT's status and large audience, it can be used as an example to demonstrate how popular media can construct certain ideas about issues, places, and people.

Second, *The New York Times* holds a supposed liberal bias. In the paper's mission statement, they emphasize a focus on objectivity, stating that "*Our fundamental purpose is to protect the impartiality and neutrality of the Times*" ("Ethical Journalism" n.d.). Despite this proclamation, a Pew Research Report showed that most of its readers were Democrats or Independents (2012), indicating the news outlet holds a potential liberal bias. The NYT has received plenty of criticism, not only from conservative sources, for a liberal bias (Bennett 2023; Frost, 2019). While they do not release the official ideological demographics of the paper to the public, conservatives and others perceive the paper as holding a "*blue-state worldview*" (Spayd 2016). It is important for the analysis that the object of analysis is a liberal-leaning news outlet. Liberal media's coverage of immigration can be expected to hold a more nuanced and implicit positive/negative skew in reporting. Conservative publications often take a more overt ideological stance, while liberal publications usually take a more subtle approach to immigration,

with ideas communicated through narrative framing and language choice. A liberal media outlet will be a more interesting analysis, given the connotations of the text showing underlying biases and perspectives that may shape public discourse on immigration.

The discourse analysis will be a synchronous analysis, focusing on reporting during a certain period to infer a larger pattern of language use in the publication. For the analysis, I used data from the year 2019 only. During his 2016 campaign and consecutive presidency, Donald Trump spoke extensively about immigration across the Mexican border. He used overtly racist language, calling Mexican immigrants “*rapists*” and invoking long-standing racist stereotypes to describe them as “*criminals, invaders, threats to women, and even subhuman*” (Thompson 2021). From the start of his campaign, the US saw increasing partisan polarization regarding whether immigration should be reduced (Hout & Maggio 2021), and by 2019, Americans listed immigration among their top concerns, with its significance increasing for all parties (PPRI Staff 2020). In 2018, Donald Trump initiated two government shutdowns regarding crackdowns on immigration, the latter being the longest government shutdown in U.S. history (Stolberg & Kaplan 2018; Restuccia & Everett 2019). At the same time, the 2020 election campaigns were underway, with Trump again running on a platform focused on hardline immigration policies (Hesson & Kahn 2020). Because of the increasing concern about immigration and the intensity of the president’s stance on the issue, there was abundant and diverse news coverage and attention on this topic in 2019, making it a thorough object of analysis for this project.

## **6.2 Data selection process**

The article selection process combines both quantitative and qualitative techniques to retrieve a sample that is as representative as possible. The articles for the analysis were retrieved from The New York Times Article Search API using a third-party Python package to simplify

the query process (“Article Search API” n.d; Den Heijer 2023). Two queries were performed: the top 50 articles related to “Mexican Migrants” and the top 25 articles related to the query “Women Mexican Immigrants.” The first query will be the base of the overall analysis, which will now be referred to as the gender-neutral corpus, while the second will be to support the analysis with more specific information, now referred to as the female-specific corpus. Between the two corpora, nine articles were repeated. These were removed from the female-specific corpus to reduce redundancy. The data selected was restricted to the news desks titled “Washington,” “Politics,” or “National” to maintain relevancy. Two articles published under other news desks were removed. Additionally, one article from each corpus that addressed African immigration was removed due to its irrelevance. In total, the gender-neutral corpus has 46 articles, and the female-specific corpus has 14 articles. The total number of articles analyzed was sixty.

The API article extraction helps to lessen bias in the research process as it eliminates the possibility of hand-picking articles that support predisposed conclusions, leading to a skewed representation of the content produced by the publication. At the same time, there are still bias concerns using this method. The API itself is not guaranteed to pull complete and unbiased data. The API may favor or exclude specific articles or misinterpret the query. However, proactive measures were taken to mitigate bias concerns in the article selection process. First, the API was configured to focus on specific keywords relating to immigration and restricted material type to “News” to enhance the relevance of the data extraction. Additionally, the results were cross-referenced with alternative, albeit less accurate, methods, such as Google searches and the NYT website’s article search feature, to compare results. Finally, the analysis is based on two queries, one more broad to represent better the overall coverage of the topic in the publication (“Mexican



Migrants”) and one more specific to the focus of the research (“Women Mexican Migrants”). This triangulation will help draw conclusions about general trends in the discourse alongside additional examples most relevant to the research.

A concern in the query process was the best term to employ to extract articles. While using the term Latino or Central American migrant would have been more in line with the research questions, using these terms led to a less relevant collection of articles. When addressing immigration, the publication does not as often use these terms, referring more often to the Mexican border or migrants in Mexico when addressing southern migration in general. As a result, although the thesis does not address migrants from only Mexico but rather all southern migration to the United States from Latin America, including Mexico in the query helped generate articles involving migration over the Mexican border with the United States, including Central American migrants that cross the border.

As a researcher focused on uplifting marginalized communities and perspectives, I recognize that often these voices are omitted from discourse. A qualitative approach is essential for studying where and how these narratives are formed in discourse, including where they do not appear at all. I have chosen to select articles accordingly, with a portion focusing on both if and how Latina immigrants are represented and another focused more on how they are represented to add to and confirm my analysis. Since I will be manually analyzing the data for this project, the sample size must remain reasonably small, so the articles chosen will not be comprehensive of all coverage of immigration from the 2019 NYT news cycle. As a result, the thesis does not claim to represent all media representations of Latina immigrants in the paper but rather analyzes pertinent examples that will help draw qualitative conclusions about the topic.

## 7. IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION ANALYSIS & RESULTS

The first part of the analysis is a qualitative approach to look for narratives and framing of the Latina immigrant identity. Due to the qualitative nature of the analysis, where numbers are employed to demonstrate a point of interest, they will be the most accurate estimate based on the interpretation of the articles. The most important part of the study is to see how women are described and addressed in the articles to see what kind of identity is constructed. Therefore, the analysis will begin with a semiotic and linguistic portion. After an initial reading of the data, themes of linguistic and semiotic devices were apparent, forming the base for the analysis format. This first section focuses on the Latina immigrant identity, specifically examining how linguistic techniques are utilized to paint a picture of Latina immigrants in the articles. The examples are then tied to a theme that will be broken down further in the following sections.

<b>Latina immigrant identity representations:</b>	<b>Linguistic examples in articles:</b>
Inclusion:	When Latina immigrants are not included in articles or referred to in reference to a social role rather than as independent subjects.
Victimhood:	Examples in which Latina immigrants are posed as helpless through victimizing language, including in accounts of sexual violence.
Motherhood:	How women are represented as connected with motherhood.
Neoliberal femininity:	Examples of discourse framed in a neoliberal framework that prioritizes certain femininities and the economic value of women.

### 7.1 Inclusion

The first point of interest was whether Latina immigrant women were mentioned at all in the articles and, if so, whether they were addressed as independent subjects. Mentions of Latina immigrant women as independent subjects occur when women are included in the article as

individual persons and not in reference to a social role (such as a mother or a girlfriend) or through an association with children. The articles in which women are excluded are the ones with no mention of women at all, including articles that mention families without further specifics or that refer only to young children (even if they are girls). Words referencing Latina immigrants specifically, like “women,” “woman,” or “mother(s),” were keywords in deciding if an article should count as mentioning women. Quotes by Latina immigrants, stories about them, and information specifically regarding Latina immigration were criteria for inclusion. The count does not include articles about women who are not immigrants, regardless of ethnicity. It is not distinguished whether Latina immigrants were described in a meaningful way, whether they are alive, or whether there was more than one. It was only considered whether they were mentioned at all and the role in which they were placed. The results are as follows:

	Women mentioned as independent subjects	Mentioned in relation to a social role or group	Women excluded
Gender-neutral corpus (46)	5	9	31
Female-specific corpus (14)	7	7	0

These statistics shed light on the brutal reality that women are usually not referenced in articles about immigration. In just fourteen of the forty-six articles in the gender-neutral corpus, women were mentioned, and only 5 of those articles mentioned them as independent subjects (and sometimes just as a passing mention). As expected, the female-specific corpus included only articles that included women in some way, yet even within this category, half of the articles only depicted women in social roles as mothers or wives or as a part of a category combined with children (e.g., woman and children, pregnant women, or pregnant women with children).

The absence of women in the articles supports the idea that immigration is often essentialized as a male phenomenon. Since the immigrant subject has historically been rendered male in discourse, it is even more critical that women are addressed individually and specifically in discourse. Without explicit inclusion, women may be forgotten by the readers of these articles. In discourse that rarely mentions women, when they are mentioned, they are formed as distinct from the standard immigrant subject rendered male. Distinguishing immigrant women as discursively separate from the more general term “immigrants” is a powerful tool to further engrain Latina immigrants as the most distanced Other, even in comparison to the male Latino migrant. Because men are addressed as the standard migrant in many cases, a homogeneous male immigrant identity is created, reinforcing it as a historically gendered term. The lack of recognition of any overlap, that Latina women both have their own identity and that they belong to the larger group, signals to the reader that unless women are specifically addressed, the migrant subject is the male one, thus drawing attention away from women’s issues and reinforcing a homogeneous male immigrant subject.

## **7.2 Victimhood**

Looking for the extent of victimization of Latina immigrants in the articles is one of the more difficult aspects of the analysis, given that immigrants as a group, regardless of gender, are often victimized in the media. However, there are certain literary tools used in these articles that attribute specifically to the victimization of Latina immigrants over Latino immigrants. The primary tool that victimizes Latina immigrants in the articles is the use of women -- especially pregnant women and women with children -- as examples when a statement is looking to elicit an emotional response. In articles that barely otherwise address gender, it is common to see women brought into a sentence that dramatizes the claim. Some examples (emphasis added):

*More than 1500 people have been returned to Mexico under the program in the El Paso area...including **pregnant women, a transgender woman** and children with health issues. (Jordan 2019a)*

***Vulnerable migrants, including pregnant women,** parents with disabled children and transgender people have been among those returned. (Jordan 2019b)*

*“It was gut-wrenching to see **mothers and children** sitting there in cages.” (Jordan & Simon 2019)*

*Several of the donors described finding the bodies of migrants – **including pregnant women and children** – in the vast brush of their property. (Micheal & Ember 2019)*

***Mothers and children** from Central America and Haiti have been sleeping in a classroom converted into a dormitory, many atop mattresses on the floor. (Jordan & Semple 2019)*

These statements are probably factually correct and, on a content level, are not inaccurate or misleading. But the importance of these sentences (and many more like them) is not in their content but in their signaling aspects. In this case, the bold words are not just descriptive but act as signs to convey a certain meaning to the audience. The use of language to combine women into categories with children, particularly through the phrase “women and children” but also depictions only as “mothers” or “pregnant women,” is a sign that conveys that immigrant women are innocent like children or that their primary role is in reference to motherhood. These signs create a narrative that no longer refers to real immigrant women who have or are having children but rather to helpless and innocent people who are suffering and in need of rescue. This kind of language is rarely if ever, used in reference to men and is often the only mention of women in the

article at all. Not all the language about Latina women in the articles creates this linkage. There are a few articles (albeit a minority), particularly in the female-specific corpus, which, despite using some of the same language, more meaningfully describe the situation of women and children. For example:

*“There’s a huge humanitarian concern,” Mr. Legomsky said. “So many of the people are these Central American **mothers and children** fleeing from high levels of violence. They would be effectively stuck in the border areas which are also extremely dangerous.”* (Rogers et al. 2019)

This statement still singles out mothers and children but does not use the language only as a linguistic tool to represent helplessness. Rather, there is information on why those people are singled out, namely their connection to increased vulnerability to violence in their country of origin. It also signifies it as a humanitarian issue, suggesting that it is unacceptable and that there should be efforts to rectify the roots of the situation. The main difference is the function of the sign: In the first examples, the signs are used to elicit an emotional response from the reader due to their association with victimhood and innocence. As a result, the article creates an identity for Latina immigrants that relies on their victimhood and innocence. In the second, similar language is used, but its function is more informative, telling the reader why mothers and children may be singled out in the sentence. Therefore, it is not the words themselves that are problematic for Latina immigrants, but the way that they are used as a sign to convey that their primary identity is to be a victim who is helpless and innocent.

Another way the NYT represents Latina immigrants is through accounts of sexual violence, which reinforce gender stereotypes and contribute further to their identity construction as victims. The importance of telling women’s stories cannot be understated: giving these

women a voice through a popular media outlet is good reporting and can help counter the homogenizing aspects of reporting that so often happens regarding the Latina immigrant. However, the way the issue is presented matters for the identity construction of Latina immigrants. Two articles stood out in the female-specific corpus as being the only articles in either corpus to center immigrant women. Both were about sexual violence and were different versions of the same content. Due to overlapping content, I will focus on the longer one, titled *'You Have to Pay With Your Body': The Hidden Nightmare of Sexual Violence on the Border* (Fernandez 2019). I take a closer look at the article, focusing on the text written by the NYT and not on the stories directly told by the Latina immigrant women who were subject to the violence.

First, the language used in this article focuses on the ways in which women were victims, with explicit language of helplessness and victimhood. Latina immigrant women are called “*powerless by almost any measure*” and “*the most unprotected of human beings*” (Fernandez 2019). Second, these articles focus on a narrow definition of sexual violence, not offering a full account of the different kinds of sexual violence Latina immigrants experience. The focus of the article and the stories being told can be summarized in the following excerpt:

*The stories are many, and yet all too similar. Undocumented women making their way into American border towns have been beaten for disobeying smugglers, impregnated by strangers, coerced into prostitution, shackled to beds and trees and — in at least a handful of cases — bound with duct tape, rope or handcuffs.*

(Fernandez 2019)

This kind of language, while factually accurate, is emotionally charged yet incomplete. It emphasizes the physical brutality of these women’s stories without recognizing the harm that occurs in more nuanced rape situations. Language like this contributes even more to victimizing

narratives, sending a message that these women are only deserving of sympathy and attention because of the particularly dramatic circumstances of the violence they experienced. Additionally, all the women chosen to share their stories were raped by smugglers or detention officers/border patrol. The article ignores the other ways that immigrant women could be subject to sexual violence from spouses or family members, as well as the ways that sexual violence against Latina women is systemically enforced in both the host country and the country of origin.

Although this is just one article of many, being the only one explicitly about immigrant women, it holds a key place in the dataset and deserves a deeper analysis. Sexual violence is a major problem for Latina immigrants, and reporting on the topic should be done comprehensively with thorough research and carefully crafted content. While this article is important to uplift women's voices, the lack of diversity in narratives and the lack of focus on empowerment contributes to the identity of victimhood already present throughout the corpora.

### **7.3 Motherhood**

Many of the articles in both corpora relay narrative examples from Latina immigrants to demonstrate the hardship they have been through. To look deeper into this theme, every article that mentioned women in the gender-neutral corpus was categorized by the gender and parental status of the subjects in stories about immigrants, both from the first-person and third-person perspectives. Articles that did not mention women were excluded to prevent data skewing toward the examples in the many articles that do not address gender. Not included are examples that did not specify the gender of the speaker or addressed both genders (e.g., parentless children, families, or couples).



	Female narratives	% Females with child	Male narratives	% Male with child
Gender-neutral (14)	9	80%	16	31%
Female-specific (46)	30	53%	10	50%
Both Corpora	39	58%	26	38%

In the gender-neutral corpus, while male stories were more likely to be covered, female stories were far more likely to be from mothers. An additional observation in the gender-neutral corpus is that in the only two stories about women without children, one was dead, and the other was regarding the threat of rape. As expected, many more stories were told about women in the female-specific corpus, but regardless, women were still more likely than men to be associated with their children, even when the story did not necessarily involve the child. Despite the female-specific corpus containing a much smaller amount of articles than the gender-neutral corpus (14 vs. 46), there were many more narrative examples in the female corpus than in the male corpus, showing a disproportionate number of narrative examples in stories with more women. Also, in the female-specific corpus, men were more likely to be referenced as fathers, suggesting that children were more likely to be included in articles that included women.

Women are more often mentioned in reference to a social role than as independent subjects. The obsession with women as the universal caretakers of children has serious implications for their identity. These narratives about women with children are, in general, not uplifting. In fact, most feature children who are hurting, in horrible conditions, or dying. By relating these stories primarily to women and mothers, the image of the “bad mother” emerges, painting immigrants as irresponsible, endangering their children for selfish reasons. This is not universal, especially for privileged and white immigrants. Those who are closer to embodying an economized femininity are not often subject to this narrative. As a result, it is less immigrant mothers in general that are scrutinized, rather more those who are non-white and/or participate in

unauthorized migration or asylum processes. In these processes, Latina women are posed as cheating the system for selfish reasons, be it money or comfort. Even when the dangers of their home country are cited, there is still an echo of irresponsibility in their migration methods, implying they are carelessly endangering their children. This is not only implied in the text but even explicitly stated (boldness added):

*He also questioned why migrants “**would knowingly put your child in that type of danger, with the risk of losing your child,**” in attempting the perilous journey to the United States. (Kanno-Youngs 2019)*

Stories of children suffering and dying in the migration process are powerful, and when it is associated with the responsibility of a Latina immigrant mother, it is attributed to the Latina immigrant identity.

Although women are not always explicitly mentioned, the articles often address the fact that more women and families are coming to the United States than single men. Additionally, as analyzed above, many stories about children in danger are associated with their mothers. In many of the articles that discuss these kinds of stories, the below quotes from U.S. politicians and policy experts demonstrate explicitly the attitude toward these parents who bring their children and the families who are coming to apply for asylum:

*Such a loose policy lures people to the United States. (Shear & Kanno-Youngs 2019)*

*Mr. Trump argues that migrants are gaming the system. (Shear & Kanno-Youngs 2019)*

*Migrants were gaming the system by falsely claiming asylum (Jordan 2019c).*

*Both sides agree that immigrants who are ultimately denied asylum often defy deportation orders and stay in the United States illegally. (Shear & Kanno-Youngs 2019)*

*The rule intends to prevent exploitation of the asylum system by those who unlawfully immigrate to the United States. (Jordan & Kanno-Youngs 2019)*

*“Folks are incentivized by the gaps in our legal framework to come to the United States right now.” (Shear & Kanno-Youngs 2019)*

These statements, of which there are many more, say a lot about what identity Latina women hold. As the primary people cited as bringing their children to the United States, as well as the perception of them as the universal caretaker of their children in the current wave of immigration, the reader sees them as the ones “gaming the system” and putting their children in danger. This contributes to their identity construction as “bad” mothers and is cemented through the many narrative examples used, most of which are focused on mothers. To name a few (of many):

*A 26-year-old mother and her toddler drowned crossing the river, at least the second parent and child since June to die doing so. (Dickerson & Addario 2019)*

*Another woman who had four days under the bridge with her 4-year-old, and she just broke down crying talking about how horrible she felt sitting in the dirt and rocks with her. (Jordan & Simon 2019)*

*Marisela Arely Ulloa Zelaya cried as she fanned her 7-year-old son, Carlos, who was lying in their tent at the plaza with a wet towel on his forehead. (Dickerson & Addario 2019)*

It is hard to read these statements without resenting the situation. These examples could be used in an emancipatory way, demonstrating the extent of the dire conditions that immigrants face because of US immigration policy and the deteriorating conditions in Central America in which the United States is directly involved. Instead, with a few exceptions, these reasons are rarely discussed. The examples instead are used to invoke pity by readers but consequently create an identity for Latina immigrants that is irresponsible and involves endangering their children.

#### **7.4 Neoliberal femininity**

While throughout much of the corpus, Latina immigrants were represented as a homogeneous group with similar situations and struggles, a few examples represent the Latina identity differently. Amongst the many articles featuring groups of suffering Latina immigrants, one article told a success story of immigration in which a Latina immigrant rose to a position of power. *The Divide in Yakima Is the Divide in America* (Searcey & Gebeloff 2019) is the story of the first Latinx (a gender-neutral term for Latinas and Latinos) politician elected to the Yakima City Council. Content-wise, the story is important, describing the inequality and racism in the Central Washington community of Yakima, which is almost half Latinx and has a high immigrant population.

The story is of a first-generation Latina American woman who defied the odds and became successful, able to push changes that would better the conditions for immigrants from Latin America. The councilwoman's advocacy and drive for change and the struggles she overcame are admirable. Her situation and life story are not up for critique in this section. As a result, her name is omitted from the analysis itself. Instead, the focus is on how the NYT told her story, what framework it operates in, and how the language chosen serves neoliberal forces.

The article emphasizes the councilwoman's difficult start in life: Her parents migrated to the U.S. as farm workers, so she arrived at grade school with "*little or no English*" and was "*in a program where Santa distributed gifts to underprivileged children*" (Searcey & Gebeloff 2019). The article also makes it clear that the odds were stacked against her to become councilwoman due to persistent racism in a community in which "*white residents blamed the growing Latino population for the proliferation of gangs in the city*" (Searcey & Gebeloff 2019). It also described white supremacist threats to her personal safety and sexist and racist remarks targeting her looks and her nationality. Finally, the article describes the difficulty she faced in becoming elected due to disproportionately low voting turnout, lack of education, and high rates of poverty in Latino populations.

All these barriers are real and unfortunate symptoms of a broken system in which marginalized populations are not offered the same opportunities that white populations are, especially women. But also important in this story is the persistence of a neoliberal framework that emphasizes individualism, resilience, and commitment as the determining factors for success, ignoring the systemic roots of the injustices at play. Pointing out injustice, while important, is not the same as investigating its causes. This article fails to do the latter. By starting with the descriptions of her childhood, the story begins shaping a framework emphasizing individualist efforts to escape one's own difficult background to succeed in America. The councilwoman's background is part of her story, but it is not the primary reason the reader should celebrate her achievements, and the fact that there are ways to remove these barriers should not be ignored. While it is a testament to her strengths that she beat the odds and became the first Latinx councilwoman, this framework also contributes to the responsibility of marginalized people to beat the system that marginalizes them.

Important to this framework is that the councilwoman herself is not an immigrant but the child of immigrants. She holds a degree of privilege that allows her to get closer to success than her immigrant counterparts, but not close enough to gain unfettered access to an economized femininity and the comparative ease of success accompanying it. However, the precarity and newness of her nationality were also not overlooked. The article was situated within a story of a white woman telling her to “*Go back to Mexico*” and how it made her think of how hard she had to work as a daughter of immigrants (Searcey & Gebeloff 2019). This emphasizes that despite not being an immigrant, she was slanted by her closeness to immigrants. By barely distinguishing her from Latina immigrants, the article sends the message that even Latina immigrants can escape their situation through dedication and hard work and, in many ways, ignores the privileges she holds by not being an immigrant herself.

The article shows that she must work harder than more privileged women (i.e., those closer to hegemonic femininity) to achieve her goals, linking the increased workload to a degree of moral goodness that would not have been as prevalent if she had not struggled. The councilwoman had to deserve a higher position in the gender order through increased struggle and commitment. Nowhere in the article does it address the overarching structural causes of the barriers she faces and the systemic solutions that could help lessen them. In other words, the article signals to the audience that the opportunity for social mobility that the councilwoman experiences is enough and that from there, success is up to her alone and how hard she is willing to work to fight the system built against her. Toward the end of the article, it states she “*plans to enroll in law school, move to a bigger city, maybe even Washington, D.C., where she can get involved in federal politics and then return to Yakima*” (Searcey & Gebeloff 2019). In other

words, she will move on to bigger things. Within a neoliberal framework, the harder she works and the more successful she is, the more admirable her story becomes.

It is not only the councilwoman's story that demonstrates the neoliberal framework in immigration discourse. The story reinforces a dominant narrative that only certain Latina women who fit certain neoliberal standards are worthy of an independent identity and agency. Neoliberal ideals like this are pervasive in immigration discourse, prioritizing the economy over human lives. For example, in an article regarding views on immigration in Wisconsin (Saul 2019), undocumented immigrants are described in a way that holds neoliberal values as more important than the reality of the situation that drives undocumented immigration (emphasis added):

*A document recently circulated to House Democrats from party consultants advised a more moderate approach — suggesting the party emphasize a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants who **'work hard and pay their taxes'** but also stress the importance of secure borders.*

This policy is framed as moderate, meaning it is a more sympathetic policy toward immigrants that allows them to work toward citizenship the “right” way. This ignores the material reality that the system does not allow this to happen for many Latina immigrants from the Global South. Given that immigrant women take on more domestic labor and household tasks, as well as discrimination in hiring practices due to their layered subjugations, their capacity for work is limited, often forcing them to turn to more dangerous ways to immigrate. Neoliberal language like this creates a false reality that the government is trying to help immigrants while clinging to policies that have been shown to play a role in creating the problem they claim to be trying to fix. The dissonance in a statement like this is a semiotic example of conflicting truths being

presented as harmonious to create an image of an achievable neoliberal ideal reality while placing the responsibility on marginalized populations to achieve it.

In the same article (Saul 2019), multiple non-Latinx immigrants were interviewed to give their views on undocumented immigrants who cross into the United States (emphasis added):

*“If you want a chance at the American dream, they say, you should **play by the rules.**”*

*“I think everybody should come in the **right way**, just like our ancestors did.”*

The European immigrant quoted here is a white European immigrant, holding a substantial degree of privilege simply from her whiteness and nationality. It is even emphasized that she is a fan of Bernie Sanders, aligning her with liberal interests. Her subjugation of immigrants from Latin America is an example of hegemonic forces at work, where someone’s relative power relies on the subjugation of an inferior Other. This type of discourse is not reserved for conservative voices but is heard even in liberal discourse; it is a tool to distinguish one’s superior Self -- creating a “good” immigrant and “bad” immigrant binary that cements the position of marginalized immigrants in the latter.

This rhetoric is also not isolated to white immigrants. Latinx immigrants also engage with hegemonic discourse. With Trump’s firm stance as anti-immigration, it is often assumed that the Hispanic American population would not support the former president. But this is not necessarily the case. Other than the fact that these voters are not a homogeneous group and may have other reasons to support Trump, there are Hispanic Americans who support Donald Trump’s immigration policy. In an article about a rally in New Mexico during the 2020 election cycle (Baker 2019), they explained their stance on immigration from Latin America (emphasis added):



*“We’re hard-working taxpayers, we serve our country, we obey the law,” said Mr. Gallegos, who was standing in the winding line to enter the rally with several members of his extended family. His brother and nephew, both veterans, nodded in agreement. “We deserve health care, not **them**.”*

*“El Paso has become a sanctuary city and now we’ve got all these people who don’t contribute, but **they** use our school system and **they** take our jobs.”*

*“If **they** fit in, if **they** are American, **they** can stay,” he said.*

It can be seen explicitly in these quotes that the Us and Them binary does not exist only along racial lines. Even within racial groups, hegemonic language and economic privilege can be powerful in reinforcing subjugation. Neoliberal ideals emphasize economic contribution as equating what it means to be American, suggesting a lack of engagement with neoliberalism is anti-American. These examples demonstrate how deeply engrained neoliberal discourse has become in society. Because neoliberal success relies on the subjugation of marginalized populations, some Hispanic Americans may seek to elevate their position in society by distancing themselves from a more subjugated group:

*Ms. Chronis and other supporters said they believed Mr. Trump’s rhetoric protected Hispanics like them because it emphasized their American nationality over their ancestry. (Baker 2019)*

Quotes like this imply that Hispanic Americans’ desire for security can outweigh any connection they may hold to the Latinx immigrant population. Hispanic citizens can exercise their relative power over Latinx immigrants, reinforcing neoliberal ideals pushed by governing ideologies and further cementing the position of Latina immigrants as subjugated even within gendered and racial groups. Like the concept behind hegemonic femininity, relative legal status can be a tool to

increase one's security in society. Many marginalized groups can still find degrees of privilege that can increase their own security under the conditions of neoliberalism. As a result, Latina immigrants find themselves at the bottom of a crossroad of intersectional marginalizations that cut through the many dimensions of their identity construction.

## **7.5 Discussion**

Although most of the articles do not address Latina immigrants, and many do not address them independently, their lack of recognition still plays a role in identity construction. News media is meant to reflect material reality, addressing issues that people care about and that exist in mainstream public discourse. The lack of representation in the NYT, especially as a liberal paper, indicates a gap in societal attention to the issues facing Latina immigrants, implying its absence from other public discourses like political speeches, campaign platforms, and other news media. In subordinate groups especially, *“an identity can be barred from, denied to, ascribed to, claimed from, and enforced on the individual and on communities”* (Ries 2018, p. 170). Lack of independent representation is a denial of identity for Latina immigrants, holding back opportunities for forming solidarity and resistance movements. Since they are rarely mentioned, their identity in NYT discourse is reduced to the few instances when they are included. Therefore, given the limited articles where women are included, how they are represented is even more important. Representation of an identity only existing in reference to another subject constructs an identity of dependency. Especially when grouped in with children, the Latina immigrant identity is inseparable from her identity in a family role. Non-mother Latina immigrants are often ignored or at least not addressed separately. As a result, a homogeneous yet shallow identity evolves, telling the reader that the Latina immigrant is first a family member and then an independent person. This association reduces the Latina immigrant experience to a single

story that is most palatable to readers: struggling mothers looking to provide their children with a better life. Here is an example of the concept of the Third World Woman, where a single experience is held as truth, and the nuanced and complex realities these women experience are ignored.

Linkages to motherhood regarding immigrant women also reinforce the gendered stereotypes that neoliberalism relies on. This is especially true regarding labor. Capitalist expansion relies on the family and, therefore, relies on the unpaid reproductive labor of women. Immigrant, poor, and working-class women are particularly systemically devalued in neoliberalism through their “*primary responsibility for unpaid reproductive labor*” (Radhakrishnan and Solari, p. 786). Additionally, posing immigrant women as primarily caregivers, mothers, wives, and girlfriends not only devalues their agency but also concretizes their position as outside of the traditional labor sector, normalizing low-wage work in caregiving roles that countries like the United States need immigrant women to fill.

Discourse that associates Latina immigrants with motherhood and children implies linkages to innocence, which are intertwined with their identity. Moeller’s de facto hierarchy of innocence describes how infants are perceived as the most innocent group of humans, and then following (in descending order) are “*children up to the age of 12, pregnant women, teenage girls, elderly women, all other women, teenage boys, and all other men*” (Moeller 2002). Women are more closely linked to innocence in general, and associating them with children reinforces those stereotypes and further feminizes the idea of innocence, therefore creating a female identity of helplessness and naivety. Combining Latina immigrant women and children into one category is a literary tool that patronizes its subject, suggesting that they are inherently dependent and without agency. As a result, an identity for a Latina immigrant is constructed that does not

convey an empowered and independent subject but rather one that depends on their association with a patriarchal social role to be recognized in discourse.

It is important to note that women's innocence looks different along racial lines. Due to their femininities being positioned lower in the gender order, Latina immigrants do not experience the protections that come along with the more hegemonic femininities that white women may hold. Latina immigrants' innocence itself is paradoxical: not only are they conveyed as part of a criminalized and racialized out-group, but they are also maintained as innocent subjects. While innocence is centered in their identity in humanitarian discourse, Latina immigrants, particularly ones entering through alternative channels, are always held back by their lack of innocence in the eyes of the criminal system. They are confusingly both innocent and "illegal," and therefore less innocent than their white counterparts. The distinction of race and legal status is a way to Otherize Latina immigrant women, creating an inferior subject compared to the white Western woman. In the case of the Latina immigrant, innocence discourse helps create the Us and Them binary described in Orientalist theory, leaving Them out of feminist movements and justifying mistreatment and apathy toward the group.

Paradoxes like this are played out within the data, where Latina immigrants are portrayed as mothers in conflicting ways. In some cases, Latina immigrant women are represented as "bad" mothers, which in ways contradicts their framing in reference to motherhood as innocence. In this case, innocence for Latina immigrants is not linked to virtue or integrity but rather to childlike traits, such as irresponsibility and lack of ability. If women are represented as irresponsible and helpless, how can they also be represented as dedicated caregivers willing to sacrifice anything for their children? This combination presents to the reader the failure of Latina immigrant women to achieve hegemonic femininity. Although they are responsible for the

family and primarily tied to that role, they often fail due to structural forces, creating a situation where they can be framed as victims needing rescue. They are not seen as working hard enough to follow more accepted channels to immigration that are required for them to be considered a “good” and “dedicated” mother. Rather than being able to “do it all” as the economized feminine subject can, they cannot catch up, excluded from neoliberal success. This perspective is again ignorant of the systemic barriers that disallow the social mobility of Latina women and the ways that hegemonic femininities reinforce values that lead to the Latina woman’s subjugation in the first place.

These linkages further contribute to the victimization of women in NYT discourse. As Miriam Ticktin describes, “*the phrase innocent victim occurs so often that it can be difficult to think of innocent and victim apart*” (Ticktin 2017). Women in NYT discourse are victimized in many of the articles in which they are mentioned, especially through an emphasis on their vulnerability. While, on the one hand, it is important to recognize the ways that immigrant women are more vulnerable than immigrant men, this is not valuable discourse unless it has an emancipatory or informative effect. Rather, with notable exceptions, the examples of vulnerability in the articles are mostly useless, used more as a literary device to create a vulnerable identity rather than to inform readers of the causes and circumstances of the vulnerability Latina immigrants experience.

It is even more important to analyze the articles in which women are the focus. As described in the data, the only articles in the corpora focused on immigrant women’s stories were regarding sexual violence. Media platforms hold the power to uplift the voices of minority groups like Latina women, helping highlight an often-overlooked identity. However, even when highlighting minority voices, media outlets still play a strong role in enforcing and constructing

dominant stereotypes (AbdulMegied 2022, p. 126). Therefore, it is important to notice how women are further linked to identities of vulnerability and helplessness through the victimizing language used in accounts of their experiences with sexual violence. Hockett et al. studied how language from a dominant group describing a woman's experience with rape can reproduce the oppression that comes with rape experiences (2014, p. 3). Their study illuminated that the way women who experience rape are labeled in media evokes differing reactions and effects based on the words chosen. Even describing women as "*rape victims*" fosters an environment that disempowers women and makes it difficult for them to escape victimhood (Hockett et al. 2014, p. 19). The focus on these women as helpless victims cements their position in this identity, limiting options for escaping victimhood, demonstrating agency, and finding empowerment. To the reader who cannot see beyond the text, these women will always hold that identity.

Especially evident in liberal and leftist discourse, emphasizing and focusing on immigrants as innocent victims allows the denial of complicity in the oppression of the group in question. Rather than focusing on the material reality that has generated the oppression, the reader is directed toward feelings of sympathy toward the result of the oppression, distracting from the root causes that got them there in the first place. As Ravecca et al. describe astutely, innocence and the innocent victim "*is therefore also a hiding place – a fortress where we can believe that we are resisting neoliberalism even as our work and the structures we operate in sustain the power of that very relation*" (2022, p. 41). The way the NYT constructs the Latina immigrant identity works to appeal to its liberal audience and appease their anxieties without recognizing the reality of neoliberalism and globalization as underlying causes of the oppression. These statements depoliticize their discourse about Latina immigrants to avoid revealing neoliberalism's ties and objectives. In other words, the articles pose themselves as resisting the

situation of the Latina immigrant without describing the oppressive forces at work in the situations they are describing.

Even in narrative stories not specifically addressing immigrants, neoliberal discourse and links to hegemonic hierarchies lie behind the words. In the case of the councilwoman, her degree of privilege as a first-generation American granted her limited access to a success story, a type of “American Dream” -- albeit one restricted by her gender and race. Ideas about the American Dream and neoliberalism work well together, “*emphasizing self-reliance, personal responsibility, and individual risk as part of the common sense fabric of everyday life and as needed beliefs and behaviors to achieve economic independence and social mobility*” (Skolnick & Alvarado 2019). Despite many scholars debunking the original conception of the American Dream (Wyatt-Nichol 2011; Su 2015), the concept continues to hold a prominent place in U.S. identity. The councilwoman’s story, in this way, reinforces neoliberal ideas about American success. The impacts of this can be seen in the examples that emphasize that hard work is necessary to be valued as a U.S. citizen, with an emphasis on immigrating the right way. By emphasizing that through merit and effort anyone can rise from a difficult background, these stories discount the very real systemic barriers that almost always prevent this from happening for marginalized immigrant populations. In the stories of non-Latinx immigrants and Hispanic Americans who distance themselves from Latinx immigrants rather than recognize commonalities, the importance of economic contribution and legality was obvious. These examples demonstrate neoliberalism’s reliance on Self – Other relationships, even within traditionally marginalized groups, to maintain hierarchies and allow for different levels of subjugation to perpetuate globalized capitalism’s existence. These intergroup hegemonies

already exist for Latina immigrants in their position as excluded from economic femininity, intensifying the additional degree of subjugation.

Being a news organization focused on objectivity does not mean that The New York Times must avoid addressing the political causes of oppression. On the contrary, news publications should engage with the political, albeit reporting the situation in a neutral way. As Foucault emphasizes, discourse has significant power to shape social dynamics and identity. As a result, the identity construction of Latina immigrants in a major news publication has lived effects on what is perceived as truth. Therefore, the identity formed in NYT discourse is not isolated within the publication itself but has effects that permeate into society. Identity construction, then, is inherently political.

## 8. NEOLIBERAL HEGEMONY ANALYSIS & RESULTS

Latina immigrant identities do not appear in a certain way in NYT discourse for no reason. There are underlying themes of hegemony, power relations, and political goals forming the discourse. News media has the power to shape social behavior and values, and in news discourse, this is often in line with neoliberal financial ideals (Berry 2019, p. 62). This section will analyze how NYT coverage of Latin America and Latina immigrants upholds or interrupts mainstream power relations and patriarchal neoliberal ideals through language and content choices.

<b>Semiotic themes in reference to power relations:</b>	<b>Linguistic examples in articles:</b>
Distinct Economic focus:	Content, tone, and word choice differences between economic and humanitarian articles.
U.S. Hegemony:	Discourse constructing Latin America as a dangerous and inferior region.



## **8.1 Distinct Economic focus**

There is a noticeable separation between economic and humanitarian content in the corpora. Humanitarian content, in this case, is that which describes the material situation from the immigrant perspective, using their voices and describing their struggles. Humanitarian content in NYT discourse has a more emotional tone and is usually emphasized through narrative examples (often feminized ones, as described in the previous section). On the other hand, economic coverage is reported in a matter-of-fact way, without the tugging-on-heartstrings stories that are present in many of the humanitarian-focused articles. Out of all the articles in the corpora, nine articles were the most focused on international economic policy and transnational relations with Mexico. In these nine articles, mostly regarding tariffs, the border wall, Donald Trump, and the Mexican government, there were no narrative examples, and migrants were primarily delineated as a generalized group crossing the U.S. border. All the articles were in the gender-neutral corpus, and none of them mentioned women (except one, which included a mention of vulnerable pregnant women).

An example of this content difference is word choice, as it was in economic articles when most crisis language was used. For example, in each article in the gender-neutral corpus, the words “flow” and “surge” were often used to refer to incoming migrants. Phrases like “surge of migrants” and “unprecedented migrant flows” appeared often, and while on their own seem merely descriptive, when read in context, they hold links to homogeneity and urgent crisis, producing an image of an uncontrollable stream of racialized bodies. The repetition of these words, along with other similar words in the articles (inundated, wave, sheer volume, record numbers, en masse), are signs that convey overwhelm and numeric crisis to the reader. Out of the

46 articles in the gender-neutral corpus, the words “flow” and “surge” appeared 93 times. Almost half of those instances appeared in the nine articles regarding economic policy, suggesting that economic content was disproportionately focused on crisis manufacturing compared to humanitarian articles. Another example of the difference between humanitarian and economic articles can be seen when comparing two articles published the same week on the same subject. Both articles discuss the “Remain in Mexico” policy, or Migrant Protection Protocol that Trump created in 2018 and expanded in June 2019 when the articles were written. The policy required asylum seekers to await their court date in Mexico before the United States would decide on their asylum claim. One article focused on the economics of the policy; the other covered the policy through a humanitarian lens. Below is an excerpt from the article focused on economic policy, titled *Mexico Agreed to Take Border Actions Months Before Trump Announced Tariff Deal* (Shear & Haberman 2019):

*The new deal reiterates that Mexico will provide the “jobs, health care and education” needed to allow the program to expand. But the speed with which the United States can send more migrants to wait in Mexico will still depend on how quickly the government follows through on that promise.*

Here is how the policy is described in the humanitarian article titled *In Court Without a Lawyer: The Consequences of Trump’s ‘Remain in Mexico’ Plan* (Jordan 2019d):

*For the 158 migrants brought in through the San Ysidro port of entry that day in July, their stay in the United States would be brief: Nearly all of them would be returned to Mexico at the end of the day to await, at a distance, what for some of them could be a life-or-death decision.*

Followed by the quote (emphasis added):

*“I am afraid the Barrio 18 gang will beat me, rape my daughter to hurt me, cut us in pieces and kill us,” a Baptist preacher from El Salvador, who identified himself only as Carlos, wrote in his petition to the court. “I am a pastor of a church who preaches that youth should follow God instead of gangs.”*

These articles, published the same week, discuss the same policy and use very different language choices and literary techniques to describe the same issue. The economic article poses the policy expansion as a goal, describing the lack of expansion due to Mexico’s actions as a setback. The humanitarian article poses the policy as devastating and threatening, describing the waiting time as a “life-or-death decision” for immigrants. The immigrant struggle in the first is reframed to pose Mexico as the antagonist and the policy as neutral, while in the second, the policy itself is the antagonizing factor. The second also highlights the human impact of the policy, which is completely absent in the first. The most powerful and pertinent part is the narrative example emphasized in the second article. This language is emotionally charged and violent, utilizing a young Latina immigrant as a tool to evoke feelings of sympathy and pity.

This content divide and language difference demonstrates that NYT discourse is often (albeit with some overlap) compartmentalized into humanitarian-focused articles with emotional and feminized narratives versus economically driven articles containing political and crisis language. Even though economic policy and transnational relations with Mexico have serious impacts on Latina immigrant lives, they are often ignored in economic content, creating a line of discourse where the economic aspects of migration are fully isolated from the lived effects of its policies. Not only is this inconsistent, but it also reveals the ways in which neoliberal coverage is incompatible with humanitarian reporting, especially regarding Latina immigrant identities.

## 8.2 U.S. Hegemony

Particularly in the articles with an economic focus, certain language is used to describe transnational relations with Mexico and Latin America, which constructs an identity not only for Latina immigrants from the region but also for the region from which they emigrate. This is not present in all articles; many do not address the conditions in Central America or the drivers of immigration at all -- a problem on its own. However, when the articles address conditions in Mexico, the words chosen have the opportunity to uphold or interrupt ideas about U.S. hegemony in transnational relations between the two regions. Given that Latina immigrants are disproportionately affected by violence in the migration process, this language must be chosen carefully, painting an image of Central America that acknowledges the complexity of these issues and recognizes the reasons for the hard conditions for women in the region.

Regarding politics, Mexico receives the brunt of this language, as it is the most discussed state of origin for immigrants to the United States in NYT coverage. The above example about the Remain in Mexico policy is just one of many articles that paint the Mexican government as incapable and at fault for the immigrant issue. Other examples are less explicit, utilizing indirect language to degrade the Mexican government, such as describing Mexican officials using a PowerPoint presentation to introduce policies to the United States government (Shear & Haberman 2019) and describing the Mexican economy as “*anemic and slowing, and its currency has weakened*” (Shear et al. 2019).

It is not just the Mexican government that is constructed in the articles. Latin America, in general, is described as dangerous and violent:

*“We don’t see how anyone could read this record and think those are safe countries,” he said, referring to the rule’s language that migrants must apply to the first safe country.” (Jordan & Kanno-Youngs 2019)*

Again, looking at the prior Remain in Mexico example, the quote regarding the preacher from El Salvador shows that even quotes by Latin American immigrants themselves are utilized to strengthen links to danger and violence. The quote, told by a preacher from El Salvador, states that he *“is a pastor of a church who preaches that youth should follow God instead of gangs”* (Jordan 2019d). The stark contrast built between the preacher -- linked to purity, goodness, and holiness-- and Latin American gangs -- linked to violence, rape, and danger -- is also a literary tool to emphasize a juxtaposition between the two that reinforces the negative sign that Latin America is more strongly linked to violence than goodness.

Describing the reasons for immigration to the United States is important, especially pointing out how this impacts Latina immigrants. There is no doubt that many immigrants are fleeing harsh conditions in Central America, often ones intertwined with gender violence and persecution. It is important that the NYT covers these topics, and to a certain extent, they do. However, as previously argued, the language used to do so is important. Describing the violence, especially in a victimizing way toward women and immigrants in general, is not the language needed to form resistance to these conditions. In some ways, NYT does a fair job including these issues and even sometimes explicitly acknowledges the struggles that women experience in their host countries. What is missing is the reason those conditions exist and the role the U.S. played in creating them. Instead, Latin America is depicted as a dangerous place full of gang violence and poverty. While difficult conditions and violence do exist, this discourse wildly misconstrues the region by linking Latin America with only negative terms. Using only language like this

conveys to the reader that the entire region is without nuance, culture, and difference. The only identity this region holds in the articles is problematic, suggesting that there is no hope of truly improving those conditions in any meaningful and lasting way.

### **8.3 Discussion**

From a neo-Gramscian perspective, global power relations are established and upheld through labor relations and economic mechanisms, acting as a hegemonic tool to keep the United States dominant over Latin America. These transnational economic relations are, in part, what have historically shaped migration flows and labor markets. Therefore, they are what produce and reinforce the exploitation and exclusion of immigrant groups, including Latina women. Latina women experience the harshest consequences of these policies through gendered violence, displacement, and marginalization. By separating economic relations from their humanitarian impacts in discourse, it is normalized that economic interests are the dominant factor in shaping immigration policy. As a result, the focus of the discourse is shifted from the humanitarian injustices in immigration policy and justifies Latina suffering. It is a form of bio-political control to regulate the movement of immigrant populations. One way to do this is to frame immigrants in economic terms, defining eligibility for entry in the context of monetary value and economic utility to the dominant order. As a group whose labor is less valuable under neoliberal capitalism, women are further disregarded, as their economic utility is seen as not as useful as the male immigrant subject.

The descriptions in the NYT articles of Latin America also contribute to U.S. hegemony. The focus on the portrayal of Latin America as dangerous and incompetent justifies the United States' intervention and exploitation in the region. This discourse is not just descriptive but constructed strategically to rationalize continued control and intervention. By importing the idea

that Latin America is broken and beyond repair, dominant forces obscure their agency and major role in creating and reinforcing that instability, therefore justifying restrictive immigration policies, even disguising them as humanitarian. Using discourse as a bio-political tool to diffuse these ideas covertly reinforces dominant ideologies, ultimately working to maintain the status quo through the idea that systemic change is unrealistic and unattainable.

Drawing on Gramsci's ideas about power relations and the use of the subaltern to uphold hegemony, it is theorized that the maintenance of hegemony by dominant forces relies on the subordination of another group. Using mostly generalized and violent language to describe Latin America in discourse creates a backward Other, allowing the United States to shine in comparison. The focus on Mexico as representing the region is an example of essentializing Latin America. As a result, it is easier to create an inferior immigrant subject necessary to reinforce oppressive immigration policies. It also maintains the dominance of capitalist ideologies and obscures other ways of being incompatible with neoliberal capitalism and globalization. As a result, patriarchal structures inherent in neoliberalism are perpetuated and reinforce systems of oppression.

The analysis of the data through the lens of neoliberal hegemony reveals the discursive techniques that allow for the Latina identity to be created and disseminated into the common-sense narrative of the American people. The neoliberal framing of immigration issues and the Latin American region is a tool to reinforce the distance between the Self (the US) and the Other (Latina immigrants). It is necessary for this relationship for the Other subject to be seen as inferior and different than the Self. Therefore, it is important that Latin America's distance from neoliberalism and the "success" that comes with it is obvious to the reader. Since the American Self is posed as neoliberal in discourse, the American reader is set up to internalize that identity.

Therefore, a threat to neoliberalism feels like a threat to themselves. The techniques in this section work to intensify the reader's connection to neoliberalism while distancing the reader and their sense of humanity from the Latin America region and the people inside of it, increasing the palatability of not only the content but the exploitation that comes with it.

#### **8.4 Counter Hegemonic Resistance**

How Latina immigrant identity constructions connect to U.S. hegemony and neoliberal dominance is intentionally covert in NYT discourse. Cultural hegemony relies on the insemination of ideas into the minds of the people without them feeling coerced. The Latina immigrant identity is presented as contradictory, a problem that is unfortunate but too confusing and too difficult to solve. When solutions are presented, it occurs as a form of resistance that still serves hegemonic neoliberal forces. Because neoliberalism enforces Latina suffering, resistance must be coopted to avoid departing from a neoliberal hegemonic framework. In the data, we saw an attempt at a resistance narrative rooted in neoliberalism through the individualistic, resilient, willing-to-work-for-it Latina subject. The analysis of how individualistic narratives are inhibited by the racial, ethnic, and gendered subjugations inherent in neoliberalism renders this form of resistance realistically obsolete. In the end, the NYT benefits from its contradictions: While appearing sympathetic to Latina immigrants while also offering (neoliberal) solutions for their suffering, it can still reinforce dominant neoliberal ideals and avoid confronting how their identity framing reinforces Latina suffering in the first place.

However, it is not true that the NYT is in no way a valuable news source. On the one hand, truly counter-hegemonic discourse must break free from the constraints of the dominant ideology. Alternative media is an example of discourse that works to unravel the neoliberal underpinnings of immigration policies and construct comprehensive and emancipatory Latina



immigrant identities. On the other hand, mainstream media is market-driven, so alternative media outlets - lacking adequate funds and positioned against capital interests - are pushed out of the market and overcome by more dominant publications (Yoedtadi & Pribadi 2020, p. 102). Without a multitude of paths of resistance working toward the structural unraveling of U.S. hegemony and the neoliberal capitalist system, careful and emancipatory discursive constructions of identity and ideology in alternative media as a main point of counter-hegemony is an uphill battle. While it is still a valuable avenue for resistance, it is not one that cannot stand on its own to resist the discursive subjugation of populations through popular media. For now, in a neoliberal capitalist society, media giants continue to dominate the news and will continue to hold power over ideas as long as the system exists in its current form.

The problem that causes the misrepresentation of Latina identities and reinforces their subjugation does not come from *The New York Times* itself. The NYT, in this analysis, is used as an example to show the pervasiveness of cultural hegemony in modern society and how it has an unnoticed influence on society, even within liberal news sources. Further avenues of resistance against neoliberal ideals and the subsequent reproduction of marginalized populations are rich fields for further research, which many critical scholars and intersectional feminist voices are already working on. However, within the scope of the thesis, it can be assumed that, barring major systemic changes, American mainstream publications will continue to hold influence and will continue to operate within a neoliberal and hegemonic framework. As a result, *The New York Times* will remain an important American news source with a comparatively high degree of international journalistic integrity. A necessary start, then, is a post-structural and critical reading of dominant discourse, even on an individual consumer level. A method of consumption that can break down the language and discursive techniques to find alternative avenues for resistance and

see the emancipatory potential in the stories of Latina immigrants. As Noam Chomsky, a major figure in linguistic studies and media criticism, says in an interview:

*The first thing I do every day is read The New York Times as it is the most comprehensive journal. You have to critically analyse what you read and understand the framework, what is left out and so forth, but that is not quantum physics, it is not hard to do.* (MacLeod 2019, p. 15)

## CONCLUSION

Neoliberal ideals and Latina immigrant subjugation in discourse are mutually reinforcing concepts that uphold U.S. hegemony and its patriarchal underpinnings. The data revealed a Latina immigrant identity that was contradictory, insufficient, unempowering, and incomplete. Latina women are portrayed through innocence, victimhood, and motherhood, contributing to their subordination as unempowered and agentless subjects. At the same time, they are part of a collective that is portrayed as illegal, irresponsible, and inferior. More than anything, their identity is barely constructed at all other than as a tool to advance other agendas. The disempowering and incomplete identity construction stifles opportunities for resistance, focusing instead on advancing hegemonic values that already exist within the United States. Through an analysis focused on deconstructing dominant narratives, exploring the fluidity of identity, and trying to find the power relations at work in discourse, the way that Latina immigrant identity representation is lacking in discourse that upholds neoliberal hegemonic ideals can begin to be understood.

This kind of research is not mainstream in international relations (IR) scholarship. Traditional IR has often taken a gender-neutral approach, suggesting that IR and gender do not interact and exist as two separate spheres (Smith 2018, p. 62). But this perspective ignores the way in which international phenomena have real gendered impacts. Traditional international relations, by not incorporating gender analysis into mainstream research, “*implicitly supports the thesis that international processes themselves are gender-neutral*” and do not impact the gendered positioning of men and women (Halliday 1988, p. 420). There exists research that studies the discourse on immigration and how language impacts policy, but in far too many cases, this research is gender-blind, leaving out a dimension that is integral to the issue. Researching a phenomenon in a way that ignores gender reinforces that it is a gender-neutral issue, an important point that the thesis attempted to deconstruct. The analysis outlined not only that transnational phenomena have differentiated outcomes along gender lines but also that those outcomes can be so easily left out of research and discourse. Importantly, the analysis showed that misrepresenting women in discourse is not an oversight but rather a method of framing the issue that serves dominant forces. As a result, this research offers a more nuanced understanding of the issue, taking a step toward filling the gaps in IR research, which has continued to fail to incorporate a gender perspective.

The immigration flow between the U.S. and Mexico is, in many ways, a unique situation with specific impacts on women based on its geo-political positioning, racial makeup, and relationship with the United States. The thesis focused on parsing through the assumed homogeneous immigrant identity to highlight the experience of one group of immigrants, Latina women. Due to the heterogeneous makeup of immigrant groups, Latina women are not the only doubly subjugated population that undergoes the immigration process. As mentioned earlier,

further research focusing on other groups, such as sexually diverse or genderqueer individuals, individuals with mental illness or physical limitations, and other subgroups of immigrants, would add to the gaps in international relations research on immigration dynamics. Also, the ideas presented in this thesis can be abstracted to other issues, not only other migration flows but to overall concepts of transnationality and global movement.

Further research into how the construction, or lack thereof, of gender identities serves dominant forces worldwide is essential. Research does not need to focus exclusively on news discourses but also policy language, public attitudes, and material realities. Such research is necessary to create a cohesive framework for analyzing the power relations at play in global migration flows, ultimately working toward a more sustainable system that accounts for differences in gender, race, and class.

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## APPENDIX: CORPORA

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