

Report and Analysis of Language in Media - Fall/Winter 2020-21

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Objective. This study offers a sociolinguistic analysis of the language used by various media outlets in their coverage of immigrants, refugees, and Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC). *Methods.* For a total of six weeks, we collected data from *The Houston Chronicle*, *Star Tribune*, *World News Tonight with David Muir*, *Nightline*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. We evaluated their uses of language to describe immigrants, refugees, and BIPOC individuals. *Results.* The results indicate that news outlets such as *The Houston Chronicle* use luring language in their titles to draw readers in or spark interest, but the content of said articles are drastically different from their titles. The *Star Tribune* offers calculated, often one-sided coverage of the response to George Floyd's murder. ABC's *World News Tonight with David Muir* and *Nightline* uses charged language in their broadcasts to appeal to the emotions of their audience and call them to action. *The Wall Street Journal* shows, much like our other sources do as well, the ignorance of the American public and the broader American misunderstanding of the immigrant and refugee experience. *Conclusion.* Media coverage on these individuals and their experiences produce extremely polarizing stories, but their stories are influential in shaping the American and world understanding of institutional and systemic racism.

The Houston Chronicle and the Role of Titles

Much of what was found within *The Houston Chronicle* was journalism that sought to illuminate the racial problems in the U.S., but also focused on the city of Houston itself and its own flaws in regards to racial justice. It is striking to see that many of the more controversial

quotes came not from newspaper staff, but instead from government officials, leaders, and even from former President Donald Trump himself. These articles unpacked the harmful nature of the statements and pointed out the ways in which the United States, in particular Houston, has yet to achieve greater equity for BIPOC individuals.

What was most intriguing about *The Houston Chronicle* was not its articles, but the titles and headlines versus actual content. For example, upon a first glance, an article published on September 19, 2020 entitled “Study finds Houston leads most cities in racial, economic and poverty disparities” might cause one to believe that Houston is better than many cities in addressing racial, economic, and poverty disparities. The use of the word “lead” implies an accomplishment, or something positive. However, after reading the article, it details how Houston has some of the largest numbers in regards to these disparities: a direct opposite of an accomplishment. According to a quote from the article, “Houston ranked second to last” out of 274 cities measured for inclusion of racial minorities.

The word “lead”, certainly, would cause one to think of Houston as a model for other cities in regards to inclusion, if someone read only the title and not the full article. The article itself addresses and explains the history and development of such a sad truth and furthermore makes clear the seriousness of the problem within the city. The titles, however, were often attention-grabbing, oversimplified, and more reductive than the articles themselves. One theory for this is that the title grabs the attention of liberals and conservatives alike; Texas is saturated with a right-leaning audience of media consumers. If it sounds as though Houston has achieved something, there is a possibility of drawing in more right-leaning readers who want to believe in the greatness of their state, and perhaps, that racial inequality is a thing of the past.

Other articles and their titles further this theory. Written on October 19th, 2020, an article entitled “Ending racism would add trillions to the U.S. economy” strikes readers very similarly to the previous article. The title, again, has its own implications that differ greatly from the content of the article. The title suggests that simply “ending racism” should be accomplished for the sake of the economy and completely disregards the fact that racism is deeply rooted in our society. Nowhere does the title mention the humanitarian or equity issues that racism has created. The rationale for “ending racism”, as it says in the title, is for economic reasons rather than humanitarian ones.

This pattern is unfortunately well-established, and must be painstakingly picked apart and readjusted in order to gain equity for the racial minorities in society. The article is an extremely well-researched and comprehensive look at the ways in which racism hurts the United States economy, particularly in regards to the ways that Black-owned businesses struggle more than others, but the title brings to mind a simple solution to an arbitrary problem, suggesting that racism should be “fixed” for the sake of the economy. This is as ridiculous as the 2017 articles about millionaire Tim Gurner’s suggestion that cutting out avocado toast would allow millennials to save enough to buy a house.¹ Perhaps this is yet another clever ploy to “invite the right-wing” readers. Many Republicans cite the economic policies as the reason why they support Republican ideology, thus framing racism as something preventing economic growth in this country. This might be one of the few ways to get through to a right-wing audience and emphasize the seriousness of racial problems in the U.S. It could also be an instance of carelessness on the part

¹ This is in reference to a 2017 article such as the one from *The Guardian* entitled “Millionaire tells millennials: if you want a house, stop buying avocado toast” (<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2017/may/15/australian-millionaire-millennials-avocado-toast-house>). The implication of a very rich man telling young people to cut out something so arbitrary from their budgets is elitist and takes something that is a deep-seated issue and provides an oversimplified motivation and solution. The article about racism and the economy hits on a similar note, though not as obviously ludicrous a suggestion.

of the newspaper staff that makes the titles less politically correct in order to draw in readers, whose attention has already been captured by this writing style.

Other examples of title and content disparities display the same pattern. For instance, an article from October 12th, 2020, entitled “Asian voters turn to Biden at SW Houston event” is particularly reductionary in its use of the word “Asians” to describe a particular group of Vietnamese-American voters. Using the word “Asians” makes the group sound like foreigners; however, if they are able to vote, that means that they have American citizenship. Additionally, the context of Vietnamese-Americans who had previously voted Republican in order to get as far away as possible from the Communism of Vietnam is needed to fully understand their views.

The October 13th, 2020 article entitled “A treasure trove of historic photos will soon be online, but Houston Latinos say it’s not enough” also follows suit. The article discusses the volume of historical information pertaining to Latinx history in Houston that has not been made available or categorized through the library.² Despite Dallas and Austin having done so extensively with smaller Latinx populations, this title implies that Latinx groups in Houston are complaining, ungrateful for what has already been done for them. It also implies Houston Latinx groups should be happy to get anything. The article explains that the Latinx population of Houston is the largest of any ethnic group in the city, thus Latinxs are only suggesting that a historical center be created specifically for Latinx people. Though the article explains the issue clearly, the title would suggest a needy, never-satisfied group that is ungrateful for what they have.

² For the purposes of this report, we are using the term “Latinx”, with the understanding that this is a contested term. Because this report examines the American context, in which “Latinx” was born, the use is applicable. However, many Spanish speakers do not claim the word “Latinx”, because of its American history and tone of telling Spanish speakers what to do with their language. The article from *The Houston Chronicle* uses the term “Latino” primarily, though many would argue that this term is not gender-inclusive. With this understanding that the word is contested, “Latinx” is used in this report in order to refer to this group of people within the American context.

It is important to note that not all titles are misleading. Titles like “‘What if that was me?’: Houston activists outraged over Breonna Taylor decision”, from September 14th, 2020 add a personal tinge to the content and express the deep hurt from police killings among the Black community and others. Much like the other personal quotes shared in this report, the words show a deep personal impact that is long-lasting.

In summary, many titles in *The Houston Chronicle* often do not match the article content and are misleading, if not intentionally created to skew audience perception. This could potentially be a tactic to draw in a more conservative audience or it could simply be because making the titles less politically correct draws in more diverse readers who are curious about the content. Whatever the case, language use in articles, in both title and content, can be very influential in understanding the broader narrative of racism in America.

Language used by the *Star Tribune* surrounding the George Floyd trial and community response

_____ Since the murder of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police on May 25, 2020, many of the front-page print articles published by the *Star Tribune* have centered around the Floyd family’s trial and community response to the killing. While Floyd’s murder sparked worldwide activism and discussion centered around racial injustices and inequities, much of the trauma surrounding the event has fallen on the shoulders of Floyd’s family and his attorneys, local activists including different families with similar stories of police brutality and murder, and the Minneapolis community at large, particularly Black residents. The *Star Tribune* has played a key role in providing coverage of Floyd’s murder and how the Minneapolis and state community has reacted to the tragedy. This includes articles about changes to policing as a result of the killing, updates on the Floyd family’s trial, and interviews with community members on their perception of systemic racial inequities. Due to the polarizing nature of Floyd’s killing and the

subsequent civil unrest, the language used in articles about this subject by the newspaper staff as well as within various quotes from government officials, attorneys, and community members is certainly worthy of critical analysis.

Following Floyd's death, the city of Minneapolis experienced a wave of civil unrest that has extended into the later months of the year. In a front-page article titled "Tensions could spark more unrest - Mpls., state feel ready to handle violent protests" published on October 19, 2020, the writer opens with the following sentence: "Knowing the city of Minneapolis could erupt in riots again, city and state officials say they have learned from the unrest following the death of George Floyd and will better respond to trouble in the future." The use of the word "trouble" to describe the protests is significant because it implies that the protesters are the problem or difficulty, not the police brutality and the systemic racism that sparked the unrest. The characterization of demonstrations against racial inequity as "trouble" villainizes the protesters, feeding into the misconceptions conservative people may have about progressive politics.

Additionally, the article is considerably one-sided, as it includes many quotes from city officials such as Mayor Jacob Frey and Police Chief Medaria Arradondo, yet completely omits any input from activists who have been affected by the militarization of the police. The article reports on potential "wide-scale destruction" of property at length, yet gives no mention of the violence inflicted upon peaceful protesters by police and the National Guard. Despite mostly focusing on the possibility of property damage, the article concludes with this quote from Chief Arradondo: "The number one priority is preservation of life, and that is non negotiable." Ironically, officers oftentimes display little regard for life and safety when confronting Black Lives Matter protesters (i.e. the use of tear gas, rubber bullets, physical aggression, etc.). The

inclusion of this quote, then, is significant, as it highlights the contrast between the rhetoric of non-violence used by city officials and the reality of police action on the street.

The community's response to Floyd's death has also produced articles and language worthy of analysis. In the same month, the *Star Tribune* published a front-page article on October 12, 2020 titled "QUEST FOR DIVERSITY LED THEM TO CITIES - The Lundquists see Twin Cities as a better fit politically and culturally." The article is about a family who relocated from the small northern town of Roseau, MN, which the reporter described as "overwhelmingly white," to Brooklyn Park, a suburb of Minneapolis which is cited as "one of the most diverse cities in the state." According to the article, the Lundquists decided to move to the cities for a number of reasons, but the "experience at 38th and Chicago Avenue, known as George Floyd Square, was so transformative that it served as the final push for the Lundquists to leave Roseau after 16 years." Here, the use of the word "transformative" implies that experiencing George Floyd Square was so significant to the Lundquists that it intrinsically changed the family and their outlook. The notion that spending time reflecting on police brutality and the broader existence of racism has the ability to completely change lives is certainly a powerful one. This diction speaks to the impact an event like Floyd's murder can have on a community, both locally and broadly.

Another compelling instance of language within this article presents itself within a quote from Kate, the mother of the Lundquist family. Lundquist is quoted saying, "When my Black sons have something that's difficult for them in relation to their race, nobody's going to understand. [Roseau] wasn't the best soil for us to grow anymore." This is a powerful use of metaphor, as it demonstrates how some places, because of their racial make-up and other demographics, can be a hostile environment that stunts development. In the wake of George

Floyd's killing, the Lundquist family found it imperative to uproot and plant themselves in an environment more conducive to their growth, especially in relation to their Black sons.

Additionally, this metaphor emphasizes the organic nature of racial equity and well-being beyond race's political construction. The issue of racial equity is constitutive of what is necessary to nurture and maintain being in a holistic, natural sense, and this metaphor given by Kate Lundquist demonstrates that idea. The inclusion of this quote may encourage other people to reflect on their own environment and if it is an environment that is beneficial to their growth or harmful. However, it must be noted that to suddenly move across the state for a better environment is not a reality for most people, as it is an extremely expensive pursuit. The *Star Tribune* highlighting this family's journey, which is marked by intense privilege, on the front page of the print edition is indicative of a narrative the newspaper is trying to represent. This is a narrative that prioritizes those who are economically and racially privileged, i.e. the newspaper's intended audience.

In addition to covering changes in policing and community responses to George Floyd's killing, the *Star Tribune* has extensively covered the upcoming trial for the four former officers charged in his death. All four officers involved have been released on bail, including Derek Chauvin, the main perpetrator of violence against Floyd who has been charged with second-degree murder. An article published on October 8, 2020 titled "Chauvin gets bail; Guard is called in - Conditions on the release of cop in Floyd case require him to stay in Minnesota" provides a glimpse into racial divisions that have been heightened by the murder of George Floyd, especially in the terms of familial relations. According to the article, Chauvin's bail was funded partially by a Christian crowdfunding site called GiveSendGo. The *Star Tribune* included a quote from the description of the online fundraiser, which states that "Chauvin deserves to be

with his family and friends.” This quote is controversial, as it insinuates that it is Chauvin’s right to be with his family despite being charged with murder. The *Star Tribune*’s inclusion of the fundraiser description could be interpreted as a way to gain sympathy for Chauvin and his family by presenting “another side to the story,” but the article also offers a sharply contrasting perspective.

Shortly following the quote from the fundraiser description, the article quoted a tweet from one of the Floyd family’s attorneys, Ben Crump. In this tweet, Crump writes, “[Chauvin’s] release on bond is a painful reminder to George’s family that we are still far from achieving justice.” This quoted tweet from Crump provides the perspective of a family in a situation far different from that of the Chauvin family, as the Floyd family is grieving over the loss of life due to violence and racism. By including quotes from two different sources about a similar subject—the experiences of both Derek Chauvin and George Floyd’s families—the *Star Tribune* prompts readers to consider the disparities between the two situations the families are in. The quotes demonstrate the vast difference between a family who hopes for bail and acquittal of murder charges for their son versus a family who wishes their son was still breathing.

The *Star Tribune* has been a fundamental source for information about George Floyd’s trial, changes to policing due to his murder, and the community response to his death. That being said, like all newspapers, the *Star Tribune* has a target audience, most likely middle-aged and older, white and affluent adults, and as such, their articles are made to be digestible for this demographic. This could be a reason as to why an article about sending in the National Guard heavily features quotes from city officials like Mayor Jacob Frey and Police Chief Medaria Arradondo rather than quotes from activists on the streets. Overall, the *Star Tribune*’s coverage of George Floyd’s murder and subsequent community response has been essential for gaining

information about the upcoming trial and changes to policing, but it is not beyond critique, especially due to the one-sidedness of many of the articles.

Misportrayal of the BIPOC Experience: Language used by ABC

_____The American Broadcasting Company, also known as ABC, is a multinational company that broadcasts a series of nightly news segments. The decision to focus on both *World News Tonight with David Muir* and *Nightline* was made as those were said to be two of the less-controversial segments that they show. Although sometimes there were accurate sections within these broadcasts, it was clear there were some inaccuracies about the BIPOC experience. A misportrayal of BIPOC individuals and their lives were broadcasted to millions of viewers, on a nightly basis.

One of the first places where this was evident was through the death of Breonna Taylor; a Black medical worker who was shot six times and killed by Louisville police officers in March 2020 during a botched raid on her apartment. Three officers dressed in plain clothing entered Taylor's house forcefully and unannounced, and began shooting when Taylor's boyfriend, Kenneth Walker, fired a warning shot at who he thought were intruders. The three officers, ex sergeant Johnathan Mattingly, Brett Hankison, and Myles Cosgrove, were not charged with Taylor's death, but Hankison was indicted on three counts of wanton endangerment for endangering neighbors when he fired his weapon.

Ex sergeant Johnathan Mattingly composed an email to fellow officers speaking of the confrontation and the backlash he received from the public saying, "It is sad how the good guys are demonized, and the criminals are canonized". Mattingly's choice of the charged words "demonized" and "canonized" only added fuel to an already massive fire. Where most people

saw Walker as a man trying to protect his home from intruders, Mattingly was working off of drug suspicions as a police officer and saw Walker and Taylor as criminals. He believes he is in the right and is being demonized for doing his job. The use of imagery such as demons and saints perpetuates systemic racism. Portraying black people as evil and police officers being saintly is the clear imagery Mattingly wanted to paint, one that continues harming those in our community and furthers the already prominent divide in our country .

Although police departments nationwide are working to reform their practices, there is no doubt that there are activists and attorneys pushing for more justice. In a World News Tonight with David Muir report, Ben Crump, the attorney for both the Floyd family and the Taylor family, spoke to state how appalling it is that people of color are being persecuted daily by white police officers. Crump called it “offensive” and “another example of no accountability for the genocide of persons of color by white police officers”. Genocide is defined as the deliberate killing of a large number of people from a particular group with the aim of destroying said group. Although, to some, equating genocides like the holocaust to the loss of black lives in the United States to white authorities may not seem equivalent, the attempt to eradicate Black and Indigenous people is something that cannot be overlooked. Unfortunately, this is not something new for the United States.

Evaluating ABCs language choices in their broadcasts was compelling and the frequency in which the term “genocide” was used in ABC’s various broadcasts was engrossing. In only one hour-long report focusing on the Indigenous experience in the U.S., the term was used over six times. The repetitive use of the word hints at this pattern of genocide, especially in regards to the lives of Indigenous people. Genocide is defined as the deliberate killing of a large number of people from a particular group with the aim of destroying said group. The term was mainly used

as a reminder of the restorative justice measures that have yet to be created in the U.S. for many minority groups, but specifically for the Indigenous people. Ty Defoe, a member of the Oneida and Anishinaabe tribes, voiced his opinion saying, “With land being stolen, language being wiped away, there was a silencing that was occurring, and it almost is strategic genocide.” Not only was this a genocide, or a silencing, of Native people in the sense that they couldn’t speak for their own land, but cultural and linguistic erasure that was and continues happening in the U.S..

Defoe continues, “But what I think is important now is that our voices are heard”. It is important for Defoe and others to tell their stories and be heard instead of being silenced like they have previously been. Like Defoe, many activists are fighting for change and making their voices heard. At a joint climate and racial justice protests, one activist could be heard saying, “Columbus [is] a symbol of genocide, of the oppression of indigenous peoples, and now’s the time for us to say no more”. What Defoe was getting at was we must reform our preconceived notions of Columbus and acknowledge his wrongdoings, along with stopping the glorification of his violence and genocide.

Melody McCoy, a Staff Attorney at the Native American Rights Fund, paints a vivid picture of the oppression Indigenous people and their tribes face. “I’ve often said that the series of Indian treaties is like a folding napkin. This is your homeland now, but then a few years later the napkin gets folded, and the U.S. comes to the tribes and says, ‘You know what, you don’t really need all that land’, and it goes on and on until there is such little left.” Indigenous people have had to fight for their freedom, rights, lands, and families when the U.S. had promised them that decades ago.

It was not until *McGirt v. Oklahoma* in 2020, last year, that Indigenous people were granted the land that they were promised, and that was for the first time since these treaties were created. It was one of many promises the U.S. made to Native Americans, but one of the only ones that was finally upheld. The American pattern of genocide is disastrous, especially when you hear the different accounts from not only BIPOC individuals, but also from immigrants and refugees. In talking about Indigenous land, one woman described it as being “Homeless in our own lands, in our own territories”. Being homeless at home is something that caught our attention. This image of homelessness in one’s own home tells of a shocking alienation that these indigenous individuals live with on a daily basis. There are already negative connotations about being homeless, but the reason they are homeless is because their land keeps wrongfully being taken away from them. The U.S. government and their actions are the reason they feel far from home on their native homelands. The broader American understanding of immigrant, refugees, and BIPOC individuals and their experiences is minute, and what little experience we think we know is what is misinterpreted and misportrayed in the media.

The Wall Street Journal: the portrayal of refugees and immigrants

The news media appear to be a vital source to deliver information about refugees and immigrants to the public. By providing relatively new content regularly, the Fourth Estate has significant potential to impact public attitudes, deliver messages about immigrant lives, and reflect how the refugee community is represented through the political lens. In 2018, an estimated 44.8 million immigrants were living in the U.S., which makes up 13.7% of the country's population. However, according to the Pew Research Center, about 11.1 million immigrants (about a quarter) are without legal documentation or authorization in the United

States. Regardless of their legal status, refugees and immigrants are at the core of society, politics, and the economy in many aspects. Through a diverse text-based qualitative data collection from news articles published in The Wall Street Journal, this analysis provides linguistic evidence concerning U.S. media's portrayal of refugees and immigrants and how usages of words and writing techniques shape readers' views on this group of minorities.

The polarizing terms used to describe refugees and immigrants provide a window to the underlying attitudes of some Americans, including, notably, the former president. The article *Supreme Court to Consider Whether Census Must Count Illegal Immigrants in Allocating House Seats*, published on November 30th, 2020, clearly states that Mr. Trump applied the term "illegal aliens" repetitively when referring to refugees and immigrants. Collectively, this potential dehumanizing term appeared three times when quoting Mr. Trump's speech. Instead of problematizing the use of this term, the author adopted the name and kept using it for the rest of their article. In addition, there were no quotations marked specifically for the term in Trump's speech, which the author apparently normalized such name-calling for immigrants and refugees. The term "illegal aliens" composes of two words, in terms of meaning, the first word, "illegal," focuses on the authorization issue for refugees and immigrants, and the second word, "aliens," usually deliver a sense of a group of people who do not owe allegiance to the new country, or who are not even human from this planet. These two words are inappropriate to describe a human being or a population of people. Often, there is a shorter version called "illegals" that represents a noun, which implies that a group of individuals is perpetually illegal. Besides the immigrants/refugees, there's no other classification that determines someone is illegal other than the actions of that individual. It should be noted that this is a rare use of the word 'illegal' to describe the sheer presence of a person, as opposed to describing the illegality of someone's

actions, as that word is typically used. The word choice made the audiences believe that refugees and immigrants as usually undocumented, against legal migration, and will never become compatible with the residents. This kind of word choice stigmatizes refugees and immigrants with a negative attitude in the very first place by calling them names that evoke inequitable meanings. The movement away from such words is not only about being politically correct but augurs a society that protects people from discrimination and prejudice, more importantly, embraces the heritage as an immigrant nation.

The misuse of writing techniques in reporting refugees and immigrants information leads to misunderstandings for the readers about this group of people. On September 30th, 2020, an article called *U.S. Refugee Backlog Swells, Leaving Families Waiting to Reunite* points out Mr. Trump compared Minnesota to a refugee camp in his campaign speech to oppose Mr. Biden due to the fact that Minnesota is home to the nation's largest population of Somali refugees. This use of simile attempted to attribute equivalency in an over-generalized way that doesn't seem to tie in at all with reality. Also, comparing these two things trigger the readers' fear of living in a State with foreigners and further stokes opposition to multiculturalism and diversity. It's suspicious that the author of this article chose to include this specific quote from Mr. Trump in their writing, intending to exaggerate the real refugee crisis in the State, which might develop more negative thoughts on refugees/immigrants once the reader reads it. What is more, the author of the article seems to just pass along this simile without any critiques or comments to problematize the non-equivalence behind it.

Finally, a strong sense of patriotism in news articles leads readers to think that they are superiors as residents and confident in the idea of the U.S. is making migration dreams come true. Many Americans still believe immigrants will immediately make their American dreams

come true once they enter the State if they work hard enough. In the article *The American Experiment Is on Life Support*, published on October 26th, 2020, the author showed confidence in portraying American culture as the best culture because it has offered a reversal of life for enough numbers of immigrants and refugees. The author states that “the power of the American ideal offered millions ... to reinvent and renew one’s life, advance one’s position, and create a better future for one’s children” which tries to deliver a positive message of the migration situation in the United States and convinced readers to believe immigrants and refugees are already living in their best lives compare what they had before, there shouldn't be anything else to ask for when their offsprings are going to be in the country enjoying “America”. Therefore, it made it hard to understand what are implicit challenges that refugees and immigrants are dealing with that result in a sense of rootlessness and unacceptability in their "second home." However, it's debatable whether the "American Dream" is an illusion or reality for the immigrants. The author certainly put aside the adult immigrants, but only thought it would be beneficial for the children to grow up in America. With the varying degrees of cultural differences, anti-immigration sentiments, and racism revealed in society; immigrants and refugees have a long way ahead.

Taken together, these patterns illustrate the way journalists cover migration, specifically the information they highlight through certain word uses, which indeed carry consequences for the audience's misinterpretation of refugee and immigrant issues, especially given the likelihood that many local U.S. citizens lack direct interaction and firsthand experience with recent immigrants and refugees. In terms of journalistic practice, The Wall Street Journal provides audiences a narrow representation of immigrants and refugees, which tends to express its role as a more conservative news source. The trend of using Mr. Trump's exact, inflammatory words in

articles by different journalists shows the more right side the media platform has taken. In general, news stories frame refugees/immigrants in terms of national security, conflict, and tribulations. Often, people tend to exclude refugees and immigrants from the BIPOC individuals. However, they are a part of the diversity of America who deserves equality and respect, too. It is important to destigmatize the negative image of refugees and immigrants if the U.S. is to make any significant progress in the areas of social equality and justice.

Conclusions

This study relies on the observation of language and linguistic elements used by *The Houston Chronicle*, *Star Tribune*, *World News Tonight with David Muir*, *Nightline*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. These sources are just case files in the greater context of the media as a whole. Our findings suggest that polarizing language is used widely and repetitively regardless of context. Indeed, media outlets are adding to the already emotional political climate we are experiencing today. There are high emotions attached to these stories, and the strength with which immigrant, refugee, and BIPOC people feel attacked, marginalized, and hurt is very clear. Many of these sources call their audience to action but in a polarizing fashion. Undoubtedly, the use of titles, word choice, and compelling testimonies are impacting the way viewers understand institutional and systemic racism.

Our findings also highlight especially the power that linguistic features hold in this case. Language is a tool that can go unnoticed, though it surrounds virtually all aspects of life. Even if the message is subtle, language has the ability to change or reinforce how we think about immigrant, BIPOC, and other marginalized identities. It is clear that we must be critical, read carefully, and think about what messages the media might be trying to send when consuming this

content. Thinking through a sociolinguistic lens, these tools of fear-mongering, attention-grabbing, and polarizing language can be engaged with critically.

The presumptions most Americans hold toward BIPOC individuals, immigrants, and refugees, are only increased by the media's coverage of those matters. The media uses attention-grabbing phrases and words in order to capture the audience, but in doing so, they detract from the intent of the story. The true meaning and emotion of these stories are, more often than not, hidden behind a layer of polarity. Our research confirms, as clearly seen in the ways that titles differ from the content of articles, in the ways that quotes from polarizing figures like Donald Trump are used, and in the underrepresentation of voices of frustrated activists who have had enough, that critical listening and interpretation is vital regardless of the media source. There is a broader American ignorance to the BIPOC, immigrant, and refugee experience. These individuals and their experiences are reduced by the media: to numbers, to statistics, to tools, to symbols, etc. Underneath it all, they are people, and they deserve equal respect in the media as such. We must be advocates for refugees, immigrants, and BIPOC individuals, as well as avoiding the sensationalism that the market-driven media produces.