

Anger, social polarization and middle class in *Las Mañaneras* of López Obrador

Odio, polarización social y clase media en Las Mañaneras de López Obrador



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Abstract:

Hate has become an important element used in populist politicians' discourse to support their agenda. This is the case of the Mexican president, Lopez Obrador (AMLO). He has used official channels and social media to verbally harass his critics and the opposition. One distinctive element in AMLO's media strategy is "La Mañanera," a daily morning conference where he informs about his national agenda. However, this space has served to exculpate his relatives and party members from the misuse of public money and to openly criticize journalists, social organizations, opponents and, since June 2021, the Mexican middle class. This article uses the discourse-historical approach (DHA) framework to study the discursive construction of "middle class" under the scope of López Obrador's speech in *Las Mañaneras*. To analyze how AMLO uses social resentment to attack the members of this social sector, and what are the main rhetorical elements employed towards the middle class under López Obrador discourse. As outcomes will show, what is remarkable about AMLO's speeches towards the middle class is the ability of populist governments to use traditional stereotypes, collective resentment, and a partial interpretation of national history to harass dissents and preserve public approval.

Keywords:

Populism; hate discourse; López Obrador; middle class; Mexico; mass media.

Resumen:

*El odio se ha convertido en un elemento clave en el discurso de los políticos populistas para apoyar sus acciones. Tal es el caso del presidente mexicano, López Obrador (AMLO), quien ha utilizado medios oficiales y redes sociales para acosar a sus críticos y a la oposición política. Un elemento distintivo en su estrategia mediática es "La Mañanera", una conferencia matutina en la que se informa sobre la agenda presidencial, sin embargo, este espacio ha servido también para exculpar a sus familiares y militantes, así como para criticar a periodistas, organizaciones sociales, opositores y, desde el segundo semestre de 2021, a la clase media mexicana. El propósito de este artículo es emplear el corpus teórico del enfoque histórico del discurso (DHA) para estudiar la construcción discursiva de la "clase media" en *Las Mañaneras* de López Obrador, cómo AMLO usa el resentimiento social para atacar a sus críticos, y cuáles son los principales elementos retóricos empleados contra la clase media. Los resultados finales mostrarán la capacidad de los gobiernos populistas de utilizar los estereotipos tradicionales, el resentimiento colectivo y una interpretación parcial de la historia nacional para acosar a los disidentes y lograr altos niveles de popularidad.*

Palabras clave:

Populismo; discursos de odio; López Obrador; clase media; México; medio masivos.

1. Introduction

As the world enters the third decade of the new century, it is possible to observe some global trends that have a direct impact in the political and social landscape such as the arrival and consolidation of digital media (from smartphones to social media) as the most important source of information, communication, and entertainment across the globe. By now about 59.5%, (4.66 billion) of the world's population is connected to the Internet (Johnson, 2021), the most popular online activity is to comment and share information on social media platforms: YouTube was the second most visited site on the Internet during 2020 (Alexa, 2021) and Facebook is one of the most active social platforms with nearly 2.89 billion monthly users (Statista, 2021). This global hyperconnectivity provides diverse opportunities for citizens and governments: giving voice to local movements, improving transparency and accountability, expanding socialization far beyond the traditional geographic barriers, among others. During the pandemic context, digital technologies have played a key role, by supporting the virtualization of business and services, letting people to continue working and studying at home (ITU, 2021). Social media and mobile applications have allowed to stay in contact with relatives and friends despite the social confinements, and receive valuable information

related with sanitation measures, quarantine regulations and vaccination campaigns. The pandemic context has confirmed how Internet access cannot still be considered as an accessory technology but as an essential human right (Web Foundation, 2020).

However, this digital omnipresence has carried unwilling effects at a social and personal level: Internet addiction which causes depression and anxiety among other health issues; digital divide which exacerbates the traditional social exclusion problems, the proliferation of online scams and harassment, etc. But there are other negative outcomes, which now stand a great threat to democratic institutions such as free press, free elections, civil rights, and power division. One of them is the irruption of the Fake News phenomena and the organization of disinformation campaigns to cause social polarization and distrust towards traditional media (Mourão & Robertson, 2019). Since citizens depend more on social platforms such as Facebook or Twitter than analogic channels as the case of television or print press to become informed about public issues, populist politicians and movements (from Far and Right ideology) have approached these platforms to share untruthful or partial information, seed conspiracy theories, instigate incertitude and doubts among the public and attack electoral adversaries and dissident groups (Miró-Llinares & Aguerri, 2021).

Although there is not a consensus about a unique definition of populism, the word is usually linked with a political interaction in where the term “the people” plays a key role in the conformation of the discourse and agenda (Moffitt, 2016; Ron & Nadesan, 2020). Populist ideology has its foundations in two key aspects: a basic conflict in between two antagonist groups, one morally righteous and another licentious, whose actions affect the people’s interests. The virtuous and the decadent group tend to vary depending on the basic ideology of the populist group or politician (extreme left or right): from the capitalism and free market to the labor unions and civil organizations. The other important element is the existence of a charismatic leader or a faction who stands as the only transcriber or interpreter of “the people’s will” (Mudd, 2017). Subsequently, they use the people’s will argument to gain power, reduce civil rights, and exercise public force to attack dissidents and critics of the regime. Populist movements flourished in recent years. They have nurtured from an adverse global context shaped by economic crises, terrorist attacks and civil wars, massive migration influxes, the effects of the pandemic in the social sphere, a rising xenophobia and racism, and a growing disillusionment towards customary politics and institutions. Extremist organizations have taken advantage of this discontent to gain public support and resources (Steenvoorden & Harteveld, 2018; Engesser et al., 2017). The use of social media, virtual partisans, and bots to organize deception campaigns and cause social polarization has granted them the achievement of important electoral victories (Lazaridis et al., 2016). Many of those leaders, as the case of Donald Trump in the United States or Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, have even won presidential elections using an open populist discourse based on misinformation and hate, blaming political adversaries, journalists, international institutions, migrants, and members of genre minorities as the main source of the economic problems and public instability (Waisbord, 2020; Miller-Idriss, 2020).

The rise of populism and the use of media, particularly social media, to spread verbal offenses, and negative imaginaries to produce social resentment as an electoral strategy have become an important subject in the recent academic literature (Assimakopoulos et al., 2017; KhosraviNik & Esposito, 2018; Paz et al., 2020; Carlson, 2021). As scholars have elucidated, the hate discourse towards ethnic, religious and genre minorities, and even social classes, considered as privileged, has become one of the most important discursive tactics used in populist speeches to support their actions and agenda (Lim,

2017; Chiluiwa et al., 2020). The use of hate speech has been analyzed under the critical discourse analysis framework (CDA) as an instrument to create sectarianism and polarization during political campaigns (Lim, 2017) or as a benefit to politicians to increase their popularity (Sengul, 2019). Some studies emphasize how media frames public problems, as the case of migration crises in Europe, to vindicate attacks towards refugees in Poland (Krotofil & Motak, 2018), and in what way social media is used to widely disperse hate discourse towards minorities, as the case of the Roma ethnic group in Sweden (Enarsson & Lindgren, 2019). Other authors have paid attention to how hate discourse materializes into class resentment, triggered by the long-lasting effects of the 2008 economic crisis and the recent impact of the pandemic in the labor market, the closing of businesses and the decline of the living standards (Burch, 2018; Foa & Wilmot, 2019; Tooze, 2020). Extremist politicians have addressed the anger and frustration caused by the establishment of austerity policies, social distancing policies and low rates of economic growth (Cohen, 2019). In times of economic depression, the target of this hate stands on social classes which are considered as parasites or privileged under an “injustice system,” such as those benefiting from social aids like people with disabilities (Mylonas, 2018) or refugees (Hakoköngäs et al., 2020). Along with the disinformation phenomena, the rise of populism and the spread of hate discourse, the irruption of the pandemic has caused, not only health and economic problems, but it has become the perfect “excuse” for populist presidents to seize more power, intimidate the political opposition and attack critics using the pandemic context as an argument to reduce civil rights and public aid to minority groups such as migrants, ethnic groups, and members of the gay collectives.

Latin America has not been invulnerable to these adverse context and social trends. In recent years, some politicians embraced a confronting discourse during the electoral campaigns, which not only helped them to win the presidential elections, but to gain exceptional public support and seize more power. These are the cases of Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil in 2018, Nayib Bukele in 2019 in El Salvador, and Andrés Manuel López Obrador in Mexico in 2018. López Obrador or AMLO, as he is widely known in Mexico, has made a profuse use of social media to communicate his political ideas (Lopez-Chau et al., 2019). He has been, as many other populist politicians, very successful to translate public resentment about the economic and social situation in Mexico into electoral votes. Under the trending slogan “La Cuarta Transformación” (The Fourth Transformation), he became, before the eyes of his followers, a charismatic leader that will resolve Mexico’s traditional problems: insecurity, criminality, and poverty. In The Fourth Transformation the employment of moral imaginaries is recurrent, in which AMLO and his functionaries appear as uncorrupted, invested with high patriotic values (Ulfgard & Villanueva, 2020). This is a discourse that contrasts with the corruption cases involving the regime’s functionaries and AMLO’s relatives uncovered by the Mexican press since his arrival to the presidency (Oré, 2020). While López Obrador openly protects the members of his family and political supporters, he has used the governmental apparatus to pursue and harass independent democratic institutions as the case of the INE (Instituto Nacional Electoral-The National Electoral Institute), the political opposition, and the free press (Agren, 2021). He has used official channels and social media to attack his critics, labeling them as “Fifís,” a pejorative term from French origin that was employed during The Porfiriato in Mexico (1876-1911) to designate the members of upper classes in the country, but that now, under AMLO’s presidency, is used to cause public scorn to everybody who does not comply with his ideas and actions. One distinctive element of AMLO media strategy is the making of “La Mañanera,” which is a dairy morning conference in where he informs about the national agenda. However, this space has served to exculpate

his relatives and the members of the official party from the misuse of public resources and openly criticize journalists, social organizations, and opponents (López Obrador, 2019; La Otra Opinión, 2020).

But in June 2021, after a mid-term election in Mexico, in where the presidents' party "MORENA," Movimiento Regeneración Nacional (National Regeneration Movement) suffered a huge electoral setback in Mexico City (Cota, 2021), the largest metropole in the country, a crucial MORENA's electoral stronghold and a good barometer to measure the people's preference for the next presidential elections; AMLO's discourse in "La Mañanera" took a different tone. The president started condemning the Mexican middle class throughout several morning conferences, accusing the members of being "aspirationist and selfish," and that they had been manipulated to vote against his political project (Guerrero & Baranda, 2021). The purpose of this article is to use the CDA framework, more in specific the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), to analyze the discursive construction of middle class under the scope of López Obrador's speech in Las Mañaneras. How AMLO uses social resentment to attack the members of this social sector, and what are the main rhetoric elements employed towards the middle class under López Obrador discourse. As final outcomes will show, AMLO's case is a discerning example of how populist governments use traditional stereotypes, social resentment, and a partial interpretation of national history to harass dissents, avoid accountability and preserve public approval.

2. Method

The article's methodology is based on the Critical Discourse Analysis framework (CDA). While there is not a unified definition, it is possible to assert that CDA focusses on the analysis of documents (writings, photographs, audios, and videos, etc.) as objects of powers. CDA considers documents as products of social interaction, consequently they reproduce social contradictions, ideologies, and structures of domination. The aim of this methodology is to connect the discourse presented in the documents with their structures of power and ideologies (Wodak & Meyer, 2009; Fairclough, 2010; van Dijk, 2015). This research centers on the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), which has been widely used to study the use of hate rhetoric in extremist populist discourses (Wodak, 2015; Sengul, 2019; Chiluiwa et al., 2020). This analysis follows the approach outlined by Reisigl & Wodak (2000:44-45), which proposes an inquiry centered on five discursive strategies: (a) nomination strategies by which one constructs and represents social actors. It refers to labeling tactics such as verbal metaphors to designate social actors or groups; (b) predicational strategies are those stereotypical and evaluative attributions of negative and positive traits in the linguistic form of implicit or explicit predicates. After the nomination of the groups, these strategies have the function of reinforcing the separation of the confronting groups according to the regimen ideology (Left or Right); (c) the argumentation strategies through which positive and negative attributions are justified. How the populist group vindicated their harassment to the minorities or political adversaries; (d) framing or discourse representation by means of which speakers express their involvement in discourse and make explicit his point of view and (e) intensifying/mitigation strategies "help to qualify and modify the epistemic status of a proposition by intensifying or mitigating the illocutionary force. It implies the use of vague expressions, hyperboles, diminutives, or augmentatives, among other rhetoric figures" Reisigl & Wodak (2000:45).

Data gathering centered on the analysis of the middle-class term in AMLO's speech in Las Mañaneras after the 2021 mid-term election in Mexico. The retrieval of the president's discourses was possible through the public videos that he shares

on his YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/c/lopezobrador>), registered under the name Andrés Manuel Lopez Obrador, in which he has the list of conferencias de prensa matutinas (Morning media conferences). The fieldwork took three months (From July to September). During the information gathering, 50 press conferences were analyzed. These conferences corresponded to the weekly broadcasts (from Monday to Friday) from May 31 to August 6, 2021. The morning media conferences had an average duration of 2 hours, the shortest time being 47 minutes and the longest being two hours and a half.

As a result of the analysis of the 50 press conferences, it was found that in 11 of them AMLO used the term middle class, mainly in the questions and answers section (73%). The term middle class was primarily used in June (10 conferences) and once July (July 14). On average, the president used this term two times per conference, the highest number of mentions being seven and the lowest one. To analyze the rhetoric construction of middle class under the scope of López Obrador speech in *Las Mañaneras*, it was necessary to transcribe the 29 fragments of his speech in which he uses this term in the 11 conferences. The analysis was based on studying these fragments from the president's discourses in their original language (Spanish). When necessary, the sections were translated into English.

3. Outcomes and Discussion

This segment focuses on the analysis of the discursive construction of middle class in 29 fragments of AMLO's speech in 11 press conferences, *Las Mañaneras*, after the 2021 mid-term election in Mexico. These conferences corresponded to the broadcasts of June 7, (1 fragment) June 8, (1 fragment) June 10, (2 fragments) June 11, (2 fragments) June 14, (7 fragments) June 21, (1 fragments) June 22, (1 fragments) June 24, (5 fragments), June 28, (2 fragments) June 30, (2 fragments) and July 14 (5 fragments). After selecting the fragments, they were classified into categories corresponding to the five strategies proposed by (Reisigl & Wodak, 2000: 44-45).

3.1. Nomination strategies: *The construction of the middle class in AMLO's Discourse*

One of the most significant characteristics of AMLO's discourse during the presidential campaign and what goes of his presidency, is the construction of well-defined antagonist groups. On one side, the "good people" (El Pueblo Bueno), consisted of low-income voters such as peasants and factory workers, bureaucrats and members of the middle class, high-skill workers such as teachers and medics and small business owners. On the other side are the "Fifís" or members of the upper classes (millionaires, owners of big media corporations, members of the political opposition and those who sympathize with them). In 2018, AMLO won the presidency with key support from the middle class (Torreblanca et al., 2018). But after the electoral setback of June 06, 2021, when the middle class' vote favored the opposition in Mexico City, the members of this sector were no longer labeled as *good people* since "they have a conservative and aspirationist mentality... they become selfish and classist" (Mañanera, 06/07/2021). In another conference, the president provided his vision of the social class structure in Mexico (Mañanera, 06/10/2021): "Imagining that Mexican society is a pyramid, in the base are millions of poor people, then, it is the middle class, and in the top are those who have more resources.... we (he continued with the explanation) have to attend those who are below, the poorest." In subsequent conferences, Obrador offered more details about who

constitutes the middle class: “people who read El Reforma,” a conservative newspaper, very critical of AMLO’s programs and actions (Mañanera, 06/10/2021), with higher education (Mañanera, 06/11/2021), “religious people but just in appearance” (Mañanera, 06/11/2021).

3.2. *Predicational strategies: stereotypical, evaluative attributions*

Lopez Obrador formulated his attack towards the middle class in Las Mañaneras as a discursive comparison in between two encountered models (Mañanera, 06/21/2021): a virtuous and a malicious version. The wicked one is composed by those who were manipulated by the “Fifi” class to vote against the presidential political party. Those are “aspirationist” and “individualists,” and “they have no scruples” (Mañanera, 14/06/2021). On the contrary, he proposed the creation of a righteous “middle class” based on a humanitarian vision that praises to help and support other people in need. “We will form a new middle class” with “humanistic principles,” “we do not want those who are classists,” “ladinos” (A very pejorative word which means ‘trickster’ in Spanish), “know-it-all that portrayed their career diplomas as nobiliary titles” (Mañanera, 06/22/2021). He later affirmed that this new middle class should be more “human” and “fraternal” (Mañanera, 06/21/2021). A few days later, when a journalist asked him in “La Mañanera” (06/24, 2021), about the impact of the middle class’s vote in the negative outcome of his political party in the mid-term election, he emphasized that when “he mentions the middle class”, he refers only to a sector of this group that “has gained influence due to 36 years of neoliberal policies”, that is indoctrinated with the idea of “succeeding at all costs, without moral scruples of any kind”. For Lopez Obrador, the virtuous middle class is compressive, but the other one is selfish and intolerant. When questioned about the impact of an urban train accident in Mexico City (may/03) in the electoral outcome of June 2021; he complained that “humble and good people can understand that these terrible accidents could happen, but the middle class does not” (Mañanera, 06/08/2021).

3.3. *The argumentation strategies through which positive and negative attributions are justified*

A distinctive of Obrador discourse towards middle class is the construction of a rhetoric based on historical stereotypes and class conflicts extracted from the Mexican history, to justify the verbal attacks to those who did not vote for him or the detractors of his policies. When referring to how the “Fifis” (the upper class) manipulated the middle class in the elections, he introduced historic passages related with The Porfirian Era in Mexico (Porfiriato, 1876 - 1911), when Mexico had a great economic expansion, but the economic and political power concentrated in an oligarchy headed by General Porfirio Díaz and in the subsequent Mexican Revolution (1910 a 1917). The aim is to use nationalist imaginaries well established across the decades in the Mexican society by the postrevolutionary governments, in which the narrative is produced under a prejudiced logic of *heroes* and *villains*. The justification towards these verbal assaults is based on the perversion and moral decline of a group that was influenced by the upper class. The middle class then becomes selfish and unscrupulous (Mañanera, 06/28/2021), he continuously introduces in these confrontations elements and images extracted from Mexican history, particularly from The Porfiriato, to support his assumptions and justify his confrontations. When he wanted to illustrate how newspapers, particularly “El Reforma,” manipulated the middle class, he presented the example of how Porfirio Díaz used El Imparcial (The Impartial), a pro-government newspaper, as an ideological instrument to support his regime. Later he introduced other examples related with the use of media by authoritarian regimes, “this is the fascist politics,” he continued,

“that Hitler established with Goebbels, according to which a lie that is repeated many times can become the truth” (Mañanera 06/14/2021). On June 24, he continued explaining how the middle class was negatively influenced, he mentioned that “it was the Fifis who celebrated when Gustavo Madero (A Mexican Revolutionary Hero and political adversary of Porfirio Díaz) was cowardly killed.”

3.4. *Framing or discourse representation by means of which speakers express their involvement in discourse*

Something remarkable about the actual populist governments is that they do not need to cover or hide the use of negative stereotypes and insults in their discourses towards minorities or political opponents. On the contrary, they openly use verbal aggressions, racist connotations and incorporate partial and false information to frame public opinion in controversial issues such as the aid to refugees or the right to carry weapons, committing all these assaults and attacks without any palpable legal or moral consequence. Lopez Obrador is not the exception to this rule. Across *La Mañanera*, he has interlaced, through a biased historic and social vision, a moral justification to harass a sector of the population, that no longer approves his political project and voted against it. In accordance with a political imaginary grounded on moral virtuosity and the protection of the people, he constructed a condemnatory discourse in which he proclaims that “the middle class was manipulated,” and “served to the economic power” (Mañanera, 06/11/2021). On July 14, 2021, he pronounced against those who organized a public demonstration in front of the Cuban embassy in Mexico because of a recent protest in the island (July 11, 2021), he called them “conservative members of the middle class.” These series of attacks, however, do not mean that AMLO is now against the middle class, but on the contrary. Along these weeks, he has developed a discourse based on the idea of *salvation*, the redemption of a manipulated social sector. He stated that he will promote social mobility, but he wanted that more Mexicans “come out from poverty and become middle class with social dimension and humanism, a new middle class, no individualist, classist, racist” (Mañanera, 07/14/2021). Since the electoral vote and support of the middle class remains vital for Lopez Obrador and his party’s aspirations for the next presidential election of 2024, he is trying to regain his electoral favor through an elaborated discourse based on the *loss of virtue* and *the recovery of redemption*.

3.5. *Intensifying/mitigation strategies*

On June 07, Lopez Obrador started his campaign against the middle class. During the next weeks, he employed diverse rhetoric figures such as hyperboles and vague connotations as intensifying strategies to increase the attacks towards his critics, but also used these rhetorical elements as mitigating strategies as well to limit the critics and observations towards his actions. He used, for example, a moralist vocabulary to negatively label and criticize this sector: “selfish,” “classist,” “ladino and racist,” “aspirationist, and unscrupulous”. These vague connotations served as an intensifying strategy to attack those who do not support his political agenda. In addition, during these morning conferences, the presence of hyperboles was common in his discourse to stress and overstate the differences among his vision of middle-class and the other, conformed for those voting against his political party. A “humanist and fraternal” middle class in contraposition to another that “only cares about themselves” (06/28/2021). The use of vague expressions appears as well when the president mentioned the existence of a “corrupt government” that is defended by conservative intellectuals and some members of the middle-class (June 14, 2021). On other occasions, he employs ambiguous expressions as a mitigation strategy to weaken the criticism about the

negative impact of a suburban train accident in Mexico City in the local elections. He evaded talking about the responsibility of the authorities in the incident, instead alluded to the existence of a “dirty war” where “the conservative party” (another nebulous term) used this tragedy during the elections to gain support. He also used pejorative sentences to label his critics as a mitigation strategy, “they lack ethics and morality,” and “privileged” (June 22, 2021).

Obrador took advantage of his morning conferences to structure a speech around two antagonist models of people: one employed to negatively label his political adversaries, the free press and those who voted against his political party. The other, a *honorable model* that serves as a propagandist tool in where the charismatic leader connects himself with an idealistic notion of a *virtuous middle class*. The two antagonist models served him as a justification to openly attack the free press and the dissidents as members of a corrupted class that are selfish and racist, but at the same time, it gives him an excuse to undertake a wider propagandistic crusade to intent to recover the confidence of this sector.

4. Conclusion

Since his arrival to the presidency, Lopez Obrador introduced *Las Mañaneras*, a new form of political communication which consisted in a daily morning conference usually broadcasted at 7 am. Obrador proposed this mechanism to share information with the Mexican citizens to combat, in his own words, “disinformation and the manipulation” (Forbes, 2020). However, as it was possible to observed in this article, he has been able to build an efficient channel to monopolize the public agenda in Mexico. That the show airs in the morning is not an eventuality but helps the president to set what will the most important daily topics to discuss among the public, in traditional media but mainly on social media such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. AMLO has been successful in using public resources to convert *La Mañanera* not in an official presidential media but as a mediatic show with prearrange questions, the use of fake news (Forbes Staff, 2021) and pro-government journalist that serves to justify his actions, limiting the impact of the criticism from the free press and the political opposition. But at the same time, *Las Mañaneras* have served to consolidate his political ideas, a leftist populism that mixes traditional vindications towards the liberalism, the free market and the big corporations with Mexican imaginaries extracted from the national history and class conflict: the *Fifis* and *El pueblo Bueno*.

This study offered an insightful analysis of the Mexican president’s hate rhetoric towards the middle class. The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) allowed to understand the discursive strategies used by López Obrador, not just to attack a sector of Mexican society that does not necessarily comply with its agenda, but to create social polarization through the construction of two encountered vision of the middle class: one virtuous and human that supported him and other vicious and decadent that is against his political project. This strategy serves to justify public harassment and repression towards political dissidents and critics. Far from being anecdotic, the constant allusion to *villains* and *heroes* of the Mexican patriotic imaginary such as “Fifis”, “Porfirio Díaz” and “Francisco I. Madero” in the construction of the two idealistic models, is a moral justification to promote the figure of a “human” and “fraternal” middle class that stands with the president, and openly denounces the other that is against him, and which is “selfish” and “aspirational.”

This work connects with the academic discussion on the use of hate discourse in populist discourse. As other investigations have asserted, populist movements have incorporated hate as a key rhetorical instrument to promote polarization, triggering

verbal and physical attacks towards political dissidents and minority groups and to gain public approval. The case of López Obrador, besides the geographic and cultural barriers, matches with recent studies on the subject: Krotofil & Motak (2018), for example, providing strong evidence of how extremist political parties, as the case of PEGIDA in Germany, incorporate nationalist images and symbols from the European history to justify their hate campaign towards Muslim migrants, as it has happened in *Las Mañaneras*, with the frequent quoting of well-known historic personages and events that serve to justify verbal attacks. Regarding class resentment, Mylonas (2018) emphasizes the key role of media framing in the spread of social discontent due to economic adverse contexts. Populist presidents have become successful in routing this pessimism towards minorities and international institutes such as refugees, the middle class, or the World Bank and The European Union. López Obrador has taken advantage of *Las Mañaneras* to build a framed discourse through which he disperses a negative vision about his political adversaries and promotes, at the same time, the presidential figure. He, as other populist movements and leaders in Europe (Hakoköngäs et al., 2020), The United States (Kellner, 2016), and Latin America (Grigera, 2017), have been very efficient using verbal aggressions to construct a partial and reduced vision of society in which two encountered factions converge, one righteous on the side of *the people* and the president and another *malicious* that must be denounced.

While this article centered on the study of fragments from morning conferences to stand its assumptions about the use of hate in AMLO's discourses towards the middle class, it will be important that further studies on the subject expand the analysis to social media platforms, to study people's reaction towards the presidential attacks to the middle class, because this could provide a wide idea of reception and the impact of AMLO's discourse. Another limitation of the study is, paradoxically one of its merits, the recency of the case (June-August 2021). More time is needed to understand how AMLO's confronting strategy will impact public opinion and, ultimately the electoral outcomes in the next Mexican elections. However, even with its limitations this research provides an insightful study about how populist presidents make use of hatred as a discursive approach to support their political agenda, and how, besides the cultural distance, populist movements (far right or far left) across the globe develop similar rhetorical strategies to create and distribute a biased version of conflicted society that serves their interests.

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6. Specific contributions from each author

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Data collection and analysis	Alejandra Ochoa Amezcuita and David Ramírez Plascencia
Discussion and conclusions	David Ramírez Plascencia and Rosa María Alonzo González
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