While the world is changing due to COVID-19, this biopolitical crisis disproportionately impacts African Americans and Latinx communities, especially immigrant and undocumented populations. The social inequities that the Latinx immigrant and undocumented communities inherited before the pandemic — such as low-paying jobs, inadequate health care, and legal status — are magnified during this moment of crisis as members of these communities have a higher risk of contracting COVID-19. By the middle of May 2020, Chicago’s Cook County had surpassed Queens, New York, with the most coronavirus cases in the country;¹ Cook County’s five hardest-hit zip codes were exclusively home to the immigrant and undocumented Latinx communities.²

In an effort to stop the continual rapid spread of the virus in the immigrant and undocumented Latinx communities, Univision-Chicago partnered with Governor of Illinois, J.B. Pritzker, for an exclusive conversation on Facebook. Reading a question from a Facebook-live viewer, Univision's Chicago News Journalist, Enrique Rodríguez, asks the Pritzker, the following
question: "Undocumented immigrants are completely forgotten by President Trump. Governor Gavin Newsom [of California] established a fund to help undocumented immigrants. Why can't your administration do the same?" In this 35-minute recorded Facebook Live conversation, the U.S. Spanish-language TV reporter and the Governor of Illinois cover topics most relevant to an immigrant and undocumented Latinx community, discussing testing sites, health insurance, essential workers' rights, and rent assistance, amongst other issues.³

Univision, as Arlene Dávila argues, historically perceives its audience as recently immigrated, Spanish-speaking Latinx communities⁴. Therefore, Univision is directly speaking to a vulnerable population who is currently being hit the hardest by COVID-19. Furthermore, this dialogue between Rodríguez and Pritzker speaks to the concerns of a vulnerable population who, under normal circumstances, already has a fraught relationship with the state due to hostile federal immigration deportation policies. What is significant about this interview is not Pritzker's talking points, but rather, the role of the bilingual TV newscaster, who switches back and forth between English and Spanish, translating the questions from Univision-Chicago's Facebook audiences and Pritzker's statements.

Instead of providing word-for-word translation, Rodríguez conveys only relevant information and facts and leaves out parts of Pritzker's canned response. For example, after sharing with Pritzker that their viewers have repeatedly complained about not receiving personal protective equipment (PPE), such as gloves or masks, from their employers, Rodríguez asks the governor if workplaces should provide PPE for its employees. In his response, Pritzker focuses on the importance of individuals wearing masks and glosses over the role that companies should play in providing PPE to their workers. Additionally, Pritzker suggests that those concerned about not having proper PPE could simply make their own masks. If translated directly, this statement would communicate to audiences that, through resourcefulness, essential workers could solve this problem on their own. Furthermore, Pritzker side-steps employer accountability, asking Latinx employees who are providing essential services during a
global pandemic to take on their own responsibility of protecting themselves. Instead of directly translating these sentiments, Rodríguez simply informs Univision viewers in Spanish that a place of employment is not legally required to provide a mouth cover to their workers, reducing Pritzker's two-minute response to a one-sentence factual statement.

Rodríguez's translation hides how much the governor deflected in answering the original question about employers providing PPE to their workers. Rodríguez persists in English, "Governor, isn't it wrong for employers to not...". However, before Rodríguez can finish his question, which would have re-stated his original question about the employers' responsibility to provide PPE for their workers, the governor cuts him off. Over the course of the next couple minutes, Pritzker adds how wearing any mouth covering that is not an N-95 mask is not for one's own personal safety, but rather for the protection of others around you. For a community experiencing a high level of COVID-19 cases in the Chicago area, the governor's remark comes off as matter-of-fact, insensitive, and even condescending. Instead of speaking to the responsibility of employers and/or the state of Illinois to provide workers with the PPE, they need for their essential jobs, Pritzker's demeanor speaks to the worker's personality separate from the state. Knowing this information, and the potential distrust such a sentiment would instill in Latinx communities Rodríguez instead communicates in Spanish, "The Governor says that it is obviously important to protect and cover yourself at work to avoid contaminating someone else" (my translation) before moving on to the next question.

As a translator, Rodríguez maintains a critical distance between the governor's deflective answers and what he wishes to communicate to his Spanish-speaking viewers. In the process of constructing the governor's statements into simple yet factual statements, he removes some of the governor's insensitive side remarks. Instead, he cultivates trust between the state and the communities, which was the interview's original intent. While Pritzker provides unhelpful information during this interview, which could have furthered the divide felt between Latinx immigrant and undocumented communities and the state of Illinois, he eventually does share
newly created resources for these vulnerable populations. These resources include the opening of community testing centers, hotlines for state-unemployment benefits, specific funds, and nonprofit aid. Rodríguez plays the role of mediator between the state and Latinx communities in his translations. He understands that there needs to be some level of trust and cooperation between these two entities. By analyzing this Facebook Live conversation, we can understand and begin to question the inscribed cultural and linguistic politics when cultivating and constructing trust between the state and one of the most vulnerable communities amid a pandemic.


