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BOOK REVIEW: GÓMEZ-JIMÉNEZ, E.M. & TOOLAN, M. (EDS.) (2020) *THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF ECONOMIC INEQUALITY: CADS APPROACHES TO THE BRITISH MEDIA*. LONDON: BLOOMSBURY

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The Discursive Construction of Economic Inequality: CADS Approaches to the British Media.
London: Bloomsbury.

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One of the most pressing social, economic and political challenges facing contemporary societies in all parts of the world today is that of economic inequality, the detrimental consequences of such a phenomenon, and the resistance to change from some of the richest and most powerful citizens within those societies. Economic inequality is the source of a vast array of social problems faced by many communities and thus the understanding of this crisis is of paramount importance. Economic inequality is much more than a mere financial issue. Throughout modern history, income polarization has led to increasingly politically and socially divided nations, resulting in degenerating social cohesion.

Taking such issues into account, the publication of this collection of papers is both timely and significant. The book investigates diverse types of public discourses to examine how wealth inequality has been depicted in the British media from the era of the Second World War to contemporary times. Drawing on a wide range of corpus-assisted methods of discourse analysis, each paper outlines ways in which the media and public discourse have helped render the notion that economic inequality is both acceptable and normal among the general public. Various formats of data are researched, such as printed newspapers, radio, and online media. The research employs methodologies grounded in critical discourse analysis, corpus linguistics and critical stylistics in order to observe the effects of the mass media on the British public, and aims to understand how the media have contributed to the entrenchment of inequality in modern Britain.

In recent years, researchers working in the fields of language and discourse analysis have begun to focus on the issue of economic inequality within a critical discourse analysis framework. Scholars have focused on the area of public discourse and on how language use can play a significant role in the construction of opinions, beliefs and stances within society. By means of language use and misuse, those within the hierarchy of government, as well as media such as newspapers, television and radio, are able to control the content of information, of what is said, and of what is left unsaid, and how individuals, organizations and policies are linguistically constructed and disseminated.

The studies are presented chronologically, according to the socio-historical issues they address. Tin general, the chapters aim to present empirical evidence on how discourse and ideological dissemination is able to influence the discursive practices and stances of the general public.

The volume chapters share a common focus in the discursive representation of varying forms of exclusion, inequality and discrimination in the British media and other forms of public discourse.

In the first chapter, the discursive representation of poverty and social exclusion in speeches made by the leaders of the Conservative and Labour Parties between 1900 and 2014 is investigated. This is achieved by analysing the concordance lines containing prominent keywords related to poverty and social exclusion. It was found that the Conservative Party speakers focused more on finance while the Labour Party speakers focused to a greater degree on hardship. In the second chapter, using data collected from a period during the Second World War, the discursive negotiation of inequality is investigated through the metalinguistic sources from the Ministry of Information and the Mass-Observation Project, which, for its time, employed an unusually vernacular language. The results indicate that the language adopted to address the 'masses' was stereotypical and employed as a means of controlling the attitudes and beliefs of the British population. In Chapter 3, data is collected from *The Times* newspaper between 1940 and 2000, which is then organized into decades in order to facilitate comparisons among differing time frames. The authors investigate representations of the welfare state by examining collocates, co-text and context. The authors argue that the findings demonstrate that the welfare state is associated with restricting and building metaphors, and the representation of an economic social underclass.

Chapter 4 focuses on descriptions of child poverty from 1970 to the 2000s. The researcher discusses two conflicting narratives: one that the UK is a place where people are able to live decently, if a suitable personal effort is made, and so the government should not interfere. The second narrative is that living well is virtually impossible for some, such as single parents or those receiving a minimum wage, unless the government provides assistance. A study of keywords from data in the 1970s revealed that child poverty was described as requiring government intervention, whereas in the 2000s child poverty was depicted as more a matter for charity-work intervention. Unemployment was associated with child poverty in the earlier period, but not in the later. Thus, the author uncovers an ideological change in *The Times* in which responsibility for child poverty shifted from social to more individual causes. Chapter 5 focuses on the reporting on corporate fraud and modern slavery in the UK national press from 2004 to 2016, and how this is related to economic inequality and accountability. It is argued that the data indicates a lack of reporting of responsibility for such crimes, or that governments should be made responsible for them. The focus of chapter 6 is on an anti-obesity campaign and the construction of social groups considered at risk. Data from UK TV advertisements from 1999 to 2019 were collected and the author argues that the adverts display patterns of representation that are related to neoliberalism. The working class are seen as responsible for the rise in child obesity, in contrast to the food and drinks industry, which appears to be constructed as free from responsibility for the situation.

Chapter 7 compares the discoursal context of austerity in 2009-10 and 2016-17. The researchers take advantage of keyword and concordance analyses combined with a qualitative analytical approach in order to investigate the representations of austerity in the national press. They argue that austerity was considered as sustainable and inevitable, although shifts in the discursive construction were found over time. Austerity was considered a central social theme in 2009-10, but was depicted as much more marginal in the later period. Chapter 8 explores inequality using data from BBC and ITV news bulletins between 2007 and 2014. The author reveals how inequality reporting

has shifted over a period of time. It is suggested that inequality issues were presented as more prominent in 2007; furthermore, both organizations were seen as promoting a neoliberal stance to these issues in 2014. In Chapter 9, the author argues that general publics in Western societies are exposed to public discourses on inequality which are biased towards the ruling class rather than empowering them to act collectively in their best interests. The author discusses democracy and how it is related to economic inequality, and how the ruling class, who once feared inequality, may now be more accepting of it, believing that electorates have been deluded into acquiescing to the status quo created by the political elite. The book concludes with general reflections on economic inequality. The writer emphasises the role of the media in representing economic inequality as both natural and unavoidable, and therefore as something which simply has to be accepted.

The Discursive Construction of Economic Inequality makes a valuable contribution to the existing literature in corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis. Any researcher interested in the methodological approaches of critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics will find this volume of great value given how the writers of each chapter carefully articulate their approaches to data collection and analysis. Other researchers working within the fields of economic inequality will also find this volume an important resource since each paper is able to provide detailed and thoughtful findings, thereby helping the reader to better comprehend how public discourse has facilitated the acceptance of increased economic inequality as a normal aspect of society in the UK at the present time.

As a reader, I found this volume to be a fascinating and insightful collection of research papers. The issues discussed are both timely and pressing, the areas in which inequality are researched are varied, and the research is methodologically rich. This is a powerful publication which I hope will be read by a large audience.