

Who Refused to Downplay Pandemic” (Apr. 16, 2020), introduces a key social actor to the discourse: Luiz Henrique Mandetta, the health minister. In H3, we observed seven occurrences of positive judgment towards Mandetta’s behavior. He is portrayed as “sober and serious,” as “a leader of the more reasoned group of Brazilian officials and politicians” in office, and as an experienced professional, who is frustrated by failed attempts at warning the government that the worst was yet to come. These choices are in sharp contrast to those regarding Bolsonaro and the Brazilian government, for which negative judgment is highly recurrent and inscribed. In describing Mandetta’s appointment as “one of the few [...] relatively sensible and credible,” H3 implies that the majority of other appointments were the opposite. Mandetta is described as “experienced” and not “an enemy of science or basic reason”—“[u]nlike many of Bolsonaro’s louder and more prominent picks.”

Besides the conventional “far-right” classification, Bolsonaro is depicted as a denier of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as an intolerant and incompetent ruler. Judgment towards the government in general is inscribed and just as negative, with mentions of “incompetence,” “empty bravado,” and “controversial, conspiratorial and rabidly conservative members.”

Finally, positive judgment towards Brazil deviates slightly from the trend previously mentioned: not only the country’s size is mentioned, but also its people’s pro-science attitude in terms of willingness to follow social distancing during the pandemic (“positive response to Mandetta’s handling of the crisis”; “a majority [of Brazilians] said they would follow social distancing guidelines”). The instances of negative judgment observed around the social actor “Brazil,” were interpreted as invoked negative judgment towards Bolsonaro and his administration (“Brazil [under Bolsonaro] is the only country in the world where the Minister of Health will fall for having decided to fight the Coronavirus”; “Brazil had already plagued itself with [Bolsonaro], an incapable and incompetent president”).