'The press has gone crazy': online media and political rhetoric of immigrants in the USA

Jack M. Mills, Silvia Gomes, Jessica Walzak

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Jack M. Mills*

College of Criminology and Criminal Justice,
Florida State University,
112 S. Copeland Street, Tallahassee, FL 32306, USA
Email: jmm18fw@fsu.edu
*Corresponding author

Silvia Gomes

Nottingham Trent University,
50 Shakespeare St, Nottingham NG1 4FQ, UK
and
Interdiscplinary Center for Social Sciences (CIS.NOVA, Portugal),
Av. Prof. Aníbal Bettencourt 9, 1600-189 Lisboa, Portugal
Email: Silvia.damotagomes@ntu.ac.uk

Jessica Walzak

Florida State University,
112 S. Copeland Street, Tallahassee, FL 32306, USA
Email: Jwalzak00@gmail.com

Abstract: Over recent decades, accessibility of mass media has introduced a new arena for the dissemination of political rhetoric to the public, and politicians have capitalised on the capacity for mass media to polarise public opinion on contested social issues. Research has argued that President Trump has extended prior rhetoric on the dangers of illegal immigration to also encompass asylum seekers and other immigrants entering the USA legally in order to solidify political support from citizens fearful or resentful of these minority groups. Through a content analysis of online news articles collected from FOX, CNN, and CBS between 2017–2019, we explore the media representations of immigration, particularly regarding those crossing the USA-Mexico border. Although each media outlet has a particular way of portraying this social and political issue, overall findings illustrate increases to the frequency of news media narratives criminalising refugees crossing the southern border, exacerbating political divides on immigration issues, and garnering support for restrictive, conservative-led anti-immigration policies.

Keywords: online media; politics; content analysis; immigration; Trump.

Biographical notes: Jack M. Mills is a graduate student in the College of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Florida State University. His primary research is focused on hate and bias, communities and crime, and comparative criminology.

Silvia Gomes has a PhD in Sociology from the University of Minho. She is a Lecturer in Criminology at Nottingham Trent University (NTU, UK) and a researcher at the Interdisciplinary Centre of Social Sciences (CICS.NOVA, Portugal). Her main areas of research are focused on crime and media, prison studies, crime and ethnicity, social inequalities, intersectional approaches, and recently on prisoner re-entry, recidivism, and criminal desistance. Her recent published books are *Female Crime and Delinquency in Portugal: In and Out of the Criminal Justice System* (2018, Palgrave), *Prisons, State and Violence* (2019, Springer), and *Incarceration and Generation*, Volumes 1 and 2 (2021 and 2022, Routledge).

Jessica Walzak has an MA in Criminology and Criminal Justice from Florida State University. Her core areas of research interest include the nature of public interactions with agents of the criminal justice system, cross-national trends in incarceration rates and practices, and the impact of mass media on perceptions of criminality and criminal justice policy.

1   Introduction

During the 2016 United States (US) presidential campaign, a recurring and critical policy-area of Donald Trump's campaign was the topic of immigration. Vehemently in opposition, Trump's campaign maintained an anti-immigrant sentiment. Campaign promises such as advocating for the USA–Mexico border to be closed and portraying Latin American immigrants as unproductive, criminal, and unamerican became the centrepiece of Trump's presidential bid (Van Ramshorst, 2018). Culminating on Twitter in 2019, Donald Trump tweeted "I may be tough on Border Security, but not that [tough]. The press has gone Crazy. Fake News!" Media attention to this rhetoric, which has increased in the last two decades, endorsed pro- and anti-immigrant initiatives, creating a significant relationship between the depiction of immigrants in the USA news and public opinion and political partisanship (Chiricos and Eschholz, 2002; Callanan, 2012; Sabo et al., 2014; Saldaña et al., 2018; Pierce, 2019; Wadhia, 2021).

Over the last two decades there has been increasing empirical acknowledgement of the relationship between depictions of various minority groups in the news media and the nature of public opinion on these reported groups (Chiricos and Eschholz, 2002; Callanan 2012). Several studies in the USA identified a link between ideologically driven news representations of Latin American immigrants and attitudes toward immigrants (Stewart et al., 2011; Fujioka, 2011; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012; Kinefuchi and Cruz, 2015; Arias and Hellmueller, 2016; Harris and Gruenewald, 2020). Despite pulling from a wide array of theoretical frameworks – including racial threat, fear of crime, moral panic, and cognitive dissonance theories – studies of media effects on the polarisation of immigration attitudes have drawn similar conclusions which proposed that the nature of online news media may be particularly impactful in shaping modern perceptions of Latino immigrants (Coutin and Chock, 1995; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012; Farris and Silber Mohamed, 2018). Furthermore, past research has implied that selective exposure to

ideologically based news is likely to have a direct effect on individual's understanding between distinguishing 'illegal' immigrants from asylum seekers, as well as viewer's willingness to accept asylum seekers as legitimate, and legal, immigrants (Welch et al., 2011; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012; Esses et al., 2013; Chiricos et al., 2014).

Recognition of this outcome has produced a compelling wave of studies within the last two-to-three years arguing that both left- and right-wing media rhetoric covering Latin American immigration following the 2016 election of President Donald Trump has shifted from discourse on illegal immigration to the legality, impact, and treatment of asylum seekers (Brown, 2016; Gonzalez, 2019; Kaufhold, 2019). Further, Eshbaugh-Soha and Juenke (2022) found that Presidential addresses related to immigration increased between 2006 and 2017, with a notable spike during the Trump administration. Extant research on Presidential perceptions of immigration has found that the so-called migrant caravan in October of 2018 was associated with negative media attention toward these immigrants and even extended toward Latin American citizens (Fabregat et al., 2020). Yet, the majority of studies engaging in qualitative, or mixed methods, analyses of television, print, and online news media content have examined representations of immigrants generally – rather than the impact that media representations could have on different categories of immigrants – prior to the year 2016, thereby failing to capture any changes to media discourse on immigration following President Trump's campaign and inauguration [see also, Famulari (2020), for a quantitative content analysis on news stories and visuals of US news websites covering the issue of immigration in a broad sense]. While prior findings on the relationship between competing news media representations of immigrants and subsequent public discourse have suggested that the influence of political ideology remains salient in the USA, it is currently unknown whether these trends have been replicated with respect to online media coverage of asylum seekers.

The current study attempts to mitigate this gap by engaging in a content analysis of online news articles from FOX, CNN, and CBS spanning from August 2017 to August 2019 to identify trends in the depiction of Latin American immigrants across ideologically diverse news outlets following the political transition from President Obama to President Trump. Based on these findings, the current study will then discuss the potential impact of this media narrative on framing public understandings of, as well as opinions about, legal immigration from Central and South America to the USA.

2 Past trends in the news media representation of immigrants in the USA

News coverage of Latin American immigrants has become commonplace in the USA. According to studies from Chiricos et al. (1997), Chiricos and Eschholz (2002), and Callanan (2012), news media representation of racial and ethnic minorities has often been covered through the lens of minority and criminal related threats. Chiricos and Eschholz (2002) demonstrated that US Latinos have been historically, and disproportionately, represented as criminals targeting non-Latino victims when featured in news coverage, compared to both Black and White counterparts. Callanan (2012) corroborates this, showing the general lack of representation of Latinos in the USA news cycle outside of negative – and largely criminal – depictions, including the implication that many of these immigrants are inherently criminal due to illegal or undocumented status.

Although many empirical studies have debunked the notion of Latino immigrants being 'inherently criminal,' and have suggested that this group is, in fact, *less* likely to engage in crime (Hagan and Palloni, 1999; Sampson, 2008; Vaughn et al., 2014; Ramos and Wenger, 2018), many studies have shown that negative representations of Latinos still remains pervasive in coverage of present-day immigrant groups (Magaña and Short, 2002; Cisneros, 2008; Chavez et al., 2010; Aguirre et al., 2011; Aguirre, 2012; Valentino et al., 2013; Arias and Hellmueller, 2016; Silber Mohamed and Farris, 2020). Specifically, Cisneros (2008) found that illegal immigrants are subjected to a great deal of negative rhetoric, including claims that they have systematically polluted US culture by criminal activity and the over-utilisation of resources intended for 'natural born American citizens'. A more recent study from Arias and Hellmueller (2016) has supported this idea, arguing that negative discourse on Latino immigration increased after California's Proposition 187 passed in 1994, which sparked long-standing national debates on the role of illegal immigrants in fuelling both economic and social hardships through their use of US social services, failure to pay taxes, and engagement in crime.

Such themes are readily visible across modern news coverage of Central and South American immigrants. Magaña and Short (2002), Aguirre et al. (2011), and Valentino et al. (2013) found support for an increased sense of immigrant-related anxiety linked to media priming about Latinos beginning in the mid1990s. Specifically, both Magaña and Short (2002) and Valentino et al. (2013) contested that stigmatisation of Latino immigrants has surpassed that of other immigrant groups in the USA over the past two decades, contributing to the salience of immigrant threat and misperceptions that the majority of these immigrants are coming into the country illegally. Additionally, Stewart et al.'s (2011) mixed methods analysis of a Virginia newspaper, Dixon and Williams' (2015) qualitative analysis of 146 cable and network news programs, and Sui and Paul's (2017) content analysis of 55 local US newspapers, have demonstrated a gross overrepresentation of Latino's as undocumented and illegal immigrants irrespective of whether the news media source was disseminating pro- or anti-immigrant content. More recently, quantitative content analyses have analysed trends in media representations of immigrants, finding that conservative news (e.g. FOX news) often linked immigration with higher rates of crime and discretely labelled immigrants as inherently illegal (Famulari, 2020).

3   Shifting narratives: modern news media and Latino immigrants

Trends of negative stereotypes of Latino immigrants in the media, especially those related to undocumented entry into the USA, have also been linked with public opinion and political responses to those seeking legal avenues to immigrate to the USA. Flores-Yeffal e tal. (2011) is among the few that have examined the effects of the internet on this anti-immigrant phenomenon, arguing that the internet has accelerated the spread of both pro- and anti-immigrant information by expanding the degree of control individual citizens have over the type of discourse that they are exposed to. Online news media has introduced new mechanisms through which citizens can express support for messages disseminated by various left-, neutral-, or right-leaning news outlets (e.g., donations, contacting politicians, sharing immigrant-related media), which can influence the salience of any given dialogue. Similarly, studies from Sohoni and Mendez (2017) and Gil de Zúñiga, Correa, and Valenzuela (2012) established a causal link between the

nature of news media discourse on a given immigrant population and responses to that population. For example, Sohoni and Mendez (2018) found that the nature of local newspaper coverage of Latino immigrants in Virginia determined the symbolic division of immigrants as either desirable, and therefore included as in-group members, or undesirable, leading to subsequent out-group media characterisations, with this pattern likely to influence perceptions of legal status.

On the other hand, Gil de Zúñiga et al.'s (2012) content analysis of CNN and FOX cable news coverage of Mexican immigration illustrated the impact of ideology on the manner in which a given news media company covers issues related to Latino immigration, as well as the potential for selective exposure to specific news outlets to impact readers' level of support restrictive immigration policies. Ultimately, it was found that FOX news was more likely to disseminate negative perceptions of Mexican immigrants, whereas CNN was more likely to engage in pro-immigrant discourse. More recent pro- and anti-immigrant discourse has each been shown to provide mixed messages about the legality of asylum seekers as a novel group entering the USA. immigration discourse, introducing questions pertaining to trends in news coverage of legal versus illegal immigrant groups. As such, selective exposure to ideologically driven media impacted viewer's level of support for restrictive and anti-immigrant policies. For instance, Estrada et al. (2016) suggests that news coverage of well-known exclusionary immigration bills often reduce immigrants to being *illegal*, dangerous, deviant, and criminal. As negative media attention of immigration increased in recent years, research has found an invisibility effect, whereby non-immigrants are framed and represented as immigrant populations in a reductionist and oftentimes non-factual manner (Charsley and Wray, 2015; Figenschou and Thorbjørnsrud, 2015).

Amnesty was first introduced as a legal avenue for immigration by the US Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. However, several studies of media coverage of this subset of immigrants have shown that there is a considerable amount of debate among journalists with respect to what type of individuals belong in this category, leading to a rather confusing narrative insofar as what differentiates amnesty from 'legal asylum-seeking' immigrants (Coutin and Chock, 1995). Put simply, amnesty is a process by which unauthorised immigrants who reside in a national state can transition to legal status there (Bosniak, 2013), whereas an asylum seeker is "an individual who is seeking international protection". In countries where individualized procedures, an asylum seeker is someone who can claim has not yet been finally decided on by the country in which he or she has submitted it. Not every asylum seeker will ultimately be recognised as a refugee, but every recognised refugee is initially an asylum seeker (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2006). Based on an early content analysis of US news sources by Coutin and Chock (1995), journalists have been largely responsible for framing definitions of asylum seekers – as well as other legal immigrant categories – for the public and often present paradoxical, ambiguous, or contradictory representations of this group by relying on trait-based legalisation narratives, rather than structure-based narratives referencing relevant international economic and political inequalities.

In line with Coutin and Chock's (1995) findings, Farris and Mohamed (2018) discusses the long-standing reliance on threat narratives by conservative news sources when referencing Asylum seekers and other immigrants. Such narratives highlight the potential threats of illegal activity and/or criminality among immigrants seeking legal entry into the USA and exaggerate the representation of undocumented immigrants in the general population. This finding corresponds with earlier studies from Welch and

Schuster (2005) and Esses et al. (2013), which underline the frequency with which US media sources and politicians draw attention to the detention of asylum-seekers, thereby cuing comparisons with the legal detention of criminals and prompting feelings of public suspicion. In particular, Welch and Schuster (2005) discuss concerns stemming from perceptions that immigrants are able to arrive in the USA under the guise of seeking asylum and then remain in the country indefinitely without following through with legal processes for documentation.

Similarly, Esses et al. (2013) argued that the framing of immigrants and refugees in Western media has become increasingly negative over the last 15 to 20 years, with many news sources feeding into perceptions of threat by raising concerns about the spread of infectious disease and depictions of asylum-seekers as individuals likely to make false claims in the hopes of gaining quicker, legal entry into Western countries. Furthermore, a study from Farris and Silber Mohamed (2018) cites prior literature indicating that the majority of media coverage related to Latino immigration emphasises illegal immigration, while providing little objective insight into legal forms of entry into the USA. Farris and Silber Mohamed (2018) focused heavily on the use of imagery in news coverage, explaining that images are likely to be particularly impactful in priming consumers of news media, regardless of ideology, and mentioning visual cues such as border patrols, ICE officers arresting immigrants, and evidence of 'the wall' on the USA–Mexico border as highly salient. Although much of the focus of prior works has been on discourse intended to influence anti-immigrant attitudes, it is possible that similar techniques (i.e., emotional appeals, use of images, discussion of current laws) may be used by more liberal news outlets intending to spread pro-immigrant rhetoric.

4   Online media narratives on Latin American immigration: current study

In spite of the strong body of literature on media representations of immigration and the most recent process of shifting and confusing narratives on legal immigration, there remains a notable gap insofar as how this shift has continued to develop in between 2017 and 2019 political climate post-Trump's election (Warren-Gordon and Rhineberger, 2021), particularly in the online news media content. As such, the current study was developed to attend to each of these gaps, allowing for greater understanding of ongoing developments to immigration narratives in the USA, as well as providing insights into the framing of politically-driven news content on online platforms. The main goal of this study is twofold:

1   understanding how online news outlets frame issues surrounding Latin American immigrants during the early years of President Trump's administration

2   exploring differences in the representation of Latin American immigration between liberal, conservative, and 'neutral' sources of news.

The study included all articles published online in three media outlets (CNN, FOX, and CBS) over a two-year period, between August 2017 and August 2019. This time frame allowed for a robust understanding of media representations of immigrants following the several executive orders made by then President Trump which attempted to exclude Middle Eastern and Latin American immigrants from asylum and claims (Eshbaugh-Soha and Barnes, 2021). Due to the relevance of USA–Mexico immigration in recent times,

both regarding border operations and immigrant detainment (Brabeck and Xu, 2010; Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2013; Sabo et al., 2014), as well as direct news media coverage of Latino immigrants (Chiricos and Eschholz, 2002; Callanan, 2012; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012; Bellovary et al., 2020; Jauregui et al., 2021), this study exclusively examines the media representations of immigrating people from Latin America, particularly regarding those travelling across the USA–Mexico border. We aim at exploring media representations of immigrant's post-executive order and the influence of narratives on such online news' portrayals.

4.1 Sample selection

CNN, FOX, and CBS were selected as representative news outlets for their respective political leanings, fulfilling a left-, right-, and centred-bias within American politics (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012). The bias of these outlets were identified from indexes that conduct an evaluation of an outlet's political affiliation through analysing authorship, article content, headlines, and self-described biases – finding CNN to be oriented with liberal politics and FOX with conservative politics (Ad Fontes Media, 2020; AllSides, 2020). Another evaluation was that of viewership, which the Pew Research Center (2014) found those who identified as conservative were very likely to consume news through FOX whereas those who identified as liberal were very likely to consume news through CNN and other liberal outlets. Ad Fontes Media (2020) found CBS to be a centred news outlet when compared to a variety of both left- and right-winged outlets. Regarding US media, it is important to note that unanimity in perceiving media as 'neutral,' or 'centred,' is difficult, and as such, this study analysed CBS within these two other indexes, AllSides and Pew Research Center, finding that CBS maintained fairly equal deviations from CNN and FOX.

Each outlet's search engine was used to locate articles with identified keywords in articles' headlines. Nine keywords were used to identify the different types of individuals who were being addressed regarding immigration: *immigrant, migrant, refugee, undocumented, illegal immigrant, illegal alien, unauthorized immigrant, asylum, and amnesty*.[1] CNN did not show results for any articles with the term 'unauthorised immigrant' or 'amnesty' in the title. These keywords were only analysed if describing a person immigrating to the US from Central or South America. For this reason, we refer to this population as Central American, South American, and Latin American, rather than through racial identifiers, Hispanic, or Spanish as the emphasis of this description refers to the location from which people are emigrating from. Following this keyword identification, 1509 articles were found within CNN, FOX, and CBS databases[2], and all were considered. Each article was examined and categorised into four subsamples: political, legal, social, and personal. These subsamples are mutually exclusive and were categorised by the major topic of each article. Political articles spanned any political changes, opinions, and platforms related to immigration or individual immigrants. Legal articles consisted of any courtroom activities and legal opinions or interpretations on policies pertaining to immigration, such as detainment and family separations, or regarding individual legal cases. Social articles largely covered pundit and newscasting opinions related to immigration. Personal articles were first-hand accounts or stories of immigrants crossing the USA–Mexico border, already in the USA, or who have been impacted by immigration efforts from others. In this article we focus on the political subsample: totalling 520 articles (187 CNN; 120 CBS; 213 FOX). The entire data

analysis and coding schemes presented below are a result of the content analysis developed with this set of news.

4.2   *Data analysis and coding schemes*

The analysis of news articles followed the standard content analysis phases (Bardin, 1995):

1   a pre-analysis of the *corpus*, with the selection and meticulous reading of all news collected on the three media outlets (1,509 articles), and then focusing specifically on the political subset (520 articles)

2   the exploration of the raw data, by examining both the structure and content presented in each individual article

3   the categorisation, organisation, and classification of material, based on what seemed preeminent (inductive process) and also according to earlier findings of the effects of anti-minority political rhetoric and strategy (e.g., Chiricos et al., 1997; Callanan, 2012)

4   the data interpretation, which could not be entirely grasped without the consideration of both qualitative and quantitative analysis.

Furthermore, it was applied an inductive approach, meaning that codes and categories were directly drawn from the data. Specifically, it was used the process of open coding (Cho and Lee, 2014), by reading each news article, determining preliminary codes that emerged from the text, then coding the remaining news articles with those codes, and adding news codes whenever data was found that would not fit an existing code. Two researchers coded and categorised each news article, and a third researcher served as an impartial judge in order to achieve 100% intercoder reliability. The use of content analysis yields a set of priority categories that cover the data instead of developing a new theory by identifying the relationships among codes and categories (Cho and Lee, 2014).

Variables such as the article's news-outlet, date, headline keyword, size, author, source, and image were collected in order to have an overview of the major structural and formatting characteristics of the news. Article 'date' was represented by publication month and year individually. With respect to the time needed for the media to become abreast of the implications of Trump's executive order, this study also separated publication dates into two equal time-sets; the first years' parameters beginning August 1, 2017, to August 31, 2018, and the second year containing articles published between September 1, 2018, and August 31, 2019. 'Headline keyword' is the specific keyword within an article's title, describing the style of immigrant representation (i.e., immigrant versus asylum seeker). Article 'size' understands the specific length, measured in page length, a page or less being *small*, 1–2 pages being *medium*, and 3 or more pages being *large.* The 'sourcing' variable represents the source material used in each article. Two types of sourcing were collected within this study: *referenced Sources* and *cited Sources*. Referenced sources were any inference, indirect reference, or supporting evidence that was not directly cited. Cited sources were any direct quotes or quoted data. The 'images' variable represents images within an article. 18 response categories exist within the 'image,' and multiple could be selected. If a single article produces multiple of the same response category, it was only listed as satisfying the response category once.

Five main variables emerged from the news content: characters, location, topic-area, narrative, and tone. These variables were subject to both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Characters represent actors within each article that were notable to the meaning and message of that article. Characters spanned across 18 response categories exist and multiple and were not mutually exclusive. Location represents the main location discussed by the article and was mutually exclusive. The most recent or most emphasised location in the article was deemed the location and categorised as such. Topic-area represents the main theme of each article. This variable was sourced directly from the articles title unless in exceptional instances when the article title did not match the substance within. Only one response category could be selected, and while several topics are within each article, the most discussed and apparent topics out of the 29 response categories were selected. Narrative represents the type of discourse present in each article. 13 response categories exist within the 'narrative' variable, and multiple could be selected. Tone represents the emotional grit that supports the narrative in each article. Nine response categories represent the 'tone' variable, and multiple could be selected.

5   Political media narratives around immigration: CNN, CBS, and FOX News

Findings from our sampled online news outlets are categorised by structural and content variables and are presented across six tables. First, we provide findings of the structural aspect of our sampled articles. This is followed by our presentation of content variables, which includes the characterisation, locality, topic-area, narrative, and tones of each article.

Media outlet representation varied among three news outlets: *FOX* (40.96%), *CNN* (35.96%), and *CBS* (23.08%). While articles were published in every month of the years under analysis, immigrants are mentioned mostly during *June* (22.9%) and *July* (15%). This was followed by a slow decline until *November*, when coverage of immigration dwindled further, with its nadir being *January* (3.8%), *February* (4.4%), and *March* (3.8%). These time-trends were similar across each news outlet, however, CBS produced fewer articles than CNN and FOX overall including its highest (27.41%) and lowest (9.52%) point. Alongside time-formatting, this study collected articles that covered a two-year time period, from August 1, 2017- August 31, 2019. 35.58% of articles were published within the first year, and 64.42% of articles were published in the second, each news outlet experiencing differing increase percentages (CNN, 46.05%; CBS, 115.79%; FOX, 100%).

Regarding article 'length', it was found that *1–2 pages* (47.88%) was most common, followed by *≤1 page* (33.46%). Far fewer articles were *≥3 pages* (18.65%), and those that were typically contained several images or multiple topics, some of which were unrelated to the article headline or the topic of immigration. *Male* (42.69%) authorship consisted of most news coverage compared to their *female* (34.23%) counterpart authors. Most articles used at least one *cited* so*urce* (87.1%), and less frequently, though still occasionally, used *referenced Sources* (61.35%). While FOX (40.4%; 34.17%) and CNN (37.53%; 36.68%) used cited and referenced sources similarly, CBS (22.08%; 29.15%) used far less of either sourcing in its articles.

Table 1   Article structure

Variable	Category	CNN	CBS	FOX	TOTAL
News outlet		187 (35.96%)	120 (35.96%)	213 (40.96%)	520 (100%)
Date	8/01/2017 to 8/16/2018	76 (41.08%)	38 (20.54%)	71 (38.38%)	185 (35.58%)
	8/17/2018 to 8/31/2019	111 (33.13%)	82 (24.48%)	142 (42.39%)	335 (64.42%)
Article Size	≤ 1 page	121 (69.54%)	29 (16.67%)	24 (13.79%)	174 (33.46%)
	1-2 pages	49 (19.68%)	52 (20.88%)	148 (59.44%)	249 (47.88%)
	≥ 3 pages	17 (17.53%)	39 (40.21%)	41 (42.27%)	97 (18.65%)
Keyword	Immigrant	59 (41.26%)	36 (25.17%)	48 (33.57%)	143 (27.50%)
	Migrant	74 (33.48%)	64 (28.96%)	83 (37.56%)	221 (42.50%)
	Refugee	17 (36.96%)	9 (19.57%)	20 (43.48%)	46 (8.85%)
	Undocumented	24 (66.67%)	4 (11.11%)	8 (22.22%)	36 (6.92%)
	Illegal	1 (2.27%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	1 (0.19%)
	Asylum	12 (41.38%)	7 (24.14%)	10 (34.48%)	29 (5.58%)
Author	Female	108 (60.67%)	23 (12.92%)	47 (26.40%)	178 (34.23%)
	Male	43 (19.37%)	46 (20.72%)	133 (59.91%)	222 (42.69%)
	Mixed gender	31 (86.11%)	3 (8.33%)	2 (5.56%)	36 (6.92%)
	None listed	5 (5.95%)	48 (57.14%)	31 (36.90%)	84 (16.15%)
Images	Children	5 (31.25%)	8 (50%)	3 (18.75%)	16 (3.08%)
	Family	8 (47.06%)	7 (41.18%)	2 (11.76%)	17 (3.27%)
	Mugshot	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (100%)	4 (0.77%)
	Border aggression	0 (0%)	1 (33.33%)	2 (66.67%)	3 (0.58%)
	Border crossing	5 (27.78%)	2 (11.11%)	11 (61.11%)	18 (3.46%)
	Border	1 (10%)	3 (30%)	6 (60%)	10 (1.92%)
	Law enforcement	8 (50%)	2 (12.50%)	6 (37.50%)	16 (3.08%)
	Government	15 (25.42%)	16 (27.12%)	28 (47.46%)	59 (11.35%)
	Victims	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (100%)	2 (0.38%)
	Protests	16 (55.17%)	5 (17.24%)	8 (27.59%)	29 (5.58%)
	General immigrants	10 (41.67%)	4 (16.67%)	10 (41.67%)	24 (4.62%)
	Trump	3 (30%)	4 (40%)	3 (30%)	10 (1.92%)
	Social media	17 (20.48%)	13 (15.66%)	53 (63.86%)	83 (15.96%)
	Detention centres	2 (25%)	1 (12.5%)	5 (62.5%)	8 (1.54%)
	Military	0 (0%)	3 (60%)	2 (40%)	5 (0.96%)
	Deceased children	0 (0%)	3 (75%)	1 (25%)	4 (0.77%)
	Other	11 (44%)	4 (16%)	10 (40%)	25 (4.81%)
Sources	Referenced	117 (36.68%)	93 (29.15%)	109 (34.17%)	319 (61.45%)
	Cited	170 (37.53%)	100 (22.08%)	183 (40.4%)	453 (87.12%)

To fully capture an article's content, a quasi-formatting variable, *keyword*, was instituted to group news outlets on identifying words used in its headlines. Keywords *migrant* (42.5%) and *immigrant* (27.5%) were used most often, generally and across media outlets while keywords *asylum* (5.58%) and *amnesty* (0.19%) were used least, both generally and within each news outlet. Regarding 'image,' nearly half (252) of our sampled articles contained no image, though, when an image was used, it was most frequently *social media* (32.94%). These images were typically screenshots of social media posts, such as tweets, or online policy-platforms posted by *government Actors* (20.63%), the second most common image to be found among articles. Images rarely included *victims of Immigrants* (0.4%), *border aggression* (0.6%), or *mugshots* (0.8%).

5.1   Characterisation: Trump and immigrants in the spotlight

Trump (43.08%) was the most often mentioned character overall and was represented similarly among FOX (39.29%) and CNN (35.71%), and less frequently in CBS (25%).

   Democrats (22.88%) were mentioned more often than *republicans* (6.73%), with FOX (54.62%; 51.43%) covering either party most often. Mentions of Trump and political affiliation typically reflected the news outlet's approval or disapproval of Trump, such as Judge Jon S. Tigar blocking Trump's attempt at reforming immigration law, stating "he may not rewrite the immigration laws to impose a condition that Congress has expressly forbidden" (CNN, 0551). Conversely, FOX (1498) implicated several democrats including Kamala Harris, Pete Buttigieg, and Richard Durbin in allowing immigrants leniency, while noting Trump's announcement that

> "Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers would soon begin enforcement actions to remove illegal immigrants."

The characterisation of immigrants was split into several categories, *generalised immigrants* (17.12%), *immigrant children* (14.23%), *immigrant families* (3.27%), and *dreamers* (0.58%). FOX included generalised immigrants more often than CNN and CBS, and when discussing the generalisation of immigrants, would sometimes draw comparisons across the political aisle (FOX, 1162), as well as generalising immigrants in terms of the size of caravans or other unorganised groups travelling towards the USA–Mexico border (FOX, 1335).

> "Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the star Democratic congresswoman-elect from New York, compared migrant caravan members who clashed over the weekend with U.S. border agents to Jewish families fleeing Nazi Germany and other targets of genocide." (FOX, 1162)

> "A caravan-size influx of migrants is flooding across the border each week in just a single sector, a top Border Patrol official told lawmakers Tuesday – the latest indicator of the growing migration crisis on the southern border… "People are traveling across hemispheres to attempt to illegally enter the U.S., using the same pathways as the Central Americans."" (FOX, 1335)

CNN and CBS mentioned immigrant children and immigrant families more often than FOX. When mentioning these characters, it was most often reflected in the individual or family's safety, housing, separation from family, or legal-political matters pertaining to family separation policies. The Trump administration said in a court filing Friday that it has identified 2,511 children between the ages of 5 and 17 in their custody who could potentially be reunited with their families (CBS, 0111). In a letter Friday to the inspector

generals for the Departments of Homeland Security and Health and Human services a group of Democratic lawmakers write that they are 'deeply concerned' about the Department of Justice's 'zero-tolerance' policy that has resulted in family separations and 'gravely disturbed' over reports about separated parents and children and the possibility that they might 'never be reunited again' (CNN, 0445).

Table 2   Characterisation

Variable	Category	CNN	CBS	FOX	TOTAL
Immigrants	General	18 (20.22%)	14 (15.73%)	57 (64.04%)	89 (17.12%)
	Children	14 (18.92%)	36 (48.65%)	24 (32.43%)	74 (14.23%)
	Families	7 (41.18%)	4 (23.53%)	6 (35.29%)	17 (3.27%)
	Single	0 (0%)	0 (%)	3 (100%)	3 (0.58%)
	DACA recipients	0 (0%)	2 (66.67%)	1 (33.33%)	3 (0.58%)
Political actors	Trump	80 (35.71%)	56 (25%)	88 (39.29%)	224 (43.08%)
	Institutional leaders	27 (38.57%)	13 (18.57%)	30 (42.86%)	70 (13.46%)
	Republicans	11 (31.43%)	6 (1714%)	18 (51.43%)	35 (6.73%)
	Democrats	25 (21.01%)	29 (24.37%)	65 (54.62%)	119 (22.88%)
Agencies	Government agencies	18 (24%)	29 (38.67%)	28 (37.33%)	75 (14.42%)
	Law enforcement	6 (15.38%)	5 (12.82%)	28 (71.79%)	39 (7.5%)
	Judicial actors	7 (35%)	5 (25%)	8 (40%)	20 (3.85%)
	Military	6 (27.27%)	3 (13.64%)	13 (59.09%)	22 (4.23%)
Immigration impact	Impacted communities	1 (14.29%)	0 (0%)	6 (85.71%)	7 (1.35%)
	Victims	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	9 (100%0	9 (100%)
Activists		19 (45.24%)	6 (14.29%)	17 (40.48%)	42 (8.08%)
Terrorists		0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (100%)	2 (0.38%)
Other		18 (48.65%)	3 (8.11%)	16 (43.24%)	37 (7.12%)

FOX was the only news outlet to mention *solo immigrants* throughout the study. *Dreamers* were not mentioned by CNN and were characterised most often by CBS (2), followed by FOX (1), though these characterisations totalled to three articles between both news outlets.

Moreover, *impacted communities* were addressed mostly by FOX (85.71%), followed by CNN (14.29%), and were not covered by CBS. Similarly, *victims* were exclusively mentioned by FOX.

5.2   *Location: defining the locality of impact*

While an emphasis on general and non-domestic immigrant characterisation was more prevalent, the locational focal point of articles was most often the *northern* (23.46%) Census region of the USA followed by the *Mexican border* (21.35%). Interestingly, CNN (61.48%) was most likely to focus on a northern locality while FOX (52.25%) was most likely to focus on the locality of the USA–Mexico border. While these regions are viewed

as the most popular among other locations, *none listed* (25.96%) was the most frequently viewed result of article locality overall, providing news information without any location.

Table 3   Location

Category	CNN	CBS	FOX	TOTAL
North	75 (61.48%)	18 (14.75%)	29 (23.77%)	122 (23.46%)
South	20 (27.78%)	21 (29.17%)	31 (43.06%)	72 (13.85%)
Midwest	2 (40%)	0 (0%)	3 (60%)	5 (0.96%)
West	7 (25%)	4 (14.29%)	17 (60.71%)	28 (5.38%)
USA–Mexico border	25 (22.52%)	28 (25.23%)	58 (52.25%)	111 (21.35%)
Latin America	9 (30%)	5 (16.67%)	16 (53.33%)	30 (5.77%)
None listed	41 (30.37%)	42 (31.11%)	52 (38.52%)	135 (25.96%)
Other	7 (53.85%)	1 (7.69%)	5 (38.46%)	13 (2.5%)

5.3   Topic-area: from political criticism to building the immigrant frame

The most frequent response-categories to this variable were *policy revisions* (11.73%), *immigrant exclusion* (9.62%), and *political agenda differences* (8.85%). It is important to note that an unsorted category, *other* (4.42%), consisted of 23 articles. Cross analysing the topic-area by news outlet produced more nuanced results, such as c*ritiques of both the Obama* and *Trump Administration's* and their respective political platforms on immigration. FOX was the only news outlet to critique the Obama administration, and CNN (53.85%) published the most critiques of the Trump administration, followed by CBS (25.64%), and FOX (20.51%). Two other topic- areas related to politics, *political agenda differences* and *misinformation* were measured, finding political agenda differences were covered most often by CNN (39.13%) and FOX (32.61%). When addressing political agenda differences, FOX (1092) quoted Trump indirectly speaking of democrats, stating "maybe they made a bad mistake", while CBS (0069) note that while republicans condemn family separation, Trump "continued to blame congressional Democrats for his own administration's 'zero tolerance' immigration policy". Moreover, CBS' (28.26%) coverage provides an additional layer of party-politics and its influence on news outlets. FOX (71.43%) overwhelmingly produced articles with misinformation, specifically exaggerated or vague information, compared to CNN (21.43%) and CBS (7.14%).

Other 'topic'-area response-categories described immigration and political outbursts rather than criticism of platforms or style of news representation. FOX was more likely than any other news outlet to publish articles with topic areas that centred around *immigrant social deviance* (93.75%) and *immigrant release and abandonment* (81.25%). When discussing social deviance of immigrants, a typical example of deviant behaviour included rape and sexual assault, specifically mentioned at a Trump speech, where the president said Mexico is "not sending their best. ...They're rapists" (CNN, 0376). Finally, *policy revisions* which were recorded most often in FOX (44.26%) articles, followed by CBS (31.15%), and CNN (24.59%). Revisions addressed by CBS and CNN most often centred around the Trump administration, such as "extending Temporary Protected Status (TPS) programs...which the Trump administration has sought to terminate" (CBS, 0187),

while FOX often included revisions of democrats, such as "Warren plans to increase annual refugee admissions nearly 800% from FY2018" (FOX, 1428).

Table 4   Topic-area

Variable	Category	CNN	CBS	FOX	TOTAL
Political	Critique of Obama Administration	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (100%)	4 (0.77%)
	Critique of Trump Administration	21 (53.85%)	10 (25.64%)	8 (20.51%)	39 (7.5%)
	Policy revision	15 (24.59%)	19 (31.15%)	27 (44.26%)	61 (11.73%)
	Policy debate	13 (59.09%)	7 (31.82%)	2 (9.09%)	22 (4.23%)
	Political outbursts	10 (32.26%)	2 (6.45%)	19 (61.29%)	31 (5.96%)
	Political agenda differences	18 (39.13%)	13 (28.26%)	15 (32.61%)	46 (8.85%)
Criminal justice	Border control	4 (26.67%)	1 (6.67%)	10 (66.67%)	15 (2.88%)
	Military operations	7 (36.84%)	3 (15.79%)	9 (47.37%)	19 (3.65%)
	Detainment	10 (32.26%)	12 (38.71%)	9 (29.03%)	31 (5.96%)
	Relocation	2 (40%)	3 (60%)	0 (0%)	5 (0.96%)
	Release and abandonment	2 (12.5%)	1 (6.25%)	13 (81.25%)	16 (3.08%)
	Detainment shortage	2 (66.67%)	1 (33.33%)	0 (0%)	3 (0.58%)
	Maltreatment	4 (18.18%)	10 (45.45%)	8 (36.36%)	22 (4.23%)
	Judicial review	9 (69.23%)	2 (15.38%)	2 (15.38%)	13 (2.5%)
Negative impact	Strain on resources	1 (50%)	0 (0%)	1 (50%)	2 (50%)
	Overwhelmed communities	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (100%)	5 (0.96%)
	Economic burden	3 (30%)	2 (20%)	5 (50%)	10 (1.92%)
	Deviance	1 (6.25%)	0 (0%)	15 (93.75%)	16 (3.08%)
	Freeloading	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	2 (40%)	5 (0.96%)
	Social ineptness	2 (50%)	0 (0%)	2 (50%)	4 (0.77%)
Information	Statistical and educational	0 (0%)	1 (20%)	4 (40%)	5 (0.96%)
	Misinformation	1 (7.14%)	3 (21.43%)	10 (71.43%)	14 (2.69%)
Economic contributions		1 (50%)	1 (50%)	0 (0%)	2 (0.38%)
Separated families		11 (36.67%)	8 (26.67%)	11 (36.67%)	30 (5.77%)
Immigrant exclusion		20 (40%)	8 (16%)	22 (44%)	50 (9.62%)
Institutional review		5 (62.5%)	2 (25%)	1 (12.5%)	8 (1.54%)
Non-profits		2 (22.22%)	3 (33.33%)	4 (44.44%)	9 (1.73%)
Border crossing spike		2 (20%)	3 (30%)	5 (50%)	10 (1.92%)
Other		15 (65.22%)	4 (17.39%)	4 (17.39%)	23 (4.42%)

Political debate was most often headlined by CNN (59.09%), followed by CBS (31.82%). Another response-category, *political outbursts* was measured to distinguish between a political discussion and political aggression. Between all outlets, FOX was far

more likely to headline *political outbursts* (61.29%) than *political debate* (9.09%) compared to other news outlets. For instance, FOX (1475) was published with the title "Kellyanne Conway rips AOC on sympathy for immigrants." Conversely, CNN was more likely to headline themes related to *political debate* (59.09%) than p*olitical outbursts* (32.26%). An example of discussion-based evidence from CNN was published with the title "Democrats demand answers on how immigrant parents will be reunited with children" (CNN, 0445).

5.4   Narratives of threat, sustainability, and cultural concern

'Narrative' covered a wide range of perspectives, creating a mechanism which interprets the reason behind publishing each article, which, for most articles, was *politically divisive* (40%), followed by *public interest-pro immigrant* (19.23%), and *criminal threat* (15.58%). Political divisiveness was addressed two-fold:

1   in-fighting between the Republican party and the Trump Administration

2   cross-aisle division, specifically one party partaking in the political blaming of the opposing party.

Either explanation can be seen in the news, one example being from FOX (0005) discussing the republican condemnation of Trump's leniency in releasing immigrants into sanctuary cities, which was "denounced by some republicans as the beginning of a civil war within the party." Cross-aisle divisiveness was present in all three news outlets, an example being Trump outwardly stating "I don't like it, I hate it! But that's a Democrat bill that we're enforcing" (CBS, 0076) and "now democrats who stand in our way will be complicit in every murder committed by illegal immigrants" (CNN, 0344). Three immigrant-driven threats were commonly mentioned; *minority threat, economic threat,* and *criminal threat.* All three of these response-categories were most often addressed by FOX (46.15%; 55.56%; 61.73%). CNN (44.23%) discussed the narrative of minority threat at a slightly lower rate than FOX and discussed economic threat (11.11%) and criminal threat (27.16%) far less than FOX. CBS rarely discussed the narrative of threat, with the lowest frequency of mentions being minority threat (9.62%). Immigrant-based threats were addressed with warlike strategies, systemic failure to secure the USA, and a justification for exclusion. Specifically, CNN represented this through a cited quote from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS): ...stating that "the law currently authorizes DHS to reject immigrants if they are or are likely to become a 'public charge' – dependent on government. Current guidance includes some forms of 'cash benefits' but exempts several programs from consideration, especially those that support the children of immigrants who are US citizens and eligible for benefits that immigrants otherwise are not (CNN, 0353).

While this representation reflects the right of a governmental institution to reject immigrants if they do not satisfy an informal requirement of being financially stable, cultural sustainability concerns voiced by the government as a barrier to immigrants is also shown through a historical contextualisation of the USA and its founding principles:

> "Throughout our history, self-sufficiency has been a core tenet of the American dream. Long-standing federal law has required foreign nationals to rely on their own capabilities and the resources of their families, sponsors, and private organizations in their communities to succeed. Self-reliance, industriousness,

and perseverance laid the foundation of our nation and have defined
generations of hardworking immigrants seeking opportunity in the United
States…." (CNN, 0769)

This representation can be tied to public interest, a narrative that acted in a binary
fashion, consisting of both *public interest-anti immigrant,* a response-category which
FOX (78.57%) discusses more often than CNN (14.29%) and CBS (7.14%), and *public
interest-pro immigrant,* which was discussed most by FOX (39%), followed by CNN
(31%), and CBS (30%). Concurrent with public opinion, another narrative response-
category, *politically divisive culture*, highlighted an important difference between CNN
(34.62%) and FOX (47.12%). *cultural sustainability* was most often mentioned in FOX
(54.76%), followed by CNN (26.19%), and CBS (19.01%). Sustainability contextualised
focused on portraying legal loopholes as the core reasoning for government
fragmentation, reflected by FOX (1058):

> "Today, legal loopholes significantly hinder the department's ability to
> appropriately detain and promptly remove family units that have no legal basis
> to remain in the country," Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen. "This
> rule addresses one of the primary pull factors for illegal immigration and allows
> the federal government to enforce immigration laws as passed by Congress."

Summarily, CNN reported fewer, but similar, results of threat and did not produce nearly
as many politically divisive or narratives of sustainability, while CBS reported far fewer
instances of any immigrant-related threat, political divisiveness, or narratives of
sustainability.

Table 5   Narrative

Variable	Category	CNN	CBS	FOX	TOTAL
Perceived threat	Minority threat	23 (44.23%)	5 (9.62%)	24 (46.15%)	52 (10%)
	Economic threat	2 (11.11%)	6 (33.33%)	10 (55.56%)	18 (3.46%)
	Criminal threat	22 (27.16%)	9 (11.11%)	50 (61.73%)	81 (15.58%)
Moral panic	Pro-immigrant	5 (13.51%)	15 (40.54%)	17 (46.95%)	37 (7.12%)
	Anti-immigrant	3 (15%)	1 (5%)	16 (80%)	20 (3.85%)
Public interest	Pro-immigrant	31 (31%)	30 (30%)	39 (39%)	100 (19.23%)
	Anti-immigrant	4 (14.29%)	2 (7.14%)	22 (78.57%)	28 (5.38%)
Sustainability	Cultural	11 (26.19%)	8 (19.05%)	23 (54.76%)	42 (8.08%)
	Institutional	12 (26.67%)	5 (11.11%)	28 (62.22%)	45 (8.65%)
Political divisive culture		72 (34.62%)	38 (18.27%)	98 (47.12%)	208 (40%)
Public health and safety		9 (32.14%)	5 (17.86%)	14 (50%)	28 (5.38%)
Other		10 (41.67%)	9 (37.5%)	5 (20.83%)	24 (4.62%)

5.5   Article tone: emotionality, factuality, and common sense

'Tone' represented most often included *factual* (28.27%), *institutional disapproval*
(26.73%), and *alarmism* (14.62%). This showed a generalisation of article grit, which
most clearly favoured a factual, or statistical, overall sense of institutional disapproval
with an occasional sense of alarmism. This disapproval was highlighted both in the
disapproval of the Trump Administration as well as disapproval of democrats, illegal and

legal immigrants, or the Latin American political response to the influx of immigrants at the USA–Mexico border. FOX (40.35%; 39.46%; 72.41%) reported in an *emotional, factual,* and *common sense* tone most often, followed by CNN (33.33%; 33.33%; 20.69%), and CBS (26.32%; 27.21%; 6.90%). Articles that were flagged with an emotional and alarmism tone represented a multitude of emotions, specifically, FOX contributed negative emotions towards immigrants while CNN and CBS contributed focus on negative emotions towards the US government. For example, the usage of emotional pleas, such as the following quote from President Trump included within a CNN article, supports the inherent victimisation of women immigrants while perpetuating a generalisation of other immigrants, presumably male, as inherent deviants:

> "Everybody said, 'Oh, he was so tough,' and I used the word rape," Trump said Thursday. "And yesterday, it came out where this journey coming up, women are raped at levels that nobody has ever seen before. They don't want to mention that. So we have to change our laws."…"Not sure why the media is acting like this isn't a well-established fact -- women and young girls are brutally victimized on the journey north," White House press secretary Sarah Sanders said in a statement later Thursday. "Strikes me as quite bizarre that reporters would try to cover up the gross atrocities perpetrated by smugglers and coyotes." (CNN, 0376)

Table 6   Tone

Variable	Category	CNN	CBS	FOX	TOTAL
Institutional	Approval	22 (46.81%)	6 (12.77%)	19 (40.43%)	47 (9.04%)
	Disapproval	60 (43.17%)	32 (23.02%)	47 (33.81%)	139 (26.73%)
Emotional		19 (33.33%)	15 (26.32%)	23 (40.35%)	57 (10.96%)
Factual		49 (33.33%)	40 (27.21%)	58 (39.46%)	147 (28.27%)
Common sense		6 (20.69%)	2 (6.90%)	21 (72.41%)	29 (5.58%)
Alarmism		15 (19.74%)	12 (15.79%)	49 (64.47%)	76 (14.62%)
General targeting		9 (20.93%)	7 (16.28%)	27 (62.79%)	43 (8.27%)
Mediating		22 (37.29%)	12 (20.34%)	25 (42.37%)	59 (11.25%)
Other		5 (50%)	4 (40%)	1 (10%)	10 (1.92%)

Conversely, CNN and CBS offer emotionality that favours immigrants, especially child immigrants and those detained, and opposes the Trump administration's current immigrant and border control policies:

> "They're coming from immigration cells so they're coming hungry, they're coming thirsty, most haven't bathed in a long time. The situation is really difficult for them…" (CBS, 0166)

This type of emotional charge can also be implicated by CNN's portrayal of immigrants as "nothing less than government sanctioned child abuse," (0439) and quoting a reporter asking President Trump "is it OK to use tear gas on children?" (0567). The usage of this emotional charge is similar to CBS, which also acknowledged children, specifically the uncertainty of children and parents when being separated after pleading guilty:

> "At the border, an estimated 80 people pleaded guilty Monday to immigration charges, including some who asked the judge questions such as "What's going to happen to my daughter?" and "What will happen to my son?" ...Papa! Papa!"

one child is heard weeping in the audio file that was first reported by the nonprofit ProPublica" (CNN, 0567)

Institutional approval and *institutional disapproval* also measured, in a binary fashion, the discourse covering governmental institutions. CNN (46.81%; 43.17%) contributed the most to both institutional approval and disapproval, followed by FOX (40.43%; 33.81%), and CBS (12.77%; 23.02%). Finally, the last response-category comparatively analysed across the three outlets was *general targeting*, which was overwhelmingly used by FOX (62.79%) compared to CBS (16.28%) and CNN (20.93%).

5.6   Turning political rhetoric of immigration and immigrants into public ideology?

Although each media outlet has a unique way of portraying immigration, our findings illustrate increases to the frequency of news media narratives criminalising refugees crossing the southern border, exacerbating pre-existing political divides on immigration issues, and garnering support for restrictive, conservative-led anti-immigration policies. This is specially done in two ways:

1   higher frequency and oversimplification of the news on the immigration topic

2   Trumps' centrality in all news, building a political rhetoric which polarises, demonises immigrants and misinforms the public on the topic of immigration.

Importantly, an increase in the frequency of news media narratives about immigration was observed, particularly during the second year of analysis of the *corpus*, which corresponds to the timeframe after Trump's executive order was fully explained and detailed. However, this increase did not correspond necessarily to more information being grasped about the immigration topic, since the majority of the news articles were small or medium size. This feature limits the ability for an article to contain specific information, instead, favouring a more streamlined approach that only covers generalised or oversimplified information. This oversimplification is also perceived in other news features, such as the location being most often *not listed*, the images being mostly generic, illustrating social media and politicians, as well as the use of certain keywords, such as *immigrant* and *migrant*, to represent those entering or approaching the USA–Mexico border.

The most popular 'keyword', *migrant*, which is an immigrant specifically seeking refuge due to economic reasons, leads to a two-fold discussion of why this keyword was most common across all outlets. It can be seen as a root of immigrants, since it is often used synonymously with immigrant and/or as a negative connotation to connect the individual with economic strain or excessive economic need, as compared to the more sympathetic terms of *refugee* or *asylum seeker* (Eberl et al., 2018). This is also particularly true for FOX when representing article characters, as many articles mentioned immigrants as broad entities that fit into categories such as families, children, and groups, most of which were characterised as individuals travelling *towards* the USA, not those who were already located in the USA. This could suggest a further simplification of information presented within news articles, and mirrors earlier studies suggesting that the media tends to frame panic and disapproval of immigrants at a general level (Chiricos et al., 1997; Chiricos and Eschholz, 2002; Cisneros, 2008; Chavez et al., 2010; Callanan, 2012; Arias and Hellmueller, 2016). This is expounded upon by the

negative representation of immigrants that FOX develops by discussing immigrants as negatively impacting communities and victimising American citizens through three primary avenues: economic injustice, sexual related crimes, or murder.

Trump was mentioned far more than any *republican*, and while still a republican himself, much of Trump's characterisation was a mouthpiece of the Republican party platform on immigration, implying that the immigration platform of republicans was effectively the platform of Trump. A higher frequency of *democrats* most often indicated simple direct opposition to Trump, additionally, an article's characterisation can relate to an article's locality, which when present, is most often in the northern USA. This can be explained by the prevalence of Trump and political actors within articles being in the District of Columbia. Likewise, the finding of FOX favouring coverage of the Mexican border suggests a direct focus on immigrants, border control, and law enforcement, often producing a representation of the negative effects that border-passing has had on the USA (Sabo et al., 2014).

The polarisation of news media within the USA is observed in the analysis of immigration news. For instance, the article's 'topic' revealed this polarisation, in which CNN and FOX publish critiques of the opposing administration (Trump versus Obama) and their respective party. This type of media duality undoubtedly leads to misinformation and is further enhanced by a negative framework towards immigrants. Such a pattern is reflective of early studies on media representations of minorities, which suggested the overrepresentation of narratives related to criminality (Chavez et al., 2010) and increased social disorder in news content related to immigrants and other racial/ethnic minorities (Chiricos et al., 1997; Chiricos and Eschholz, 2002; Cisneros, 2008; Callanan, 2012; Arias and Hellmueller, 2016).

The finding of exaggerated and misinformation may represent the effect of emotionality, through the form of flashy headlines and content, as news representation. This is not to say that FOX depends on emotionality to represent news, however, could explain one of few differences between news outlets regarding discussion based and debate-oriented topics, especially if the news article discusses immigrant criminality. Article narratives *minority threat, economic threat,* and *criminal threat* contributed to this inference as these results construct a generalised ideology of potential country-wide victimisation from immigrants, instilling a direct representation of immigrants as *threatening* to major aspects of American life (Magaña and Short, 2002; Aguirre et al., 2011; Aguirre, 2012; Valentino et al., 2013). This, in part with narrative's *public interest-pro immigrant* and *public interest-anti immigrant*, offer a discourse of public perception towards immigrants, allowing news outlets to factor in their respective audiences while drafting articles of immigration within a broader political discourse (Flores-Yeffal et al., 2011; Sohoni and Mendez, 2017; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012).

In terms of *divisiveness*, FOX discusses political divide far more often than CNN, indicating that this outlet is polarised more intensely than CNN on the topic of immigration. This is expounded by the assumption of polarisation and American insecurity to potential immigrant provoked threats (Cisneros, 2008; Arias and Hellmueller, 2016), and is compatible with the finding of *cultural* and *democratic sustainability* being most represented by FOX, as the outlet produced in-group representation of naturalised Americans, and out-group representation of foreign immigrants, framed by legal status. This pattern echoes that found by earlier studies from Stewart et al. (2011), Dixon and Williams (2015), and Sui and Paul (2017), who argue that news media coverage over represents immigrants, especially those belonging to

ethnic minority groups, as illegal. Moreover, it can be inferred that while immigrant-related threats existed in all articles, the motivation behind the inclusion of threat differed across outlets. That is, it was not necessarily the aim of CNN or CBS to mention these threats as a concern for sustainability or to create divisiveness; however, when comparing threat narratives within each outlet, this was the intention for FOX, specifically when addressing the generalisation of American victimisation. Such a finding supports recent claims from Farris and Silber Mohamed (2018), who argue that conservative news outlets are more likely to over represent immigrants as illegal and dangerous to the USA.

While *emotional, factual,* and *common sense* tones were most often used by FOX, it does not necessarily indicate any article in its entirety embodied one specific tone over another. In fact, because articles can include multiple tones, one reason for FOX dominating the use of these three response-categories could be that a simple combination of these types of tones is used more often by FOX, compared to other outlets. This highlights an innate emotional simplicity to the information being provided and suggests that FOX, unlike CNN and CBS, relies more heavily on presenting published news content through the lens that this content should be 'common knowledge' among the public, which may help to explain prior findings suggesting that FOX news exposure is more likely to influence attitudes about immigrants than exposure to CNN (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012).

Similar to tone and narrative response-categories which measure public perception, 'tone' response categories *institutional approval* and *institutional disapproval* are not necessarily reflective of a news outlet's respective belief. Rather, this could be the result of each news outlet – particularly CNN approving and FOX disapproving of the current governmental institutions related to immigration – triggering these response-categories by addressing the opposition. Articles could also contain both approval and disapproval depending on the characters addressed, such as a quoted republican outwardly approving of the Trump Administration's newest immigration policy while a quoted democrat outwardly disapproves of the policy. As news outlets are not barred from political commentary on their opposition, it is possible that CNN and FOX, and perhaps even CBS, contributed certain articles supportive of their particular stance as an outlet, as well as other articles which addressed response-categories of opposing news outlets to spark debate or divisive discourse. Finally, *general targeting* could be a tonal solution to sustainability concerns addressed above, explaining earlier findings of sustainability practices and divisive narratives, as well as emotional and common-sense tones, keeping in mind that FOX would take a particular interest in safeguarding the USA and its culturally democratic values, and in doing so, generally target immigrants to maintain safety.

Has the press gone Crazy? After considering the increase of news especially after Trump's executive order as well as his centrality in the news under analysis, we observe that online news is characterised by the polarisation, demonisation, emotionality and misinformation about the immigration topic along ideological lines (re)produced by liberal and conservative media outlets. These media outlets end up being the mouthpiece of the political rhetoric built around the immigration topic in the country, relying heavily on the oversimplification of the topic and stigmatisation of the migrant groups, particularly legal immigration and asylum seekers.

6   Conclusions

Much of the recent literature on media representations of immigration suggests a former narrative of criminalising illegal immigrants as a specific and separate group of a more general immigrant collective. This narrative has shifted towards generalisations of immigrant criminality, specifically in that legal immigrants, to include asylum seekers, are perceived as inherently deviant. The most basic understanding of this shift in narrative can be understood by the growing influence of political rhetoric within online news, however, a gap exists as to how this shift has continued to develop in the years following Trump's inauguration. The current study attempts to attend to these gaps, allowing for a greater understanding of ongoing developments to immigration narratives in the USA, as well as providing insights into the framing of politically driven news content on online platforms. The most general finding of this study notes that there is a gross overrepresentation of Latinos as undocumented and/or illegal irrespective of whether the news outlet was disseminating pro- or anti-immigrant rhetoric. While this general finding presents itself, results show a difference in description of illegal immigrants across outlets, especially in polarisation, demonisation, emotionality, and misinformation. Media outlets ultimately act as a mouthpiece of political rhetoric, influencing public understanding and opinions of legal immigration by way of generalising the complexities of immigration and furthering the stigmatisation of Latin American groups.

   While these findings present an overall idea on how media outlets depict immigration along ideological lines and how these may impact the public perception of immigration, limitations do present themselves at different stages within this study. First, the timeframe of analysis extends from August 2017-August 2019, which only covers the time period between Trump's barring of asylum seekers from entry to the USA to the beginning of the analysis in August of 2019. This neglects articles that would be published in Trump's first and fourth year as President, as well as those articles that were published during Trump's campaign. Second, while variables were identified to closely reflect the complexities of political news articles, an article's 'topic' was quantitatively analysed, allowing for only one response-category to be flagged. Moreover, an article's 'tone' could reflect 'institutional approval' and 'institutional disapproval,' however, this dichotomy does not necessarily reflect a news outlet or even an article's approval or disapproval. This limitation was partially overcome by exploring the variable qualitatively instead of solely quantitatively. However, for future research purposes, it seems relevant to include a more complex codification of these response-categories.

   Despite these limitations, it should be noted that the impact of this study on public policy is still meaningful as it can produce an understanding of political framing through the dialogue of major media networks that publish with a vast amount of political capital. This can be impactful in understanding why terms such as 'asylum' and 'amnesty' are not commonly used, and, therefore, neglected in media discussions on the topic of immigration. Furthermore, it helps inform the current societal and political period the US is living, and how media and politics intersect and influence each other. While media plays an important role in the communication of political information, a central process for any democracy, the way this communication is done should raise concern as it impacts the public's understanding of contested social issues such as immigration of asylum-seeking individuals and pressures future public policies in the country, which affect national and global citizens.

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Notes

1   If multiple keywords appeared in a single headline, the article was examined to identify which keyword was the focal point of the article and then selected appropriately.

2   Only original articles were used. If an article was a replica or updated in any way, the original article was the only one considered and coded.