Illegality, Criminality and the Taxpayer’s Burden: The Incomplete U.S Immigration Narrative

by

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“It is impossible to talk about the single story without talking about power. There is a word, an Igbo word, that I think about whenever I think about the power structures of the world, and it is "nkali." It's a noun that loosely translates to "to be greater than another." Like our economic and political worlds, stories too are defined by the principle of nkali. How they are told, who tells them, when they're told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power.”

- Chimamanda Adichie, “The Danger of A Single Story”
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**Introduction**

According to the 2010 census, the United States population has an estimated 40 million foreign born individuals (Foner, 2013). Approximately, 11.5 million of this population from Mexico and other Latin American countries reside in the country without legal status (Kim et. al., 2011). As these figures continue to increase over time, immigration policy remains a constant topic of debate, at times experiencing periods of heightened attention in both the media and political sphere. Throughout U.S history, immigration has often been the center of political controversy invoking skepticism and concern among the American public (Daniels, 1990; Foner, 2013; Kim et. al., 2011). In the 1850s, Irish and German Catholic immigrants were seen as threats to the Protestant American tradition (Daniels, 1990). The wave of Southern and Eastern European immigrants also met with resentment (Foner, 2013). Towards the end of the century, Asian immigrants were targeted by the American public and subjected to a series of exclusionary immigration policies based on nativist attitudes and ethnic prejudices (Foner, 2013). The nation’s newcomers were often negatively portrayed in local newspapers and magazines, depicted as “inferior” and cited as sources of social and economic issues of the time (Foner, 2013, p.17). There are parallels between the experiences of the early European immigrants and the current situation of Latino immigrants, who are often seen as causing problems such as crime, drugs, violence and economic burden (Kim et. al., 2011).

Fueled by nativist attitudes during the late 19th century, Congress began to pass legislation that discouraged immigrants of certain ethnic groups who were deemed detrimental to the preservation of the “American race” as well as catering to
the social and economic concerns of the public (Kim et al., 2011, p. 295). In 1882, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Acts, which halted Chinese immigration for a decade and prohibited Chinese immigrants from naturalizing (Daniels, 1990). The Immigration Act of 1924, placed country based quotas on the immigrant population, that highly favored Western Europeans. Though the passage of the 1965 reform act was a congressional attempt to “eliminate the taint of racism from U.S immigration law”, hemispheric caps were placed hindering migration from neighboring Latin America and the Caribbean (Massey, 2013, p. 17; Kim et al., 2011).

Due to restrictions on legal migration enacted by past legislation, illegal immigration into the U.S has sharply increased (Kim et al., 2011; Massey & Pren, 2012). Contemporary immigration legislation has prioritized reducing this surge of unauthorized migration through extensive enforcement policy. Focusing on the Mexican border and the flow of undocumented immigrants, the U.S spends approximately 18 billion dollars annually on border control and immigrant deportation (Massey, 2013). Despite this increased effort, many argue that restrictive policies have failed, citing a continuous increase in the “undocumented population” (Massey, 2013, p. 17).

The partisan divide over immigration policy has fueled extensive debate in Congress, with Republicans advocating for stricter border control and Democrats for more comprehensive reform. News media plays a significant role in influencing the public’s perception of the immigration debate. Previous research has demonstrated how the framing of the immigration debate can influence public beliefs on key points of an issue (Kim et al., 2011). Studies have also shown that the more salient an issue,
the more the public regards it as an urgent matter. The theory of agenda setting
describes “the process by which the news media shows the public what is important
by giving more salience to certain events and issues over others” (Dunaway et. al.,
2010, p. 361). As media attention on the immigration debate increases, the public’s
perception of its importance is also heightened. Media content, tone, and the framing
of immigration also influences public perceptions and play a role in the definition of
immigration as a “social problem” (Kim et. al., 2011, p. 293). Correa and Graauw
argue that the immigration debate has been narrowed down to focus on the illegality
of immigration, which negatively impacts the way legislators react with policy
(Jones-Correa & de Graauw, 2013). Although illegals are a minority group within the
U.S immigrant population, debate and policy has often centered on them, creating the
perception of their illegality as a priority issue. The consistent portrayal of
undocumented immigrants as criminals and public nuisances have led to tougher
immigration legislation, which often includes measures of increasing border
enforcement and heightening deportation rates (Jones-Correa & de Graauw, 2013).

In 1996, under the Clinton Administration, Congress passed the Illegal
Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) enacting har
sheter measures for undocumented immigrants, including an expansion of deportation
categories and an increase in crimes that would result in deportation (Jones-Correa &
de Graauw, 2013). Seventeen years later, in the summer of 2013, the Senate passed
the Border Security, Economic Opportunity and Immigration Modernization Act. The
act proposed a pathway to citizenship for the 11 million undocumented immigrants
who had been residing in the United States. It was significantly more sympathetic to
undocumented immigrants and their plight. Though the bill has currently reached a standstill in the House, it can be seen as a reflection of changing attitudes on immigration in the U.S. While political views and public sentiments towards immigration are progressively becoming more favorable, the question remains whether the media portrayal of the immigration debate has changed along with it. This study attempts to evaluate the differences in news media portrayal of U.S immigrants in 1996 during the passage of IIRAIRA vs. the Senate’s passage of the 2013 Immigration Reform Act. Is the news media’s coverage of the immigration debate and portrayal of immigrants reflective of a shift in public attitudes and perception? How has the narrative of U.S immigration changed between these two political periods?

First, this study will review the history of U.S immigration patterns and policy. It will then examine the historical representation of immigrants in the U.S as well as public attitudes towards these immigrant groups. The later sections will describe research on the effects of the media’s portrayal of migrants and coverage of the immigration debate. Finally, it will conclude by discussing contemporary immigration and the climate of the current debate.
History of U.S Immigration and Policies

Immigration has shaped the United States’ since its conception, beginning with the first European settlers in 1607 (Daniels, 1990). Escaping from religious persecution and political oppression, early British settlers viewed the New World as a haven and encouraged continuous migration. By the end of the 17th century, 90% of settlers were of “English birth or descent” (Daniels, 1990, p. 103). Other European groups would soon come to join this population as various historical events encouraged floods of migrants from Southern, Eastern and Central Europe (Daniels, 1990; Foner, 2013). In many of their reviews of U.S immigration, historians often neglect to discuss involuntary immigration and the number of Africans who were forced to come to the U.S during the Atlantic Slave Trade (Daniels, 1990). According to Daniels, “Slave trade was one of the major means of bringing immigrants to the New World in general and the U.S in particular” (Daniels, 1990, p. 54). From the mid 15th century to 1870, approximately 10 million Africans were kidnapped from the coast of West Africa, with a majority sold to the Americas (Daniels, 1990). The Naturalization Act of 1790, which defined U.S citizens as exclusively “free white persons”, prohibited the African immigrant group from naturalization until 1870, when the act was extended to persons of African descent (Daniels, 1990, p. 113). Today, 10% of American people are descendants of African immigrants (Daniels, 1990).

19th Century Immigration

By the turn of the 19th century, 90% of U.S immigrants were considered to be European (Daniels, 1990). Up until 1875, immigration was essentially unregulated by
the federal government, which allowed for free migration into the country. During this period, the nation experienced an influx of several European groups, including the Irish. In the 1850s, a severe potato famine devastated Ireland, sending 2 million out of the country and 1.5 million into the U.S (Daniels, 1990). Most of the population settled in the New England region. Other large immigrant groups that migrated during this period were the Germans and the Italians, who had totaled 4.1 million within the U.S between 1880-1920 (Daniels, 1990).

Restrictive Immigration Legislation

As the wave of new migrants settled in the U.S, they faced negative perceptions and treatment, which were manifested in early immigration policies. As these groups began to settle, distinctions were made between “old” and “new” immigrants. While old immigrants were seen as “persons from the British Isles and northwestern Europe who came by the 1880s”, new immigrants were classified as Eastern and Southern Europeans who migrated after this period (Daniels, 1990, p. 121). Throughout the early immigration period, old immigrants often felt animosity towards the newer ones.

Daniels cites three phases of “anti-immigrant activity”: anti-Asian, anti-Catholic and anti-all immigration (Daniels, 1990, p. 265). Beginning around 1848, many Chinese migrants, encouraged by the California Gold rush, settled in the West, mostly serving as miners in the region (Daniels, 1990). Due to ethnic prejudices towards the group and economic tensions, the government enacted the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which essentially halted Chinese immigration. Restrictive legislation was later aimed at Japanese and Filipino migrants.
Between the late 1820s and 1830s, the migration of Irish and German Catholic immigrants increased tremendously (Daniels, 1990). Religious differences caused great tension between new and old immigrant groups, who felt that the new immigrants threatened Protestant tradition and the Anglo-Saxon American stock. Tensions between the new and the old often led to violence and conflict (Daniels, 1990). In the early 1900s, the U.S began to pass legislation to limit migration into the U.S. One influential bill was the Immigration Act of 1924, which set quotas based on national origins. The bill significantly favored Western Europeans, while limiting immigrant groups restrictionists felt were detrimental to the preservation of the American identity (Daniels, 1990).

**Early Latin American Immigration**

From 1820-1930, 1.3 million immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean settled in the U.S, with more than half migrating across the Mexican border (Daniels, 1990). The Texas-Mexico border regions experienced a significant influx of Mexican migrants, who often served as laborers in the region’s booming agriculture economy (Daniels, 1990). In response to the growing population of Mexican immigrants, nativists began to push for restrictive immigration measures in the form of quotas and literacy tests (Daniels, 1990; Weber, 2013). Regional farmers and agriculturalists, dependent on the labor of the Mexicans, advocated against limited immigration (Weber, 2013). Anti-restrictionists and restrictionists both held the same sentiments about the Mexicans migrants but held different ideas about their impact on the nation. (Weber, 2013). On one end, restrictionists saw the group as a threat to the preservation of American identity. Though anti-restrictionists also saw
immigrant groups as inferior, they considered their labor vital to the growth of the agricultural economy. When quotas were not enacted, restrictionists turned to large-scale deportations under the guise of “law enforcement campaigns” (Weber, 2013, p. 168). Some argue that sentiments against Mexicans stemmed from the economic pressures of the Great Depression. Weber also argues that “decades of nativist agitation and arguments over the proper place of Mexicans within the hierarchy of racial desirability” contributed to this discrimination (Weber, 2013, p. 168).

In the 1950s, 3.8 million Mexicans were deported under “Operation Wetback”, which was implemented by the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) (Daniels, 1990, p. 312; Hansen, 2009). During this period, despite stringent enforcement legislation, the U.S began to see a steady rise in illegal immigration over the Mexican border. It is argued that this rise was a result of a large Mexican population and weak economic growth, as well as inadequate border control.

According to Weber, restrictive immigration measures are to blame, stating “the unintended consequences of the laws and their effects on population movements across the border shrouded the Mexican and Mexican-American populations with the taint of illegality and illegitimacy” (Weber, 2013, p. 177). By creating legislation that purposely excluded Mexican immigrants and reducing their options for legal entry, the nation created a new population of immigrants who are now viewed as illegal.

**1965 Immigration Overhaul**

The 1965 Immigration Reform Act was a significant overhaul of the immigration system and is viewed as the beginning of modern immigration policy. Before the passage of the bill, the United States had passed the Civil Rights Act of
1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which prohibited voting discrimination. In 1965, immigration reform became part of this new era of inclusiveness and equality. According to Massey, “In the context of an expanding civil rights movement, the provisions within U.S immigration policy that openly discriminated against Asians, Africans, and Southern/Eastern Europeans came to be seen as intolerably racist” (Massey, 2013, p.6). Despite its elimination of the national quota system, the statute created hemispheric quotas, which put Latin-American nations, who had a higher volume of immigrants in search of visas at a disadvantage. After 1965, illegal immigration continued to increase rapidly due to the depletion of legal opportunities for Latin American migrants (Daniels, 1990; Massey, 2013).

Contemporary immigration policy has focused on decreasing the number of illegal immigrants through border security, deportation laws and stringent legal entry provisions. Overall, America’s immigrant population continues to change, shifting to include a variety of groups from all over the world. However though, immigration legislation has become relatively more inclusive, lawmakers still continue to debate the role of immigrants in U.S society.
American Nativism and the Historical Representation of Immigrants

So much of the anti-immigration debate is formed around nativist arguments that in order to understand the story of immigration, we need to review what nativism has meant in the United States. Anti-immigrant sentiments have always been present in American society, thus fueling restrictive immigration legislation and feelings of animosity between old settlers and new immigrant groups (Daniels, 1990). In John Higham’s, Strangers in the Land, nativism is defined as the “antipathy toward aliens, their institutions and ideas” (1955, p.3). American nativism has fluctuated along with strong feelings of nationalism within the country (Higham, 1955). American nativism flourished because of the flood of European immigrants from the 1830-1850 (Higham, 1955). Due to the large influx of foreigners bringing different languages, cultures and ideas into the nation, many natives felt the need to protect their conception of an American identity (Higham, 1955). Surges in nativist attitudes often came in response to apprehension and fear amongst Americans during periods of uncertainty, prompted by events such as war and economic instability (Higham, 1955; O'Hara, 1979).

*Anti- Catholic Sentiments*

Historians have divided American nativism into three categories of anti-immigrant attitudes influenced by “religion, radical ideas and racial characteristics” (O'Hara, 1979, p. 64). Anti-Catholic attitudes in Protestant America existing prior to the 1800s European migration to the United States, were a significant component in the negative attitude toward the Irish and German Catholic immigrant population during the 19th century (Daniels, 1990). According to Higham, “anti-Catholic heritage
formed an important element in colonial loyalties”, which can be traced all the way back to the Protestant Reformation during the 1500s (Higham, 1955, p. 6; O’Hara, 1979). In the early 1850s, anti-Catholic movements and political groups began to emerge, such as The Order of United Americans (O.U.A), and the Know Nothing Party (Higham, 1955). In response to the fear of Catholic immigrants corrupting American society, both groups assembled in order to restrict the migration of these populations utilizing lobbying and political propaganda (Higham, 1955). Irish and German immigrants were depicted as poor, violent and lazy, incapable of properly assimilating into American society (See Images 1). These perceptions were often captured in various political cartoons constructed by the anti-Catholic movements. In the Northeast region, where most of the Irish and German population resided, violence erupted between the Protestant settlers and the new Catholic population (Daniels, 1990). Catholic churches and convents were often targeted by Protestants, fueling the conflict between the groups (Daniels, 1990).

Image 1. (Rogers)
Anti-Immigrant attitudes in America have also been heavily influenced by racist attitudes towards various ethnic groups (Daniels, 1990; Higham, 1955; Pickus, 2005). Asian immigrants were especially targeted by racial nativism and were explicitly excluded from entry and citizenship (Pickus, 2005). The Anti-Asian movement was primarily centered in the Western United States (Shepard, 2012). In the 1850s, encouraged by the California Gold Rush and the construction of the Central Pacific Railroad, Chinese immigrants in the U.S went from 2,700 to 65,000 (Shepard, 2012).

Due to the fact they worked for smaller wages, Chinese laborers were viewed more favorably among companies compared to their white counterparts creating animosity between the two groups (Shepard, 2012). Anti-Chinese movements spread throughout quickly the region, prompting some of the most restrictive immigration legislation in U.S history (Daniels, 1990; Shepard, 2012) (See Image 2). Aaron Sargent, a prominent leader in the anti-Chinese movement, argued that the Chinese immigrants were unable to assimilate and “adapt American ideas” (Shepard, 2012, p. 51). Regional newspapers, such as the Idaho Statesman, depicted the Chinese as “filthy” and “dishonest” (Shepard, 2012, p. 51). Other papers, such as the Salt-Lake Tribune and New Haven Registrar, appealed to the fear of Americans and depicted the Chinese as “infiltrating the country in hopes of conquering it” (Shepard, 2012, p. 51). These anti-Chinese attitudes varied by region (Shepard, 2012). For example, the East
and South were more sympathetic to the plight of Chinese migrants, which was demonstrated in a few regional newspapers calling for understanding toward them (Shepard 2012).

One reason cited as to Asian immigration received more opposition than other immigrant groups was because they were perceived as being very dissimilar to Europeans in origin, in terms of ethnicity, religion and overall culture (Shepard, 2012). O’Hara cites the “closing of the western frontier” at the end of 19th century, arguing that it created widespread paranoia that land would not be as available (O'Hara, 1979, p. 64). This idea of competition for depleting resources combined with “deep depression, lost of faith in civic government, the development of business trusts that appeared to limit opportunities, labor strife” and the creation of immigrant filled slums combined contributed to the surge in anti-Asian sentiments (O'Hara, 1979, p. 64). Asian exclusion introduced a new “gatekeeping ideology”, changing the ways Americans viewed race, American identity and immigration (Lee, 2002, p. 37). Lee argues that early Chinese Exclusion Acts, “legalized and reinforced the need to restrict, exclude and deport, ‘undesirable’ and excludable immigrants” (2002, p. 37). The U.S’ current system of immigration is mainly focused on who should be excluded from citizenship, which Lee argues can be traced back to the treatment of Asian immigrants in the mid-1800s (Lee, 2002).

Mexicans are another immigrant group that has been historically impacted by racial nativism in the U.S. During the influx of Mexican migration, caused by the boom of the agricultural economy during the early 20th century, nativists once again feared an immigrant “takeover” (Sánchez, 1997, p. 1014). While immigration
restrictionists urged that limitations be placed on Mexicans, farmers and individuals and those invested in the agricultural economy, saw the influx of Mexican labor as extremely valuable (Daniels, 1990; Sánchez, 1997). However, despite disagreement on immigration legislation, both sides held racist attitudes towards Mexicans, seeing them as more prone to crime and as a drain on national resources, which are sentiments that are maintained today (Daniels, 1990; Sánchez, 1997). In an attempt to alleviate the fears of nativists, anti-restrictionists often used racial arguments to devalue Mexicans and reduce their presence as a threat. In a 1920s testimony to Congress regarding the fears of a “Mexican takeover”, an agricultural lobbyist argued:

Have you ever heard, in the history of the United States, or in the history of the human race, of the white race being overrun by a class of people of the mentality of the Mexicans?... To assume that there is any danger of any likelihood of the Mexican coming in here and colonizing this country and taking it away from us, to my mind, is absurd. (Sánchez, 1997, p. 1014)

A sense of the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon tradition was held by both sides of the immigration debate, even though they argued for different policies.

Anti-immigrant sentiments and policy was also influenced by the emergence of “competing ideas about the meaning of American nationality” during the founding of the nation (Pickus, 2005, p. 10). Pickus argues that the identification and construction of an American identity is what has and continues to influence immigration policy and the treatment of new settlers (2005). The notion that American identity is related to the European culture was a widespread sentiment that was cultivated through early naturalization legislation, one example being the early notion of Americanism as defined by whiteness, which excluded both non-Western
European immigrant groups, as well as American-born, African descendants (Daniels, 1990, Pickus, 2005). Under this Anglo-Saxon defined Americanism, immigrants who wanted to be apart of the American identity, had to first share a white, European heritage.

Contemporary Nativism

With the influx of Latino immigrants over the past twenty years, anti-immigration sentiments have continued to surge. Sánchez argues that “today’s nativism is as virulent as any that has gone before” (Sánchez, 1997, p. 1013). Current anti-immigrant attitudes, Sánchez argues, are now linked to “racial discourse” then they were in the 19th century (Sánchez, 1997, p. 1013). The current immigration population in the U.S is “racially identifiable and [fits] established racial categories” (Sánchez, 1997, p. 1013). Sánchez argues that three new traditions now shape the nativism of the 20th century, the first being an “extreme antipathy towards non-English languages” (Sánchez, 1997, p. 1020). Americans now fear that the presence of different languages will undermine American culture and identity (Sánchez, 1997, p. 1020). This fear was demonstrated by the passage of various ‘English Only’ bills in states that aimed to validate English as the nation’s official language, and discourage the use of other foreign languages in public spheres (Horner and Trimbur, 2002). The idea that immigrant groups would take advantage of “racial preference entitlements” such as affirmative action is also a fear embedded in contemporary nativism (Sánchez, 1997, p. 1020). Finally, Sánchez discusses the notion of immigrants as “drains” on public resources such as welfare, education, and healthcare services, which is another common argument in the current immigration debate. He argues that
new immigrants are replacing the African American poor as “scapegoats” for the nation’s economic issues (Sánchez, 1997, p. 1023).

As the world becomes more interdependent and global economic conditions falter, the United States continues to see large immigrant populations from all over the globe. U.S corporations have also been “internationalized”. Focusing on profit, these corporations look towards developing nations for cheaper labor (Sánchez, 1997, p. 1025). The competition for resources along with the fear of compromising the American identity both contribute to the call for “economic protection and nationalism” (Sánchez, 1997, p. 1025). Though economic interests have impacted public perceptions of immigrants, they do not offer a complete explanation of nativist attitudes and restrictive legislation (Pickus, 2005). Pickus notes that exclusionary legislation, such as the Naturalization Act of 1790 or the 1924 Quota Act, were not passed during “a period of extensive economic turmoil” (Pickus, 2005, p. 11). Even when an immigrant labor force was advantageous for the U.S economy, restrictionists still called for the exclusion of certain immigrant groups, on the basis of their inability to assimilate into American society.

Anti-Muslim Sentiment

In the post- 9/11 era, there is now a new perceived threat of terrorism, which has contributed to an increase in anti-Muslim sentiments. As with other immigrant groups, many Americans believe that Muslims are unable to assimilate into American culture (Alibeli, 2013). Anti-Muslim sentiments are tied to Islamophobia, which rejects Islamic values and traditions that many Americans deem too deviant from Christianity (Panagopoulous, 2006). Stereotypes have depicted both Muslim
immigrants and Muslim-Americans as “intolerant, ungenerous and less respectful of women” (Alibeli, 2013, p. 99). Fueled by fear after the 9/11 attacks, many Americans have become skeptical of Middle Eastern immigrants, allowing for negative attitudes towards the group to skyrocket (Alibeli, 2013; Panagopoulos, 2006). Though 9/11 and the War on Terror have exacerbated the negative stereotyping and prejudice against Muslim immigrants, this intolerance corresponds with the historical pattern of American nativism and its resulting acts of cultural and racial exclusion.

Overall, the U.S has a history of being skeptical and often hostile towards people of different cultures and backgrounds. Due to fear and misconceptions, immigrants throughout history have been portrayed negatively, which reinforced these negative attitudes. This cycle of nativist attitudes and negative representation has both social and political implications that I will further explore in the following sections.
Public Opinion and Attitudes on U.S Immigration

Public opinion on immigration is important to examine because of its important role in shaping legislation and political action. American immigration sentiments are constantly shifting as the issue goes through periods of more or less salience. Through national polling, researchers have periodically measured public opinion on immigration, as well as examined the factors that influence these attitudes towards immigration. Periods of restrictionist attitudes and anti-immigration sentiment have often taken a prominent role in the political sphere (Espenshade and Hempstead, 1996).

Recent Trends in Public Opinion

In the 1990s, the American public held mostly negative sentiments towards immigration and immigrants, with the restrictionist movement peaking during the middle of the decade. Pieces of legislation such as California’s Proposition 187 in 1994, which excluded illegal immigrants from state benefits, such as welfare and healthcare, were widely supported by the public (Burns and Gimpel, 2000; Muste, 2013). Burns and Gimpel argue that at this time the American public had begun to make the connection between the “Hispanic influx and the state of the labor market” (Burns and Gimpel, 2000, p. 216). Many American employers took advantage of Hispanic immigrant laborers, paying them lower wages because of their status. This caused American workers to view these migrants as labor competition (Burns and Gimpel, 2000; Muste, 2013). Hispanic immigrants were also inaccurately perceived as the main beneficiaries of federal welfare programs, such as food stamps and unemployment funds, which eventually led to the passage of the 1996 immigration
and welfare reform legislation that denied federal and state benefits to both illegal and legal immigrants (Wilson, 1996). In addition to the restriction of benefits, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, expanded deportation, increased border control and further “criminalized” the state of being an undocumented immigrant (Jones-Correa and Graauw, p.188)

Since 2002, the public opinion has been “less volatile and has shifted away from supporting reduced immigration levels” (Muste, 2010, p. 402). Polling has shown that perceptions and attitudes towards immigrants and immigration have become more positive over the last few years. According to the General Social Survey, perceived impacts of immigration and immigrants as contributing to the country rose from 29% in 1994 to 49% from 2001 onward (Muste, 2010). The perception of immigrants as a threat to national security decreased from 1994 to 2000 (Muste, 2010). The idea that immigrants increase crime rates has declined from 32% in 1999 to 25% in 2004 (Muste, 2010). Though public opinion is still negative toward increasing immigration levels, attitudes are more positive on policies regarding current immigrants (Muste, 2010, p. 413). This positive shift in attitudes toward immigrants from the early 1990s to 2000s can be attributed to stringent immigration legislation passed in both 1986 and 1990, which criminalized illegal immigration, increased detention provisions and restricted asylum laws (Muste, 2010). As the government began to crack down on immigration, the public felt less threatened, therefore causing an increase in positive sentiments.
Social Factors that Influence Public Attitudes on Immigration

There has been a significant amount of research that aims to understand the factors that influence anti-immigrant attitudes. Though public opinion on immigration has been recorded over the years, changes in sentiment are often difficult to follow, due to the gaps in polling (Muste, 2013). From the data that has been collected through national surveys, factors such as education, income, and political ideology have been linked as factors related to attitudes on immigrants and immigration levels (Burns and Gimpel, 2000).

**Economic Interests**

Researchers argue that opposition towards immigrants and immigration increases during periods of economic instability (Burns and Gimpel, 2000; Espenshade and Hempstead, 1996). The “greatest consistency and negativity in public opinion about immigrants impact concerns jobs” (Muste, 2010, p. 406). Espenshade and Hempstead state that, “concerns with the condition of the macro economy and growing anxieties over economic insecurity have been given as reasons for the rise in neo-restrictionism in the United States” (Espenshade and Hempstead, 1996, p.539). In 1986, polling showed a large portion of the public attributing economic conditions to immigration (Espenshade and Hempstead, 1996). Respondents cited immigration as a main contributor to the strain on jobs, welfare and resources (Espenshade and Hempstead, 1996). From 2001-2007 about one-half of respondents believed immigrants would not have “much effect” on job opportunities, but a third of respondents thought immigrants would make opportunities “worse” (Muste, 2010, p. 406).
Specifically, the idea of economic self-interest has been linked to influencing the attitudes of natives on immigration (Burns and Gimpel, 2000; Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2010). The fear of job competition and the idea of an influx of immigrants interfering with personal financial stability are factors that spark negative views on immigrants (Burns and Gimpel, 2000). In Hainmueller and Hiscox study, they predicted that natives would be opposed to immigrants of equal working skills. The idea being that newcomers would serve as competition in the labor market, while the fiscal burden model predicts that rich natives would oppose low-skilled immigration more than poor natives (Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2010). In the end, the researchers found that both low-skilled and high-skilled natives preferred high skilled immigrants to low-skilled immigrants (Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2010). Anti-immigration views also increase with pessimism about the economy in general (Chandler and Tsai, 2001). If individuals believe that the economy is in a fragile state, they are less likely to be proponents for increased immigration levels. In contrast, Chandler and Tsai (2001) note that the economy plays a minor role in influencing public opinion on immigration, because anti-immigration sentiments are still very much present during periods of economic stability.

*Racial and Cultural Differences*

Racial and ethnic stereotyping of immigrant groups is another factor that contributes to the public’s perceptions and attitudes on immigration (Brader et. al., 2008; Burns and Gimpel, 2000). Burns and Gimpel say that the term ‘immigrant’ is becoming increasingly associated with the concept of ‘ethnic minority’ and the negative connotations that accompany it (Burns and Gimpel, 2000). Worries over
cultural impact of immigrants are often the concern of natives, which is reflected in their negative attitudes (Espenshade and Hempstead, 1996). In 1986 public opinion surveys, “three out of five”, respondents cited negative characteristics of both Asian and Latino immigrants (Espenshade and Hempstead, 1996, p. 540). Issues such as drugs, crime, and “unwillingness” to assimilate into American culture were cited as support for these sentiments (Espenshade and Hempstead, 1996, p.540). Anxieties over illegal immigration continue to play an increasing role in influencing public opinion (Espenshade and Hempstead, 1996). What distinguishes the immigration issue from earlier periods is the entire concept of illegality. The U.S went from 1.6 million undocumented immigrants at the end of the 1960s to 11.9 million 20 years later (Espenshade and Hempstead, 1996). As immigration legislation began to exclude more immigrant groups over the years, an increasing number of migrants fell under the concept of ‘illegal’ (Jones-Correa and de Graauw, 2013). Framed as a legality or criminal issue, immigration excites negative sentiments and opposition (Jones-Correa and de Graauw, 2013).

Racial identity can also serve as a predictor of immigration attitudes. Burns and Gimpel state, “race and ethnicity are strong substantive influences on the propensity to stereotype positively or negatively one’s own group and other groups” (2000, p. 213). In a 1992 study on racial stereotyping, Blacks gave more positive evaluations of Blacks and Hispanics compared to White respondents (Burns and Gimpel, 2000). Such “cultural affinity” in the context of immigration means that Hispanics, Blacks and Asians are often more supportive of immigration while whites are seen to have more negative views (Espenshade and Hempstead, 1996). “Cultural Affinity” which
is the idea that closer ethnic or racial ties to immigrant groups leads to more supportive attitudes towards immigration in general (Espenshade and Hempstead, 1996).

Brader et. al. argue that “who the immigrants are” is a factor in the formation of public opinion (Brader et. al., 2008, p.960). When analyzing the immigration debate, Brader et. al. found that racial or ethnic cues about the “salient” immigrant group (i.e. physical appearance) could trigger emotions such as anxiety, which influences perceptions of immigration consequences as well as general attitudes (Brader et. al, 2008, p. 960). If an individual feels threatened and experiences high anxiety because of the exposed immigrant group, the more likely he or she is to perceive immigration very negatively (Brader et. al., 2008, p.960). Latino cues in immigration articles were more likely to trigger anxiety in comparison to stories of European immigration (Brader et. al., 2008). In a study on the impact on racial and ethnic cues, Brader et. al. found that when Latino immigrants were made salient in immigration news stories emphasizing the costs of immigration, subjects were more likely to feel anxious in contrast to when European immigrants are placed in the same context (Brader et. al, 2008). The triggering of these feelings is important to note because they can lead to other reactions such as fear and hostility. These negative attitudes towards specific immigrant groups can lead to exclusive legislation, such as California’s Proposition 187 in 1994 and the Illegal Immigration Reform Act in 1996, which also exempted both illegal and legal immigrants from receiving government benefits (Burns and Gimpel, 2000).
There are several different factors that contribute to public opinion on immigration and its policies. Combined with social conditions and events, the effects of these factors can vary significantly. Though there is still uncertainty on what exactly serves as the tipping point for public attitudes, research shows that there is a pattern to when the public is more susceptible to newcomers and when negative sentiments are overwhelming.
Theoretical Considerations

News media is an important source of information for a wide range of the population. In the U.S, the media is often used as a tool to influence the public on political issues and social matters (Branton and Dunaway, 2009). In highly controversial issues, news coverage can play a significant role in the way people perceive and comprehend issues and events. The media’s role in “public discourse” includes the process by which the media chooses to report and frame political issues, which are seen as “crucial to establishing the range of criteria for constructing, debating, and resolving social issues” (Domke et. al., p. 574). Since immigration is a highly debated and contested subject in the U.S, the media has a dynamic role in how the issues are framed and defined.

News Framing Theory

News framing and its implications is a topic that has long been studied within the field of political communication. Framing is defined as involving “a communication source presenting and defining an issue” (de Vreese, 2005, p. 51). De Vreese further elaborates by describing news framing as more of a “dynamic process that involves frame building (how frames emerge) and frame setting (the interplay between media frames and audience predispositions) (de Vreese, 2005, p. 51). Framing is a way for the media to reduce complex issues to “easy to understand” packages for the public (Kim et. al., 2011, p. 293). In a 1990s New York Times article entitled, “Reasonable Immigration Reform”, the author gives an overview of the 1996 immigration reform bill and focuses on a few aspects of the debate (1996, May 29). Such simplifications of the issues are defined as “heuristics”, which play a role in
helping the public understand political matters (Domke et. al., p. 574). Through the process of framing, these media constructions are often stressed and can shape “values, ideas and relationships” within political discourse (Domke et. al., p. 574). Frames can be identified by “the presence or absence” of specific words, phrases, and images (de Vreese, 2005). In studying frames, researchers examine the language used and the choices in facts and quotations that are used (de Vreese, 2005). In the immigration debate the use of “alien’ versus “immigrant” can be considered to be a framing device and can elicit different responses. Frames occur “thematically” and can reinforce certain facts and judgments about an issue or event (de Vreese, 2005, p. 54). In the “Reasonable Immigration Reform” article, the term, ‘illegal’, is continuously used to describe the immigrants who the bill was aimed at. Using the term ‘illegal’ versus “undocumented’ explicitly emphasizes the notion of criminality which can influence a reader’s perception of the immigrant groups and the overall immigration debate. In measuring frames, one can examine a variety of features that can serve as “framing mechanisms” from the headlines to the photos that are displayed (de Vreese, 2005, p. 54).

According to de Vreese, news frames that have an “inherent valence”, that is a specific emphasis on either positive or negative, have the ability to influence political support for certain policies (de Vreese, 2005, p. 59). Branton and Dunaway (2009) focus on the effects of media slants, with regard to the immigration debate. They argue that with such a “contentious issue” as the immigration debate, stakes are high for the parties involved and media depictions are “crucial” in shaping policy preferences (Branton and Dunaway, 2009, p. 258). In terms of news coverage of
immigration, immigrants are often depicted in unfavorable terms (Kim et. al., 2011). In a news analysis of coverage on the U.S Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, researchers found that newspapers portrayed illegal immigrants as “greedy, lazy and a threat to social stability” (Kim et. al., 2011, p. 294). Other portrayals of immigrants include ties to drugs and crimes, as well as them being financial burdens (Kim et al., 2011). These negative portrayals can shape the public’s opinion of these groups.

In a study conducted by Semetko and Valkenburg, five generic media frames were identified: conflict, human interest, attribution of responsibility, morality and economic consequences (de Vreese, 2005). The conflict frames emphasize the conflict between two different actors (i.e. individuals, groups, values, etc.) (de Vreese, 2005). For example, in 1996, a majority of immigration-related articles, published by the New York Times, were centered on partisan disagreements between the Republicans and Democrats over the passage of the reform bill. The articles focused on the disparities between both the House and Senate bills over various provisions of the legislation, from a ban on educating illegal immigrants to penalizing immigrants for using public services (1996, May 29). The human-interest frame places an “emotional angle” on a story (de Vresse, 2005, p. 56). In regards to immigration stories, these pieces often include a narrative about the plight of an individual or group of immigrants.

In their content analysis, Semetko and Valkensburg discovered that “attribution of responsibility” was the most common frame, which was the presentation of an issue “in such a way as to attribute responsibility for causing or
solving to either the government or a specific group” (de Vreese, 2005, p. 55). Other researchers have cited the effects of conflict and economic consequences frames for their ability to influence how individual’s form opinions on certain political issues (de Vreese, 2005). The framing of the immigration debate in terms of “economic consequences” often influences negative opinions when immigrant groups are represented as a drag on the economy and as taxing on government resources (Branton and Dunaway, 2009; Citrin et. al., 1997).

Researchers continue to study the different factors influencing the construction of certain media frames. First, scholars look at the individuals who are framing these issues to understand the reasons for focusing on certain aspects. In terms of the immigration debate, political elites develop the frames, mainly focusing on economic considerations, which include the costs and benefits of immigration, as well as its effects on economic resources (Domke et. al., 1999). Societal factors, such as current social movements also contribute the construction of certain news frames. In the early 1990s, the restrictionists movement influenced the negative immigration news frames that portrayed immigrants as a “drain” on government resources (Citrin et. al., 1997). Framing can be viewed as both cause and effect. On one hand, framing can shape how individuals interpret information, but also serve as a reflection of present attitudes and “discourse” (de Vreese, 2005).

Economic theory on the construction of news frames suggests that these media biases or “slants (e.g, partisan, ideological, positive or negative)” are constructed for the purpose of profit gain (Branton and Dunaway, 2009, p. 257). Controversy often appeals to audiences (Branton and Dunaway, 2009). Looking at the
immigration debate specifically, coverage is often sensationalized and negative (Dunaway et. al., 2010). Some studies suggest that network affiliation and ownership should be further examined to understand the motivation behind the construction of certain media frames and coverage slants. According to Branton and Dunaway, “effort at profit maximization can promote ideological slant in news coverage” (Branton and Dunaway, 2009, p. 259). Audiences want stories that are in line with their political views. Therefore, if an organization perceives its audience to have a specific stance on an issue, their news coverage will reflect these attitudes (Branton and Dunaway, 2009). News networks, such as Fox News and MSNBC, that have audiences with very distinct political leanings, often construct their news frames accordingly.

*Framing Effects*

When examining framing effects, researchers often cite the psychological process of priming. By emphasizing certain ideas, they are more likely to stay present in the memory, increasing its “accessibility” (Domke et. al., 1999, p.573). These easily accessed ideas contribute to the “shaping of one’s judgment” (Domke et.al., 1999, p.573). The consequences of framing can be seen on both a societal and individual level, altering individual attitudes towards certain issues, and on a societal level, shaping social processes (de Vreese, 2005). De Vreese, in what he defines as “frame setting”, looks at how media frames interact with an individual’s prior knowledge (de Vreese, 2005, p. 52). Framing effects occurs when “different, but logically equivalent, words or phrases cause individuals to alter their preferences” (Druckman, 2004, p. 671). The role of context in conjunction with frames is
important in how people interpret and evaluate issues (de Vreese, 2005; Druckman, 2004). Certain circumstances disrupt the assimilation of “accessible information” which can “moderate” or eliminate the framing effect (Druckman, 2004).

News coverage of political issues can influence racial perceptions and stereotypes (Domke et. al., 1999). The immigration debate intersects with racial relations. News frames “draw from common patterns of discourse about race-related topics, such as those that emphasize jobs and economic resources in debates about immigration” (Domke et. al., 1999). Exposure to these frames can activate “associated cognitions” about the various racial and ethnic groups. Domke et. al. looked at the effects of “ethical” and “material” news frames of immigration on racial perceptions and the shaping of opinions on U.S immigration (1999, p. 577). When exposed to the “material” frames of immigration, which emphasize the economics of the immigration debate, individuals were more likely to use economic considerations in contemplating the issue (Domke et. al., 1999, p. 582). When exposed to the “ethical” frames, which emphasized the “ethical and moral considerations” of immigration, individuals were more likely to use them in their deliberations (Domke et. al., 1999, p. 582). When considering the levels of immigration, racial perceptions came into play when individuals were exposed to the material frames as opposed to the ethical (Domke et. al., 1999). The negative perceptions of Hispanics as “lazy” and “violent” influenced the call for lower immigration levels in the group that received the material frames (Domke et. al., 1999).

Druckman’s research aimed to examine the political conditions that allow for these framing effects to occur (Druckman, 2004). In examining how individuals
responded to various framing effects, she found that that counter-framing and “heterogeneous discussions” reduce framing effects by “prompting deliberate processing and offering reformulations of the problem” (Druckman, 2004, p. 680). Consistent with the idea of priming theory, highlighting the negative or positive aspects of immigration causes people to focus on that information and consider it in the evaluation process (Druckman, 2004).

Agenda Setting Theory

While framing refers to the “presentation of issues”, agenda setting theory deals with the “salience” of issues (de Vreese, 2005, p. 53). Agenda setting is defined as the process by which news media show the public which issues are important (Dunaway et. al., 2010). In Dunaway et. al.’s., study on agenda setting and immigration news coverage, results showed that the more individuals were exposed to immigration news coverage, the more they perceived immigration to be an important issue (Dunaway et, al., 2010; Lee, 2004).

The factor of issue obtrusiveness also influences agenda setting effects. Studies have shown that the more obtrusive (or relevant) an issue, the less likely one sees agenda setting affects. The idea is that the more experience an individual has with an issues, the less they will rely on outside information (Dunaway et. al., 2010; Lee, 2004). Lee asserts that these two views are complementary and that the “time dimension” of agenda setting affects must be considered (Lee, 2004, p. 162). The more obtrusive an issue, the easier it will be to activate it in the memory compared to an unobtrusive issue, regardless of the “intensity” of news coverage (Lee, 2004, p,162).
This section’s findings suggests that media news coverage and framing plays a significant role in the construction of public opinion and attitudes towards political issues. How issues are framed and to the extent to which they are covered all have implications on how they are perceived. The role of the media is to provide the public with adequate and un-bias information about an issue for them to evaluate and construct personal judgments. Unfortunately, the majority of news coverage is not neutral and the public is often exposed to competing frames. In terms of the immigration debate, increased news coverage of the topic, as well as the commonly held negative portrayal of immigrants and immigration in general, has influenced public attitudes towards the subject.
METHODS

This is an archival study analyzing media coverage of immigration from 1996 and 2013. This study aims to analyze the depiction of U.S immigration and immigrants in the media and compare narratives between these two politically distinct periods.

Sample Selection

I decided to examine 1996 and 2013 because I wanted to examine whether there has been a shift in media representation of immigration and immigrants. In 1996, negative opinion and sentiments towards U.S immigration were prominent including the passage of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act (IIRIRA), which included severe provisions against both documented and undocumented immigrants. In contrast, the United States Senate passed a comprehensive immigration reform bill in 2013, which will grant legal status to over 11-million undocumented immigrants residing in the U.S, which is pro-immigration.

To limit my sample, five United States newspapers were initially chosen for analysis. My selection was based on geographic location, proximity to the U.S-Mexican border, and article circulation and availability: The Washington Post, The New York Times, The Denver Post, the Austin Statesman and the Los Angeles Times. However, due to limited availability, I had to replace The Los Angeles Times with The San Jose Mercury News, another California-based newspaper. The electronic database LexisNexis was used to collect the sample of articles using the keywords: Hlead (immigration) AND Subject (immigration). The search was restricted to the
six-month period that preceded the passage of the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act on September 30th and the 2013 Border Security, Economic Opportunity and Immigration Modernization Act on June 27\textsuperscript{th}. Under this search, there were over 1,500 article hits. All articles that had only passing mentions of immigration and immigrants, and/or failed to focus on the subject were discarded from the sample. After reviewing the sample from \textit{The Denver Post}, which produced very few articles for the combined periods of 1996 and 2013, I decided to eliminate the paper from my final sample, which left me with articles from \textit{The Washington Post, The New York Times, The Austin Statesman and The San Jose Mercury News}.  

\textbf{Procedures}  

Due to the qualitative nature of my study, I utilized Grounded Theory, which focuses on the categorizing of data to uncover reoccurring themes and patterns (Corbin and Strauss, 1994). Using Glaser and Strauss’ methodology, one develops a theory “grounded in data” that is systematically gathered and analyzed (Strauss and Corbin, 1994, p.273). The coding process involves “constant comparative analysis” which allows for the development and discovery of broader concepts and themes (Strauss and Corbin, 1994, p.273).

To begin my content analysis on immigration news coverage, I first conducted a preliminary analysis on a large portion of articles from both local and national newspapers. In order to address my first primary research question on how immigrants in the U.S are portrayed in news media, I noted the type of immigrants that were referenced, the different topic frames used in the coverage of immigration, individuals featured and mentioned in the articles, as well as any political biases for
or against U.S immigrants. For my second question on whether there was a shift in coverage and overall rhetoric between the periods of 1996 and 2013, I examined aspects of the immigration debate that were emphasized, whether the article provided substantive information on the immigration bills and how immigrants were depicted and labeled in the stories (e.g., criminals, hard-workers, illegals, etc.).

After a review of a large selection of my articles, I developed a coding schema, based on my initial observations to further examine how articles during these two periods defined the immigration debate and portrayed immigrants in general. Throughout the process, the coding schema was modified to accommodate additional concepts.

**Coding**

The primary codes used during my data collection included: article title, article date; article’s paper section (e.g., metropolitan, opinion, editorial, national); article length, measured by word count; immigrant type (e.g., student, parent, elder, child, low-skilled worker and high-skilled worker); nationality of immigrants mentioned; immigrant statues (e.g., legal, illegal, asylum, detainee); rhetoric used to describe immigrant groups (e.g., alien, undocumented, foreigner, illegal, resident); and individuals featured in the article (e.g., immigration lawyers, U.S immigration representatives, politicians, immigrants).

To further analyze the narrative of each sample period, I assigned an overall frame for each article, which included economic impact, security, political, cultural response, moral/humanitarian response, immigrant perspective and community response. Indicators of an economic impact frame included mentions of financial
effects of immigration, references to job competition and public resources. Political frames consisted of stories exploring issues such specifics of immigration bills and partisan contention regarding the debate. Security articles highlighted immigration related issues such as border control, crime and terrorism. Cultural response frames discussed the idea of immigrant assimilation and the effects of immigration on American society, while the moral/humanitarianism frame focused on the moral implications of immigration and immigration policy. Immigrant perspective articles often featured immigrants and highlighted their personal narratives.

Finally, I kept a list of mentions related to immigration and the immigration debate, which included: deportation, public benefits, crime, border security, family unification, and elections. Not every code applied to each article, but general notes and observations were taken throughout the data collection process. A complete list of codes used for the study can be found in Appendix 1.

Analysis

The final sample for my content analysis totaled about 600 articles from 4 different newspapers over the two selected periods. I hypothesized that the media representation of the debate would mirror public sentiment and attitudes in 1996 and 2013. After coding my sample, I found a series of themes that reoccurred throughout my data collection. One prominent theme that emerged during both periods of news articles was the focus on the most provocative/controversial issues within the immigration bill debate. During my coding, I tracked article mentions of “controversial” provisions of the bill, political contention and immigrant narratives. I also looked at the difference of rhetoric and representation between the periods and
whether the change in public attitudes towards immigration had an impact on the way
the media referred to immigrants. Did articles focus on the costs of immigration or
the benefits? Were high-skilled or low-skilled workers highlighted? Which media
frames were used? I also considered the type of individuals who were featured in
order to determine how news media established these people’s credibility in the
immigration debate and immigration in general.

My analysis supported my hypothesis and revealed that there was a shift in
news coverage of the immigration debate that mirrored the public sentiments of the
two the respective time periods. As the public became sympathetic to the plight of
immigrants, the media reflected these sentiments, which was manifested in rhetoric,
topics of focus and the types of immigrants discussed and portrayed. One major
theme that emerged was the focus on the controversiality of immigration legislation,
specifically during 1996. For example, most politically framed articles focused on the
proposal in the education bill, which was a highly contested provision that aimed to
ban children of illegal immigrants from attending school. The topic of economic
effects of immigration was another theme that was heavily debated and evaluated
during both periods. Depending on the public sentiment at the time, immigrants and
immigration overall, were viewed as either beneficial or detrimental to the American
economy. Use of rhetoric, specifically how immigrants were referred to, was another
important concept that allowed me to determine the change in media coverage across
the two periods. The results and discussion section will further explore this shift in
the immigration narrative, as well as compare the different portrayals of immigrants
and the debate across the two periods.
RESULTS/DISCUSSION

The United States’ immigration debate is one that has constantly invoked media and political attention and encompasses a variety of interests from national security to the economy. Highly contentious debates about immigration policy are often subjected to political polarization, widespread citizen advocacy and lobbying by multiple interest groups. Sentiments towards immigration and the overall media portrayal of immigrants have ranged from positive and sympathetic to negative and abrasive, depending on the political climate. These public attitudes can influence the depictions of immigrants in the media which influences whether they are presented as hard-working individuals or as criminals and economic burdens. Through my content analysis of the print news coverage of immigration from 1996 and 2013, I observed themes in rhetoric, framing, and portrayal, some of which changed overtime while others remained consistent. Overall, I found that the media constructed U.S immigration as a problem. Though there was more positive coverage seen in 2013, negative aspects of the debate were highly stressed in both periods, such as economic impact and security concerns. Meanwhile, certain critical narratives were completely neglected. My final sample includes such issues as political contention, controversy, crime, in addition to community responses on immigration and both positive and negative immigrant depictions.

The final sample for my content analysis totaled about 600 articles from four different newspapers, two from U.S-Mexico Border states (California and Texas) and two from non-border states (Washington D.C and New York). I hypothesized that print media’s representation of the immigration debate would mirror public sentiment.
and attitudes during the respective periods in terms of framing, rhetoric, and immigrant portrayal. My analysis supported this and revealed that there was indeed a shift in media coverage of the immigration debate between 1996 and 2013. As the public became sympathetic to the plight of immigrants, newspaper coverage reflected these sentiments, which was evident in terms of rhetoric used, the topics discussed and how immigrants were represented. The following results and discussion section explores the changes in narratives according to the differences in time period and newspaper locations (non-border states versus border states). I have organized my results according to the seven media frames I observed from both sample periods (e.g., political, economic impact, security, immigrant perspective, moral response, cultural response and community response). First, I will discuss the narrative shifts within these frames between 1996 and 2013. I will then discuss the different themes found in each respective period and the differences in coverage found between border and non-border states newspapers. Finally, I will consider neglected narratives.

**Media Frames**

According to Callaghan and Schnell, “[media] frames set the boundaries of public policy debates. [Media frames] use linguistic cues to define and give meaning to issues and connect them to a larger political environment” (2005, p.2). I coded my articles according to the story’s overall focus (e.g., media frame) and seven overarching frames: political, economic impact, security, immigrant perspective, moral response, cultural response, and community response. Some media frames were more prevalent during one period compared to the other; for example, a larger number of “community response” frame were seen in 2013 compared to 1996. Most
articles had only one frame, which provided a very clear focus on one aspect of the debate, though a small portion of articles were coded as having multiple frames. For example, a 2013 *San Jose Mercury News* article that focused on a protest march, in addition to highlighting the plight of several local immigrants, was also coded as both community response and immigrant perspective. Less than one percent of the articles were too brief and did not contain enough information to be coded. These articles included stories that provided dates for public events and reviews of local businesses.

**Political Frame**

One major shift in narrative that I found between 1996 and 2013 was the composition and utilization of the political frame. About 33% of the entire sample from both 1996 and 2013 were politically focused, covering the various stages of the proposed bills in the legislative process (e.g., bill drafting, committee action, floor votes); congressional debate regarding the specific provisions of the bills; as well as specific politician’s stances on the bills (See Figure 1). Most of these articles provided substantive information about the proposed immigration bills and highlighted key measures and their presumed effects on immigrants and the country as a whole. For example, a politically framed editorial...
titled, “Instant Amnesty for Illegal Immigrants Is Bad Policy”, discussed the “pathway to citizenship” aspect of the 2013 immigration reform bill and argued that the legalization of undocumented immigrants would lead to an increase in illegal immigration (Krauthammer, 2013).

In addition to covering specific policy measures, politically framed articles also examined the role of various politicians and political actors in the debate, including their acts of advocacy/ disapproval and congressional floor voting records. These articles heavily featured both Republican and Democratic officials, authoritative figures serving as “sources” in addition to interest group representatives, pro- and anti-immigration advocates, academics, Immigration and Naturalization Service officials, immigrants and citizens (Callaghan and Schnell, 2005, p.57).

Together these individuals helped illustrate the political climate during the respective periods. Two specific political frames observed in the 1996 sample included political contention and controversy. In 2013, the political narratives shifted to focus on bipartisanship and consensus.

**1996 Article Features**

![Figure 2. Breakdown of 1996 article features](image)

**Political Contention**

The emphasis on political contention and partisan polarization in the debate on immigration policy was especially strong in 1996.

According to media framing studies, mainstream media journalism is “overly concerned with rancorous
debate, point-counterpoint, and mean-spirited partisanship” (Callaghan and Schnell, 2005, p.41).

Approximately 39% of the 1996 articles had a political frame, a majority focusing on the disagreement between party members regarding the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act (IIRAIRA). Public attitudes towards immigrants and immigration were mostly negative during this period and tensions among politicians were high. Several Republican officials called for restrictive provisions against both legal and illegal immigrants, while Democratic leaders despite their agreement on the need for restriction voiced disapproval over certain controversial measures introduced by Republicans, such as the “education ban” and extended deportation provisions affecting legal immigrant’s use of public benefits. These articles reiterated how hostile and heated the immigration debate was between the two parties. In 1996, 24% of the articles featured a Republican leader while only 7% featured a Democratic leader (See Figure 2). This discrepancy in partisan features was also apparent in the 2013 sample, which had 25% of the articles featuring Republicans and 12% featuring Democrats (See Figure 2). The similarity between time periods can be attributed to the fact that Republicans held the majority in Congress in both 1996 and 2013, and were more prone to inflammatory rhetoric.

To exhibit the contentious political climate during this period, partisan members were often featured (e.g., quoted) bashing the actions of the opposite party. For example, in an article discussing IIRAIRA, a Democratic senator from North Dakota responded to the Republican proposed measure to deport legal children who had utilized public assistance by stating that Republican actions were “mean- spirited
and unnecessary” (Schmitt, 1996, p.10). In the same New York Times article, then Republican House leader, Dick Armey, was quoted as stating his “disappointment” with President Clinton and his decision to tie the year’s budget proposal to the passage of IIRAIRA (Schmitt, 1996, p.10). Politicians also blamed the opposite party for failures in the legislative process. In one article, Democrat Senator Edward M. Kennedy was quoted blaming the Republicans for the delay in the passage of the legislation. He stated “[the delay] clearly indicated that the Republicans can’t get their act together on an issue of critical concern” (Branigin, 1996). Both parties engaged in ‘finger pointing’ and vehemently expressed their dissatisfaction with the handling of the legislation.

President Bill Clinton was another key political actor who was frequently mentioned in the articles and contributed to the contentious discourse. Through both direct and indirect quotes, President Clinton was featured commenting on his disapproval of Congress’ actions. In one article, Clinton was depicted as refusing to approve a spending bill until Republicans agreed to drop certain provisions from IIRAIRA that he felt went too far with penalizing legal immigrants (Branigin, 1996). In another article Clinton voiced his opinion on the harsh provisions against legal immigrants that were introduced by Congress stating, “It [is] wrong to say to people, ‘We’ll let you work here, you’re helping our country, you pay taxes, you serve in our military…but if someone mugs you on the street corner, or you get cancer…we’re not going to give you assistance anymore” (Branigin, 1996, p. A04). Though Clinton agreed on a more restrictive immigration policy, he was portrayed as more sympathetic to the immigrant plight. Presidential features were a way for the media to
establish credibility and secure public attention on the issue (Callaghan and Schnell, 2005). Despite the president’s frequent mentions, I found that he was featured far less frequently than other party leaders, such as Republican California Representative Gallegly, who was strongly anti-immigration, for instance, who was featured in a number of 1996 political articles.

Non-political actors, such as interest groups and advocacy groups, also contributed to the national debate on immigration. Sixteen percent of the articles I coded featured a pro-immigration advocates; including representatives from groups such as the American Immigration Lawyers Association and the National Council of La Raza, who have supported immigrant rights, nondiscriminatory immigration policy, and community support (See Figure 2). On the other end of the debate were anti-immigration advocates, who were featured in 9% of the articles and included groups such as the Federation for Immigration Reform (FAIR), who called for limited immigration into the United States (See Figure 2).

In the articles, these advocacy groups would either endorse or condemn political actions according to their specific stance on the issue. In response to a Senate immigration bill that failed to include a curb on legal immigration, the deputy director from the anti-immigration group, Federation for Immigration Reform, was quoted as stating, “[the Senate] betrayed the will of the overwhelming majority of the American people, who think the current system is broken and that the substantial reductions in legal immigration are needed” (Branigin, 1996). Concurrently, the pro-immigrant group, La Raza, called the proposed immigration bill “a travesty and an unprecedented display of anti-immigrant demagoguery” (Branigin, 1996). There were
a surprisingly small fraction of articles that featured citizens (2%), which I found to be slightly contradictory considering how often the media made references to the widespread negative sentiment held by the American public (See Figure 2).

I would argue that presenting debates between politicians and special interest groups at odds over immigration policy has important implications for how political issues are perceived and understood by the public. The display of extremely polarized views on an issue conveys a sense of dysfunctionality within Congress, as well as political inefficiency to the public. It emphasizes the “negative aspects of public affairs”, which can “breed cynicism” and discourage political engagement (Callaghan and Schnell, 2005, p. 41). Seeing authoritative figures upset and in discord over immigration legislation may cause the public to associate such negative feelings with immigration and immigrants in general. The immigrant population can become perceived as ‘trouble makers’ and a force that is tearing the country apart.

**Controversiality of Immigration Legislation**

Another theme exclusive to the 1996 articles was the focus on controversial aspects of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA). According to media theory, news outlets are more likely to focus on controversy and contention because disharmony is more entertaining and consequently, more profitable (Branton and Dunaway, 2009). While controversial provisions in the 2013 legislation were also discussed, 1996 was unique in that the articles explicitly labeled and referred to these measures as ‘controversial’, priming readers to consider them as such. Throughout the 1996 debate, the media emphasized a competition between Republicans and Democrats as to who could be the toughest
on immigration (Schmitt, 1996). The politically framed articles mainly focused on provisions in IIRAIRA that were deemed ‘controversial’ by both the public and other politicians. Referred to as the “controversial Gallaghey amendment” the “education ban” that aimed to ban the children of illegal immigrants from attending public schools was a provision that was heavily covered in 1996 (Schmitt, 1996).

Democratic leaders, as well as a portion of Republican leaders, strongly disagreed with the provision and fought to prevent its adoption. One article stated, “The amendment, sponsored by Rep. Elton Gallegly (R-Calif.), has fueled an election-year debate over immigration, heating up the campaign cross fire between President Clinton and GOP leaders” (Branigin, 1996). The article continued to refer to how the clause is also causing “recriminations among prominent Republicans and sparked public feuding by police unions” (Branigin, 1996).

The denial of other federal benefits, including welfare and Medicare, to legal residents was another political move that was labeled as controversial during the debate. Prefaced by California’s 1994 passage of Proposition 187, which denied public benefits to both legal and illegal immigrants in the state, Congress continued to introduce measures that excluded immigrants from state and federal support programs in efforts to prevent individuals from becoming “public charges” (Branigin, 1996). Though both parties wanted to restrict and regulate immigration, several Republican officials believed that both legal and illegal immigration needed to be curbed and that they were large financial burdens to U.S taxpayers. One measure included the deportation clause, which aimed to remove immigrants who had utilized government assistance within their five years of residing in the U.S. This clause targeted children
who utilized Medicare or attended publicly funded schools. Even though many groups felt that these restrictive provisions were negative and mean-spirited, the measures were still able to gather both public and Congressional support. In one article, a Republican representative defended the provisions stating that the overall goal was to “discourage the unchecked flow of illegal immigration and to encourage those illegal immigrants already here to go home” (Schmitt, 1996). Again, the focus was placed on ‘illegal’ immigrants, even though the mandates included legal immigrants. The articles also pitted one party against the other; for example, a presidential adviser was quoted as disapproving of the education ban and advocated its removal (Branigin, 1996). In the same article, Republican Representative, Bob Dole, defended the tough measure, stating, “if the liberal Democrats in Congress block consideration of the [education] measure, then the citizens of California will know whom to blame,” which was in reference to California’s billion dollar spending on education in previous years (Branigin, 1996). Because these provisions were deemed so controversial, it fueled the appearance that all members of the debate were at odds with one another. The primary focus on controversial aspects of the bill also undermines other aspects of the debate such as immigrant integration. Overall, the political climate in 1996 was portrayed as chaotic with no real sign of cohesiveness, even within the different parties.

2013 Bipartisanship: “The Gang of Eight”

Compared to 1996, the articles from 2013 had a very different political narrative. One notable change was the focus on political cooperation and consensus. Instead of quarrelsome debate and controversial politics, the 2013 articles focused on
bipartisanship and its influence on immigration reform, which was a notion that was almost unheard of in 1996. One Washington Post article noted this change in U.S’ political climate, “Bipartisanship and cross-party alliances are suddenly in vogue in the Senate this spring” (Blaz, 2013). Political leaders on both sides of the aisle were depicted as working together to craft the immigration reform bill. The “Gang of Eight” was a term frequently used by the media to refer to the bipartisan group of legislatures responsible for the immigration reform bill. They became portrayed as a symbol of cooperation, leadership and bipartisanship.

One point of agreement mentioned in the articles was the need to increase security along the U.S- Mexico border. Senators agreed to add several billions to the budget to “fortify” the border with additional fencing, a “surge” of Border Control agents, and “aerial drone surveillance” (O’Keefe, 2013). Illegal crossings over the U.S- Mexico border were highlighted as a large contributor to the number of undocumented immigrants, even though the number of successful crossings had been declining and border security had already accounted for a significant portion of the national budget. A Republican senator stated in one article, “We are investing resources in the border that have never been invested before. The American people have asked us, if we pass an immigration bill…that we do everything we can to secure the border” (O’Keefe, 2013).

Another point of agreement was the inefficiency of immigration policy. Regardless of partisan standing, there was a large consensus on the need to “fix the immigration system” (Scherr, 2013). The long waiting periods, backlog and the growing number of undocumented immigrants were all cited as indicative of the need
for a significant legislative overhaul. In an article, Republican Senator Ted Cruz stated, “This is a system that produces human tragedy” (Sargent, 2013). Though some partisan members did disagree as to how the system should be reformed, specifically on key issues such as a pathway to citizenship (or what some Republican leaders called amnesty), there was a general tone of agreement and cohesiveness amongst political leaders during the 2013 immigration debate. The media also covered the reaction of the public to this politically amicable climate. For example, in a San Jose Mercury News article, an immigration advocate stated how much he “welcomed” the new bipartisanship (O’Brian, 2013). Terms such as ‘support’ and ‘compromise’ were used to describe the shift towards a more cooperative political climate. The media also described this shift as “unusual” and special (Mascaro, 2013).

This is not to say that 2013 did not hold points of contention and political disagreement regarding immigration reform. According to several articles, the path to citizenship provision of the bill was the most “divisive issue” among politicians and the public (Nakamura, 2013). Many Republicans disagreed with amnesty for the millions of undocumented and the bill ultimately stalled in the House, unable to reach a floor vote that would ensure its passage. Despite this, the articles in this period portrayed a tone of optimism among both politicians and the general public. This emphasis on bipartisanship demonstrated to the public that legislatures were serious about reforming the system and refused to allow ideologically differences to interrupt the “common good” (Callaghan and Schnell, 2005, p.97).
Another notable shift in the political narrative between 1996 and 2013 was the concern for the effects of immigration legislation on voting patterns and election outcomes. During my analysis, I compiled a list of article mentions from each sample period, which, in addition to elections, included: family reunification; deportation; fiscal burden; border security; crime; controversiality of a provision; job competition; economic benefits; and terrorism. An article was coded as having a mention only if the term was explicitly cited in the article. In 1996, approximately 9.3% of the articles mentioned the upcoming election and in 2013 there was a slight increase with 10.3% of the articles mentioning both the 2012 and upcoming 2016 election (See Figure 3). Though both periods saw the discussion of immigration’s impact on future elections, their narratives differed.
In 1996, the overall concern regarding future elections was essentially “how would the passage of IIRAIRA and the tough stance on immigration affect partisan support?” “Which partisan group would be able to take credit for the ‘crackdown on immigration’ in the following elections?” One *Washington Post* article discussed how President Clinton’s signing of the immigration bill could “enhance his re-election campaign” (Branigin, 1996). A Latino civil rights activist commented on the influence of election concerns on legislation stating, “Immigrants are easy targets. I can’t help but think the political atmosphere is dictating this. This is an election year” (Argetsinger and Borgman, 1996). This notion of immigration policy as a political pawn in the upcoming elections was emphasized in the media again detracting from the real issues behind the immigration system.

The 2013 narrative regarding election concerns differed from 1996. In addition to discussing how the passage of the 2013 legislation would affect politicians’ favorability with the public, it went deeper and looked at how immigrant groups, mainly Hispanic groups, would respond in the elections. Republicans, who were portrayed, “[worried] about [the] lack of Latino support” (Nakamura, 2013). This was a significant shift in that immigrant groups were now being considered and viewed as a significant electorate that deserved attention. Prefaced by the 2008 election where President Obama received over 70 percent of the Hispanic vote, parties began to truly consider how their actions regarding the immigration bill would impact future elections. One article emphasized the “critical role” of Hispanic voters in the New York City mayoral race and another stated how the Hispanic vote was “up for grabs” (Taylor, 2013). In this new widespread support for immigration, the
debate shifted to become more politically inclusive of Hispanic immigrants and their impact on policy.

**Economic Impact Frame**

There was a heavy focus on the economic effects of immigration in both 1996 and 2013. Out of the entire sample from both periods, 29% of the articles had an economic frame (See Figure 1). In 1996, about 17% focused on economic issues, increasing to 35% in 2013. Public opinion towards immigration influenced whether immigrants were seen as either a harm or benefit to the economy. For instance, the economic impact articles in 1996 primarily focused on immigration’s negative impact on the economy. The topics covered during this period included immigration’s effect on American jobs, the fiscal budget and the use of welfare/public benefit services.

1996: The “American Taxpayer” and the Fiscal Burdens of Immigration

In a 1996 *New York Times* article, Speaker Newt Gingrich defended the Republican’s harsh illegal immigration measures stating, “Don’t come here illegally and think that the American taxpayer will take care of you” (Schmitt, 1996). The idea of the overburdened “American taxpayer”, overwhelmed by the costs of immigrants, was a narrative that specifically emerged during the 1996 debate. I found that articles focusing on economic impact fixated on immigrant use of public benefits and government services. Even when stories did not have an economic frame, the use of welfare, Medicare and other social services by immigrants was mentioned. 31.5% of all the articles regardless of media frame referenced the fiscal burden that immigrants placed on the U.S economy in 1996 (See Figure 3). In the articles, both politicians and citizens argued that the American people should not be responsible for the costs
of taking care of immigrants, both legal and illegal. In support of the restrictive measures, a Republican representative was quoted stating that the bill “[prevented] illegal aliens from taking American jobs and [ended] noncitizens’ abuse of the welfare system” (Branigin, 1996).

Immigration was also portrayed as an extreme financial burden for individual states. A significant portion of the 1996 articles covered stories where states were in the process of suing the federal government for the billions of dollars that they were spending on immigrants, which included funding for programs such as Medicare, food stamps and public school education. In regards to the government lawsuits, one article stated that Congress “must appropriate the money to reimbursed the states for the cost of educating illegal immigrants” (Wilson, 1996). Another Republican leader argued that it was unfair for the government to “stick state taxpayers with the horrendous cost of providing benefits which are, in effect, a reward and incentive to people to come violate the law and enter the country illegally” (Jordan, 1996). The media also made a point to reiterate certain figures to emphasize the economic burden of immigrants. For example, the fact that “$1.8 billion” was being spent annually in California to educate the 350,000 “illegal” immigrant children was frequently repeated (Schmitt, 1996). Even though this particular figure was exclusive to California at the time, all four-newspapers highlighted these facts as an example of the high costs that states, as well as taxpayers, were contributing to public services for immigrants. These articles only focused on lower-income, illegal immigrants and ignored the fact that this group is in the minority. Portraying immigrants as poor and
dependent on government is inaccurate representation of the millions of immigrants who are contributing to the U.S economy.

2013: High-Skilled immigrants and Economic Benefits

The year 2013 nearly did a complete turnaround in terms of the economic effects of immigration. Instead of focusing on the expenses of public services and benefits used by immigrants, articles now focused on how immigrants positively contributed to the American economy.

![Immigrant Type By Year](image)

**Figure 4. Immigrant types mentioned in 1996 vs. 2013**

Concentrating on the economic advantages of immigration, 2013 articles had a new focus on high-skilled immigrants such as academics, scientists, and skilled laborers. Many articles covered advocacy for the increase of H-1B visas, which bring foreign workers into the country to work in specialty occupations. Calling this immigration “innovation” One article stated, “The emphasis now…seems to be on high-skilled workers and enforcement, two themes popular with Republicans” (Garfield, 2013, Preston and Parker, 2013). In 2013, 21.9% of the articles mentioned
high-skilled immigrants compared to 1% in 1996 (See Figure 4). More specifically, the technology industry was a key player in the debate. Prominent technology companies such as Facebook, Microsoft, and IBM actively lobbied for high skilled immigrants to contribute to the technology field. In an article titled, “Immigration Reform Means a Stronger Silicon Valley and U.S Economy”, the author argued that policies the immigration of high skilled workers were “critical” in determining the future of innovation in the U.S and urged the passage of the 2013 bill (Garfield, 2013). Because of this focus on technology, articles in 2013 began to focus on Asian immigrants. 18% of the articles mentioned Asian immigrants where it was argued that Asians were more likely to have experience with “skilled occupations” like engineering and technology (Younglai, 2013) (See Figure 4). The articles went on to illustrate how foreign-born immigrants with advanced degrees helped create jobs in the U.S, which propel the economy. One article stated, “To achieve our full economic potential, we must deal with the entire spectrum of immigrants. Reforming our [system] will allow companies to fill tens of thousands of good-paying but vacant jobs in knowledge-dependent sectors” (Garfield, 2013).

Beyond the technology industry, there was also substantial coverage of immigration’s impact on the agricultural industry. Groups such as United Farm Workers Union and the Agricultural Workforce Coalition were featured lobbying for the passage of the 2013 reform bill in hopes that it would lead to a “legal workforce” on U.S farms. Instead of immigrants being depicted as unnecessary burdens, the media was now telling the public that immigration is vital to economic growth and policy should push to increasing immigrant numbers.
Security Frame

Security frames accounted for 15.8% of the total of articles in both years, with 27.7% in 1996 and 9.8% in 2013 (See Figure 1). In addition to categorizing the articles that had an overall focus of security, I also documented articles mentioning of crime, border security and terrorism. These articles mostly focused on border related looked at both local and national security issues regarding immigration and were inherently negative. Immigrants were portrayed as dangerous threats, especially in border cities in Texas and California.

1996: Criminalization of Mexican Immigrants

The 1996 security narrative was mainly aimed at illegal Mexican immigrants and local crime. Most security-framed articles depicted the influx of illegal Hispanic immigrants the main contributors to border-state crime. Out of all the 1996 articles, 13.7% mentioned crime committed by immigrants (See Figure 3). Several stories referred to the Mexican drug cartel and the fear of immigrants as vehicles for bringing crime and drugs into the United States. One article discussed cracking down on the “growing number” of drug smugglers along the Southwest border and the need for increased Border Control (Garcia, 1996). 12.5% of articles in this period featured border control or Immigration and Naturalization Services representatives (INS) to elaborate on immigrant crime (See Figure 2). In one article, a law enforcement officer near the U.S- Mexico border was quoted saying, “drug smuggling is probably our major concern in this area” (Garcia and Scheibal, 1996).

Fraud was another topic discussed in the 1996 debate. Articles reiterated the need to crack down on the number of immigrants working illegally and utilizing false
work authorization papers in the U.S. Articles referred to the “scores of immigrants” being detained for using fraudulent green cards and work papers, some that were allegedly smuggled out of INS (Sullivan and Levy, 1996). Often, articles also voiced their concern of INS becoming lax in its security measures and called for more stringent immigrant background checks. In a New York Times investigative a government official voiced his concerns stating “when you look at the immigration service, you have a huge opportunity for corruption, and the amounts of money that are being paid out is incredible” (Sullivan and Levy, 1996). The media portrayed the current immigration system as inefficient and unable to keep criminals out of the U.S and deter immigrant crime.

I found that majority of these crime and security-focused articles were published in the ‘Metro’ or ‘Metropolitan’ sections of the newspapers. From past media research, we know that the media often covers a disproportion amount of crime, specifically focusing on minority or “non white” perpetrators (Dunaway et. al., 2010, p.362). The frequent depiction of the criminal Mexican immigrant has dangerous real life implications. It perpetuates the idea that all ‘illegal’ or undocumented immigrants are criminals. Other than being in the country without authorization, the majority of these individuals do not possess criminal records and media coverage fails to reflect this. Bringing salience only to the topics of illegal immigrants and crime prevents other prevalent issues from being considered. Presenting one group as criminals creates acts of prejudice and racism.
2013: Border Control and Terrorism

2013 security articles had a more general focus on cutting down illegal immigration. Even though there was less portrayal of immigrants as criminals, articles still reiterated the need to place a check on the “flood” of immigrants (Weiner, 2013). As in 1996, this idea of U.S borders being exposed and unprotected was a concept that was emphasized in 2013. The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 were a pivotal moment for the country, which also influenced the immigration narrative. Instead of focusing on security along the southern border, both politicians and the public were now viewing legal immigration as a prospective national threat. With the events of September 11th and later, the 2013 Boston marathon bombing, the security frame in 2013 shifted to focus on terrorism. Border security mentions went from 20.7% of the articles to 33.7% (See Figure 3). 4.5% of 2013 articles mentioned terrorism, which contrastingly had zero mentions in 1996 (See Figure 3). In an interview with the Homeland Security Secretary, an article that referenced the September 11th hijackers gave as an example the ways in which “defects” within the immigration system, allowed them to legally enter the U.S as students (Parker, 2013). The same argument was also applied to the Boston bombers, who both entered the United States legally as well.

Moral/ Humanitarian Frames

Viewing immigration as a humanitarian/human rights issue was a very significant shift in immigration debate from 1996 to 2013. Articles began considering ‘what is the right thing to do?’ in terms of U.S immigration policy. Seven percent of the articles during this period had a morality frame, compared to 3.1% in 1996.
Articles in 2013 presented coverage on inefficiencies of the immigration system and their effects on immigrants. They also discussed civil rights abuses and ways in which the law could be more accommodating for both legal and undocumented immigrants. Common rhetoric that was used in these frames was the idea that the immigration system needed to be ‘just’ and ‘humane’. In a 2013 op-ed, the author argued in favor of the pathway to citizenship for the millions of undocumented immigrants residing in the U.S, stating that the “legalization of the undocumented is humane and practical” (Ngai, 2013).

Three topics of discussion that arose from this new outlook were the long waiting periods for immigrants, the call to make family reunification a “priority” and the immigration detention system (O’Brian, 2013). In one article, a group of protestors were featured with signs stating, “Dividing families is immoral!” (Constable and Bahrampour, 2013). Even political leaders were discussing this, which is not normally done. Naturally, there was opposition to these moral arguments. One Republican official was featured saying, “I don’t believe there’s any moral or legal responsibility to reward somebody who entered the country illegally with every benefit that you give to somebody who entered legally” (Helderman and Sullivan, 2013). In response to a Republican leader from South Carolina, one article stated, “[the Representative was] now working through how to balance the moral case for treating newcomers with compassion with a desire to respect the law and be fair to those who followed it” (Helderman, 2013). The media began to offer a more complex perspective on the immigration debate, which was not simply legal versus illegal immigrants.
In terms of the immigrant detention system, 2013 articles paid some attention to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Articles discussed the injustices in deportation cases, as well as the violation of civil rights of those who were detained. In presenting the statistics of ICE, one article attacked the use of solitary confinement for immigrants stating, “For those held for civil violations, solitary confinement is wildly inappropriate” (2013, p.22). Fairer treatment of immigrants was advocated for all those who were incarcerated.

**Immigrant Perspective Frame**

2013 articles also focused and framed their discussion on the immigrant perspective and experience. The 2013 articles had 7% “immigrant perspective” frames, which was slightly less than the 9.5% in 1996. Under this frame, the articles focused on the personal perspective of immigrants and how they were fairing under the system. For example, one article discussed the implications of the U.S Diversity Visa Program on immigrants, “Diversity visas are one of the few ways people from Africa and the Caribbean can come to this country” (Constable, 2013). An Ethiopian immigrant was quoted, “In my country, whole cities wait to hear the results of [the] lottery” (Constable, 2013). The inclusion of an immigrant narrative is an important one that diversifies and personalizes the portrayal of immigrants in the media and gives those affected a voice.

**Community Response Frame**

Community response frames contributed to nine percent of the 2013 articles, an increase from the three percent in 1996. These articles focused on community activism and the overall support for reform encouraging the legalization of
undocumented immigrants, as well as better treatment for legal immigrants. In one article President Obama stated, “Most Americans agree that it’s time to fix a system that has been broken for way too long” (Landler, 2013). Citizens, activist groups and immigrants were all depicted as uniting together to rally for a cause. These articles tended to be more positive and optimistic about the future of U.S immigration. A San Jose Mercury article titled, “Field Poll Shows Overwhelming Support for Path to Citizenship” states that, “An extraordinary 90 percent of California voters [are] now in favor [of] letting illegal immigrants who have lived here for a number of years stay…” (O’Brien and Richman, 2013). However, not all community responses were positive and supportive of immigration; a New York Times article titled, “New Attitude on Immigration Skips an Old Coal Town” discussed the efforts of the town to discourage immigrants from staying (Gabriel, 2013). The article stated that the community “passed the country’s first law aimed at making life so difficult for illegal immigrants that they would pack up and leave” (Gabriel, 2013). Regardless of the sentiment, responses from the public were highlighted during this period.

Another related narrative within this frame was the notion that immigration was a ‘top priority’ of President Obama’s agenda, which emphasized the matter of urgency and national priority to the public. The president was frequently quoted stating, “now is the time” for immigration reform (Cassidy, 2013). Community response frames that featured various community members calling for immediate change heightened this sentiment. Articles would focus on how significant the reform was to the 11 million that were waiting. Headlines such as “Obama Urges Congress: Don’t Dally on Immigration” emphasized this need to pass policy quickly (Goldfarb and
Helderman, 2013). The media made it clear that Americans wanted immigration reform and they wanted it soon.

A unique aspect of the debate was the presence of the religious community and their opinion on immigration. Religious representatives were featured in 6.4% of 2013 articles, which was significant considering that 1996 had zero features (See Figure 2). These features included various religious leaders, such as evangelical Christians and Catholic deacons. These individuals emphasized moral considerations in the treatment of immigrants and advocated for pro-immigrant measures, such as the pathway to citizenship. In one article, a Baptist leader was quoted encouraging the need for reform stating that the proposed legislation, “[respected] the God- given dignity of every person” (Worthen, 2013). Features such as these encouraged a more optimistic outlook on policy toward the treatment of immigrants. Instead of looking at the economic and social implications of immigration, the media began to highlight arguments that focused on the common good and human decency, which I would argue is rarely the focal point of politics.

**Cultural Response Frame**

Another frame that emerged was a cultural response to immigration, which focused on how immigration affects American tradition or identity. Though less than 1% of the articles in the entire sample had these frames, they were only seen in 1996 sample. For example, a *Washington Post* article discussed the cultural and societal effects of large numbers of Hispanic immigrants entering the country, “It’s unreasonable to think that so many poor newcomers could be assimilated instantly or effortlessly. Immigration inevitably depresses our indicators of national well-being”
(Samuelson, 1996). Arguments such as these completely disregard America’s history and the fact that groups that we would now consider “Americans” such as the Irish, Italians and Germans, were once considered poor and unable to adapt to the American way of life. Though cultural arguments went beyond security, politics and economics, they are considered to be less tangible, and they dangerously cater to the fear and prejudice that the public may possess.

Rhetoric: Illegal versus Undocumented

Though there was a shift in terms of how immigrants were labeled between 1996 and 2013, I found the rhetoric to be hyperbolic across both years. Many articles utilized metaphorical language to describe the impact of immigration as well as immigrants themselves. According to Cisneros, “metaphors create conventional understandings by connecting phenomena with familiar cultural assumptions and experiences” (Cisneros, 2008, p.570). Several articles in both 1996 and 2013
described immigration in terms of an “influx” or “wave” of individuals (Branigin, 1996). Articles in 1996 were especially more negative and derogatory in describing immigrants, especially undocumented immigrants. For example one 1996 article referred to undocumented immigrants entering the U.S from Mexico as “trailer loads of aliens” and elaborated on how the public was “fearful” of this influx of illegals in the country (Branigin, 1996). Cisneros states, “metaphors of immigrants often portray [immigrants] as objects or threats to society” (Cisneros, 2008, p. 573). In 1996, almost all of the articles casually used derogatory/politically incorrect language (e.g., alien, illegal) to describe immigrants. As sentiments towards immigrants grew negative, the more derogatory language was used in the media. It could be argued that this language helped cultivate this widespread negativity towards immigrants. Using the word ‘alien’ to refer to someone is very dehumanizing and takes away a person’s individuality. As the media becomes saturated with stories about the ‘millions of aliens’ coming into America, the public becomes disillusioned to the plight of immigrants, and are more likely to view them as foreign nuisances instead of people.

As sentiments improved in 2013, the U.S became more conscious of labels and more politically correct terms (e.g., undocumented, resident, foreigner, non-citizen, migrant) were used in the media. Use of illegal decreased from 58% of articles to 43% and new terms, such as ‘unauthorized’ and ‘migrant’ were utilized to replace more offensive terms (See Figure 5). A noticeable change was in the use of the term ‘alien’, which was basically non-existent in 2013, only being used in 1.5% of the sample (See Figure 5). Articles even began to criticize the usage of derogatory terms to refer to immigrants. For example, in a Washington Post article titled, “A
Wetback Backlash”, the author condemned the use of racial slurs to refer to immigrants such as “wetback” (Milbank, 2013). As positive sentiment increased, both politicians and the public became more cognizant of how immigrants were labeled and consequentially depicted.

Beyond media frames, specific topics within immigration and immigrants were emphasized within each period, such as illegality and asylum, which I regarded as themes. The following two sections will explore these themes found in 1996 and 2013 respectively.

**THEMES FROM 1996**

As previously discussed, public sentiment towards immigrants and immigration during 1996 was mostly negative and discouraging. Public opinion showed that the American people were in favor of reducing immigration levels and passing restrictive policies regarding both undocumented and legal immigrants. Media constantly reiterated this idea of widespread dissatisfaction during this period, overall emphasizing immigration as a significant issue in the U.S.

**Illegality of Immigration**

One notable theme in the 1996 was the overall focus on the illegality of immigration. Due to the negative sentiments during this period, I predicted that illegal immigration would be portrayed as the most significant issue with the system and would be highly emphasized in the articles. I coded the type of immigrants who were explicitly mentioned in the articles which included: asylum/refugee; children/students; low and high-skilled workers; criminals, legal immigrants, and families. Surprisingly, 33% of the articles in 1996 mentioned legal immigration (See
Despite this large percentage of mentions of legal immigrants, I found that the articles still heavily focused on those who were undocumented. First, this was exhibited through article titles. I saw a large portion of the articles with headlines such as “Focus on Illegal Aliens”; and “The Expense of Illegal Immigrants”, which immediately primes the reader to focus on the topic of illegal immigration (1996).

In article features, politicians, law enforcement and INS representatives constantly voiced their concerns about the illegal immigrant population. In one article, a San-Diego National Border Patrol Council representative stated that certain areas in his communities were “overwhelmed with illegal immigrants” (Wilson, 1996). There was also an overall focus on Hispanic immigrants, specifically Mexican immigrants. This focus and rhetoric in 1996 set the tone that illegal immigration was a significant problem. It also did not take into account the ways in which immigrants can lose status or become ‘illegal’ such as overstaying. Instead, the media depicted the flow of illegal immigrants solely resulting from large groups of Mexican immigrants illegally crossing the border. 35.9 percent of articles mentioned Mexican immigrants. Asian (12%), European (5%), and Caribbean (1.7%) immigrants were underrepresented in comparison to their actual presence in the U.S (See Figure 6 Below). Illegality was made synonymous with Mexican immigration, which has ramifications on racial profiling and the perpetuation of the stereotype that all illegal or undocumented are Hispanic. Such a bias has political implications with legislatures purely focus on the illegality of immigration and not on issues with legal immigration.
There was also a focus on poor, low-skilled workers who the media portrayed as ‘public charges’ or taxpayer burdens. In an op-ed, one author stated how immigration is a form of “importing poverty” and that many immigrants arrive as “poor” (Samuelson, 1996). Many articles also considered Mexican and Hispanic immigrants as being low-income and government dependent. Another article described immigrants coming from Central America as “poor and desperate” (Harmon and Todd, 1996). This depiction of Mexican immigrants and Latin-American immigrants as an overall impoverished and government dependent group allows them to be used as economic scapegoats. In 1996, there were very few positive immigrant narratives being covered, which is in stark contrast to 2013. I found that the majority of the articles in 1996 appeared to have an overall negative focus, whether they were discussing the political contention in Congress or the burden of immigrants on the national economy. Though I was unable to code for article tone or emotional appeal, I did notice that most articles were framed in a way that would lead to creating concern and fear in the public. For example, article title’s such as “California Faces New Welfare Reality; Counties with Large Immigrant Population Fearful of Financial Hit” or “Importing Poverty” give off the impression that immigration is an urgent issue that is hurting the nation (Claiborne, 1996; Samuelson, 1996). The media was constantly portraying immigration as an issue that had overall negative effects.
Asylum and Refugee Immigrants

Asylum and refugee immigrants were another focus in the 1996 sample and accounted for the majority of African immigrants mentioned during the period (See Figure 6). 20.5% of the articles mentioned African immigrants because of the canned story about a 19-year-old woman, Favziya Kasingo, who had fled Togo to escape from genital mutilation and was detained by immigration services despite having no criminal record. This story became the face of asylum cases and was sensationalized due its controversial nature. All four newspapers repeatedly published the exact same story for weeks focusing on the controversy surrounding the case. Articles focused on the conditions she was running away from, without expanding on asylum and refugee immigration in general. For example, a Washington Post article discussed how “horrible” and “painful” the custom of female circumcision is (Branigin, 1996). Kasingo’s story was sold as a ‘juicy’ story and after the Togolese women was eventually granted asylum, dialogue and coverage of asylum and refugee immigration nearly ceased.
THEMES FROM 2013

Positive/Supportive Frames

The themes that were unique to 2013 can be categorized as mostly positive or supportive coverage, which I argue mirrored the sentiments towards immigrants and immigration reform at the time. The Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act of 2013 was presented in the media as a symbol for change and hope for the millions of immigrants who resided in the United States without clear status. 2013 included new narratives that were not addressed in the 1996 debate such as the issues within the legal immigration system. The media began to use the notion that an efficient system was in the country’s best interests. One article stated, “The heart of immigration reform is fixing the legal immigration system so it works for America” (Preston and Shear, 2013). Advocacy for the acceptance of certain immigrant groups such as high-skilled workers and agricultural laborers began to emerge, which was discussed in previous sections. In terms of article features, both political and non-political individuals began voicing their support for immigrants, outlining the benefits of immigration and the need for the United States to reform its immigration system into one that was more inclusive and ‘immigrant friendly’.

‘The Dreamers’ and Merit-Based Immigration

One specific theme that emerged in 2013 made a distinction between immigrants who deserved to be in the country and those who did not. Several articles mentioned immigrants that ‘did it right’ and emigrated into the U.S via the proper or legal way. The media made a point to highlight that Americans were fighting for the hard working, educated immigrants who were not economic burdens to the country.
(O’Brien, 2013). In addition to high-skilled workers, there was a sudden focus on the Dreamers, who were students brought into the country at a young age by their parents and were therefore undocumented. The argument to push legislation granting them citizenship was based on the fact that they were ‘innocent’ and that the blame and therefore punishment should be with their parents. Articles focused on these young people’s character and depicted them as good people that were deserving of citizenship (Sharry, 2013). I would argue that this distinction between who deserves or does not deserve fair treatment is dangerous and labels undocumented immigrants as inherently criminal. Instead of focusing on the circumstances that led them to this status, they are viewed as lesser and inferior to those who have privileged status. Though 2013 did provide a new perspective of the debate, the media did neglect certain aspects of immigration and the plight of immigrants that are essential to understanding the complete picture. These themes will be discussed at the end of the chapter.
Border versus Non-Border Newspapers

Based on previous literature, we know that public opinion towards immigration differs. States near the Mexican border differ from non-border states because of differences in salience (Dunaway et. Al., 2010). These border states have a higher concentration of immigrants and therefore there are more interactions with citizens, which affects public perceptions and attitudes on the issue. Consequentially, media coverage also differs between border and non-border states. Past studies have shown that the local media in border states offer more coverage on immigration than non-border states, and are more likely to portray it as the “most important problem” (Dunaway et. Al., 2010, p. 362).

Originally, I had predicted that the border state papers (The Austin-American Statesmen and San Jose Mercury) would contain more coverage of immigrant crime compared to non-border states (The Washington Post and The New York Times) due to their proximity to the border. I also expected the border state papers to have a higher use of derogatory rhetoric to describe immigrants. After analyzing both sets of papers and comparing the results, I found that there was no significant difference in coverage between the papers.

Crime Focus

Initially, I had expected articles from the Austin-American Statesmen and the San Jose Mercury News to contain more coverage on immigrant crime compared to The New Times and The Washington Post. In 1996, crime mentions accounted for 10.7% of border state articles and 9.7% in non-border state papers, proving that my original hypothesis was incorrect. Instead, I found that border state papers had more specificity in regards to the crime stories they covered. Due to the relative proximity,
stories of crime were more focused on the U.S-Mexican Border and provided more detailed stories on crime and security issues along the border. For instance in 1996, the border state papers covered several stories on drug trafficking along the border. An *Austin-American Statesmen* article stated, “Corruption, intimidation and other strong arm-tactics long associated with drug trafficking cartels in Mexico are spilling over the border into the United States” (Hood, 1996). The article continued to pinpoint a specific area along the border, Maverick County, Texas that was seen as the most affected area. I speculate that the lack of significant difference on crime coverage between the papers was due to the nature of my sample and the border state papers that were finally chosen. Due to access and newspaper availability, I was unable to use papers from cities that had a closer proximity to the U.S-Mexican border. For example, San Jose is located in Northern California and therefore would have less immigrant interaction compared to Los Angeles, which is closer to the Mexican border. This also applied to Austin, Texas which has a more central location and is farther away from the border. I would assume that my findings would have been different had the border state papers been from cities on the border.
Negative immigrant representation and rhetoric

Originally, I hypothesized that the border articles would have a higher usage of negative rhetoric towards immigrants compared to non-border articles. Drawing from previous literature, I assumed that areas with a higher concentration of immigrants would possess more negative sentiments towards immigrants, which would then translate into the use of derogatory labels such as ‘alien’ and ‘illegal’. Overall, the use of negative rhetoric labels was similar between both border and non-border state papers. Looking at 1996, when the use of negative terms was more prominent, the use of ‘illegal’ was in 63.5% of border state articles and 56.8% in non-border state articles (See Figure 7). The term ‘alien’ was used in 12.5% of border state articles and more than doubled in non-border state articles, with 28% of them using the label (See Figure 7). Again, I point to the nature of my sample and the lack of border-city representation as an explanation for the lack of distinction between the two paper’s uses of narrative. *The Austin- American Statesmen* paper covers a
politically liberal city, which would explain why the coverage mirrored that of the *Washington Post* and *The New York Times*.

**Neglected Narratives**

There were several aspects of immigration that were either completely left uncovered or severely underrepresented in the newspaper articles. In 2013, the media began to highlight different immigrant perspectives, yet it still failed to address many issues with the system. While it is unrealistic for the news media to cover every single immigrant perspective, it is important for the public to have a holistic understanding of the United States immigration system and the millions who are affected by it.

One significant aspect left uncovered was that of ‘overstays’ and the fact that a large portion of undocumented immigrants enters the nation legally before their visas eventually expire. The media constantly emphasized undocumented immigrants tying it into an issue of border control, implying that this high number of illegal immigrants is due to lax border security. Overstayed immigrants are pooled into one large group, and the public fails to realize that individuals who illegally entered the country are only a small percentage of the total of undocumented immigrants. Most of these individuals are undocumented because of the backlog that burdens the legal immigration path, which the media often neglects to discuss. These misconceptions about how the majority of immigrants become undocumented prevents discussions of issues with the legal system and the circumstances that causes individuals to fall out of status and become ‘illegal’.
Another aspect of immigration the media failed to address was the diversity of immigrants in terms of both nationality and immigrant status. Simply using immigration terms of legal and illegal grossly oversimplifies the many categories immigrants fall under. For instance, asylum and refugee immigrants were fairly underrepresented aside from the one Togolese asylum applicant featured in 1996. In terms of nationality, the media mainly focused on Latino immigrants, specifically Mexicans. Though Asian immigrants are a large immigrant group in the U.S, they were almost completely left out of the conversation. African, Caribbean and European immigrants were also underrepresented in the articles. Immigration affects all races and ethnicities from all over the world, but based on media coverage, one would not think so.

Another neglected narrative was the presence of mixed-status families residing in the U.S. ‘Mixed-status’ homes refers to families comprised of individuals with different immigration statuses from undocumented to citizenship. As of 2010, an estimated 9 million individuals lived in mixed-status homes (Taylor et. Al., 2011). This is a substantial number of immigrants, yet this was completely disregarded in the articles. Again, the media simplified the topic of immigration into ‘legal’ and ‘illegal’. The presence of mixed status homes is important to consider, especially when legislation aims at punishing or cracking down on undocumented immigrants, because legal residents and even U.S citizens are often affected as well.

Finally, there was a lack of focus on immigrant successes and contributions in media coverage. The 2013 articles focused mainly on high skilled immigrants and their contribution to technology and other ‘specialized’ industries, but that still leaves
out the other ways immigrants contribute to our economy, such as in the agricultural sector. Overall, It is imperative that these narratives be included. Media is a powerful tool that shapes discourse and influences what the public discusses. By failing to cover certain aspects, the public is left unaware and these issues are lost. Moreover, this affects the policies that are enacted, how policy is constructed and how individuals are treated. Therefore it is important to hear their stories and their perspectives. When the public is not aware of these issues it allows policymakers to neglect important problems and not be held accountable. Many perspectives are necessary in order to make sound and inclusive political decisions.
CONCLUSION

Mainstream media is a powerful medium, especially in educating the public on political events and issues. What we watch on television or read in newspapers tells us which topics are important by giving “more salience to certain events and issues over others” (Dunaway et al., 2010, p. 361). The media also has an affect on the how political debate is shaped and perceived (Dunaway et al., 2010). In terms of immigration, the media has the ability to influence political debate through its depiction of immigrants and its emphasis of certain aspects of the issue, while neglecting others. Media representation of immigrants and the immigration debate is important because it impacts how immigrants are treated and how government policies respond to immigration (Cisneros, 2008).

In the United States, immigration coverage has often focused on the negative narratives that portray immigrants as destructive, criminal and at times, non-human, which has facilitated the creation of restrictive and discriminatory policies (Cisneros, 2008). We previously saw this with the Asian exclusion period in the 1800s and the Anti-Mexican campaign in the 1950s. There was always an “other” population that has been scapegoated, “deemed undesirable and excluded in the U.S” (Douglas and Sáenz, 2013, p. 200).

With immigration being such a hot topic, it is especially important to examine such narratives and rhetoric. Media framing is intentional, carries biases in attitudes and perceptions, and does not objectively discuss facts about the issues (Dunaway et al., 2010; Cisneros, 2008). Caprini says:
The growing importance of media campaign consultants, the increasing use of media strategies by organized interests, the blending of media and policy strategies by policy makers, the growth of an institutionalized communications bureaucracy in government, and even the increasing use of media strategies by foreign governments seeking to influence U.S policy all signal the important role played by the media in framing the way political choices are presented and thus resolved. (Callaghan and Schnell, 2005, p. 23)

This process of media framing and political action is cyclical in that public attitudes impact media and the media in turn shares these sentiments.

My study revealed that immigration narrative in the media did follow public sentiments. The media also framed immigration as a national problem. Themes of illegality, immigrant crime and the economic impact of immigrants were emphasized during the period of negative public attitudes towards immigration. To further emphasize this disapproval, negative and discriminatory language was used to dehumanize and give the sense that immigrants and immigration were detrimental to the country. In terms of depiction during the period of positive attitudes, I found that the narrative shifted to depict immigration’s value in economic terms, stressing the economic benefits. The consideration of immigration as both a moral and humanitarian issue did not really occur until 2013, when public sentiments towards immigrants had improved. Even then, the media only covered a small part of immigration. By choosing to focus on only selected elements of the immigration, the media’s depiction of immigration is incomplete and is a biased source of information for the public.

The use of a negative metaphor “alien” and of “illegal” to describe immigrants was found to be significantly related to how immigrants were portrayed in different
periods. When public sentiment was negative, the media reflected this through their usage of derogatory terms, describing immigrants, in general, as criminals and public charges. This is dehumanizing and perpetuates negative opinions that may already exist. It also allows readers to distance themselves from the individuals, which in turn influences policy. Negative portrayals and representation of immigrants can be used to justify restrictive measures, which is what we saw with anti-Asian sentiments in 1850s and Mexican immigrants in 1950 (Cisneros, 2008).

The type of immigrants portrayed in the media lacked diversity. The articles that I reviewed during both 1996 and 2013 primarily focused on Hispanic immigrants, specifically from Mexico. Articles in both periods failed to mention and feature immigrants who had overstayed as a part of the undocumented population, as well as the large number of asylum and refugee immigrants who are dependent on efficient legislation. By framing the debate using only one group of immigrants the public will not take into account the thousands of other immigrants who are also affected by immigration legislation. If the public is not aware of the vastness and diversity of immigration, they will be unable to call for action to address complex issues that exist in the system.

Along the same lines, the focus on illegality was being linked to Mexican immigration, and was used politically to target the larger depiction about all immigrants. Although, a small portion of immigrants are “illegals” the focus on legality highlighted Mexican immigrants and made illegality the face of the immigration debate. The media left out larger issues such as how immigrants become undocumented in the first place, as well as the consequences of this status for them.
Articles failed to discuss inefficiency with the legal pathway and how it places many immigrant groups at a disadvantage.

As seen in the results, differences in framing and immigrant portrayal are intentional and reflect wider social attitudes towards the issue, for example, portraying immigrants as economic burdens in 1996 and then flipping this most recently in seeing them as beneficial. Media prejudice seems to skew toward the negative and thereby, at times, seems rooted in racism and prejudice.

Words have power and media framing is impactful. The use of negative rhetoric and framing immigrants as criminal threats is dehumanizing. It is important that the public be cognizant of how media stories are framed. So many aspects of immigration are left discussed and uninformed judgments about the topic, which makes for inefficient policy. By further examining these portrayals and rhetoric in media discourse, we can begin the process of debunking dangerous representations (Cisneros, 2008).

Limitations and Suggested Future Directions

Due to the nature of my project there were several limitations. The most important was the nature of my sample. My study covers a very small portion of immigration news during these two periods. I was not able to look at every article that depicted immigrants or discussed immigration due to the sheer size of the sample. I had specific criteria for the articles that I chose to analyze and this made it possible to cover the vast majority of articles. I only looked at articles from periods where significant immigration legislation was considered, which means a large area of relevant coverage was left out. Coverage could have significantly differed in a period
where an important bill was not being deliberated in Congress. How does the media depict immigration then when there is less obvious political contention being covered?

Also, my newspaper selection was influenced by the availability of circulations on LexisNexis. I would have liked to look at newspapers with larger circulations for my border states, such as the Los Angeles Times and the Houston Chronicle, but I was limited to the sample that was available on LexisNexis. Though the papers I used covered two distinct regions, there is extensive room for variation. Between non-border states in the Mid-West and Northeast, coverage can differ tremendously. For future research suggestions, I would urge a larger geographical area be analyzed for a longer period of time.

A second limitation was my coding. I could not devise a code to capture some variables like tone and emotional impression, which I feel are an important component to consider in terms of how media affects public opinion. For example, if an article presents scary facts about criminal immigrants coming and devastating towns, the impression could be coded as invoking fear, concern, or anger. Meanwhile, an article discussing the benefits of immigrants and their contribution to the economy could be coded as a positive or optimistic. It would provide more depth to the analysis and allow for deeper understanding of how media affects public attitudes and opinion.

Another point to consider is the idea of other facets of media outlets: television, internet blogging and online news. Different types of media can have different types of framing which influences its effect on the public. For example, it would be interesting to see how media framing in television or more visual coverage
can influence certain visceral responses print media is unable to create. There is a significant difference between reading about immigrants and watching them on the television. Furthermore, newspaper and print media are being dominated by other mediums and the public is utilizing other ways of receiving information such as blogs, online newspapers and other social sites. I would argue that it is important to analyze and explore the content provided by these mediums, especially in this social media age.

Overall, though it appears that the public is becoming more progressive in its understanding of immigration and immigrant populations, we must be careful to see how the media is conveying information and which narratives are used. Immigration is complex and should not be simplified into a handful of themes and stories that reinforce widespread misconceptions. It is easy for the media to reduce immigration into black and white, good or bad for the nation, but this should not be not the case.

There has been a change in narrative and looking back at history, we can assume that it will continue to shift with political and social events. Since these depictions have real implications on the lives of millions of immigrants from all over the world, they should be as multi-faceted as possible and try to represent the complexities of human migration.
APPENDIX 1

Coding Schema

- Immigrant Type
  - Nationality of immigrants mentioned
  - Other characteristics of immigrant mentioned/featured
    - Students/Children
    - Low skilled worker
    - High skilled worker
    - Criminal
    - Legal
    - Asylum/Refugee
    - Overstay
    - Detainee
    - Family

- Rhetoric Used to describe immigrant groups
  - Illegal
  - Undocumented
  - Foreigner
  - Alien
  - Non-citizens
  - Residents
  - Migrants
  - Unauthorized

- Article Features:
  - Politicians (Republicans, Democrats)
  - Anti-immigrant advocates/representatives
  - Pro-immigrant advocates/representatives
  - Immigrants
  - Church Leaders (Pastors, Clergymen)
  - U.S Immigration Official (INS rep. ICE rep.)
  - Employers
  - Lawyer
  - Academic
  - U.S Citizens

- Media Frames:
  - Economic Impact: focus on economic implications of immigration (job competition, fiscal burden of immigrants, economy growth/benefits)
  - Cultural costs: failure to assimilate, dilution of American culture
  - Morality frame: moral/humanitarian arguments
  - Security issue: mentions of terrorism, violence, crime, border control
  - Politics: bipartisan conflict, provisions of bill, congressional action
  - Community response: group response/reactions to immigration
  - Immigrant perspective: stories from an immigrants’ point of view
- **Mentions:**
  - Family unification
  - Deportation
  - Elections (both presidential/ congressional)
  - Fiscal burden of immigrants
  - Border security
  - Crime
  - Controversiality of the bill
  - Job competition
  - Economic benefits
  - Terrorism
APPENDIX 2: Newspaper Article List

(1996, April 10). 60-Mile march protests border violence. _San Jose Mercury News_. p. 3B.
(1996, April 8). The trouble is not with the INS, it’s with congress. _San Jose Mercury News_. p. 6B.
(1996, August 5). What will be the real cost of welfare and immigration reform? _San Jose Mercury News_. p. 7B.
(1996, July 25). Experiment in identifying illegal immigrants criminals is promising the ins backs off a good idea. _San Jose Mercury News_. p. 8B.
(1996, June 11). Study: immigrants are economic plus. _San Jose Mercury News_. p. 3B.
(1996, June 13). $2.4 billion asked of U.S. illegal immigrants: appeals court to rule on whether government should reimburse the state. _San Jose Mercury News_. p. 3B.
(1996, June 24). plan would cut health benefits for immigrants. _San Jose Mercury News_. p. 6A.
(1996, June 29). Latinos urge politicos to be careful. _San Jose Mercury News_. p. 3B.
(1996, September 16). State is overrun; with immigration non-solutions. *San Jose Mercury News.* p. 6B.
(2013, June 24). Immigration bill passes key test vote in Senate. *San Jose Mercury News*
Bachman, S.L. (1996, August 8). Immigration also splitting GOP issue is potentially more volatile than abortion, party analysts say. *San Jose Mercury News*. p. 4A.


Contin, M. (1996, August 7). Convention puts spotlight on immigration protests: dueling groups focus on GOP event to offer varying views on border issues. San Jose Mercury News. p. 3B.


Dugger, C. W. (1996, July 8). In pursuit of freedom, only to find prison bars;
Farragher, T. (1996, September 25). Immigration shift pleases white house plan to let states deny schooling has been shelved. San Jose Mercury News. p. 5A.


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Preston, J. (2013, June 28). For gay immigrants, marriage ruling brings relief and a path to a
Quinn, Sally. (2013). Freedom of religion seen through a glass darkly (pp. METRO; Pg. B02).


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