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THE SECOND WATCHER AT THE GATE: LOCAL NEWSPAPER FRAMING OF REFUGEES, ASYLUM SEEKERS, IMMIGRANTS, AND MIGRANTS AT THE BORDER IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

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THE SECOND WATCHER AT THE GATE: LOCAL NEWSPAPER FRAMING OF
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THE AGE OF COVID-19

A Thesis

by

GABRIEL ALEJANDRO RODRIGUEZ

Submitted to Texas A&M International University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

December 2022

Major Subject: Communication

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ABSTRACT

The Second Watcher at the Gate: Local Newspaper Framing of Refugees, Asylum Seekers, Immigrants, and Migrants at the Border in the age of COVID-19 (December 2022).

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The COVID-19 pandemic caused a repeat of a historical association between migrants and disease with the re-activation of Title 42, which gave the federal government the power to bar and expel migrants and asylum seekers without the opportunity to contest their expulsion, under the basis of public health. Based on a content analysis of the frames employed in the coverage of the pandemic by five newspapers located on the southern U.S. border for the period of 2020 to 2021, this study explored how these English-language newspapers gave priority to as sources, how they framed immigrants and immigration issues during the first two years of the COVID-19 epidemic, and how these frames shifted (if at all) over the course of the pandemic. The study found that while elements of “Othering” which treated refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants, and migrants (RASIM) as a problem to be dealt with were present in the five newspapers’ coverage, the most prominent frame was “Attribution of Responsibility”. This implies that all parties who were given a voice by the media were taking the opportunity to define and contest what issue to focus on, who is responsible for both the issue and the solution, and what the solution should be. RASIM were also given little representation by the newspapers present in the sample except for one outlet, while the most attention was granted towards federal and non-federal U.S. officials.

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Introduction

The COVID-19 epidemic represents an ideological Rorschach test in the United States. According to various surveys put out by the Pew Research Center, one's political affiliation determines how serious of a threat one deems the pandemic to be (Tyson, 2020). This difference in perception can affect how one responds to preventative measures from masking to vaccination (Jurkowitz & Mitchell, 2021) Because of this kaleidoscopic lens placed over the pandemic, it becomes pertinent to interrogate how news sources construct the image of COVID-19.

The ideological prism placed upon COVID-19 pulls heavily upon pre-existing discourses within American culture: a rebellion against "elites" and intellectuals, the images of an authoritarian new world order, and an association between migrants and disease. This last aspect has been made explicit by the adoption of Title 42 first by the Trump administration in March 2020 and later by the Biden Administration in 2021, which allows for the expulsion of migrants and asylum seekers in the name of preserving public health in the age of COVID-19 (*A Guide to Title 42 Expulsions at the Border*, 2021).

Historically, Mexican and Central Americans, especially lower-class members of these groups crossing the border into the U.S., have been historically depicted as disease ridden (Markel & Stern, 1999). A tendency to conflate health issues that arise from their material conditions has been conflated with moral failings on their part, with popular depictions of them in the press and media casting them as burdens on the country.

This thesis follows the model of *The International Journal of Press/Politics*.

This in turn has led to a myriad of issues regarding their right to integrate with American society, as this image has fueled racist beliefs and regulations.

On the other hand, for many recurrent historical reasons having to do with discrimination and lack of equal access and opportunities, Latino individuals (along with ethnic and racial minorities as a whole) also tend to be more adversely affected by COVID-19 relative to their white peers (CDC, 2020). This is exemplified by the border community of Laredo, Texas having one of the highest COVID-19 death rates in the country for a period of time (Martinez, 2021).

The objective of the paper then, is to track coverage of refugees, migrants, immigrants, and asylum seekers in English-speaking newspapers on the Southern U.S. border to see whose voice gets heard when discussing immigrants, migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in the context of public health, and how stories involving these elements are depicted. This will be achieved via a content analysis of the frame building techniques utilized in each story. By doing this, I hope to contribute to the pre-existing literature regarding coverage of migrants in the media.

Theoretical Framework

Framing

Framing, in its current form in media studies, is often treated as a subfield of media effects (Scheufele 1999; Scheufele & Tewksbury 2007). The shared conclusion of media effect models is that repeated exposure to a media discourse can lead to an audience member being swayed by it in some capacity. This study starts from the same conclusion: that the repetition of a problematic discourse, especially among a population that has not been inoculated from it, can lead to the population being influenced by it.

The study of frames and framing pulls from a wide variety of sources, two of the most prominent roots being Kahneman and Tversky's research on framing in cognitive psychology (e.g Kahneman & Tversky 1984) and Erving Goffman's examination of it from a sociological perspective (Goffman 1986). Both studies relate to how individuals contextualize, and process information and events presented to them: Kahneman & Tversky looking at the internal thought processes, and Goffman examining the external factors that influence these thought processes. Despite both ultimately rooting themselves in studying how people contextualize and make sense of the world around them, this difference in perspective has led to different theoretical and methodological approaches.

When the study of framing in the context of texts was adopted by communication and media studies, these methodological gaps and disagreements carried over. Multiple papers have been published which focus on the ambiguities and conflicts between different studies and papers that cover the subfield (D'Angelo 2002; Entman 1993; Van Gorp, 2007; Vliegenthart & van Zoonen 2011), with one of the most frequently cited papers in the subfield having the subtitle of "Towards a clarification of a fractured paradigm" (Entman 1993). Earlier studies in

media framing pulled primarily from the sociological paradigm (Gamson et al. 1992; Gamson & Modigliani 1989; Gitlin 1980; Tuchman 1978), examining the various factors that create the frames one sees in the news (such as the political economy of the newsroom, source selection, and power relations), along with how readers negotiate the news with the reality in front of them.

Entman (1993) attempts to bridge the gap between the sociological tendency and the cognitive psychology tendency by examining framing as an example of media effects. In his definition, framing studies examines how a text highlights certain aspects of a perceived reality while omitting other aspects that could contradict them. Because communication is the active demonstration of how individuals process, internalize, and disperse information, one can find frames at four different parts in the communication process: in the culture at large, in the communicator, in the text, and in the receiver. (Entman 1993).

The culture at large refers to a series of shared symbols, beliefs, stereotypes, and other schemata that both the communicator and the receiver pull from (assuming they share in the same culture). The communicator, pulling from the unspoken beliefs and assumptions shaped by their culture, makes the conscious decision to highlight certain aspects of a perceived reality and define a problem (and/or a solution) based on this selection of some information and omission of others. The text, therefore, is an artifact of both the unspoken biases present in the communicator's culture, and the conscious choices made by the communicator in order to convey a certain perception of reality, and to sway the receiver of the text into buying into this perception.

Much like Tuchman and Gitlin before him, Entman is interested in news as ideological reinforcement, and how this reinforcement can influence public opinion. In *Making News* (1978), Tuchman argues that ideology can be differentiated from knowledge, not by what is said, but by

what is not said. We see this reverberate in Entman's examples of how American news outlets covered Operation Desert Storm, noting that any critical frames of the war that fell outside of what was deemed "acceptable discourse" were not covered by news outlets, and thus had no sway over public opinion. This is reinforced by research that shows that when an individual has no lived or vicarious experiences with a subject, they fall back on media discourses as the source of their opinions (Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart, 2009; Gamson et al., 1992).

Where some have argued that Entman has fallen short, however, is a failure to include the external factors that influence both the frames and an audience's receptiveness to them (Van Gorp, 2007; Vliegenthart & van Zoonen, 2011). Vliegenthart & Van Zoonen, for example, point out that Entman's discussion of framing in *A Fractured Paradigm* assumes intentionality on the part of the communicator, be it the journalist or the source being cited. While this can be the case, it is also pointed out that previous research into the creation of frames used by media outlets attempted to take into account the external factors that can play a role in frame building, such as the typical newsgathering routine, the political economy of the media organization, the working environment of the media organization, and so on (Breed, 1955; Gitlin, 1980; Tuchman, 1978). While Entman's depiction of the frame building process as a battle for dominant meaning is consistent with Gamson et al.'s (1992) assertion, Entman frames it primarily as a battle being held among the political elite and leaves this conflict in the frame building process.

One other point of contention is the implication of a passive audience ready to accept the dominant meaning of a frame. This goes against the notion that media frames and discourses are but one of many points of reference that audiences use to make sense of the world and are more likely to prioritize lived or vicarious experiences, past knowledge, or cultural notions of common

sense when present (Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart 2009; Gamson et al. 1992; Gamson & Modigliani 1989; Vliegenthart & van Zoonen 2011; Wakefield & Elliott 2003).

When looking at how to identify frames methodologically, Entman argued that frames define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgements, and suggest remedies. On top of the fact that not all news items will tick off these boxes, one issue of contention Entman has with the more sociology-oriented frame researchers is regarding the potential for multiple frames or multiple meanings within a frame (Vliegenthart & van Zoonen 2011). Whereas Entman argues that researchers should not attempt to determine the various frames one can interpret in a text, Vliegenthart and Van Zoonen argue that frames can often be multiple and conflicting, both within a text and within a reader's lexicon.

Van Gorp (2007), taking from the constructionist approach to framing research, proposes a more general method of reconstructing frames from a text in a way that could potentially capture the potential multiplicities at play. He argues that each frame can be represented by a "frame package" (p. 64), a cluster of identifiers that are composed of three parts: The manifest framing devices, the manifest or latent reasoning devices, and an implicit cultural phenomenon that displays the package as a whole.

A history of the association of immigration and disease

The southern U.S. border region was in a dire predicament during the onset of the COVID-19 epidemic in early 2020. Facing disproportionately high death tolls relative to the rest of the country, residents of these areas found that the federal government was quicker to throw members of their communities out than to provide aid (Martinez 2021; Romero 2021).

What are the historical roots of the still prevalent association of immigrants and disease? During the late 19th and early 20th century, the expansion of the United States Public Health

Service (U.S.PHS) and the growing acceptance of bacteriology among health officials made the health surveillance of incoming immigrant populations a more pressing concern to the federal government. While “old” immigrants (typically individuals from the wealthier Northern European countries) and more well-to-do “New” immigrants were often given the privilege to bypass these measures, their working-class peers found themselves subject to a series of invasive and demeaning exams and decontamination procedures before they were allowed entry into the United States. Areas where incoming immigrants would be screened included Ellis Island, Angel Island, and El Paso. (Markel & Stern 1999, 2002). This need to exclude immigrants on the basis of public health was codified in the Immigration Act of 1891, which barred entry of those who suffered from “a loathsome or dangerous contagious disease” (Markel & Stern 1999 p. 1325). Following revolution and a typhus outbreak in Mexico in the early 20th century, the U.S.PHS began to “quarantine” the country and set up sanitation stations across the U.S.-Mexican border. There, incoming migrants would line up to be soaked in kerosene and vaccinated, or risk being turned away if they carried disease. Illegal points of entry used by individuals looking to circumvent these stations were monitored and patrolled by an early predecessor to the U.S. Border Patrol, and those who were seen using these points of entry were detained and forcefully decontaminated.

Despite the typhus outbreak subsiding, these public health measures continued for the working-class laborers, their more well-to-do peers able to cross the border unmolested. These continued measures created the popular image of the Mexican as a disease-ridden people, which became a rationale behind their continued discrimination in the United States. This is exemplified in the federal case of *Mendez v. Westminster*, in which Mexican and Mexican-

American children in Orange County, California were placed in segregated public schools out of fear that they posed a public health risk (Macías 2014)

The decline of pandemic occurrences as the 20th century progressed led to the use of eugenics as a means of medicalizing perceived undesirable traits among immigrants entering the United States. Soon, the explicit medical terminology shifted towards using disease as a metaphor for the immigrants themselves. This is exemplified in the statements made by Senator Patrick McCarran in 1952

Today ... as never before, a sound immigration and naturalization system is essential to the preservation of our way of life, because that system is the conduit through which a stream of humanity flows into the fabric of our society. If that stream is healthy, the impact on our society is salutary; but if that stream is polluted our institutions and our way of life becomes infected. (Markel & Stern 2002 p. 773)

The implementation of Title 42 effectively suggests that this mentality of migrants, either as disease carriers or as a metaphorical disease in the body of the country, has never gone away. What results then are structural actions taken to reinforce the migrant as a diseased individual.

The Structural Inequalities in Health Care

The persistent association of immigration and disease led to American lawmakers on the state and federal level to consider drafting laws that prevented undocumented immigrants from using public goods such as American medical services (Markel & Stern 2002). The conflation of their material conditions as a moral failing has led to the discourse of “immigrants as diseased” to “immigrants as a burden on society”. One result of this was the adoption of "Proposition 187" in California in 1994, which required that medical workers report any patients they suspect to be undocumented immigrants to the relevant authorities. This in turn led to a decline in the usage of health services by all immigrants, regardless of legal status. While this law was found

unconstitutional soon after its passage, the discourse that led to it manifested itself in various other state and federal actions.

The initial push by the U.S. federal government to create a bi-national commission on public health with Mexico was nearly derailed by the U.S.' insistence that Mexico be financially responsible for the alleged burden its emigrants place on the U.S. healthcare system. (Collins-Dogrul 2012)

One other way this discourse manifests is via the "Public Charge rule". Adopted in 1882, it dictates that if individuals who are seeking residence are determined to become dependent on the government for most of their life, they are prohibited from becoming U.S. citizens. In early 2020, the Trump administration altered this rule by proposing that the use of any public service would count against them, even if used by their U.S. citizen children. This in turn led to a decline in enrollment in services such as Medicaid and an avoidance of public health services among the individuals who could stand to benefit the most from them. (Blackburn & Sierra 2021)

This change occurred at a period when the utilization of public health services by those on the border was already quite low. Previous research has shown that the 4 southwestern border states have uninsurance rates of over 18%, and account for 30% of the total uninsured U.S. population, with over 12 million uninsured U.S. residents as of 2008. 26% of adults and children in Texas are uninsured, with rates particularly high in the border communities. (Bastida et al. 2008, p.1987) This is entirely because the border economy is dependent on the Mexican labor market. Low wages, a lack of workplace benefits, and the high cost of U.S. insurance leaves many of these individuals dependent on Medicaid or free or reduced cost medical care in the United States.

These factors ultimately result in already vulnerable populations being more adversely affected to public health issues such as COVID-19. Medical focused academic papers actively urge researchers to take into account the structural socioeconomic conditions of a population when gathering and interpreting data out of a desire to avoid false racialized rhetoric, which in turn effectively gives officials and the public at large an excuse to ignore a public health issue as opposed to addressing its underlying causes (Chowkwanyun & Reed 2020)

The Newspaper, Migrants, and Social Forces at Play

With all this information in mind, it must be examined how and why these discourses can manifest in the public sphere. The only comprehensive study found so far that covers historical publications on immigration in the context of disease (let alone epidemics) is one that examines a sample of 180 stories published in various American newspaper publications between 1891 and 1893 (Moore 2008). Publications in the sample include the New York Times, the Boston Daily Globe, the Los Angeles Times, and others. Coverage of immigrants was overwhelmingly negative, depicting them as a source of deviance for health and morality, and repeatedly calling for policies of exclusion using highly emotionally charged language to differentiate the incoming population from the native one. This style of writing is epitomized in this article published in the Boston Daily Globe in 1893

Whenever it shall be shown to the satisfaction of the president that by reason of the existence of cholera or other infectious or contagious disease in a foreign country, there is serious danger of the introduction of the same into the United States, and that notwithstanding the quarantine defence [sic], the danger is so increased by the introduction of persons or property from such country, that a suspension of the right to introduce the same is demanded in the interest of public health, the president shall have the power to prohibit, in whole or in part, the introduction of persons and property from such countries or places as he shall designate and for such a period of time as he may deem necessary. (Moore 2008 p. 71)

While changes in journalism practices within the past hundred years have pushed for less usage of emotionally charged language and for the journalist to take the role of an “objective observer”, these practices simply make the ideological assertions of an article implicit as opposed to explicit. While the language has changed, the news media’s depiction of migrants (along with minority groups as a whole) has yet to reach parity with how it depicts their white counterparts.

One must remember that the primary motive of a newspaper is that of profit. As Tuchman (1978) discusses, the news organization is financially incentivized to distribute a seemingly endless stream of content. This can bleed into two major factors which make up the news gathering process: source selection and story selection.

Journalists are often incentivized to prioritize government officials as sources (Bennett 2001; Tuchman 1978). This is because they often serve as a relatively easy to access, centralized source of information. The press, aware of their own ability to grant legitimacy, do not need to spend time verifying or justifying government officials as a legitimate source due to their place in society and the unspoken assumption of their legitimacy among the populace. For a journalist that is constantly under pressure to meet deadlines, time is their most valuable resource. Having a safe source of information is practically a necessity. However, as a result, they are disincentivized from questioning the legitimacy or authority of these sources of information too strongly. Not only will they risk closing off a reliable resource necessary to do their job in a timely manner, it also throws past information given by the source into question.

Inversely, migrants aren’t given as much presence as a source in news coverage regarding them (Gemi et al. 2013; Sui & Paul 2017). Not only does a journalist have to exert relatively more effort to justify why they’re a legitimate source of information, but often they’re more

difficult to access as a source of information - either due to a lack of trust built between the journalist and the migrant/migrant community, the migrant's desire to not be in the public eye, or due to language/cultural barriers that require the time and resources necessary to find a translator - neither of which may be immediately available to the journalist.

Previous studies have also shown that news media typically places a large emphasis on crime as a means of garnering audience attention (Klite et al. 1997; Gilliam & Iyengar 2000). Because this is an effective way of generating audience interest, which is necessary to appease advertisers that fund these organizations, these organizations are incentivized to continue this trend.

What this leads into then is an uncomfortable position where not only is Latino (let alone migrant) representation disproportionately small relative to their place in the US population, it is also overtly centered on crimes committed by this population and the danger and/or burden they're said to place on society (Dunaway et al. 2011; Kim et al. 2011; Sui & Paul 2017). This is especially dangerous in areas where the presence of these individuals is low. A lack of pre-existing, experiential, or vicarious knowledge of a subject will lead individuals to rely on media discourses as their source of information and sensemaking. If the "parasocial contact" (Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart 2009 p.535) with that group is overwhelmingly negative, then it will lead to predominantly negative attitudes about that group among these individuals (Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart 2009; Dunaway et al. 2011; Mastro 2015)

Primary Points of Reference

Three previous studies will serve as a theoretical and methodological foundation for this study. All of them focus on American newspaper coverage and framing of epidemics but focus on different epidemics and different facets and consequences of these epidemics. Ogdobo et al.'s

(2020) article was published shortly after the onset of the COVID-19 epidemic across the globe, examining how major global news publications framed the early days of the pandemic as they were happening. They selected sources from four different regions: America, Africa, Asia, and Europe. Based off an adaptation of Semetko and Valkenburg's prior study on the media framing of European politics (Semetko & Valkenburg 2000), the researchers identified two more frames and classified each unit of analysis under these nine frames: Economic consequences, Human interest, Conflict, Morality/Religion, Attribution of Responsibility, Politicisation, Ethnicisation, Fear/Scaremongering, and Hope. Despite the study's timeframe of only five months, the researchers assert that a given frame can retain dominance for a long period of time as it aligns with the "Constructionist frame perspective" (p. 265). In this case, the most dominant frame within the sample was "Human Interest", which focuses on the human consequences of the pandemic (be they on a personal or mass scale), with "Fear/Scaremongering" coming in as a secondary dominant frame.

A potential shortcoming with this article is that, in its analysis, it does not elaborate on the differences between outlets, or even between regions. While a data table and bar chart are provided to allow the reader to come to their own conclusions about any potential differences, the authors do not treat the outlets or regions as independent variables when discussing their data. This is especially peculiar when one considers that Semetko and Valkenberg's original study was specifically comparing the differences in frame usage between various media outlets.

Their assertion that a frame can retain dominance for a long period of time is also suspect. As stated in the past, the frame-building process is depicted as a constant battle for dominance amongst various groups with different interests (Entman 1993; Gamson et al. 1992; Van Gorp 2007). In the context of a global pandemic, one would assume that the unstable and

rapidly changing conditions and understanding of the situation by the political elite, the scientific community, and the public at large would lead to a continuous flux of dominant frames. While the article they cite does support this argument (D'Angelo, 2002), the study this article cites (along with other articles about the Constructionist paradigm) do not make this assertion (Gamson & Modigliani 1989; Van Gorp 2007)

A 2008 longitudinal study of how the New York Times frames epidemics provides a more suitable illustration for how frames could shift over time. (Shih et al. 2008). Both these studies and prior literature on risk communication in news media make note of how the structural emphasis on novelty and events can actively undermine its consistency as a source for risk communication when there is a clear lack of narrative events. (Ogbodo et al. 2020; Shih et al. 2008; Wakefield & Elliott 2003). However, this longitudinal study incorporates this assertion into its research by referring to the theoretical framework of the Issue Attention Cycle (Downs 1971). This “cycle” involves five stages of issue coverage in the news media: the pre-problem phase, where only experts are aware of an issue. The public discovery stage, where the public becomes aware of it but is optimistic that it can be avoided. The third stage is where the realization that fighting it requires more resources than they're willing to tolerate, which in turn leads to the decline stage, where the issue does not receive as much attention. And then there is the final, “post-problem” stage, where an issue has been replaced by other concerns and only occasionally recurs.

The researchers identified six frames, pulled from four prior studies: Consequence, Uncertainty, Action, Reassurance, Conflict, and New Evidence. Typically, the “New Evidence” frame occurred most frequently in Shih et. al's (2008) study around the “Decline” and “Final” stage, whereas the “Uncertainty” frame occurred most frequently during the pre-problem and

public awareness stage. However, as opposed to prior research which focused on ever-ongoing issues and thus were more cyclical, the researchers found that coverage of epidemics was primarily event-based, and thus varied depending on the number of infected cases and the types of governmental action being taken in response to the disease.

An examination of U.S. newspaper publication framing of H1N1 in Mexico (Ellis 2018) took the Issue Attention Cycle approach utilized by the aforementioned longitudinal study, and applied it to a much shorter time-frame of around two months. The study identified three frames predominantly used in the coverage of the epidemic in Mexico: Fear, Disaster, and Othering. The study found that the dominance of the “Fear” frame in the first week of the epidemic soon gave way to the dominance of the “Othering” frame, which remained dominant until the end of the timeframe. One interesting note identified within the study is that coverage by local publications closer to the border (such as the Houston Chronicle and the Los Angeles Times) contained no significant differences to the two national papers being studied (The New York Times and the Washington Post). If this assertion holds true for the study that is to be conducted, one could expect little in the way of differences from paper to paper.

Research Questions

Based on the literature review presented above, this study will try to collect data to respond to the following questions:

RQ1: How did English-language newspapers on the U.S. side of the border frame immigrants and immigration issues during the first two years of the COVID-19 epidemic?

RQ2: Did these frames shift (if at all) over the course of the pandemic?

RQ3: Did particular sources show any tendencies to focus on or emphasize particular frames?

Method

The study was based on a content analysis of English-language daily newspapers of cities within 100 miles of the U.S.-Mexican border that have a population of over 100k people. The papers were sourced from Newsbank. To identify stories about newcomers to the country, the search terms used were “Refugee”, “Asylum Seeker”, “Immigrant”, “Immigration”, “Migrant”, or “Migration”. The reason for the usage of these specific terms is due to the historic tendency of the press to conflate these different terms (Gabrielatos & Baker 2008), along with Title 42’s blanket use on all of these groups. They are referred to in the results section as “RASIM”. To locate articles that focus on their struggles in the context of the COVID-19 epidemic, the other search terms included were “SARS-COV-2”, “COVID-19”, “Health”, “Disease”, “Quarantine”, and “Coronavirus”. Any articles that were not about migration over the Southern US border, along with letters to the editor, were excluded. Stories were pulled from a two-year period from January 2020 to December 2021. The sample consisted of eight composite weeks, consisting of every story related to those terms that was published every 13 days in 2020 and every story that was published every 13 days in 2021. The publications that were examined were daily newspapers available in Newsbank that represent some of the major cities within 100 miles of the U.S.-Mexico border.

- The Laredo Morning Times
- The Brownsville Herald
- The San Diego Union-Tribune
- The Arizona Daily Star
- The McAllen Monitor

The unit of analysis was any news story referring to any of the terms mentioned above. While it does seem pertinent to differentiate between content written by other publications that has been rehosted on the newspapers sampled (ranging from newswires such as the Associated Press, to national publications such as the New York Times, to statewide publications like the Texas Tribune), Newsbank is inconsistent when it comes to including rehosted content depending on the publication; whereas every article published within the San Diego Union-Tribune is included on the database regardless of its origin, only stories written in-house by the Brownsville Herald are included within its database entries (save for articles it has had wired in from the McAllen Monitor), for example. If Ellis' (2018) assertion that there's little difference between local and national coverage of issues holds true, then it would render this concern needless.

A similar problem emerges in the context of scanned copies of each newspaper: whereas the database does contain full scans of the Laredo Morning Times and the San Diego Union-Tribune (which in turn could lend well to considering both the visual elements of a unit of analysis, as well as where it is placed on that specific issue), its entries for the Brownsville Herald contains only text scraped from the publication's website, which makes the study of the aforementioned elements too inconsistent to be considered.

One other issue that arose early on during the data collection period was the removal of the El Paso Times' content from Newsbank. This is an unfortunate loss because El Paso was the second largest metropolitan area included in the sample (and by extension, second largest Southern border-city in the US), and no feasible method of content collection could be found within the timeframe of this study's writing. As a result, what little data that has been collected

from the El Paso Times was not included because it was not numerous enough to constitute a representative sample.

Codebook Criteria

This study is based on the quantitative analysis of the frames utilized by these publications. The codebook was based primarily on Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) codebook, which aims to identify the multiple frames that a reader could interpret from a story by noting the presence (or absence) of signifiers that can point to a specific frame, satisfying the criteria set forth by Van Gorp (2007). Its versatility being demonstrated by previous usage in studies of stories covering COVID-19 or asylum seekers (d'Haenens & de Lange 2001; Ogbodo et al. 2020) was also an additional reason for its use in this study.

Our project will expand upon the initial 20 questions in Semetko & Valkenburg's codebook by including two additional frames to take note of: "Fear/Uncertainty", and "Othering". "Fear/Uncertainty" were consistent frames that occurred in prior studies of pandemics and epidemics in the press (Ellis 2018; Ogbodo et al. 2020; Shih et al. 2008), and the coding criteria for this frame was taken from Ellis' study. "Othering" was a frame used by Ellis' (2018) study of U.S. press coverage of H1N1 in Mexico that I felt would be appropriate to include here, due to the historical precedent of "othering" migrants during a health crisis (Moore 2008) and is equivalent enough to Ogbodo et al.'s "Ethnicization" frame. To expand upon Ellis' original criteria and make it relevant to this study, I pulled from a critical discourse analysis of the UK press that identified terms and phrases used to "other" refugees, migrants, immigrants, and asylum seekers (Gabrielatos & Baker 2008). Such criteria includes references to crime, depictions of RASIM as "diseased" or "a burden" (broadly classified as "contrasts and

comparisons”), a reference of the number of RASIM in the country or that have crossed the border, and the use of terms such as “rocketed” or “flooding” in reference to RASIM numbers.

The reason why “references to crime” is in the “Othering” category as opposed to the “Fear” category was due to it being flagged as a criterion in literature related to the former regarding discussion of RASIM. However, it is ultimately statistical clustering that determines which category is the best fit for a signifier. If “references to crime” correlates more frequently with “Fear” as opposed to “Othering” in the data collection, then it will be counted as a factor for “Fear”.

Something to be noted is the identification of sources within the codebook. Due to the federal government’s invocation and upholding of Title 42, and the Remain in Mexico program which requires the assistance of the Mexican government, I hypothesized that any sources of information that are used to paint migrants and asylum seekers in a negative light would most likely be U.S. and Mexican government officials, whereas any stories portraying them in a positive light or illuminating the systemic issues they face were likely to be from advocates or from the migrants and asylum seekers themselves. The distinction between “First source and second source cited” was to denote how important a particular story deemed each source to be, assuming they stick to the typical newspaper structure of the “Inverted Pyramid” (which lists information from order of most importance to least importance). One other question asked by the source list is “How often were migrants and asylum seekers given a voice and agency within a story? Were they depicted as individuals, or are they depicted as an abstract issue to be dealt with?”.

The Codebook

What is the story headline?

Where was the story published?

- 101. The Laredo Morning Times
- 102. The Brownsville Herald
- 103. The El Paso Times
- 104. The San Diego Union-Tribune
- 105. The Arizona Daily Star
- 106. The McAllen Monitor

When was the story published?

What is the wordcount of the story?

Who is the primary source of information? (Typically, the first one to be quoted or cited in a story)

- 301. U.S. federal officials
- 302. Mexican federal officials
- 303. Non-federal U.S. officials
- 304. Non-federal Mexican officials
- 305. A refugee/asylum seeker/immigrant/migrant
- 306. U.S. community members
- 307. Mexican community members
- 308. U.S. advocacy group
- 309. Mexican advocacy group
- 310. Bi-national/international advocacy group
- 311. Community member from another country
- 312. Other
- 313. None

Who is the secondary source of information? (Typically, the second one to be quoted or cited in an article)

- 301. U.S. federal officials
- 302. Mexican federal officials
- 303. Non-federal U.S. officials
- 304. Non-federal Mexican officials
- 305. A refugee/asylum seeker/immigrant/migrant
- 306. U.S. community members
- 307. Mexican community members
- 308. U.S. advocacy group
- 309. Mexican advocacy group
- 310. Bi-national/international advocacy group
- 311. Community member from another country
- 312. Other
- 313. None

Framing Analysis

The following section is a series of yes/no questions that will be utilized to determine the general thematic topic(s) utilized within a given news story. If your answer to a question is “no”, mark it as “0”. If your answer to a question is “yes”, mark it as “1”

Attribution of Responsibility

- Does the story suggest that some level of the government has the ability to alleviate the problem?
- Does the story suggest that some level of the government is responsible for the issue/problem?
- Does the story suggest solutions to the problem?
- Does the story suggest that an individual (or group of people in society) is responsible for the issue/problem?
- Does the story suggest that the problem requires urgent action?

Human Interest Frame

- Does the story provide a human example or “human face” on the issue?
- Does the story employ adjectives or personal vignettes that generate feelings of outrage, empathy/caring, sympathy, or compassion?
- Does the story emphasize how individuals and groups are affected by the issue/problem?
- Does the story go into the private or personal lives of the actors?

Conflict Frame

- Does the story reflect disagreement between parties/individuals/groups/countries?
- Does one party/individual/group/country reproach another?
- Does the story refer to two sides or more than two sides of the problem/issue?
- Does the story refer to winners and losers?

Morality Frame

- Does the story contain any moral message?
- Does the story make any reference to morality, God, and other religious tenets?
- Does the story offer specific social prescriptions about how to behave?

Economic Frame

- Is there a mention of financial losses or gains now or in the future?
- Is there a mention of the costs/degree of expense involved?
- Is there a reference to economic consequences of pursuing (or not pursuing) a course of action?

Fear/Uncertainty Frame

- Does the overall tone of the story convey urgency or fear?
- Are there terms used that imply danger or a large threat, such as “Crisis” or “Epic proportions”?

- Are there comparisons made to other historical events?

Othering Frame

- Are there comparisons and contrasts made between the refugee/asylum seeker/immigrant/migrant(s) depicted and a U.S. citizen that doesn't fall into these categories?
- Does the story make any references to crimes committed by refugees/asylum seekers/immigrants/migrants?
- Does the story explicitly use the term "Legal" or "Illegal"?
- Does the story mention the number of refugees/asylum seekers/immigrants/migrants who have crossed the border?
- Does the story use terms such as "flooded" or "rocketed" in reference to the number of refugees/asylum seekers/immigrants/migrants who have crossed the border?

Once the stories were coded, they were analyzed in search of patterns present among the codes, how they differed among news outlets and sources, and whether these patterns had shifted as the pandemic stretched on.

A total of 93 stories were collected in Newsbank for the defined period. The stories were downloaded and stored and sorted according to the coding book. The statistical analysis was done using SPSS.

Results

To interrogate if frames shift depending on date, publication, and source usage, the interaction between these variables must be examined first.

Overall Frame & Source Usage

Table 1: Frequency of Stories by Yearly Quarter

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Q1 2020	5	5.4
	Q2 2020	18	19.4
	Q3 2020	7	7.5
	Q4 2020	10	10.8
	Q1 2021	17	18.3
	Q2 2021	15	16.1
	Q3 2021	13	14.0
	Q4 2021	8	8.6
	Total	93	100.0

The above frequency table by yearly quarter illustrates that news interest in the topic of migration and public health seems to come in waves; a period of low coverage gives way (either gradually or suddenly) to an increase in activity, presumably caused by fear of the COVID pandemic (alongside policies that affect how migrants are handled, along with how both factors will affect the US Border Patrol), that wanes as time goes on. Interestingly, the periods of highest activity occur during the 2020 presidential election, and the inauguration of Joseph Biden on January 20th, 2020, presumably due to the increase in migration following Trump's leave of office, along with debate over what is to be done about the policies left in his wake. However, as

the novelty of both the pandemic and Biden’s presidency wear off, the frequency in news coverage of RASIM in the context of public health also wanes.

Table 2: Story Frequency * Outlet

		Publication
		Frequency
Valid	The Laredo Morning Times	13
	The Brownsville Herald	11
	The San Diego Union-Tribune	36
	The Arizona Daily Star	18
	The McAllen Monitor	15
	Total	93

Table 3: Publication * Quarter Crosstabulation

Count

		Quarter								Total
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
		2020	2020	2020	2020	2021	2021	2021	2021	
Publication	The Laredo Morning Times	0	3	0	3	1	2	4	0	13
	The Brownsville Herald	0	3	1	3	3	0	1	0	11
	The San Diego Union-Tribune	3	9	4	2	8	5	1	4	36
	The Arizona Daily Star	2	2	2	1	1	5	2	3	18
	The McAllen Monitor	0	1	0	1	4	3	5	1	15
	Total	5	18	7	10	17	15	13	8	93

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2- sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	37.214 ^a	28	.114
Likelihood Ratio	44.175	28	.027
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.230	1	.135
N of Valid Cases	93		

a. 36 cells (90.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .59.

Table 2 shows that The San Diego Union-Tribune devoted more stories to undocumented migration and Covid-19, doubling the frequency of stories relative to the second most prominent paper in this sample, The Arizona Daily Star. While circulation numbers are not available, San Diego does have double the population of Tucson, which in turn has double the population of Laredo. One would assume that the larger the city is, the more resources it has available to it, and thus is able to create more original content. An alternative explanation may be that Brownsville and Laredo, being the cities in the sample with the highest Hispanic population (over 94%), were

less likely to focus on undocumented migrants and on their potential as a public health threat.

The descriptive nature of this study, however, does not allow to draw any conclusions about the reasons explaining the discrepancies in the number of news stories between the five dailies.

Table 4: Source 1 Frequency

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	U.S. federal officials	26	28.0
	Mexican federal officials	1	1.1
	Non-federal U.S. officials	18	19.4
	A refugee/asylum seeker/immigrant/migrant	13	14.0
	U.S. community members	10	10.8
	Mexican community members	2	2.2
	U.S. advocacy group	17	18.3
	Bi-national/international advocacy group	1	1.1
	Other	2	2.2
	None	3	3.2
	Total	93	100.0

Table 4 shows that US federal officials are the most frequently used first citation/source in the sample. This ranges from office holders such as the President of the United States or members of the U.S. Congress to employees of the U.S. Border Patrol. This is followed by non-federal U.S. officials, typically representing a city, county, or a state. Members of U.S. advocacy groups are the third most used primary source in this sample, especially when it comes to talking about issues and challenges faced by refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants, and migrants (referred to from here as RASIM). The fourth most used primary source is the members of the RASIM group themselves. The framing of undocumented immigration and of their potential threat to public health, thus, was not balanced but heavily tilted in favor of public officials (federal or otherwise), giving much less chance to activists, Mexican officials, or the migrants

themselves to influence the representation and framing of the issue. Table 5 shows the same information but distributed by quarter with US Officials dominating in most of the quarters.

Table 5: Source 1 * Quarter Crosstabulation

Count

		Quarter								Total
		Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	Q4 2020	Q1 2021	Q2 2021	Q3 2021	Q4 2021	
Source 1	U.S. federal officials	2	7	1	3	6	3	3	1	26
	Mexican federal officials	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Non-federal U.S. officials	1	2	2	0	5	5	3	0	18
	RASIM	0	1	0	4	2	3	0	3	13
	U.S. community members	0	2	0	2	2	2	2	0	10
	Mexican community members	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
	U.S. advocacy group	1	4	4	0	2	1	1	4	17
	Bi-national/international advocacy group	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Other	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
	None	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	3
Total		5	18	7	10	17	15	13	8	93

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2- sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	82.477 ^a	63	.050
Likelihood Ratio	72.752	63	.188
Linear-by-Linear Association	.037	1	.848
N of Valid Cases	93		

a. 79 cells (98.8%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .05.

Table 6: Source 2 Frequency

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	U.S. federal officials	18	19.4
	Mexican federal officials	1	1.1
	Non-federal U.S. officials	15	16.1
	RASIM	2	2.2
	U.S. community members	8	8.6
	U.S. advocacy group	16	17.2
	Other	1	1.1
	None	32	34.4
	Total	93	100.0

These trends largely hold true for articles which use a secondary source or citation, a majority of which use none (see Table 6). However, one sees a significant decrease in the use of RASIM as a source while the frequency of US advocacy sources remains consistent (2 RASIM sources versus 33 US public officials). No RASIMs appeared as sources in news stories about them after the third quarter (Table 7).

Table 7: Source 2 * Quarter Crosstabulation

Count

		Quarter								Total
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
		2020	2020	2020	2020	2021	2021	2021	2021	
Source 2	U.S. federal officials	2	3	2	4	3	1	2	1	18
	Mexican federal officials	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Non-federal U.S. officials	1	2	0	0	4	2	5	1	15
	A refugee/asylum seeker/immigrant/migrant	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
	U.S. community members	0	2	1	1	1	2	0	1	8
	U.S. advocacy group	1	4	2	1	3	4	0	1	16
	Other	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	None	0	7	1	4	4	6	6	4	32
	Total	5	18	7	10	17	15	13	8	93

Continued from Table 7

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	47.36 6 ^a	49	.540
Likelihood Ratio	46.15 0	49	.589
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.339	1	.247
N of Valid Cases	93		

a. 61 cells (95.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .05.

When examining Table 8, it becomes immediately apparent that the only outlet in the sample that gave RASIM a significant voice in their coverage was the San Diego Union-Tribune, although this paper favored official sources over the former by far. Otherwise, U.S. officials, both federal and non-federal, made up the majority of the primary sources in all other news outlets both as first and as second sources (Table 9). Unfortunately, the Chi Square was unreliable in both cases due to the high number of cells with less than five counts, so we cannot be certain the differences between the sources existed in the total coverage of immigrants in the five newspapers.

Table 8: Source 1 * Publication Crosstabulation

			Publication					
			The Laredo Morning Times	The Brownsville Herald	The San Diego Union- Tribune	The Arizona Daily Star	The McAllen Monitor	Total
Source 1	U.S. federal officials	Count	6	5	5	5	5	26
		% within Publication	46.2%	45.5%	13.9%	27.8%	33.3%	28.0 %
	Mexican federal officials	Count	0	0	0	0	1	1
			0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.7%	1.1%
	Non-federal U.S. officials	Count	3	1	7	4	3	18
			23.1%	9.1%	19.4%	22.2%	20.0%	19.4 %
	RASIM	Count	1	1	10	0	1	13
			7.7%	9.1%	27.8%	0.0%	6.7%	14.0 %
	U.S. community members	Count	1	1	5	2	1	10
			7.7%	9.1%	13.9%	11.1%	6.7%	10.8 %
	Mexican community members	Count	0	0	2	0	0	2
			0.0%	0.0%	5.6%	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%
	U.S. advocacy group	Count	1	3	5	5	3	17
			7.7%	27.3%	13.9%	27.8%	20.0%	18.3 %
	Bi- national/international advocacy group	Count	0	0	1	0	0	1
			0.0%	0.0%	2.8%	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%
	Other	Count	0	0	1	0	1	2
			0.0%	0.0%	2.8%	0.0%	6.7%	2.2%
	None	Count	1	0	0	2	0	3
			7.7%	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%	0.0%	3.2%
Total		Count	13	11	36	18	15	93
			100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0 %

Continued from Table 8

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2- sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	36.666 ^a	36	.438
Likelihood Ratio	38.863	36	.342
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.171	1	.279
N of Valid Cases	93		

a. 45 cells (90.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .12.

Table 9: Source 2 * Publication Crosstabulation

			Publication					
			The Laredo Morning Times	The Brownsville Herald	The San Diego Union- Tribune	The Arizona Daily Star	The McAllen Monitor	Total
Source	U.S. federal officials	Count	2	3	5	4	4	18
2			15.4%	27.3%	13.9%	22.2%	26.7%	19.4%
	Mexican federal officials	Count	0	0	1	0	0	1
			0.0%	0.0%	2.8%	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%
	Non-federal U.S. officials	Count	3	1	5	1	5	15
			23.1%	9.1%	13.9%	5.6%	33.3%	16.1%
	RASIM	Count	0	1	1	0	0	2
			0.0%	9.1%	2.8%	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%
	U.S. community members	Count	1	1	4	1	1	8
			7.7%	9.1%	11.1%	5.6%	6.7%	8.6%
	U.S. advocacy group	Count	0	2	11	2	1	16
			0.0%	18.2%	30.6%	11.1%	6.7%	17.2%
	Other	Count	0	0	0	0	1	1
			0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.7%	1.1%
	None	Count	7	3	9	10	3	32
			53.8%	27.3%	25.0%	55.6%	20.0%	34.4%
	Total		Count	13	11	36	18	15
			100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Continued from Table 9

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2- sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	118.217 ^a	63	.000
Likelihood Ratio	75.671	63	.131
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.324	1	.127
N of Valid Cases	93		

a. 76 cells (95.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .01.

To stay consistent with Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) methodology, the results of the "Yes/No" portion of the codebook were run through a principal component analysis with varimax rotation to note how each frame signifier clustered. Only the items with a factor loading higher than .50 were included in the scales, a threshold commonly used by researchers (Pedhazur & Pedhazur-Schmelkin, 1991). Signifiers that score higher than this threshold occur together frequently enough to make for a coherent frame. Those that score lower than .50 don't occur frequently enough with other signifiers to have a strong factor loading. Each column in the table indicates a different clustered group, with the signifiers that have an acceptable factor loading marked in bold.

Table 10: Rotated Component Matrix (n = 93)

	Component							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
H.Interest: Human Face?	.926	.000	-.060	.010	-.099	-.043	-.091	.067
H.Interest: Adjectives or vignettes?	.875	.001	-.171	.073	-.169	-.024	.024	-.025
H.Interest: Effect on Individual/Group?	.793	.274	.100	.031	-.195	.104	.109	-.042
H.Interest: Private or Personal Lives?	.769	-.040	-.140	.098	-.004	-.136	.107	.070
Attribution: Solution?	.088	.856	-.078	.076	.067	.040	.082	-.150
Attribution: Government Alleviation?	-.106	.708	.081	-.106	-.006	.099	-.085	.022
Attribution: Government Responsibility?	.200	.673	.237	-.175	.070	.103	-.075	.088
Fear: Fearful Tone?	.161	.436	.219	.348	-.133	-.030	.414	.156
Othering: Crime?	-.078	-.346	.324	.317	.144	.072	.237	-.321
Conflict: Disagreement?	-.060	.142	.868	-.102	-.098	.010	-.025	.063
Conflict: Two+ sides	-.188	-.110	.760	-.171	-.091	.119	.016	.052
Conflict: Reproach?	-.011	.264	.670	.178	.187	-.068	.054	-.004
Morality: Moral message?	.177	-.057	-.120	.735	-.042	-.089	.115	-.101
Morality: Social Prescription?	.154	-.070	-.309	.730	-.067	-.015	.124	.101
Othering: Distinctions?	-.086	.073	.321	.576	-.062	.270	-.060	-.057
Attribution: Individual Responsibility?	-.251	.004	.017	.434	.425	.005	-.391	.035
Othering: Flooding?	-.221	-.026	-.046	.011	.649	-.059	.065	.003
Economic: Cost/Degree of Expense?	-.014	.262	-.025	-.173	.602	.299	-.177	.003
Othering: Number?	-.220	.091	-.065	-.143	.576	-.144	.439	.024
Othering: Legal/Illegal?	.016	-.256	.237	.424	.452	.141	-.030	-.038

Continued from Table 10

Economic: Financial losses or gain?	-.091	.029	-.009	.090	-.157	.901	.041	-.018
Economic: References to economic consequences of an action?	-.003	.177	.104	-.023	.417	.753	-.111	.088
Morality: Reference to Morality/Religion?	.236	-.218	-.128	.049	.091	-.006	.656	-.176
Fear: Terms to imply Danger or Threat?	-.173	.178	.269	.234	-.049	-.025	.580	.305
Fear: Historical Comparisons?	.071	-.094	.025	-.099	-.014	.081	-.017	.884
Attribution: Urgent Action?	-.009	.543	.185	.228	.216	-.134	.126	.567

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 8 iterations.

The complete absence of the “Winners/Losers” signifier in the sample impeded upon SPSS’ ability to conduct a factor analysis, so it was removed. While d’Haenens & de Lange (2001) imply that a reading below .50 notes an absence of the signifier, this is contradicted in Semetko & Valkenburg’s original study, which states that a low factor loading could indicate that the signifier was “empirically and conceptually more distant to the remaining items that loaded on the same factors” (2000, p.99).

When looking at the factor analysis results, one sees that the Human Interest, Conflict, and Morality cluster by category, matching with Semetko & Valkenburg’s findings. Also matching with Semetko and Valkenburg’s finding is the lack of correlation of the “Winners & Losers” signifier. Where it differs from Semetko & Valkenburg’s study but matches with d’Haenens & de Lange’s (2001) findings is the relatively low factor loading of “Individual

Responsibility”. While the authors posit that the low factor rating is due to a lack of prominence regarding stories covering the subject matter, we found that the number of stories containing this signifier occurred more frequently than the number of stories that contained any of the signifiers for the “Morality” category, all of which have a factor loading higher than 50%. As a result, we can surmise that the low factor loading of the “Individual Responsibility” signifier is not the result of its absence, but the result of a less consistent co-occurrence with the other signifiers in its category.

Otherwise, the other frames lower than the .50 factor loading were “Fearful Tone”, “Crime”, and “References to legality”. Given that these were all attempts at creating signifiers for new categories related to potentially dehumanizing language, this is an indicator that these signifiers need to be either reworked or thrown out entirely. The “References to Legality” signifier occurred primarily during op-ed pieces as opposed to more traditional news stories, therefore it seems the most likely candidate to be thrown out.

Certain signifiers clustered with categories outside of their own, such as the remaining ones in “Othering” and “Fear”, once again drawing attention the need to rework the signifiers for this category. Others had one or two outliers which, while not clustered with their initial category, did cluster with others. Potentially, this could be the result of the relatively low sample size compared to other studies which used this codebook. It is possible that with a larger sample size, these inconsistencies would be remedied.

Ultimately, “Winners or Losers”, “Fearful Tone”, “Crime”, “References to Legality” and “Individual responsibility” were excluded from the measurements due to their lack of consistent co-occurrence with other signifiers. The reason why these exclusions were made was because, at least in the context of the population being examined, each question was either too distant from

the others in its frame category or simply not relevant to the population at all. As a result, their inclusion in the scales would have potentially interfered with measurements of frame prominence, which were calculated by aggregating the mean scores of each signifier in a category.

Frame Usage

Table 11: Frame Prominence * Outlet

Publication	Attribution of Responsibility	Human Interest	Conflict	Morality	Economics	Fear	Othering	N
Laredo Morning Times	0.42	0.06	0.20	0.15	0.18	0.04	0.21	13
Arizona Daily Star	0.53	0.18	0.37	0.15	0.22	0.20	0.35	18
San Diego Union-Tribune	0.53	0.47	0.21	0.12	0.13	0.17	0.11	36
Brownsville Herald	0.57	0.36	0.24	0.06	0.09	0.14	0.21	11
McAllen Monitor	0.62	0.12	0.42	0.05	0.11	0.27	0.33	15
Total	0.53	0.29	0.28	0.11	0.15	0.17	0.22	93

Our research questions asked whether there was variance between sources, time periods, and the frequency of tropes related to the depiction of RASIM as an “other” to be feared. To investigate if and how these variances occurred, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted. Table 11 shows the mean framing scores per outlet, ranging from 0 to 1, with 0 indicating a story has no signifiers at all and 1 indicating that all the signifiers of a frame are present.

The above results show that, overall, “Attribution of Responsibility” is the most prominent frame used by all outlets, followed closely by the “Human Interest” and “Conflict”

frame. The “Human Interest” frame has the most divisive use in the sample, ranging from not being prominent at all in the Laredo Morning Times’ stories to being the second most prominent frame utilized in the San Diego Union-Tribune’s stories.

While the “Othering” frame in total was not particularly prominent relative to the others in the sample, one outlier in terms of signifier usage was the frequent reporting on immigration numbers overall, as demonstrated by Table 12.

Table 12: Descriptive Statistics for Othering

	Publication	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Othering: Distinctions?	The Laredo Morning Times	.00	.000	13
	The Brownsville Herald	.09	.302	11
	The San Diego Union-Tribune	.08	.280	36
	The Arizona Daily Star	.11	.323	18
	The McAllen Monitor	.27	.458	15
	Total	.11	.311	93
Othering: Number?	The Laredo Morning Times	.54	.519	13
	The Brownsville Herald	.45	.522	11
	The San Diego Union-Tribune	.19	.401	36
	The Arizona Daily Star	.67	.485	18
	The McAllen Monitor	.60	.507	15
	Total	.43	.498	93
Othering: Flooding?	The Laredo Morning Times	.08	.277	13
	The Brownsville Herald	.09	.302	11
	The San Diego Union-Tribune	.06	.232	36
	The Arizona Daily Star	.28	.461	18
	The McAllen Monitor	.13	.352	15
	Total	.12	.325	93

The mean for signifier usage of “Numbering” sees significantly higher usage in the sample relative to all other signifiers of the “Othering” frame, and these figures signal that every outlet in the sample but the San Diego Union Tribune frequently reported on the number of RASIM either in the country, apprehended by U.S. law enforcement, or waiting for admittance on the Mexican side of the southern U.S. border.

Table 13: Frame Usage * Source 1

Publication	Attribution of Responsibility	Human Interest	Conflict	Morality	Economics	Fear	Othering	N
Fed US Official	0.48	0.03	0.32	0.09	0.05	0.23	0.29	26
Fed Mex Official	0.5	0	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.50	0.33	1
Non-Fed U.S. Official	0.52	0.06	0.31	0.04	0.28	0.11	0.24	18
RASIM	0.42	0.89	0.08	0.13	0.08	0.12	0.10	13
U.S. Comm. Member	0.85	0.49	0.30	0.27	0.27	0.35	0.17	10
Mex. Comm Member	0.25	0.5	0	0.33	0.17	0.25	0.00	2
U.S. Adv. Group	0.60	0.40	0.33	0.10	0.20	0.09	0.22	19
Intl. Adv. Group	0.5	0.75	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1
Other	0.5	0.13	0.67	0.17	0.00	0.00	0.00	2
None	0.33	0	0.11	0.11	0.00	0.00	0.44	3
Total	0.53	0.29	0.28	0.11	0.15	0.17	0.22	93

One potential cause for variation in frame usage is source usage. Another MANOVA was run comparing frames with source usage, the means of which were used in Table 13. For example, stories that featured RASIM as a source were most likely to have signifiers of the

“Human Interest” frame. The outlet that featured the most RASIM voices, the San Diego Union-Tribune, was also the outlet that published stories which prominently featured the “Human Interest” frame.

The most consistently used source across all outlets were the Federal U.S. Officials. Stories which featured this group as a primary source were more likely to use the Attribution of Responsibility frame, followed by the Conflict and the Othering frame. This is related to outlets consistently covering intra-government debates regarding immigration policy on the Southern U.S. border.

Non-Federal U.S. officials, as the second most utilized source, follow a similar trend with a larger emphasis on economics. Much like with the Federal U.S. officials, this is also related to debates regarding immigration policy, with a larger emphasis on local economics due to this element being a larger concern for local officials.

Members of U.S. advocacy groups, as the third most utilized source, were the second most likely group to be cited in stories which feature the “Attribution of Responsibility” frame, followed by the “Human Interest” frame. This is presumably due to the dual role played by members of U.S. advocacy groups. News organizations often must rely on relatively easy to access centralized sources of information to have a story composed within tight deadlines. Due to the possible language, cultural, legal, and accessibility barriers between journalists and RASIM, U.S. advocacy groups often act as a surrogate (Gemi et al., 2013; Tuchman 1978). Not only do they speak in place of RASIM regarding their experiences, they’re also likely to advocate for changes and reforms due to the nature of their work and organizations.

Regarding the “None” category: typically, these are stories that report on immigration trends using data. As a result, the strong presence of the “Othering” frame in stories which have

no primary source is due to these stories being overwhelmingly focused on immigration numbers or crimes committed by RASIM.

For U.S. Community members, the strong prominence of the “Attribution” and “Human Interest” frames in stories which feature them as a primary source is due to the frequency of op-eds which were published by the papers within the sample. Whereas more traditional news stories attempt to take on a more objective tone, these opinion pieces follow Entman’s (1993) definition of framing, as the authors of these pieces used their personal experiences to identify topics which they saw as issues and point out whom they saw as offenders and what they believed to be potential solutions.

It should be noted however, that significance scores have indicated that the above trends were not statistically significant.

Table 14: Frame Usage * Source 2

Publication	Attribution of Responsibility	Human Interest	Conflict	Morality	Economics	Fear	Othering	N
Fed US Official	0.61	0.17	0.46	0.06	0.11	0.22	0.26	18
Fed Mex Official	0.25	0.00	0.33	0.00	0.67	0.00	0.67	1
Non-Fed U.S. Official	0.63	0.08	0.40	0.07	0.29	0.13	0.22	15
RASIM	0.63	0.75	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.25	0.17	2
U.S. Comm. Member	0.59	0.34	0.04	0.08	0.21	0.25	0.17	8
Mex. Comm Member	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0
U.S. Adv. Group	0.63	0.63	0.19	0.08	0.13	0.13	0.23	16
Intl. Adv. Group	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0
Other	0.75	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.33	1
None	0.38	0.25	0.22	0.20	0.09	0.16	0.19	32
Total	0.53	0.29	0.28	0.11	0.15	0.17	0.22	93

Due to a plurality of stories featuring no secondary source, frame prominence for that category is more spread out. The frame prominence trends regarding Federal U.S. Officials and Non-Federal U.S. officials mostly hold true, with the “Attribution” and “Conflict” frames holding slightly more prominence due to the journalistic practice of covering multiple sides of an issue.

Frame Prominence in Q1 2020

Table 15: Frame Usage * Publication (Q1 2020)

Publication	Attribution of Responsibility	Human Interest	Conflict	Morality	Economics	Fear	Othering	N
Laredo Morning Times	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0
Arizona Daily Star	.25	.50	.50	0	0.17	.25	.17	2
San Diego Union-Tribune	.58	.25	.41	0	0.00	.33	.11	3
Brownsville Herald	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0
McAllen Monitor	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0
Total	.45	.35	.47	0	0.07	.30	.13	5

Table 16: Frame Usage * Source 1

Publication	Attribution of Responsibility	Human Interest	Conflict	Morality	Economics	Fear	Othering	N
Fed US Official	0.63	0.00	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.50	0.17	2
Non-Fed U.S. Official	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.50	0.00	1
U.S. Adv. Group	0.50	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.33	0.00	0.33	1
Intl. Adv. Group	0.50	0.75	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1
Total	0.45	0.35	0.47	0.00	0.07	0.30	0.13	5

*Table 17: Frame Usage * Source 2*

Publication	Attribution of Responsibility	Human Interest	Conflict	Morality	Economics	Fear	Othering	N
Fed US Official	0.63	0.00	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.50	0.17	2
Non-Fed U.S. Official	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.50	0.00	1
RASIM	0.50	0.75	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1
U.S. Adv. Group	0.50	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.33	0.00	0.33	1
Total	0.45	0.35	0.47	0.00	0.07	0.30	0.13	5

This is the “Pre-Problem” stage. Covering the period from January to March, these stories were written prior to or in the immediate aftermath of the COVID-19 lockdowns which occurred in the U.S. on March 11th. As a result, there’s very little coverage of the issue, as can be seen by the small sample of stories from this period. The most prominent frame is that of “Conflict”, which saw comparable prominence in both outlets featured. The second most prominent frame is “Attribution of Responsibility”, which saw more use from the San Diego-Union Tribune. The stories during this period primarily covered conflicts over immigration policy and how it could shift with the looming threat of COVID-19.

Frame Prominence in Q2 2020

Table 18: Frame Usage * Publication (Q2 2020)

Publication	Attribution of Responsibility	Human Interest	Conflict	Morality	Economics	Fear	Othering	N
Laredo Morning Times	0.00	0.00	0.11	0.11	0.00	0.17	0.22	3
Brownsville Herald	0.83	0.42	0.22	0.00	0.00	0.33	0.11	3
San Diego Union-Tribune	0.53	0.19	0.30	0.00	0.19	0.22	0.07	9
Arizona Daily Star	0.63	0.00	0.83	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.17	2
McAllen Monitor	0.50	0.25	0.67	0.00	0.33	0.00	0.33	1
Total	0.50	0.18	0.33	0.02	0.11	0.19	0.13	18

Table 19: Frame Usage * Source 1 (Q2 2020)

Publication	Attribution of Responsibility	Human Interest	Conflict	Morality	Economics	Fear	Othering	N
Fed US Official	0.57	0.07	0.48	0.00	0.00	0.29	0.19	7
Non-Fed U.S. Official	0.25	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.17	0.00	0.00	2
RASIM	0.25	0.75	0.00	0.00	0.33	0.00	0.33	1
U.S. Comm. Member	0.88	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.50	0.75	0.00	2
U.S. Adv. Group	0.63	0.50	0.50	0.00	0.08	0.00	0.08	4
Other	0.00	0.00	0.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1
None	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.33	1
Total	0.50	0.18	0.33	0.02	0.11	0.19	0.13	18

*Table 20: Frame Usage * Source 2 (Q2 2020)*

Publication	Attribution of Responsibility	Human Interest	Conflict	Morality	Economics	Fear	Othering	<i>N</i>
Fed US Official	0.75	0.17	0.67	0.00	0.11	0.17	0.11	3
Non-Fed U.S. Official	0.25	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.17	0.00	0.00	2
U.S. Comm. Member	0.75	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.25	0.00	2
U.S. Adv. Group	0.63	0.44	0.33	0.00	0.08	0.25	0.25	4
None	0.32	0.00	0.38	0.05	0.14	0.21	0.14	7
Total	0.50	0.18	0.33	0.02	0.11	0.19	0.13	18

This period covers April to June of 2020. During this period, stories were primarily focused on how to respond to the COVID-19 epidemic. The most used source by newspapers is U.S. Federal Officials, and the most prominent frame is Attribution of Responsibility, followed by Conflict. The former is most likely to be used in stories which feature U.S. Advocacy Groups, U.S. Federal Officials, and U.S. Community Members. The latter saw heavy usage in stories covering U.S advocacy groups and Federal U.S. officials.

Frame Prominence in Q3 2020

Table 21: Publication * Frame Prominence (Q3 2020)

Publication	Attribution of Responsibility	Human Interest	Conflict	Morality	Economics	Fear	Othering	N
Laredo Morning Times	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0
Brownsville Herald	0.75	0.75	0.67	0.00	0.00	0.50	0.33	1
San Diego Union-Tribune	0.50	0.25	0.17	0.25	0.17	0.25	0.08	4
Arizona Daily Star	0.63	0.13	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.50	0.00	2
McAllen Monitor	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0
Total	0.57	0.29	0.48	0.14	0.10	0.36	0.10	7

Table 22: Frame Prominence * Source 1

Publication	Attribution of Responsibility	Human Interest	Conflict	Morality	Economics	Fear	Othering	N
Fed US Official	1.00	0.25	1.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	1
Non-Fed U.S. Official	0.38	0.13	0.00	0.17	0.00	0.50	0.00	2
U.S. Adv. Group	0.56	0.38	0.58	0.17	0.17	0.13	0.17	4
Total	0.57	0.29	0.48	0.14	0.10	0.36	0.10	7

Table 23: Frame Prominence * Source 2

Publication	Attribution of Responsibility	Human Interest	Conflict	Morality	Economics	Fear	Othering	N
Fed US Official	0.63	0.13	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.50	0.00	2
RASIM	0.75	0.75	0.67	0.00	0.00	0.50	0.33	1
U.S. Comm. Member	0.00	0.25	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.50	0.00	1
U.S. Adv. Group	0.63	0.38	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.00	0.17	2
None	0.75	0.00	0.00	0.33	0.00	0.50	0.00	1
Total	0.57	0.29	0.48	0.14	0.10	0.36	0.10	7

This covers the period from July to September 2020. A lull in coverage, the outlets present in the sample focused on COVID-19 infections and the repercussions it could have on the community at large. This period saw less prominence of Federal U.S. officials as a source due to the larger focus on issues faced by local communities. The most prominent frame is “Attribution of Responsibility”, which was heavily used by all three news outlets present in this quarter’s sample. This is followed by “Conflict”, which was used prominently in the Arizona Daily Star and the Brownsville Herald. The third most prominent frame is “Fear”, which also saw relatively prominent use in the Arizona Daily Star and the Brownsville Herald.

Stories in which the “Attribution of Responsibility” frame was prominent were likely to feature federal U.S. officials and U.S. advocacy groups as the primary source, and feature federal U.S. officials, U.S. advocacy groups, and RASIM as secondary sources. The “Conflict” frame meanwhile was likely to feature U.S. advocacy groups and U.S. federal officials as the source, and U.S. federal officials and RASIM as a secondary course.

Frame Prominence in Q4 2020

Table 24: Frame Prominence * Publication (Q4 2020)

Publication	Attribution of Responsibility	Human Interest	Conflict	Morality	Economics	Fear	Othering	<i>N</i>
Laredo Morning Times	0.17	0.25	0.00	0.56	0.22	0.00	0.11	3
Brownsville Herald	0.33	0.58	0.22	0.11	0.11	0.00	0.11	3
San Diego Union-Tribune	0.38	0.88	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.25	0.17	2
Arizona Daily Star	0.75	1.00	0.33	1.00	0.00	0.50	0.00	1
McAllen Monitor	1.00	0.25	0.67	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	1
Total	0.40	0.55	0.23	0.33	0.10	0.10	0.10	10

Table 25: Frame Prominence * Source 1 (Q4 2020)

Publication	Attribution of Responsibility	Human Interest	Conflict	Morality	Economics	Fear	Othering	N
Fed US Official	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.67	0.00	0.00	0.11	3
RASIM	0.31	0.81	0.17	0.00	0.17	0.13	0.08	4
U.S. Comm. Member	0.88	1.00	0.50	0.50	0.17	0.25	0.17	2
Other	1.00	0.25	0.67	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	1
Total	0.40	0.55	0.23	0.33	0.10	0.10	0.10	10

Table 26: Frame Prominence * Source 2 (Q4 2020)

Publication	Attribution of Responsibility	Human Interest	Conflict	Morality	Economics	Fear	Othering	N
Fed US Official	0.44	0.50	0.33	0.25	0.00	0.13	0.08	4
U.S. Comm. Member	0.50	0.75	0.00	0.00	0.67	0.00	0.00	1
U.S. Adv. Group	1.00	1.00	0.67	0.00	0.33	0.00	0.33	1
None	0.19	0.44	0.08	0.58	0.00	0.13	0.08	4
Total	0.40	0.55	0.23	0.33	0.10	0.10	0.10	10

This period covers October to December 2020. The stories from this period cover a mix of crime, economic struggles, and the 2020 presidential elections. The frame with the highest prominence during this period was the “Human Interest” frame, with the Arizona Daily Star, the San Diego-Union Tribune, and the Brownsville Herald using its signifiers heavily. Following this is the “Attribution of Responsibility” frame, Attribution of Responsibility frame, with the McAllen Monitor and the Arizona Daily Star being more likely to use this frame. The morality frame saw more frequent use during this quarter, prominently showing in the Arizona Daily Star and the Laredo Morning Times’ stories.

The “Human Interest” frame was prominently used in stories which featured U.S. community members and RASIM as primary sources, and U.S. advocacy groups, community

members, and federal officials as secondary sources. The “Attribution of Responsibility” frame saw its most prominent usage among stories which featured “Other” sources (in this case, a candidate for vice president) and U.S. community members as a primary source, and U.S. advocacy groups and community members as a secondary source. The morality frame’s most prominent usage was in stories which featured federal U.S. officials and U.S. community members as primary sources.

Frame Prominence in Q1 2021

Table 27: Frame Prominence * Publication (Q1 2021)

Publication	Attribution of Responsibility	Human Interest	Conflict	Morality	Economics	Fear	Othering	N
Laredo Morning Times	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.33	1
Brownsville Herald	0.50	0.08	0.22	0.00	0.22	0.00	0.33	3
San Diego Union-Tribune	0.63	0.50	0.29	0.13	0.17	0.13	0.29	8
Arizona Daily Star	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.33	0.00	0.50	0.67	1
McAllen Monitor	0.69	0.06	0.33	0.00	0.17	0.25	0.42	4
Total	0.57	0.26	0.25	0.08	0.16	0.15	0.35	17

Table 28: Frame Prominence * Source 1

Publication	Attribution of Responsibility	Human Interest	Conflict	Morality	Economics	Fear	Othering	N
Fed US Official	0.33	0.00	0.17	0.06	0.11	0.17	0.56	6
Non-Fed U.S. Official	0.60	0.15	0.40	0.00	0.27	0.10	0.33	5
RASIM	0.75	0.88	0.17	0.17	0.00	0.25	0.17	2
U.S. Comm. Member	1.00	0.88	0.33	0.33	0.00	0.25	0.17	2
U.S. Adv. Group	0.63	0.13	0.17	0.00	0.33	0.00	0.17	2
Total	0.57	0.26	0.25	0.08	0.16	0.15	0.35	17

Table 29: Frame Prominence * Source 2

Publication	Attribution of Responsibility	Human Interest	Conflict	Morality	Economics	Fear	Othering	N
Fed US Official	0.58	0.08	0.33	0.00	0.22	0.17	0.44	3
Fed Mex Official	0.25	0.00	0.33	0.00	0.67	0.00	0.67	1
Non-Fed U.S. Official	0.69	0.06	0.50	0.00	0.33	0.13	0.33	4
U.S. Comm. Member	0.75	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1
U.S. Adv. Group	0.50	0.58	0.11	0.11	0.00	0.17	0.33	3
Other	0.75	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.33	1
None	0.50	0.44	0.17	0.25	0.00	0.25	0.33	4
Total	0.57	0.26	0.25	0.08	0.16	0.15	0.35	17

This covers the period between January to March 2021. This period saw the largest number of stories in the sample, covering the aftermath of the Trump presidency, its policies, and the cultural attitudes and struggles over the border. The most prominent frame in the stories from this quarter was “Attribution of Responsibility”, which saw heavy usage in all but one outlet. Following this was “Othering”, which was most present in stories by the Arizona Daily Star and the McAllen Monitor.

The “Attribution” frame was most prominently featured in stories which used U.S. community members, RASIM, U.S. advocacy groups, and non-federal U.S. officials as primary sources, and U.S. community members, “Other”, non-federal U.S. officials, and federal U.S. officials as secondary sources. The “Othering” frame was most prominently featured in stories which used federal U.S. officials as a primary source and federal Mexican officials as a secondary source.

Frame Prominence in Q2 2021

Table 30: Frame Usage * Publication (Q2 2021)

Publication	Attribution of Responsibility	Human Interest	Conflict	Morality	Economics	Fear	Othering	<i>N</i>
Laredo Morning Times	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.17	2
Brownsville Herald	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0
San Diego Union-Tribune	0.70	0.80	0.00	0.27	0.07	0.10	0.00	5
Arizona Daily Star	0.50	0.10	0.20	0.07	0.47	0.10	0.40	5
McAllen Monitor	0.33	0.33	0.22	0.11	0.22	0.17	0.33	3
Total	0.53	0.37	0.11	0.13	0.22	0.10	0.22	15

Table 31: Frame Usage * Source 1 (Q2 2021)

Publication	Attribution of Responsibility	Human Interest	Conflict	Morality	Economics	Fear	Othering	<i>N</i>
Fed US Official	0.25	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.22	3
Non-Fed U.S. Official	0.55	0.00	0.33	0.00	0.40	0.00	0.40	5
RASIM	0.58	1.00	0.00	0.33	0.00	0.17	0.11	3
U.S. Comm. Member	0.63	0.75	0.00	0.50	0.50	0.25	0.17	2
Mex. Comm Member	0.50	0.25	0.00	0.00	0.33	0.50	0.00	1
U.S. Adv. Group	1.00	0.75	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1
Total	0.53	0.37	0.11	0.13	0.22	0.10	0.22	15

*Table 32: Frame Usage * Source 2 (Q2 2021)*

Publication	Attribution of Responsibility	Human Interest	Conflict	Morality	Economics	Fear	Othering	N
Fed US Official	0.25	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.33	0.00	0.67	1
Non-Fed U.S. Official	0.75	0.50	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.00	0.17	2
U.S. Comm. Member	0.50	0.13	0.00	0.00	0.17	0.25	0.17	2
U.S. Adv. Group	0.69	0.69	0.00	0.08	0.08	0.13	0.17	2
None	0.42	0.25	0.17	0.17	0.28	0.08	0.22	6
Total	0.53	0.37	0.11	0.13	0.22	0.10	0.22	15

This quarter covers the period between April to June of 2021. Stories in this period were split between covering the struggles of RASIM and government officials debating over the best way to secure the border. As a result, the two most prominent frames in this quarter were “Attribution of Responsibility” and “Human Interest”. The “Attribution” frame was most prominent in stories from the San Diego Union-Tribune, the Arizona Daily Star, and the Laredo Morning Times. The “Human Interest” frame was most prominent in stories from the San Diego Union-Tribune.

The stories that most prominently contained the “Attribution” frame had used every source but federal U.S. officials as a primary source, and prominent secondary sources consisted of non-federal U.S. officials, U.S. community members, and U.S. advocacy group. This is appropriate as various groups try to push differing definitions on what “the border crisis” is and how to solve it. The stories that most prominently featured the “Human Interest” frame had used RASIM, U.S. community members, and U.S. advocacy group members as primary sources, and U.S. advocacy groups and non-federal U.S. officials as secondary sources.

Frame Prominence in Q3 2021

Table 33: Frame Prominence * Publication (Q3 2021)

Publication	Attribution of Responsibility	Human Interest	Conflict	Morality	Economics	Fear	Othering	N
Laredo Morning Times	0.88	0.00	0.58	0.00	0.42	0.00	0.25	4
Brownsville Herald	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.33	1
San Diego Union-Tribune	0.00	0.75	0.00	0.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	1
Arizona Daily Star	0.50	0.00	0.17	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.50	2
McAllen Monitor	0.75	0.00	0.60	0.00	0.00	0.50	0.40	5
Total	0.67	0.06	0.44	0.08	0.13	0.19	0.33	13

Table 34: Frame Prominence * Source 1 (Q3 2021)

Publication	Attribution of Responsibility	Human Interest	Conflict	Morality	Economics	Fear	Othering	N
Fed US Official	1.00	0.00	0.67	0.00	0.00	0.33	0.56	3
Fed Mex Official	0.50	0.00	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.50	0.33	1
Non-Fed U.S. Official	0.75	0.00	0.33	0.11	0.44	0.00	0.22	3
U.S. Comm. Member	0.88	0.00	0.67	0.00	0.17	0.25	0.33	2
Mex. Comm Member	0.00	0.75	0.00	0.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	1
U.S. Adv. Group	0.25	0.00	0.67	0.00	0.00	0.50	0.00	1
None	0.50	0.00	0.17	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.50	2
Total	0.67	0.06	0.44	0.08	0.13	0.19	0.33	13

*Table 35: Frame Prominence * Source 2 (Q3 2021)*

Publication	Attribution of Responsibility	Human Interest	Conflict	Morality	Economics	Fear	Othering	N
Fed US Official	0.75	0.00	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.25	0.50	2
Non-Fed U.S. Official	0.85	0.00	0.47	0.07	0.27	0.20	0.33	5
None	0.50	0.13	0.39	0.11	0.06	0.17	0.28	6
Total	0.67	0.06	0.44	0.08	0.13	0.19	0.33	13

As both the Joe Biden presidency and the COVID-19 epidemic become normalized, it appears that the number of stories per quarter related to immigration and public health get smaller with each quarter. This period covers the months between July and September 2021. Most of these stories focused on continued efforts by U.S. officials to find a solution to what they deemed to be an immigration problem. As a result, federal and non-federal U.S. officials were most frequently used as either primary or secondary sources.

The most prominent frame during this period was “Attribution of Responsibility”, seeing heavy usage in all outlets except for the San Diego Union-Tribune, in which it was absent. The second most prominent frame used was “Conflict”, which was heavily present in the McAllen Monitor and the Laredo Morning Times’ stories. This is presumably due to the Department of Homeland Security meeting with local leaders during this period, with the latter group expressing concerns about how the federal government was handling border security.

This is reflected in the presence of sources during this quarter. RASIM and U.S. advocacy groups are practically absent from the conversation during this period. The “Attribution” frame was most prominent in stories which featured every source but U.S. advocacy group and Mexican community members as primary sources, and both federal and non-federal U.S. officials as secondary sources. The conflict frame saw prominent usage in

stories which had federal U.S. officials, U.S. community members, and U.S. advocacy groups as primary sources, and federal and non-federal U.S. officials as secondary sources.

Frame Prominence in Q4 2021

Table 36: Frame Usage * Publication (Q4 2021)

Publication	Attribution of Responsibility	Human Interest	Conflict	Morality	Economics	Fear	Othering	N
Laredo Morning Times	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0
Brownsville Herald	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0
San Diego Union-Tribune	0.31	0.69	0.00	0.08	0.17	0.00	0.00	4
Arizona Daily Star	0.75	0.17	0.11	0.33	0.44	0.17	0.67	3
McAllen Monitor	0.25	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1
Total	0.47	0.41	0.04	0.17	0.25	0.06	0.25	8

Table 37: Frame Usage * Source 1 (Q4 2021)

Publication	Attribution of Responsibility	Human Interest	Conflict	Morality	Economics	Fear	Othering	N
Fed US Official	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.67	0.00	0.00	1
RASIM	0.25	0.92	0.00	0.11	0.00	0.00	0.00	3
U.S. Adv. Group	0.63	0.13	0.08	0.25	0.33	0.13	0.50	4
Total	0.47	0.41	0.04	0.17	0.25	0.06	0.25	8

*Table 38: Frame Usage * Source 2 (Q4 2021)*

Publication	Attribution of Responsibility	Human Interest	Conflict	Morality	Economics	Fear	Othering	N
Fed US Official	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.67	0.00	0.67	1
Non-Fed U.S. Official	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.67	0.00	0.00	1
U.S. Comm. Member	1.00	0.00	0.33	0.67	0.67	0.50	1.00	1
U.S. Adv. Group	0.50	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1
None	0.19	0.56	0.00	0.17	0.00	0.00	0.08	4
Total	0.47	0.41	0.04	0.17	0.25	0.06	0.25	8

At this point in time, the number of stories present in the quarter dip below the upward trend that started during the 2020 election season, matching the valley in Q3 2020. This period covers the months of October to December 2021, and the stories published during this time were either focused on RASIM overcoming negative experiences or related to the continuing attempts to solve the “border crisis” by the federal government.

The two most prominent frames during this period were “Attribution of Responsibility” and “Human Interest”. The “Attribution” frame, while used by all sources, was most prominent in stories published by the Arizona Daily Star. The prominence of the “Human Interest” frame is almost entirely attributed to its usage by the San Diego Union-Tribune.

The stories which prominently featured the “Attribution” frame were likely to use U.S. advocacy groups and U.S. federal officials as primary sources, and U.S. community members, advocacy groups and federal officials as secondary sources. The “Human Interest” frame, meanwhile, was driven into prominence entirely by RASIM as primary sources and U.S. advocacy groups as secondary sources.

Frame Prominence Trends

Table 39: Frame prominence * Yearly Quarter

	Attribution of Responsibility	Human Interest	Conflict	Morality	Economy	Fear	Othering
Q1 2020	0.45	0.35	0.47	0.00	0.07	0.30	0.13
Q2 2020	0.50	0.18	0.33	0.02	0.11	0.19	0.13
Q3 2020	0.57	0.29	0.48	0.14	0.10	0.36	0.10
Q4 2020	0.40	0.55	0.23	0.33	0.10	0.10	0.10
Q1 2021	0.57	0.26	0.25	0.08	0.16	0.15	0.35
Q2 2021	0.53	0.37	0.11	0.13	0.22	0.10	0.22
Q3 2021	0.67	0.06	0.44	0.08	0.13	0.19	0.33
Q4 2021	0.47	0.41	0.04	0.17	0.25	0.06	0.25
Total	0.53	0.29	0.28	0.11	0.15	0.17	0.22

In table 39, we note the mean for frame prominence by yearly quarter. Attribution of Responsibility has remained the most prominent frame for all but two quarters; Conflict was the most prominent in Q1 2020, and Human Interest in Q4 2020. The second most prominent frame alternated between Conflict and Human Interest.

Morality saw a significant jump in prominence in Q4 2020 before returning to its typically lower levels of prominence. Presumably due to the presidential election season, news outlets were more likely to utilize moral messages and social prescriptions. These signifiers were found in stories which featured U.S. Federal officials, U.S. community members, or presidential candidates as sources.

The Fear frame saw its highest prominence in Q3 2020. Overall trends show that the frame is most prominent in the McAllen Monitor, and among U.S. community members as a

primary source, but in this quarter, it saw stronger use in the Brownsville Herald and the Arizona Daily Star and was featured in stories which involved federal and non-federal U.S. officials as a primary source, and RASIM, U.S. community members, and federal U.S. officials as a secondary source.

The “Othering” frame was consistently stronger in 2021 than it was in 2020. Outlets were more likely to focus on the number of RASIM that’s been apprehended by U.S. enforcement agencies when President Joe Biden took office. Whether or not this reflects an actual increase in migration or apprehensions along the southern U.S. border prior to the Trump administration cannot be determined at this time due to a lack of availability regarding data, but an article written by the U.S. Census Bureau argues that 2021 saw the lowest amount of international migration in the span of 10 years (Schachter et al., 2021).

Terms like “Surge” or “Spike” saw virtually no usage in 2020 but became more commonplace in 2021. While these elements were common in The Laredo Morning Times, the Brownsville Herald and the McAllen Monitor, the Arizona Daily Star consistently contained the most frequent usage of these elements. While not relevant to the framing research, we would like to draw attention to the Arizona Daily Star’s published op-eds, where one article outright compared unauthorized migration to an invasion from an enemy country, while another examined the history of medicalized xenophobia.

Stories which examined RASIM numbers typically used federal and non-Federal U.S. officials as sources, the former of which were most likely to be used as a source in stories where terms such as “Surge” or “Spike” were utilized. Stories which explicitly depicted RASIM as a burden or as distinct from U.S. citizens in some capacity did not occur as frequently as the other

two signifiers, they did tend to be more common in 2021 as well. Typically, the reasons why actions needed to be taken to secure the border remained as an unspoken assumption.

Discussion

This study analyzed five newspapers on the Southern U.S. border in order to examine how utilized frames and sources shifted during a two-year period in the COVID-19 epidemic. The general objective of the study was to explore how these English-speaking newspapers framed immigrants and immigration issues during that period of the pandemic, and how these frames shift (if at all) over its course.

In terms of the first research questions, how did English speaking newspapers on the U.S. side of the border frame immigrants and immigration issues during the first two years of the COVID-19 epidemic?

This study found that the most used frame was “Attribution of Responsibility”. Throughout the pandemic, various parties used their opportunity with the press to outline an issue, assign responsibility, and outline potential solutions for the issue. For four out of five of the publications examined, RASIM were largely absent from the conversation in all publications except for the San Diego Union-Tribune. When they are featured, the story was more focused on the individual struggle of the RASIM being interviewed.

More often, however, U.S. advocacy groups were invited to speak in their place. This is presumably due to relative ease of access journalists have to this group (Gemi et al. 2013; Tuchman 1978). However, these occurrences were not as frequently featured as the perspective of U.S. officials (both federal and non-federal), who often reduced RASIM to an abstract security issue that needs a solution.

In terms of research question 2, how do these frames shift (if at all) over the course of the pandemic?

The findings were consistent with Ogbodo et al.'s (2020) assertion: The dominant frame rarely shifted throughout the course of the sample period. While the dominant frame differed from Ogbodo et al.'s study, the consistent prominence of the “Attribution of Responsibility” frame was surprising. While various parties were offered a chance to contest and debate over dominant discourses (Entman 1993; Gamson et al. 1992; Van Gorp 2007), the main point of contention seemed to be “Who is responsible for the cause and solution of the issue, and what should the solution be?”

While coverage hasn't neatly fit into the Issue Attention Cycle as Shih et al.'s (2008) longitudinal study of epidemic coverage, there is a consistent waxing and waning in terms of interest and coverage.

In terms of the third research question about whether particular sources showed any tendencies to focus or emphasize particular frames?

Tables 11 and 12 indicate that certain frames did occur more commonly among certain sources. RASIM for example appear more often than any other group in stories which utilize the “Human Interest” frame; the “othering” frame was most likely to be featured in stories which had either federal or non-federal U.S. officials as a source; and while all groups were featured in stories which strongly exhibited the “Attribution of responsibility” frame, U.S. advocacy group members saw the most representation in these stories. It should be noted that the data generated is not statistically significant enough to draw any conclusions regarding correlation.

Limitations

The largest limitation in this study has been the scope. Because of the focus on stories which cover both topics of RASIM and public health, published in typically smaller newspapers on the Southern U.S. border, the sample size was relatively small compared to other stories which utilized the same methodology. These papers were picked because of their proximity to the southern U.S. border. While circulation numbers were not accessible for these papers at the time this study was conducted, the small population present on Newsbank during the sample period and the reliance on rehosting stories published that were published by another paper in the selected population (as was the case for the Brownsville Herald) left us with little material to work with.

A second limitation was the researcher's own inexperience with the statistical tools necessary to complete the project. Attempts to see how frames correlated with one another were cast aside due to the researcher's inability to gather this data.

Further Research

Further research could refine the signifiers for the “Fear” and “Othering” frame to fit a more constructionist approach. Previous studies have shown that there are discursive and linguistic signifiers for racism within the press (Dijk 1991; Gabrielatos & Baker 2003; Stewart et al 2011). If some variation of this particular methodology is to be used, the frame signifiers need to be refined to cluster together within a varimax rotation.

The scope could also be expanded, either through a broadening of the topic being examined or an expansion of the papers being studied. A previous study has noted that coverage of immigration tends to get more negative the closer one is to the southern U.S. border (Branton & Dunaway 2009). If we continue the research conducted here, perhaps differences can be charted between how southern border newspapers frame the topic compared to papers further north, or even more national outlets. The time period being studied can be expanded as well; perhaps the pandemic has led to a shift in the prominence of frames that were being utilized, and this shift could be charted in a more longitudinal study.

Alternatively, Spanish-language papers on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border could be examined. One article in the sample discussed how Mexican community members were afraid of the possibility of Americans spreading disease in the country. A comparative study examining how frame prominence and source usage could vary between publications printed in different regions and languages could illustrate potential differences in journalistic practices between the outlets and areas.

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