

Framing Immigration and Illegal Immigration in the 2016 Presidential Campaigns: Comparing Donald Trump and Bernie Sander's Position¹

*By Jin Yang**

This study compared the U.S. TV news coverage of Donald Trump's and Bernie Sanders' talking points on immigration in the 2016 presidential campaign. Utilizing six common frames on immigration in general and adopting framing's function approach (which consists of definition, causes and solutions aspects of an issue or a topic under discussion) to illegal immigration, the study content analyzed 153 TV news transcripts. Trump's talking points highlighted the claim that immigrants were dangerous because they brought crimes to U.S., and they had to be deported and borders must be secured. Sanders' talking points emphasized the idea of a nation of immigrants where even illegal immigrants should be entitled to basic human rights, and immigration reform constituted a better solution. The causes for illegal immigration, however, were largely marginalized in the TV news coverage.

Keywords: *Framing immigration, framing illegal immigration, framing's function approach, 2016 U.S. presidential campaign, U.S. TV news coverage of election*

Introduction

Ethnic diversity and immigration may be the United States' most outstanding, if not the most unique, cultural and social threads of the fabric of the country. However, the public opinion reflected in the 1992–2002 ten-year Poll Trend indicates the public's ongoing negativity and ambivalence towards immigrants, and a strong anti-immigration sentiment after 9/11 (Muste, 2013). The year of 2016 witnessed more polarizing opinions among the U.S. electorate on immigration. As TV was a closely watched media platform by majority of voters, an analysis of how two 2016 presidential front-running candidates talked about immigration on TV would only be revealing.

The most common way for media elites, including politicians, to promote or define issues is through framing (Kim and Wanta, 2018). Research has shown that the framing of issues may have an effect on public perception and interpretation of issues (Chong and Druckman, 2007; Entman, 1993; Grabe and Bucy, 2008). Television, still the top source for election results in 2016 (Anderson, 2016), ranks as the second most popular political news platform after social media, even for millennials (Mitchell et al., 2016). Therefore, the U.S. television is one of the most important platforms to investigate. Second, Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders represent typical positions on immigration among Republican and Democrat

*Professor, University of Memphis, USA.

¹This research project was funded by the 2017 Faculty Research Grant of the University of Memphis. The author would like to recognize and thank graduate student William Colter Prentis for his data coding assistance.

voters. Kathleen Parker, the columnist for the *Washington Post*, commented in a Sunday morning NBC news/interview program *Meet the Press* that "I actually see Trump and Sanders as sort of mirror images of each other in that they're representing the extremes of the base," (Meet the Press Transcript, 2015). Zooming in on their positions on immigration will efficiently uncover the complexity and subtlety of immigration. After all, immigration is not a monolithic issue, but a dividing issue not only along party lines but also among party members (Thompson, 2018). Third, though researchers have studied a diverse group of political issues, including immigration issues, in relation to presidential elections from the framing perspective, few have focused on the framing of immigration issue from the comparative approach.

Therefore, the study intends to adopt the theoretical framework of framing in analysing and comparing the TV news programs that have reported Trump and Sanders as presidential candidates talking about immigration. The six-common-immigration frames developed by Quinsaat (2014) and the illegal immigration frames developed by Kim et al., (2011) based on Entman's (1993) conceptualization of functionality of framing are to be adopted in the study to provide a comprehensive picture of immigration in news by two front runners.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework of Framing

In general, there are two kinds of frames based on where the frames are: in people's minds or in media texts. The first one, also known as *audience frames* (Cappella and Jamieson, 1997), or *micro-constructs* (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007) refers to the frames in the minds of individuals that help to process information and form their impression or perceptions of the world. The second one, known as *media frames* (Cappella and Jamieson, 1997), or *macro constructs* (Scheufele, 1999; Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007) refers to modes of presentation that journalists and media communicators adopt in media discourses to deliver information (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996). While media frames are more relevant in this study, it is impossible not to mention audience frames in defining the frame construct.

The framing theory postulates that an issue can be examined from different perspectives for multiple values and views (Chong and Druckman, 2007). Framing, therefore, assists people in forming a particular idea of an issue or leading people's thinking about an issue (Chong and Druckman, 2007). Goffman (1974) defined "framing" as "schemata of interpretation" that allows users to organize experiences (p.46). Goffman's sociological approach to defining a frame becomes very useful for the study of journalistic messages because media has a great amplitude for producing social frameworks of interpretation and playing a key role in shared social discourse (Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015). While Goffman (1974) was usually credited as the first scholar to define the term *framing*, his definition seems to be more about the individuals' capacity to interpret the message.

Many other scholars and researchers defined framing from a media perspective. Entman (1993) noted that "to frame a communicating text or message is to promote certain facets of a "perceived reality" and make them more salient in such a way that endorses a specific problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or a treatment recommendation" (p. 51). Tuchman (1978) pointed out that a news frame "organizes everyday reality" because news making is not only about reflecting and presenting the reality but also about constructing the reality (Tuchman 1978, p. 193). And that "central organizing idea" not only provides meaning to a series of events but also develops a connection among them (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989, p. 143). Shah et al., (2002), however, emphasized that a frame promotes "particular definitions and interpretations of political issues" (p. 343) which aligns well with Entman's (1993) take on framing: orienting readers.

The two approaches are not completely independent from each other. Thus, arises social constructionism that speculates such a relation: audience frames are closely related to media frames. Van Gorp (2007) points out that social constructionism is all about developing reality in social interaction. Media audiences are active in the sense of processing and interpreting what is made available to them (Wicks, 2001). However, mass media only delivers a limited range of persistent frames for audience to process (Pan and Kosicki, 1993; Reese, 2001). Eventually, these persistent frames help establish "interpretation of events" (Goffman, 1974) or thinking of a particular issue (Chong and Druckman, 2007) such as attributing responsibility treatments as concluded by Iyengar (1991) and Scheufele (2000). Thereupon, the functionality of frames in constructing social reality through definition, causal pinpoints and solutions by Entman (1993) is of particular importance in examining the frames of issues presented by the media.

Media Framing of Presidential Campaigns

Media frames matter a lot because they influence public attitudes and behaviors (Chong and Druckman, 2007). Grabe and Bucy (2008) noted that although political campaigns shape the candidate's public performances to a great extent, it is journalists who have the final say about what aspects of that performance are conveyed to audiences, and hence media retains some influence over the candidate's public image.

A majority of political science and communication literature is about how elites' frames (such as the ones of intellectuals, politicians and interest groups) influenced citizens' frames and attitudes (Chong and Druckman, 2007). While some researchers focused on the media bias or favors given to candidates, others compared how candidates were presented in different media platforms. For instance, D'Allessio and Allen (2000) conducted a meta-analysis of 59 studies that reviewed the media coverage of presidential elections. They concluded that no significant biases or favors were shown for candidates in the newspaper coverage, and the same was almost true of the TV coverage. Miller et al., (1998) studied and compared how 1996 GOP presidential candidates framed themselves in press releases and how elite newspapers covered them. They concluded that the four

GOP candidates' images were distinct in press releases, but news stories distinguished the candidates even more and placed the candidates in very different positions. Grabe and Bucy (2008) identified very different partisan ways of presenting candidates. While Democrats tended to present their presidential candidates in a populist frame in network news, Republicans preferred to present theirs in an ideal candidate frame with linkages to patriotic symbols. Lowry and Xie (2007) studied the 2004 presidential campaign coverage by TV news in comparison to the coverage in the years of 1996 and 1992. They concluded that cable news, CNN and Fox News, were more interested in covering poll stories and security issues while the networks displayed more interested in traditional topics of economy and religion. Kim and Wanta (2018) studied the frames used in the four major U.S. newspaper coverage of the immigration debate during election years. They found that conflict frame was the most dominant frame, followed by human interest frame as the second frame and horse-race frame as the third frame. They also found that "illegal" was the most frequently associated characteristic attached to the immigrants.

If issues and policies are the most important attention points in a presidential election, what seems to be needed is the comparison of candidates' positions, especially on pressing issues. How one candidate distinguishes himself/herself from the rest in terms of their stances on issues is not only what holds him/her accountable in the future terms if elected, but also acts as a campaign strategy that may resonate with and appeal to voters. This study attempts to focus on the issue of immigration by comparing the views of the Republican candidate and the Democrat candidate on immigration in general, and illegal immigration in particular. The study wants to gauge how two candidates' positions on immigration were framed on TV. And most important of all, the study is especially interested in finding out how the illegal immigration issue was talked about by the two candidates.

Immigration in the United States

Ashley (2006) points out that America is a "nation of immigrants" but not "a nation of illegal immigrants" emphasizing that "immigration is not the same thing as illegal immigration," (p. 344). Unfortunately, these two terms get intertwined and mixed up in political talks and mass communication discourses. Politicians and media tend to associate the general term of immigration with the specific term of illegal immigration, causing legal immigration somehow to fade into the background. However, the 2018 Current Population Survey reveals that 28% of the overall U.S. population (89.4 million) were legal immigrants (Zong et al., 2019) while 3.2% of the nation's population (10.5 million) were illegal immigrants in 2017 based on Pew Research Center's results (Radford, 2019). Moreover, the portrayals of immigrants are mostly negative (Farris and Mohamed, 2018).

Foreign-born population inflated from 9.6 million (4.7 % of U.S. population) in 1970 to 28.4 million (10.4% of the U.S. population) in 2000 (Camarota, 2001)

due to the 1965 landmark law² that rewrote U.S. immigration policy (Pew Research Center, 2015). However, after September 11, 2001, the trend completely changed. President George W. Bush launched border security initiatives in 2003, including measures on terrorist attack, illegal immigration and drug smuggling (Securing the Homeland and Strengthening the Nation, n.d.). The U.S. government developed the Department of Homeland Security (Chishti and Bergeron, 2011), and legislators focused on tackling immigration from the perspective of homeland security (Quinsaat, 2014).

Even the academic world began to hear a different voice about immigrants. Political scientist and historian Huntington (2004) suggested that the biggest problem of Latin American immigration, and especially Mexican immigration, to the U.S. is the so-called "Hispanization," which may lead the country toward a demographic "Reconquista" of the U.S. regions (p. 221).

On the public front, some activist organizations, such as *The Minuteman Project* whose mission is to monitor the flow of undocumented immigrants by setting up watch posts and even armed forces along the Arizona-Mexico border, have attracted far more media attention and public debate on illegal immigration (Chavez, 2008).

All these forces led to several national and state-level legislative measures. In 2005, the U.S. house of representatives introduced a bill named *Border Protection, Anti-Terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act* (H.R. 4437) and passed it by a vote of 239 to 182, though the bill failed in the Senate (Archibold, 2010). In 2009, the state of Arizona passed a bill on law enforcement support and neighborhood safety, which was probably the harshest anti-illegal immigration act in history (Archibold, 2010).

The most recent significant development in immigration concerns the termination of *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals* or DACA³ by the Trump administration (Schallhorn, 2018). The DACA program, developed in the Obama era, allowed minors who arrived at the U.S. illegally to be free from deportation. Trump's termination was invalidated by a federal judge in California, thus the Trump administration has to resume accepting DACA renewals (Chavez, 2018). USCIS has resumed accepting requests to renew a grant of deferred action under DACA, however, the future of DACA remains to be decided.

The public opinion on DACA reveals a striking 42-point partisan difference. While only 50% of the Republicans say it is all right to grant permanent legal status to immigrants who entered the U.S. illegally when they were children, it is an overwhelming majority of 92% of the Democrats who say so (Tyson, 2018).

²The 1965 *Immigration and Nationality Act* wiped out the national origins quota system that had favored immigrants from Europe and replaced it with one that values family reunification and skilled immigrants (Pew Research Center, 2015). As a result, more than half (51%) of the new immigrants are from Latin America and one-quarter from Asia (Pew Research Center, 2015).

³Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) is a kind of administrative relief from deportation. The purpose of DACA is to protect eligible immigrant youth who came to the United States when they were children from deportation. DACA gives young undocumented immigrants: 1) protection from deportation, and 2) a work permit. The program expires after two years, subject to renewal. Excerpt from <https://undocu.berkeley.edu/legal-support-overview/what-is-daca/>.

Immigration may be the No. 1 issue in the 2016 presidential campaign due to its conflicting nature and complication (Jones, 2015). Therefore, in a close primary or general election contest, even if immigration is less important than economy and other issues, the election outcome could be totally dictated by the immigration stand (Jones, 2015).

Therefore, the study intends to investigate how immigration in general was framed by presidential candidates via the U.S. television, and then it zooms in on how illegal immigration was framed by presidential candidates in the U.S. television. Here are two research questions to be addressed in this study.

Q1. How was the immigration issue framed by the 2016 presidential candidates Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders in the U.S. television?

Q2. How was the illegal immigration issue framed by the 2016 presidential candidates Trump and Bernie Sanders in the U.S. television?

Method

Sampling

The sample of the six U.S. TV news transcripts (i.e., CNN, MSNBC, Fox News, ABC, CBS, NBC) was obtained from the Lexis-Nexis database. The time frame for the sample starts from the two candidates' formal announcement dates to enter the race. Trump's time frame starts from June 16, 2015 and Sanders' from May 26, 2015. The end date of the time frame for both candidates is June 16, 2016, when Sanders announced that he would exit the race and work with Clinton to defeat Trump in the presidential election. In collecting samples for both candidates, the author found that there were more news transcripts on Trump than on Sanders. Therefore, to create comparable samples for both candidates, June 16 was also set as the end date for the Trump sample. The study used all the news transcripts available for the Sanders' sample because the TV news coverage on Sanders' position turned out to be much fewer than expected. For Trump's sample, a constructed month sampling technique was taken. The Trump sample ended up with 101 news transcripts, and the Sanders sample with 52 news transcripts.

Measurements

To examine immigration in general, the study borrowed Quinsaat's (2014) approach to frames that were derived from his inductive analysis of news story data and theoretical constructs speculated from literature review. Quinsaat's (2014) findings yielded six common frames on immigration: Nation of Immigrants, Failed Immigration Policy, Dangerous Immigrants, Cheap Labor, Immigrant Takeover, Immigrant-as-Other. These six frames, developed in the examination of immigration coverage on news media, can serve as generic frames for the immigration issue. The frame of "Nation of Immigrants" (NOI) features the immigrant history of the United States, honors the process of becoming a citizen,

supports undocumented immigrants' protests, promotes their human rights and promises not deporting them (Quinsaat, 2014, p. 583). The frame of "Failed Immigration Policy" (FIP) criticizes the failure of the country to address the immigration problem, or the inability of the government to perform its role resolving the conflicts between local and the federal governments, and wordings such as border control, rules of laws and similar words often appear in such a frame (Quinsaat, 2014, p. 584). The frame of "Dangerous Immigrants" (DI) concerns national security, and wordings such as terrorists, terrorism, professional agitators, criminals, bad people are associated with immigrants (Quinsaat, 2014, p. 585). The frame of "Cheap Labor" (CL) stresses the economic factors that drive immigration, as this frame is more about poverty, jobs, and unequal incomes and resources (Quinsaat, 2014, p. 586–587). The frame of "Immigrant Takeover" (IT) applies a demographic perspective on the issue, voicing the concern that the minority of population becomes the majority, and the U.S. population composition shifts and changes (Quinsaat, 2014, p. 588–589). The frame of "Immigrant-as-Other" (IAO) offers a pessimistic view on the assimilation of immigrants in that immigrants' faith, values, beliefs, and cultural inheritance are difficult to integrate in the mainstream U.S. system (Quinsaat, 2014, p. 590–591). The study measured the six common frames at the ratio level by counting the frequency, or the number of times, a particular common frame appeared in the TV news transcripts.

The study examined the illegal immigration issue coverage using Entman's (1993) idea about the key functions of framing from a social constructionism approach. Basically, illegal immigration is investigated from three aspects: how it is defined, how its causes, or root, are explained and what solutions are offered. Kim et al., (2011) adopted such an approach in examining six regional and national newspapers' coverage of illegal immigration. Their *definitions of illegal immigration* reside in whether illegal immigrants were reported in the context of crimes, social costs, national security, safety, job loss, basic human rights requirement, and others, all of which were measured at the nominal level with dichotomous categories of yes and no in this study. *Likely causes* for illegal immigrants were operationalized by Kim et al., (2011) as Latin America's economic problems, U.S. immigration system's failure, U.S. weak border control, lack of strong law enforcement, and others, all of which were measured as the binary code of yes or no in this study. Lastly, *solutions* for the illegal immigration problem were defined by Kim et al., (2011) as consisting in six categories: helping Latin America economy, immigration reform, tougher border control, stricter law enforcement, deportation of immigrants and others. Again, the measurement was taken as the binary code of yes or no for each category in this study.

One graduate student and the researcher worked on the sample coding. Three rounds of trainings were taken until the inter-coder reliabilities, i.e., Scott's pi (p), for all variables reached at least 0.80.

Results

The study analysed a total of 153 TV news transcripts with 66% on Trump and 34% on Sanders. Six TV networks or cable services were included: CNN (36%), Fox News (23%), MSNBC (13%), ABC (9%), NBC (6%) and CBS (13%). With regards to news transcript types, 61% are talk show programs, followed by video clips (34%), the rest 5% are interviews, combined news packages and others. The entire TV news transcripts totalled 741,096 words ranging from 366 words per story to 15,822 words per story, with an average of 4,844 words per story. For the Trump sample, the story's average length is 5,051 words, and for Sanders', it is 4,440 words. The sampling frame covers 354 days, almost one year. There are two coverage peaks: August 17–18, 2015, when Trump released his plan to combat illegal immigration, and March 10, 2016, when Sanders and Clinton debated for the eighth time the previous day and Republican candidates debated for the last time.

Q1. How was the immigration issue framed by the 2016 presidential candidates Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders in the U.S. television?

Six common frames were examined in every transcript at the ratio level. That means every frame was measured as an independent variable. Then independent sample t-test was run for the comparison between Trump and Sanders. The SPSS output revealed that **Nation of Immigrants** frame was significantly ($t=6.89$, $df=151$, $p<0.001$) more associated with Sanders ($M=1.40$, $SD=1.33$) than with Trump ($M=.11$, $SD=.34$). And Trump was much more associated with the frame of **Dangerous Immigrants** ($M=1.07$, $SD=1.38$) than Sanders ($M=0$; $SD=0$). The analysis was significant ($t=5.58$, $df=151$, $p<0.001$). The frame of **Failed Immigration Policy** was more associated with Trump ($M=1.86$, $SD=1.70$) than with Sanders ($M=0.92$, $SD=1.56$). The t-test was significant ($t=3.33$, $df=151$, $p>0.01$).

Only 16 stories, or 10% of the 153 stories, carried the other three common frames of **Cheap Labor**, **Immigration Takeover** and **Immigrant-as-Other** in the U.S. TV news. Therefore, no statistical analysis can be run for these three common frames in the sample.

Q2. How was the illegal immigration issue framed by the 2016 presidential candidates Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders in the U.S. television?

Illegal immigration was analysed from three different aspects: its definition, its causes and its solutions. In comparing the candidates' **definitions of illegal immigration**, the Chi-square test was run to identify the differences between the two candidates in seven categories of crimes, social costs, national security, safety, job loss, basic human rights requirement, and others. The overall finding produced by the Chi-square was significant ($\chi^2=33.06$, $p<0.001$). Therefore, z-test was run on the individual definition to check whether the specific definition differed significantly. It was found that the candidates differed in defining illegal

immigration as *crime* (z-test $p < 0.05$), in defining illegal immigration as a concern for their *safety* (z-test $p < 0.05$), and in defining illegal immigration as a *basic human rights* issue (z-test $p < 0.05$). In other words, Trump was more likely to define illegal immigration as crime (13.1% vs. 0), but Sanders was more likely to define it as a safety concern (0 vs. 5.9%) and as a basic human rights concern (0.7% vs. 2.6%). See Table 1 for details.

Table 1. Relationships between Candidates and Illegal Immigration Definition

Illegal Immigration Definition (how candidates present it as a problem)	Candidates		z-test
	Trump	Sanders	
No Mention	51.6%	25.5%	
Crime	13.1%	0	p<0.05
Social Cost	0	0	
National Security	0	0	
Safety of Illegal Immigrants	0	5.9%	p<0.05
Jobs Taking Away	0.7%	0	
Basic Human Rights	0.7%	2.6%	p<0.05
Total	66%	34%	
$\chi^2=33.06, df=4, p<0.001$			

In terms of **causes for illegal immigration**, 96.7% of the stories did not mention any causes. Among the rare 3.3% of the stories that did talk about causes, only one cause of weaker control was mentioned. Therefore, there was not enough data to run the analysis.

Table 2. Relationships between Candidates and Illegal Immigration Solutions

Illegal Immigration Solutions	Candidates		z-test
	Trump	Sanders	
No mention	62.4%	51.9%	
Helping Latin American Economy	0	0	
Immigration Reform	0.7%	16.3%	p<0.05
Tougher Border Control	4.6%	0	p<0.05
Stricter Law Enforcement	0	0	
Deportation	19.6%	0	p<0.05
Others			
Total	66%	34%	
$\chi^2=64.47, df=3, p<0.001$			

In analysing candidates' frames of **solutions of illegal immigration**, the Chi-square test produced a significant finding ($\chi^2=64.47, df=3, p<0.001$) which suggests there was a big difference between the two candidates in six categories: helping Latin America economy, immigration reform, tougher border control, stricter law enforcement, deportation of immigrants and others. The following z-tests were run to identify the specific solution differences. The study found that Trump and Sanders differed in the following solutions: *immigration reform* (z-test

$p < 0.05$), *border control* (z-test $p < 0.05$) and *deportation* (z-test $p < 0.05$). In other words, Sanders (16.3%) was more likely than Trump (0.7%) to support the immigration reform as a solution. Trump (4.6%) was more likely to support the solution of tougher border control than Sanders (0), and support the solution of deportation (19.6%) than Sanders (0). See Table 2 for details.

Discussion and Conclusion

The two front-running candidates for the Republican and Democrat parties, Trump and Sanders, diverged from each other on the immigration issue in the 2016 primary election. Trump's primary talking points were that *U.S. has a failed immigration policy and immigrants are dangerous because they bring crimes to this country, and they have to be deported and borders have to be secured*. And Sanders' talking points were that *this is a nation of immigrants, even illegal immigrants should enjoy basic human rights and deserve humane treatment, and the immigration reform is a much better solution*.

What should be noted is the general immigration issue, framed as the issues of dangerous immigrants and failed immigration policy by Trump, indicates his tendency to intermingle the general immigration issue with the illegal immigration. His defining illegal immigration as a crime reinforces the already negative portrayals of immigrants in this country, and his solutions of deportation can only intensify the general perception of negativity towards immigrants.

Interestingly, the study identified two opposite outstanding solutions for illegal immigration: tougher border control and deportation by Trump, and immigration reform by Sanders, which are in line with the findings by Kim et al., (2011). The two very different solutions to reducing illegal immigration reflects the partisan differences in tackling illegal immigration and are very reflective of the American public's fundamental differences in visioning illegal immigration.

Surprisingly, the discussion of the causes of illegal immigration was marginalized in this general election coverage. The causes of illegal immigration deserve more news space for speculating, elaborating and discussing because a comprehensive knowledge of the problem of illegal immigration must start with causes. The marginalization of causes may miss the most critical piece of the complicated picture.

TV news plays a significant role in informing the public about issues, especially in the time of presidential elections. The candidates' positions on immigration are made quite salient via the framing devices. Social constructionism notes that framing contributes to the creation and institutionalization of reality in social interaction, where an active audience interprets and evaluates media texts based on the available persistent frames. Therefore, in constructing the immigration reality, audiences would either have quite a negative picture of immigrants, and thus support the deportation, or have a sympathetic perception of immigrants and support the initiative of reform. This either-or institutionalization of immigration may only reinforce the already polarizing views of immigration and exclude the middle-ground views or the possible third view or fourth view of immigration. As

such, a complicated issue, such as immigration, is reduced to a simple battling issue between parties.

Theoretically and empirically, framing is very useful in exploring and investigating a controversial issue from a comparative perspective: either across media platforms or across points of views. Generic frames identified from prior studies may be adopted repeatedly to synthesize conclusions on issues. Entman's functionality of frame taking up definitions, causes and solutions of issues provides a multi-angle view of what is under discussion. Functioning as a telescope lens and as a microscope lens on issues, this framing device may be universally applicable to any complicated social, political, economic and scientific issues.

This study makes some contribution to the theoretical development of framing in that generic media frames such as issue definitions, causes, and solutions enabling a consistent analysis of media content, and allowing the possibility of building a structured model on framing in future. Another contribution lies in the fact that social constructionism connects media frames and audience frames perfectly. Instead of treating the two types of frames as two independent entities, an empirical study from the social constructionism perspective may mobilize and integrate both frames in research endeavours to cover media frames on one end and audience frames on the other. After all, social constructionism is about how audiences interpret and understand issues in social interactions based on how issues are framed in mass media.

Limitations and Suggestions

While framing is useful, we have to admit the classification of immigration into categories, such as Nation of Immigrants or Dangerous Immigrants, resorts to the stereotypical depiction of immigrants by simplifying their human conditions and circumstances. The full stories of immigrants, especially illegal immigrants, seem impossible to tell with this framing analysis. Through framing, the social construction of an immigrant as a citizen (in Nation of Immigrants), a criminal (Dangerous Immigrant), a dispensable worker (in Cheap Labor), an invader (in Immigrant Takeover) or a forever foreigner (in Immigrant-as-Other) (Quinsaas, 2014) is constrained by the singular value judgement of good versus bad, and trapped in the traditional monolithic reasoning of right versus wrong. Moreover, defining illegal immigration as crime is even more value-laden. While Democrat candidate Sanders did define illegal immigration as a safety and human rights issue, his voice may have gotten lost in the more dominant coverage of Trump.

This study only analysed 153 news transcripts, with 66% dedicated to Trump and 34% to Sanders, and the sample size could have been much larger by including regional TV stations with a large TV audience market. The manual coding of the variables could not fully address the reliability and validity problems, and the use of a computer-assisted textual analysis may confirm and complement the findings.

Future analysis may consider the integration of surveying public perception of immigration so that a direct relationship between media coverage and public perception can be identified and inquired. After all, the effect of media message on the public would be more meaningful because that is what counts most. Lastly, a comparative study between TV news coverage and print news coverage would be more interesting, as print news generally provides in-depth analysis of current events in which the causation aspect of illegal immigration may not be marginalized and excluded.

References

- Anderson, M. (2016). TV still the top source for election results, but digital platforms rise. Retrieved from: <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/21/tv-still-the-top-source-for-election-results-but-digital-platforms-rise/>. [Accessed 22 November 2016].
- Archibold, R. C. (2010). *U.S.'s toughest immigration law is signed in Arizona*. The New York Times.
- Ardèvol-Abreu, A. (2015). Framing theory in communication research in Spain. Origins, development and current situation. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 70(Jan), 423–450.
- Ashley, L. R. N. (2006). Bordering on the impossible. *ETC: A Review of General Semantics*, 63(3), 343–348.
- Camarota, S. A. (2001). *Immigrants in the United States - 2000*. Retrieved from: <https://cis.org/Report/Immigrants-United-States-2000>. [Accessed 9 March 2020].
- Cappella, J. N., Jamieson, K. H. (1997). *Spiral of cynicism: the press and the public good*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Chavez, L. R. (2008). *The Latino threat: constructing immigrants, citizens, and the nation*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Chavez, N. (2018). *Trump administration resumes accepting DACA renewals*. Retrieved from: <http://www.cnn.com/2018/01/13/politics/daca-resumes-renewals/index.html>. [Accessed 21 January 2018].
- Chishti, M., Bergeron, C. (2011). *Post-9/11 policies dramatically alter the U.S. immigration landscape*. Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/3eOL81K>. [Accessed 24 January 2018].
- Chong, D., Druckman, J. (2007). Framing public opinion in competitive democracies. *The American Political Science Review*, 101(4), 637–655.
- D'Alessio, D., Allen, M. (2000). Media bias in presidential elections: a meta-analysis. *Journal of Communication*, 50(4), 133–156.
- Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51–58.
- Farris, E. M., Mohamed, H. S. (2018). Picturing immigration: how the media criminalizes immigrants. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 6(4), 814–824.
- Gamson, W. A., Modigliani, A. (1989). Media discourse and public opinion on nuclear power: a constructionist approach. *American Journal of Sociology*, 95(1), 1–37.
- Grabe, M., Bucy, E. (2008). *The struggle for control: visual framing, news coverage, and image handling of presidential candidates, 1992–2004*. Conference Papers - International Communication Association, 1–42.
- Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: an essay on the organization of the experience*. New York: Harper Colophon.

- Huntington, S. P. (2004). *Who are we? The challenges to America's national identity*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Iyengar, S. (1991). *Is anyone responsible: how television frames political issues*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Jones, J. M. (2015). *One in five voters say immigration stance critical to vote*. Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/30viIF9>. [Accessed 24 January 2018].
- Kim, S., Carvalho, J. P., Davis, A. G., Mullins, A. M. (2011). The view of the border: news framing of the definition, causes, and solutions to illegal immigration. *Mass Communication & Society*, 14(3), 292–314.
- Kim, J., Wanta, W. (2018). News framing of the U.S. immigration debate during election years: focus on generic frames. *The Communication Review*, 21(2), 89–115.
- Lowry, D., Xie, L. (2007). *Agenda-setting and framing by topic proximity: a new technique for the computerized content analysis of network TV news presidential campaign coverage*. Conference Papers - International Communication Association, 1.
- Meet the Press Transcript – July 5, 2015 (2015). Retrieved from: <http://www.nbcnews.com/meet-the-press/meet-press-transcript-july-5-2015-n386996>. [Accessed 27 September 2016].
- Miller, M. M., Andsager, J. L., Riechert, B. P. (1998). Framing the candidates in presidential primaries: issues and images in press releases and news coverage. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 75(2), 312–324.
- Mitchell, A., Gottfried, J. Matsa, K. E. (2016). *Millennials and political news: social media – the local TV for the next generation?* Retrieved from <http://www.journalism.org/2015/06/01/millennials-political-news/>. [Accessed 22 November 2016].
- Muste, C. P. (2013). The dynamics of immigration opinion in the United States, 1992–2012. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 77(1), 398–416.
- Pan, Z. P., Kosicki, G. M. (1993). Framing analysis: an approach to news discourse. *Political Communication*, 10(1), 55–75.
- Pew Research Center (2015). *Modern immigration wave brings 59 million to U.S., driving population growth and change through 2065*. Retrieved from: <https://pewrsr.ch/39dXGi6>. [Accessed 5 June 2020].
- Quinsaat, S. (2014). Competing news frames and hegemonic discourses in the construction of contemporary immigration and immigrants in the United States. *Mass Communication & Society*, 17(4), 573–596.
- Radford, J. (2019). *Key findings about U.S. immigrants*. Retrieved from: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/06/17/key-findings-about-u-s-immigrants/>. [Accessed 15 October 2019].
- Reese, S. D. (2001). Introduction. In S. D. Reese, O. H. Gandy, A. E. Grant (Eds.), *Framing public life: Perspectives on media and our understanding of the social world* (pp. 1–31). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Schallhorn, K. (2018). *What is DACA and why is the Trump administration ending it?* Retrieved from: <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2018/01/15/what-is-daca-and-why-is-trump-administration-ending-it.html>. [Accessed 21 January 2018].
- Scheufele, D. A. (1999). Framing as a theory of media effects. *Journal of Communication*, 49(1), 103–122.
- Scheufele, D. A. (2000). Agenda-setting, priming, and framing revisited: another look at cognitive effects of political communication. *Mass Communication & Society*, 3(2–3), 297–316.
- Scheufele, D. A., Tewksbury, D. (2007). Framing, agenda setting, and priming: the evolution of three media effects models. *Journal of Communication*, 57(1), 9–20.

- Securing the Homeland and Strengthening the Nation (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.dhs.gov/publication/securing-homeland-strengthening-nation>. [Accessed 30 November 2016].
- Shah, D. V., Watts, M. D., Domke, D., Fan, D. P. (2002). News framing and cueing of issue regimes: explaining Clinton's public approval in spite of scandal. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 66(3): 39–70.
- Shoemaker, P. J., Reese, S. D. (1996). *Mediating the message: theories of influences on mass media content*. 2nd Edition. White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Thompson, D. (2018). How immigration became so controversial. Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/30zj9hp>. [Accessed 20 August 2019].
- Tuchman G. (1978). *Making news*. New York: The Free Press.
- Tyson, A. (2018). *Public backs legal status for immigrants brought to U.S. illegally as children, but not a bigger border wall*. Retrieved from <https://pewrsr.ch/3jskPlx>. [Accessed 26 January 2018].
- Van Gorp, B. (2007). The constructionist approach to framing: bringing culture back in. *Journal of Communication*, 57(1), 60–78.
- Wicks, R. H. (2001). *Understanding audiences: learning to use the media constructively*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Zong, J., Batalova, J., Burrows, M. (2019). *Frequently requested statistics on immigrants and immigration in the United States*. Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/3js3mtq>. [Accessed 15 October 2019].