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Immigration and Crime in the News, 2014-2018: Do Focusing Events and Policy Windows Affect Framing?

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Immigration and Crime in the News, 2014-2018:
Do Focusing Events and Policy Windows Affect Framing?

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ABSTRACT

Although an abundance of literature demonstrates that immigrant populations are less crime-prone than the native-born population, the majority of Americans believe that immigration inherently threatens the security of the United States. Because Americans are not well versed in the complex issues of immigration and crime, public opinion is undoubtedly influenced by media outlets' crafted narratives that simplify circumstances and events into easily digestible material. The current study examines how media behavior changes and responds to social and political events by examining "frames" utilized in articles that produce narratives about immigration and crime. Using content analysis of over 1,700 articles published between 2014 and 2018, multi-level models reveal that (1) over half of articles describe immigrants as crime-increasing; (2) some frames are more likely to occur in response to specific events; and (3) some frames are less likely to occur in response to specific events. I conclude with implications of consumer behavior and ongoing debates and research on immigration and crime.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the 1970s, the foreign-born population within the United States has increased over 300

percent, even touching some rural and suburban communities that historically have not been

major destinations of foreign-born population settlement (Edwards and Liu 2018; Lichter and

Johnson 2009). In turn, debate about how immigration has reshaped the social fabric of the

United States has grown over the past several decades, as well. Today, the politically driven

criminalization of the foreign-born population remains a particularly prominent political and

social debate (Ellis 2006), one that has been amplified by advancements in technological

communication increasing access to the news and information allowing different (and often

antagonistic) narratives to compete with those that are more fact-based (Milan 2017).

The issue of narratives in news media remains an important feature of understanding

immigration and the criminalization of the foreign born because the American population, in

general, does not possess much direct knowledge regarding the intricacies of immigration policy

and immigrant communities. Instead, they often rely upon the media's heuristic "framing" and

priming in order to interpret and more easily digest information regarding such complex issues,

like immigration and crime (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007). Although this dynamic could

work to educate the American public on the empirical relationship between immigration, crime,

news media outlets provide platforms for "claimsmakers" – individuals, both legitimate and

illegitimate, who provide statements and narratives – to push agendas that may be detrimental to

the foreign-born population. For example, recent research shows that news media narratives

often link immigrants (especially the undocumented) to high crime rates (Harris and Gruenewald

2019), despite widespread contradiction within empirical research that immigration more often

reduces crime (Ousey and Kubrin 2018). The crime-prone immigrant narrative is then made

easily consumable and accessible for audiences across the nation with little regulation. Perhaps unsurprisingly, nearly two-thirds of Americans believe that immigrants make our communities less safe and threaten national security (Gallup 2017; Hohmann 2011; Pew Hispanic Center 2015).

The global community gained a heightened awareness of how powerful the media can be in shaping public sentiment about immigration and crime following the 2016 presidential election of Donald Trump. Though the use of immigrants in this manner has been essential to American politics since the birth of the nation (Barber 1992; Grigoryan 2019), the immigrationcrime link became a primary element of Donald Trump's platform when he asserted that

Mexican immigrants were overwhelmingly responsible for increasing crime rates in the United States, even if some "are good people" (Finnegan 2016: A00). Yet, this position contradicts longstanding findings within criminology regarding the crime decline in the United States since the 1990s and consensus that immigrants are less likely to commit crimes than their American counterparts (Gramlich 2019; Harris and Feldmeyer 2013; Ousey and Kubrin 2018). Instead, Trump used the news media to help craft a narrative for widespread public consumption in order to advance specific policy ideas (e.g., the border wall).

Critically for the purposes of this project, research shows that policymakers, policy entrepreneurs, and other "claimsmakers" strategically utilize the news media's influence to push forward policy agendas, including those directed toward the immigration and crime. Yet, there remain important empirical questions that have yet to be addressed. In particular, there has been limited research into whether and how media narratives change around "focusing events" and

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subsequent "policy windows," which are the "opportunities for advocates of proposals to push their pet solutions, or to push attention to their special problems" (Kingdon 1995: 165). Critically, the emergence of a policy window, which cultivates an environment for legislation to be pursued both locally and nationally, reflects "a confluence of events that allows advocates to push their policy solutions to problems onto the political agenda" (Farley et al. 2007:345). During this time (or even preceding it), narratives can be amplified by the news media, providing political claims makers a platform by which conflicting arguments and solutions can be disseminated to the general American population.

Building on these observations, I ask the following question: *how does media framing of immigration and crime change differ around focusing events and policy windows over the 20142018 period?* This period is especially important to the immigration-crime debate in this period that (a) immigration overall has decreased, although the non-native born population is relatively high; (b) the economic boom of the late 1990s and early 2000s and the later Great Recession paved the way for historical rates of inequality in the United States through the 2010s; (c) the crime spike of the early-to-mid 1990s and subsequent decline in offending; as well as (d) important immigration and crime events, like the expiration of DACA and deaths of Kate Steinle and Mollie Tibbetts. In exploring this period, I aim to untangle how prominent national news articles narratively describe the immigration-crime link in unique ways in and around these key incidents.

In seeking to address these questions, I extend the growing literature regarding news media influence on politics, society, and public opinion, as well as the academic study of policy windows themselves (Kingdon 1995). Unfortunately, these topics traditionally have been studied without much consideration to the mechanisms by which they collectively shape the

public and political landscape, especially in regard to the link between immigration and crime. Empirical evidence demonstrates that the media is capable of shaping (and reflecting) public opinion by selectively articulating specific narratives and employing frames both intentionally and unintentionally (Cervantes et al. 2018; Menjivar 2016). At the same time, prior literature has also established that media framing of certain events can provide the circumstances by which the "politics stream" gains traction – a necessary element for the creation of a fruitful policy window (Farley et al. 2007; Menjivar 2016). Overall then, I aim to bring together these various themes into an empirical examination of immigration-crime narratives over time and around focal events.

More broadly, the relationship between news media framing relative to policy windows has considerable, intergenerational consequences for both American society and the international community by (in part) helping shape who the American public will consider to be deserving of a life lived inside the United States. Likewise, it also impacts the measures that American policymakers will take to deter and deport those who do not by illustrating how the foreign born can become linked to social problems like crime. That said, the purpose of the current project is to examine the relationship between the narratives employed by prominent news media regarding the foreign-born population and crime with a particular emphasis on and how those narratives correspond with important focusing events and policy windows over time.

REVIEW OF PRIOR LITERATURE

The Occupational Task of News Media

News media outlets and their journalists perform a significant role in democracies by serving as the link between the general public and elite political decision makers. Advancements in news communication technologies – particularly through smartphone applications – narrow the gap

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between the public and the elite, reinforcing the illusion for many that the news media's political leverage is a symptom of the 21st century. Despite recent attention and concerns to the reliability of news media outlets, the processes or tactics utilized by contemporary news outlets to gain attention are neither novel nor unique; rather, news media creating a narrative or highlighting stories that evoke a strong emotional response are present across the national news media landscape and throughout time (Wettstein and Wirth 2017).

As one illustration, the 1800 presidential election of Thomas Jefferson brought about highly politicized print news opinion pieces exaggerating the personal characteristics and leadership capabilities of both presidential candidates, including an anonymous warning to voters published in the *Federalist Connecticut Courant*. In particular, claims were made that the election of Jefferson would surely bring the country to its knees, describing an apocalyptic wasteland where "murder, robbery, rape, adultery, and incest [would] be openly taught and practiced" (Digital History 2016). Although Jefferson ultimately became president, the 1800 election cycle drew attention to the media's lasting tradition of selectively granting attention to contentious topics that capture the attention of a national audience, coupled with framing mechanisms that guide public opinion to a desirable outcome, contingent to the media outlet's bias (Wettstein and Wirth 2017).

As a more recent example, the media transformed the national political environment around the publication of the 1998 Washington Post's *Special Report: The Starr Report*. The report, a lengthy federal government report authored by Independent Counsel Ken Starr, was published first through the *Washington Post* as an un-tampered document, followed by CNN and MSNBC with commentary. The report delivered though news outlets reached an estimated 20 million Americans, who read the report within two days of its publication (Kravetz 2009).

Within three months of the report's publication, President Clinton was impeached. Crucially, some outlets framed the report as an indication of Starr's fascination with sexually explicit content, attempting to minimize the report as an exaggeration of President Clinton's actions. Other outlets praised Starr's report, acknowledging Starr's authority and describing him as a public servant dedicated to justice. Although Clinton was more than likely to be impeached consequential to the report's findings, with or without mass publication, systematic framing of the report's contents by ideologically divergent media outlets along with widespread access to the report ultimately contributed in part to the 1998 impeachment of President Clinton. The American public became widely aware of Clinton's misconduct, while news outlets shaped narratives in ways that informed the public on how to respond to such transgressions.

What these examples illustrate is that, because media outlets have a finite window to produce news stories, journalists allocate much of their coverage to "sudden, attention-grabbing events" that consequentially "[advance] issues on the [policy] agenda" by heightening public awareness of the issue at hand (Birkland 1998:53). The process by which these editorial decisions are made, also referred to as agenda setting, is essential to understanding why some topics receive more coverage in the media than others, and how the public interprets this coverage in terms of urgency and necessity (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007). Consequentially, media cycles often result in short, rapid streams of coverage for specific topics that harness the public's attention as quickly as they lose it. Agenda setting successfully alerts the public to social problems, but also struggles to produce meaningful solutions as a result of constantly revolving coverage of competing issues (Allcott and Gentzkow 2017). On one hand, some scholars consider agenda setting a harmful consequence of coverage, rather than a systematic process by which the media seeks to advance the betterment of American society. On the other

hand, as Birkland acknowledges, media coverage of focusing events has the potential to "serve as important opportunities for politically disadvantaged groups to champion messages… [previously] suppressed by dominant groups" (1998:54). The discrepancy between these arguments rests upon the narrative – or frame – that journalists utilize, whether intentionally or unintentionally, in the article.

Framing

Relevant to the current study, I highlight two key concepts that inform my discussion of media treatments of immigration and crime over time and that build on the overall news media process of agenda setting. The first involves the manner in which media sources narratively describe – or *frame* – immigrants and immigration-related topics (I use the terms "frame" and "narrative" interchangeably). Understanding narratives, or frames, is critical to understanding the role of media because narratives impose a "cognitive style or a mode of thinking" upon consumers of the information, ultimately manipulating readers' interpretation of any given topic or issue (Ryan 2007:27). Media frames work to condense complicated, multifaceted circumstances into easily digestible stories by "selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution" (Entman 2004:5). Relevant to the current study, immigration and crime are both complex issues, including such issues as refugees from crime and immigrant caravans, criminal behavior displayed by specific immigrants or immigrant populations, the intricacies of foreign born status within the criminal justice system, and even issues surrounding the legality of the foreign-born population's presence in the United States (i.e., undocumented immigration as a crime).

More broadly, all news media articles display bias to some degree, even if they intend to deliver the most accurate and unbiased information possible (Wettstein and Wirth 2017).

Indeed, bias in the media has recently been associated with the spread of "fake news," muddying the discrepancy between reliable news and manipulating media narratives. In turn, this phenomenon appears hand in hand with the polarization of news media consumption in American society (Allcott and Gentzkow 2017). Nevertheless, the media framing process capitalizes on the consumption of confusing and contentious stories by removing context from such stories and imposing a specific narrative, successfully drawing both attention and an emotional response from the outlet's audience.

A plethora of studies agree that agenda setting and framing are integral pieces of the news media production cycle and are fundamental to current power structures in the political landscape (Morstatter et al. 2018, Entman 2007). Although both agenda setting and framing are not inherently detrimental to general understanding of a given topic, they do encompass a series of processes by which outlets prioritize coverage of specific events over others; falsify reality by distorting information; favor one interpretation of an event or policy over another interpretation of said event or policy; and/or allows personal bias of the reporter to bleed through to content production (Entman 2007). In any case, agenda setting in news media is inevitable to some degree due to a variety of factors ranging from initial misreporting to the political leaning of a journalists' outlet, and is "ultimately an attempt to persuade the opinion of the reader" to adopt a specific idea or perspective about a topic (Morstatter et al. 2018). A growing body of literature agrees, though, that agenda setting – particularly in response to a focusing or political event – is neither random nor accidental, but rather patterned, intentional, and occurs systematically.

For instance, specific to immigration and race, scholars retroactively acknowledge the "moral panic" presented in the media directed towards people of color during the 1980s and 1990s as a classic example of agenda setting. During this time, the American public was

"consumed by the looming threat posed by America's [non-white] youth" via overrepresentation of events such as the Central Park Jogger case, in which five people of color were convicted of raping a white woman, and later exonerated (Moriearty 2010:850). The criminal framing of nonwhite youths in the media heavily influenced public opinion and consequential policies aimed towards "controlling" this demographic by intentionally producing news stories in which white Americans were victimized by people of color and "outsiders", either to promote personal bias or

to increase readership.

Changes in media behavior do not only occur in response to focusing events, such as the Central Park Jogger case, but also in response to shifts in the political landscape following election cycles, the passage of legislation, as well as periods of social unrest. For instance, following the passage of Arizona State Bill 1070 in 2010, media framing of immigrants as threats to public security and the economy became increasingly prominent in both local and national newspapers. Sequential media coverage exploring the intricacies of SB 1070 exposed the public's misunderstanding about the legal proceedings of immigration and role of law enforcement in at the municipal level, as well as the ability of framing to manipulate public opinion in favor of anti-immigrant policies (Fryberg et al. 2012).

A growing body of literature also suggests that in the past three decades, national news outlets have engaged in a tradition of emphasizing "the negative consequences of immigration" by increasing coverage of the socioeconomic conditions and crime rates of Latinx communities (Abrajano, Hajnal and Hassell 2017). This increase in the prevalence of antagonistic frames – particularly in articles published by conservative news outlets – directed toward immigrants corresponds with a meaningful shift in public opinion. Following even short-term exposure to

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anti-immigrant framing, Americans become more accepting of civil rights violations against undocumented immigrants, economic policies that directly target immigrant communities, and social definitions outlining the differences between white and non-white groups (Fryberg et al. 2012). Bias and reasoning aside, scholars agree that the framing of non-white immigrants in the United States as inherently criminal and detrimental to the wellbeing of society is partially responsible for lasting racial inequalities social institutions, particularly the criminal justice system.

Focusing Events and Policy Windows

As a second set of key concepts, *focusing events* and *policy windows* remain important to news media in that they provide context for why certain topics (regardless of framing) are covered more than others. Not all issues can make it to the top of any social or political agenda and, instead, must compete for attention from lawmakers, moral entrepreneurs, and other "claim makers" (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Loseke 2003). As such, news media periodically revive issues – like immigration and crime – as immediate concerns using specific and often sensationalized stories that serve as "focusing events" (Birkland 1998) to open up "policy windows" (Kingdon 2003). It is this rapid onset of coverage that pushes social problems (again, like immigration and crime) onto the public stage before they are eventually replaced.

Although focusing events and policy windows as concepts more frequently appear as the theoretical frameworks of policymaking, few scholars have attempted to operationalize the multifaceted elements of either beyond the original definitions delineated by Kingdon (1995 [1984]). As addressed by Ridde (2009), systematically exploring the mechanisms through which policy emerges is a complicated feat because the public policy process is "neither monolithic nor linear" but rather, a multi-stage process with countless actors pursuing competing agendas (p.

939). Indeed, Kingdon's "multiple-streams model" identifies three fundamental components –
the problem stream, the policy stream, and the politics stream – that together create the
conditions for a successful policy window. While this project does not attempt to causally link
media narratives to focusing events or policy window outcomes, it does aim to establish that
media behaviors, particularly the prevalence of certain frames, correspond with these events and
policy cycles.

Multiple-Streams Model

Broadly, the multiple-streams models states that "a policy window of opportunity exists
and policy change is most likely to occur" when all three streams coincide (McBeth and
Lybecker 2018:871). First, the *problem stream* emerges "when an existing condition is defined
as a problem" and both by the public and policymakers deeming it worthy of being solved
through legal intervention (Farley et al. 2007:344). Problem streams transpire from focusing
events – such as the 9/11 attacks, Hurricane Katrina, or the Sandy Hook Elementary School mass
shooting, and rapidly gain national attention. They may also emerge more gradually through the
evolution of a social or environmental issue (e.g., global climate change, a housing crisis).

Pertinent to this project, the amount of feedback from policymakers and citizens
regarding a specific problem is significant to the likelihood that change will occur. Feedback can
be defined as the national conversation between the political elite and the general population,
moderated by attention granted by the media (Farley et al. 2007). It is through feedback that the
role of media in the policy process is highlighted; journalists and media organizations "fulfil an
important double-function in a democracy by informing the public of political processes and
reflecting the public opinion for the political elites" (Wettstein and Wirth 2017:262).

Second, as the problem stream gains national attention, a *policy stream* emerges.

Comprised of potential solutions to the problem presented and advocated for by different "claim makers" competing for national attention, the policy stream is constrained by the attention and approval of political decision makers, a notably limited resource. Different stakeholders "thus [produce] a short list of proposals" that are "technically feasible, acceptable in the policy community, and in line with current budget priorities" (Farley et al. 2007:346). Much of this involves capitalizing on a focusing event by immediately providing media outlets with a policy narrative promoting a pre-existing solution – a process known as "problem surfing" (Kingdon 1995; Boscarino 2009).

Third, the *political stream* emerges and is "composed of such things as public mood, pressure group campaigns, election results," as well as "partisan or ideological distributions in congress", the politics stream reflects the national mood regarding support of specific policy solutions (Kingdon 1984:152; McBeth and Lybecker 2018). The political stream indicates the political receptibility displayed by the general population and policy decision makers toward certain solutions. The political stream also highlights which groups adhere to which political narratives as relayed by the media (Chermak and Weiss 1997).

The key takeaway from the multiple-streams model is that news coverage of political issues (like immigration and crime), including the narratives promoted by media outlets, is significant in the democratic process and is highly influential in policy outcomes (Birkland 1998; Chermak and Weiss 1997; Menjivar 2016). That is, news media framing of social problems that takes place around focusing events and policy windows is an integral part of the news making process. Yet, whether and how news media frames change around these focusing events and policy windows remains empirically unsettled, a gap that the current project seeks to fill.

THE CURRENT STUDY

Overall then, the goal of this project is to build on prior research indicating that focusing events and policy windows are consequential times for media agenda setting and, in turn, for highlighting changes in the news narratives that describe substantive positions for social problems, like immigration and crime. Thus, my research question is as follows: *how does media framing of immigration and crime change around focusing events and policy windows over the 2014-2018 period?*

Data

To answer this question, I draw data from nationally prominent, English-language newspaper articles with a circulation of over 100,000 published between 2014 and 2018, archived through LexisNexis Academic (now NexisUni). Seven papers satisfy these criteria: *The New York Times*; *The Washington Post*; *USA Today*; *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*; *The Buffalo News*; *Orange County Register*; *St. Petersburg Times/Tampa Bay Times*.

Using the LexisNexis repository, I conducted a filtered search for these newspapers collecting articles with the words "immigrant" or "immigration" within five words of "crime" or "violence" present within the body of the article, with an additional filter to remove duplicate articles. Subsequently, I employed an ethnographic content analysis to code articles for frames as defined by Harris and Gruenewald (2019), excluding international immigration-crime articles and articles irrelevant or ambiguous within the immigration-crime debate.

The ethnographic content analysis process encompasses not only the collection of documents from various information outlets, but also the reflexive interpretation of underlying themes, messages, and meanings; the development of qualitative and quantitative content analysis protocol; and the influence of the grounded theory approach (Altheide and Schneider

2013, Harris and Gruenewald 2019). For the purpose of this study, these themes, messages, and

meanings are systematically coded by the presence of six frames, guided by prior empirical

criminological and sociological research. Because constant discovery and comparison are

embedded in the process of ECA, it is crucial to acknowledge that the six frames analyzed in this

study do not encompass all of the conversations revolving around immigration and crime in the

media. To accommodate for the range of additional conversations that do not fall within the

specific boundaries of the six frames utilized in this study, a seventh option – the ambiguous

frame – was included in the process. Articles with frames that do not conform to the six outlined

in this study were coded only as ambiguous and removed from the sample. Overall, while this

current study is limited to years 2014 through 2018, it contributes Harris and Gruenewald's

previously collected and coded dataset ranging from years 1990 through 2013. Elimination of

duplicate, international, and ambiguous articles resulted in a final sample size of 1,720 articles

with a total of 3,276 frames.

Unit of Analysis

In this study, I focus on individual articles as my unit of analysis. Utilizing articles as a unit of

analysis is a valuable asset to any study concerning news media behavior, increasingly so in an

era defined by nearly instantaneous consumer access to both news media itself as well as the

political elites and journalists who fuel, interpret, and disseminate national discourse through

various print and media platforms (Karnowski, Leonhard, and Kümpel 2017). Articles,

particularly those sourced from the seven papers that meet this study's criteria, are a valuable

unit of analysis because (1) each article itself is a discrete unit, (2) each article has the capacity to

address the immigration-crime link independent of its paper's political leaning by employing any

or all of the frames listed, and (3) the papers from which my sample is sourced are highly circulated in the United States, with a combined daily subscription-based print readership of over 3.3 million Americans. Because this measure is conservative in that it does not include "unique visitors" who access articles through free monthly allowances, or online-only readers, including those with subscriptions to any of the papers which meet this study's criteria, it can be assumed that these articles reach a considerably large proportion of American consumers.

As such, because articles are discrete units published at one specific point in time by only one paper, they can be contextualized by shifts in the national political landscape, such as the emergence of a policy window or focusing event, as well by other attributes, including whether the article appears on the front page or not and how many words each article contains. Articles also grant insight to the exclusive world of professional news making because they highlight the final results of the news journalistic process, by which editors produce stories on certain topics with specific narratives while simultaneously excluding others (Paulussen et al. 2007).

Dependent Variable – Article Frames

My dependent variables are frames as they appear in each article, specifically the six news media narratives as identified by Harris and Gruenewald (2019): (1) criminogenic, (2) protective, (3) the act of immigration itself as a crime, (4) immigrants as victims of crime, (5) immigrants as refugees from crime, and (6) a frame discussing the civil and/or legal rights of immigrants within the criminal justice system. Because narratives are not mutually exclusive of one another, it will be assumed that all six narratives can potentially appear in any given article.

Immigration as criminogenic. The criminogenic frame encompasses the general belief expressed by American society that immigrants are crime-prone and that immigration as a process is corrosive to the security of the United States, even if immigrants aren't themselves

committing crime. Articles with the criminogenic frame often validate pre-existing prejudices about the immigrant population by providing coverage of the criminal acts of specific individuals, or by acknowledging fears of crime among the foreign-born population as a whole. Coverage of events, such as the accidental shooting of Kathryn Steinle by undocumented immigrant José Inez García Zárate, for example, exemplifies the criminogenic frame. Bump's 2015 *Washington Post* article describes the event as Kathryn being "viciously killed by a 5-time deported Mexican with a long criminal record, who was forced back into the United States because they didn't want him in Mexico." As another example, a 2014 New York Times article by Damien Cave documenting Mexican immigration quotes a spokesman for the Tulsa County sheriff's office describing that "as an illegal alien it's really difficult to find a bona fide job… but it's really easy to turn to the drug world and start selling drugs on the corner" (P. 12).

Immigration as protective against crime. Articles displaying the protective frame typically utilize empirical evidence regarding immigrants and immigration to challenge the belief that immigrants are dangerous, often asserting that immigrants actually make American communities safer. For example, an article published in the *Tampa Bay Times* describes conflict between the city of Santa Fe's sympathetic immigration policy and federal immigration authorities, citing studies concluding that "immigrants are less prone to commit crime than people born in the United States" (Valverde 2016). This frame often directly contradicts the criminogenic frame identified above.

Immigration as a crime. Although the act of improperly entering the United States is a misdemeanor criminal offense, news sources tend to misrepresent simply being in the United States without documentation as a criminal offense rather than the civil violation that it is. Articles that engage in a discussion of the criminality of undocumented immigration, particularly

how this demographic assimilates in American society, display this frame. For example, throughout 2014, the Mexican-American border crisis was well documented in national newspaper outlets, with calls for policy or structural changes to accommodate for "the increase in illegal border crossings in recent years" whether such change coming in the form of a complete border wall, or a pathway to U.S. citizenship (O'Keefe 2014:5). Likewise, a 2010 Washington Post article illustrates the same theme in quoting an Arizona resident reflecting on a crime-control policy: "When [Governor Jan] Brewer brought this forth, she did it for those of us on the front lines,' Bob Dekoschak said. 'Those of us armed. Those of us with illegals running through our yards.'" (McCrummen 2010: A01).

Immigrants as victims of crime. Articles that contain the victims frame "describe either the direct victimization of particular immigrants or discuss the vulnerability of the foreign-born population to crime and violence" (Harris and Gruenewald 2019:8). While some newspapers tend to report criminal offenses committed by immigrants, other articles, such as a 2017 *New York Time*s article, report stories of the vulnerability of immigrants, with consideration to empirical evidence that this group is more likely to be victimized than their American counterparts (Medina 2017:2). Medina describes the situation of a nonprofit agency struggling to help victims of domestic violence in Orange County, in which "nearly half of the more than 70 new cases that [the agency] received each month came from undocumented immigrants."

Immigrants as refugees from crime. Articles that highlight the plight of immigrants escaping their war and violence-torn countries of origin by seeking safety in the United States are identified as using the refugee frame. These stories often include a personal account of why an individual flees, such as a Washington Post article describing a Honduran teenager's account of being tortured, "kidnapped, drugged, starved, [and] raped by 'eight or nine' MS-13 gang

members" over the course of ten days as an act of revenge against her family, forcing her to flee to the United States or risk death (Henneberger 2014).

Civil and legal rights of immigrants. Finally, some articles are less concerned with criminal offenses committed by immigrants (or victimization, etc.), but tend to articulate on "either the ambiguity of immigrant rights without our criminal justice systems or on new policies designed to change the rights of foreign-born persons" typically with the goal of integrating this community into the criminal justice system (Harris and Gruenewald 2019:9). This frame is present when an article describes issues such as "[the replacement of] Secure Communities with a new Priority Enforcement Program, which would only seek custody of immigrants convicted of certain serious crimes" (Editorial Board 2015:18). Importantly, this frame often appears with alongside other frames (e.g., criminogenic), but can also occur on its own when discussing issues of the foreign born within the criminal justice system (e.g., bail, visitation rights, participation of local justice agencies with federal enforcement, etc.).

Independent Variables – Policy Windows and Focusing Events

Given the focus of the current study on framing relative at specific points in time, my independent variables are policy windows and focusing events. Unfortunately, there is no agreed upon amount of time that is thought to constitute either event. Some periods may be lengthy – for example, the debate leading up to the 1996 Immigration Reform and Control Act – in which news media framing may change more gradually, take place leading up to and after the event/window, and/or change for longer periods of time. In other cases, events may be short and acute – for example, the Kathryn Steinle shooting or the 9/11 attacks and passage of the Patriot Act in 2001 – where media narratives change quickly and for shorter periods of time.

Utilizing Kingdon's multiple-steams framework, I have identified eight focusing events and three policy windows regarding the immigration-crime link occurring during the 2014 to 2018 period. While many focusing events and policy windows did occur throughout this period, only policy windows and focusing events that were discussed multiple times in each of the seven outlets are included in this analysis. To ensure a conservative measure, each focusing event is operationalized by a one to three-month period beginning on the specific date that the event occurred and ending after a specified interval allowing for national discourse, while each policy window's duration is limited to one month. A dummy variable was created to encapsulate each individual policy window and focusing event time period, allowing me to determine which articles were published during these intervals and which articles were not (1 = the article was published during a policy window or focusing event; 0 = no, the article was not published during a policy window or focusing event).

Focusing Event 1: The Central American Migrant Crisis. The Central American Migrant Crisis emerges during the summer of 2014 "as record numbers of unaccompanied children and families crossed the U.S.-Mexico border", resulting in an unprecedented increase in border apprehensions (Stinchcomb and Hershberg 2014:5). The U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs holds a hearing on July 9, 2014 as detention center and temporarily shelter capacities decrease, protests in the southwest become more frequent, and border tensions escalate. Focusing Event 1 begins on May 15, 2014 and ends August 15, 2014 – a three-month interval – to account for increases in border crossings leading up to the peak in June as well as national discourse following the July 9 hearing.

Focusing Event 2: Donald Trump's Candidacy Announcement. On June 16, 2015

Donald Trump makes a speech officially announcing his presidential candidacy for the upcoming 2016 election cycle. It is during this speech that Trump discloses his platform and speculates on the character of Mexican immigrants, claiming that "They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists" (Time 2015). Focusing Event 2 begins June 16, 2015 and ends July 16, 2015, allowing a one-month interval for public response.

Focusing Event 3: Accidental Shooting of Kate Steinle. The accidental shooting and death of Kate Steinle on July 1, 2015 by undocumented immigrant José Inez García Zárate makes national headlines, further contributing to public dissonance regarding the immigrationcrime link. Proponents of anti-immigration legislation target San Francisco's sanctuary city policies as a threat to national security and the wellbeing of Americans. Although the death of Kate Steinle has prevailed in the immigration-crime link debate since the shooting, this event begins on July 1, 2015 and ends one month later on August 1, 2015.

Focusing Event 4: Presidential Election of Donald Trump. Donald Trump is elected president of the United States on November 8, 2016 and sworn into office on January 20, 2017. The election of Donald Trump is significant to the immigration-crime link debate due to his office's commitment to the criminalization and deportation of undocumented immigrants and endorsement of increased border security measures, including the completion of a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border. To account for the election as well as the public's response leading up to the inauguration of Donald Trump, Focusing Event 4 begins on November 8, 2016 and ends January 20, 2017.

Focusing Event 5: Central American Migrant Caravan of Spring 2018. In March 2018, a caravan of approximately 700 primarily Honduran migrants begin a trek from Tapachula, Chiapas, Mexico to the U.S-Mexico border. By their arrival on April 29, 2018, the caravan has

grown to nearly 1,200 migrants despite discouragement from several Trump administration officials, including attorney general Jeff Sessions, claiming the caravan to be "a deliberate attempt to undermine our laws and overwhelm our system" (Semple and Jordan 2018). As such, Focusing Event 5 begins March 25, 2018 and concludes May 29, 2018.

Focusing Event 6: Children in Cages. Following the arrival of the Central American Migrant Caravan in April 2018 and consequential changes to immigration detention policies in May 2018, conditions of detention centers make national news headlines as journalists permitted to visit these centers publish images of migrant children being separated from their parents and detained in cages, as well as multiple accounts of the mistreatment of these undocumented minors. Focusing Event 6 begins June 1, 2018 and ends August 1, 2018, a two-month period encapsulating early visits to detention centers by politicians and reporters, followed by one month of consequential public discussion.

Focusing Event 7: Murder of Mollie Tibbetts. On July 18, 2018, University of Iowa student Mollie Tibbetts disappears while jogging and is reported missing the following day. Approximately one month later on August 21, 2018, undocumented immigrant Cristhian Bahena Rivera leads authorities to Tibbetts' body in a nearby cornfield after confessing to her abduction and murder. The murder of Mollie Tibbetts becomes highly politicized as opponents of illegal immigration utilized this event to strengthen the link between immigration and crime, despite the Tibbetts family's public denouncement of such claims. Focusing Event 7 begins on the day of Tibbetts' disappearance, July 18, 2018, and ends September 18, 2018, approximately one month after the identification and arrest of suspect Rivera.

Focusing Event 8: 2018 Midterm Elections. The 2018 United States midterm elections are held on November 6, 2018. The 2018 midterm elections are significant to the current study

due to the political atmosphere in which the immigration-crime link debate is a primary element of both Republican and Democratic platforms. The elections are also significant due to high voter turnout, in which "fifty-three percent of the citizen voting-age population" participate in the 2018 midterm elections, up eleven percent from the previous 2014 midterm election (Misra 2019). Focusing Event 8 begins October 6, 2018 and concludes December 6, 2018; this twomonth period includes one month prior to the 2018 midterm election and one month following the midterm election.

Policy Window 1: DACA Expansion. On November 20, 2014, President Obama announced that within 90 days the USCIS would expand DACA (the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program), allowing undocumented immigrants in the program to remain in the United States temporarily without fear of immediate deportation as well as the opportunity for employment authorization (USCIS 2015 A). This announcement came with a series of other executive actions with the intent to crack down on illegal immigration along the U.S.-Mexico border; prioritize the deportation of felons rather than families; termination of the Secure Communities program managed by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE); and to implement requirements for a series of background checks and taxes for those who wish to receive deferred action (USCIS 2015 B). Policy Window 1 begins on November 20, 2014, the date that the executive actions were announced, and ends December 20, 2014, allowing onemonth for public discourse.

Policy Window 2: Reinstatement of Secure Communities. On January 25, 2017, just five days after his inauguration, newly elected President Trump reinstates the Secure Communities program previously halted by President Obama's 2014 executive actions on immigration. Secure Communities utilizes a "federal information-sharing partnership between DHS and the FBI that

helps to identify in-custody aliens" desirable by the Trump administration for deportation

(USICE 2018), and has grown to be a point of contention in the immigration-crime link debate

and American politics, along with the transparency of ICE. Policy Window 2 begins on January

25, 2017, the date that President Trump signed the executive order, and concludes on February

25, 2017. This interval provides one month for public discourse and responses from prominent

news media outlets.

 Policy Window 3: Expiration of DACA and Sanctuary City Lawsuit. March 5, 2018,

DACA expires with without renewal legislation or additional executive actions in place, leaving

nearly 700,000 undocumented immigrants in a legal freefall. The following day, March 6, 2018,

the U.S. Department of Justice files a lawsuit amounting "to a pre-emptive strike against

[California's] so-called sanctuary laws" (Benner and Medina 2018) in response to the January

2018 passage of SB 54 – the California Values Act – "which limits state and local law

enforcement officers' ability to communicate with federal immigration authorities about a

person's immigration status (Villazor and Gulasekaram 2018:556). Both events result in a policy

window beginning March 5, 2018 and concluding April 6, 2018, a one-month interval following

both events to allow for public response.

Additional Control Variables

Other article-level variables were also coded, including (1) whether or not the article appeared on

the front page of the newspaper; (2) the word count of the article; (3) whether the article's story

concerns international or domestic issues; (4) the year of publication, in order to account for

trending over time; and (5) which of the seven newspaper outlets printed the article (to capture

publication effects shared by articles from the same paper).

Analytic Strategy

To answer my research question regarding whether and how immigration-crime media narratives change over time in correspondence with focusing events and policy windows, I first examine the prevalence of each frame throughout the 2014 – 2018 period. As a second step, I use each of the variables identified above to predict article frames across the pooled cross-section of all articles from 2014 – 2018. My key outcome is the presence of each narrative frame (dummy coded for whether they appear in an article or not) with my key independent variable being whether an article was published during a policy window/focusing event, controlling for time, publication, and other key article-level covariates. Given the dichotomous nature of my dependent variables, I use logistic regression analysis, constructing a model for each of the frame outcomes and comparing across them in terms of the effect of policy windows on the likelihood of a frame being used in an article.

FINDINGS

Table 1 displays the means and standard deviations for each of the six dependent variables, eight focusing events, three policy windows, and all other article-level variables included in this study. First, I note that some immigration-crime frames appear more frequently than others. For example, the criminogenic frame appears in over half of the 1,720 articles included in the sample (55 percent), followed closely by the "immigration as crime" frame, which appears in approximately 44 percent of all articles in the sample. These frames tend to be increasingly antagonistic towards immigrants, appearing primarily in articles that perpetuate the immigrationcrime link by repeatedly highlighting criminal behavior displayed by a select few individual immigrants, and further generalizing this behavior to the general immigrant population. In comparison, the civil/legal frame, which addresses issues such as the legal

ambiguity of undocumented immigrants and legality of sanctuary cities, appears in

approximately 42 percent of all articles. The sympathetic-leaning frames, specifically the

protective and victims frames, appear far less frequently in the sample than the more antagonistic

frames mentioned above. The protective frame, which describes immigrants as less crime-prone

than their native-born counterparts, appears in approximately 21 percent of all articles in the

sample, while the victims frame highlighting the increased likelihood of immigrant victimization

appears in only 13 percent of all articles. Lastly, the refugees frame appears in 15 percent of all

articles.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Sample of Articles (n = 1,720)

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.
Frames (n=3276)		
Criminogenic	0.55	0.50
Protective	0.21	0.41
Imm. As Crime	0.44	0.50
Victims	0.13	0.33
Refugees	0.15	0.36
Civil/Legal	0.42	0.49
All Focusing Events	0.26	0.44
FE: CA Migrant Crisis	0.04	0.19
FE: Trump Candidacy	0.03	0.17
FE: Kate Steinle	0.04	0.19
FE: Trump Election	0.06	0.23
FE: CA Migrant Crisis 2	0.02	0.14
FE: Kids in Cages	0.04	0.19
FE: Mollie Tibbetts	0.03	0.18
FE: 2018 Midterms	0.03	0.17
All Policy Windows	0.09	0.29
PW: DACA Expansion	0.02	0.12
PW: Secure Communities	0.06	0.23

PW: DACA Expiration	0.02	0.13
2014	0.10	0.30
2015	0.15	0.36
2016	0.28	0.45
2017	0.28	0.45
2018	0.20	0.40
Word Count (ln)	6.84	0.65
Front Page	0.14	0.34

Note: Articles may have more than one frame so percentages do not sum to 100.

Second, Table 1 also shows that articles published during focusing events make up about 26 percent of all articles, while only about 9 percent of articles are published during policy windows. In fact, two events/windows stand out as particularly prominent times when immigration-crime articles are published. The first is the Trump election, when 6 percent of all articles between 2014 and 2018 were published, while the second is the passage of the Secure Communities Act, when another 6 percent of articles were published. No other policy window or focusing event had more than 4 percent of articles published during their time periods.

Finally, third, Table 1 shows that few immigration-crime articles appear on the front page of these large, national papers (only about 14 percent) and articles are, on average, about 934 words in length ($e_{6.84}$). However, there are important differences in when these articles were published. Twenty-eight percent of all immigration-crime articles were published in the years 2016 and 2017, whereas only 20 percent of all articles were published in 2018, 15 percent in 2015, and only 10 percent in 2014. Not surprisingly, the election and inauguration years (20162017) of Donald Trump are the years with the most articles written, dovetailing with the same observation regarding the focusing events above.
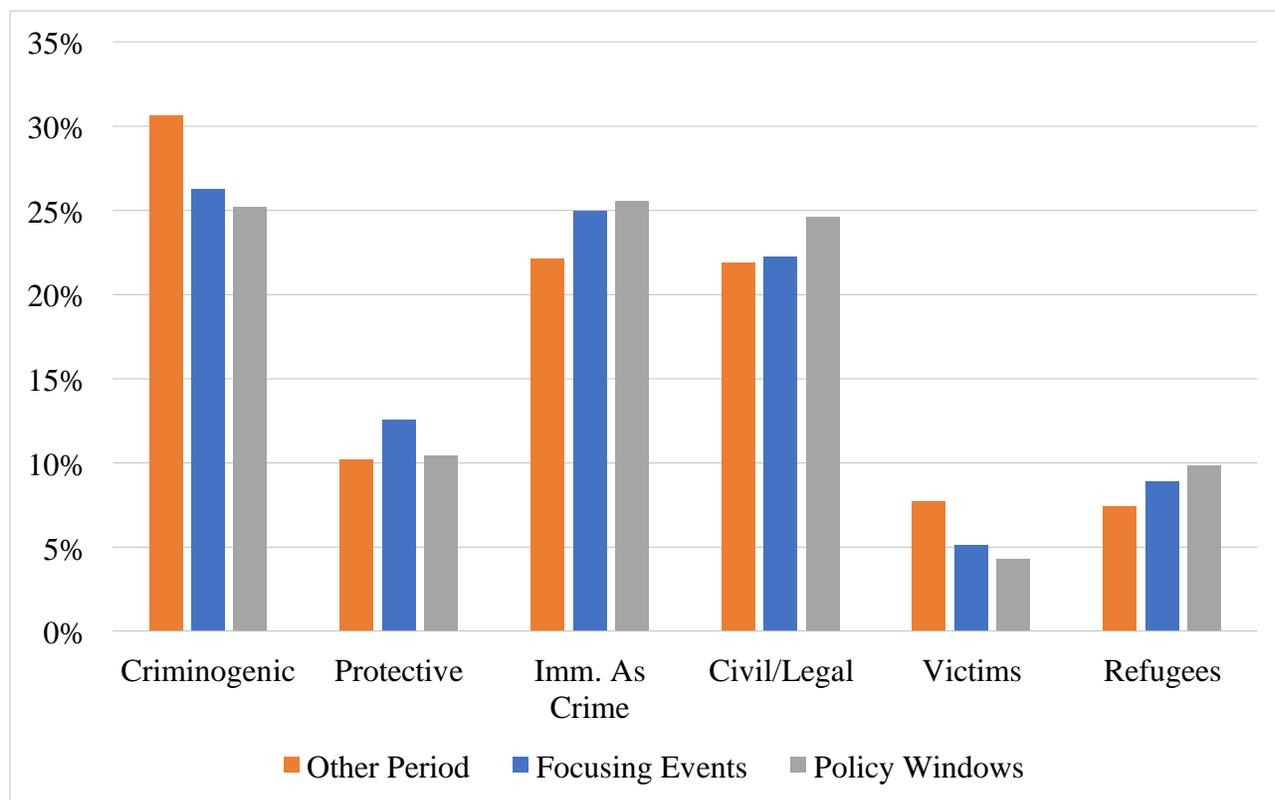
Figure 1. Comparison of Frame Prevalence, 2014-2018

To better illustrate the frequency of specific immigration-crime narratives relative to key events/windows, Figure 1 depicts the prevalence of each individual frame as it appears during all focusing events, all policy windows, or during any other time during the 2014 to 2018 era. Other periods, also referred to as outlying periods, refer to time intervals that are absent of a focusing event or policy window. First, I note that only the criminogenic and victims frames appear more frequently during outlying periods than during focusing events and policy windows. Second, the protective frame is the only frame that appears more often during focusing events than policy windows and outlying periods. Third, the immigration as a crime frame, civil/legal frame, and refugees frame all occur more frequently during policy windows than focusing events and outlying periods. Taken together, some frames appear more frequently during policy windows and focusing events (civil/legal, refugee, immigration as a crime, protective), while other frames

appear at higher rates during periods outside of those policy windows and focusing events (criminogenic, victims). However, I note that this may be because the majority of articles are published during these other periods, as indicated in Table 1. I return to this issue in my multivariate models.
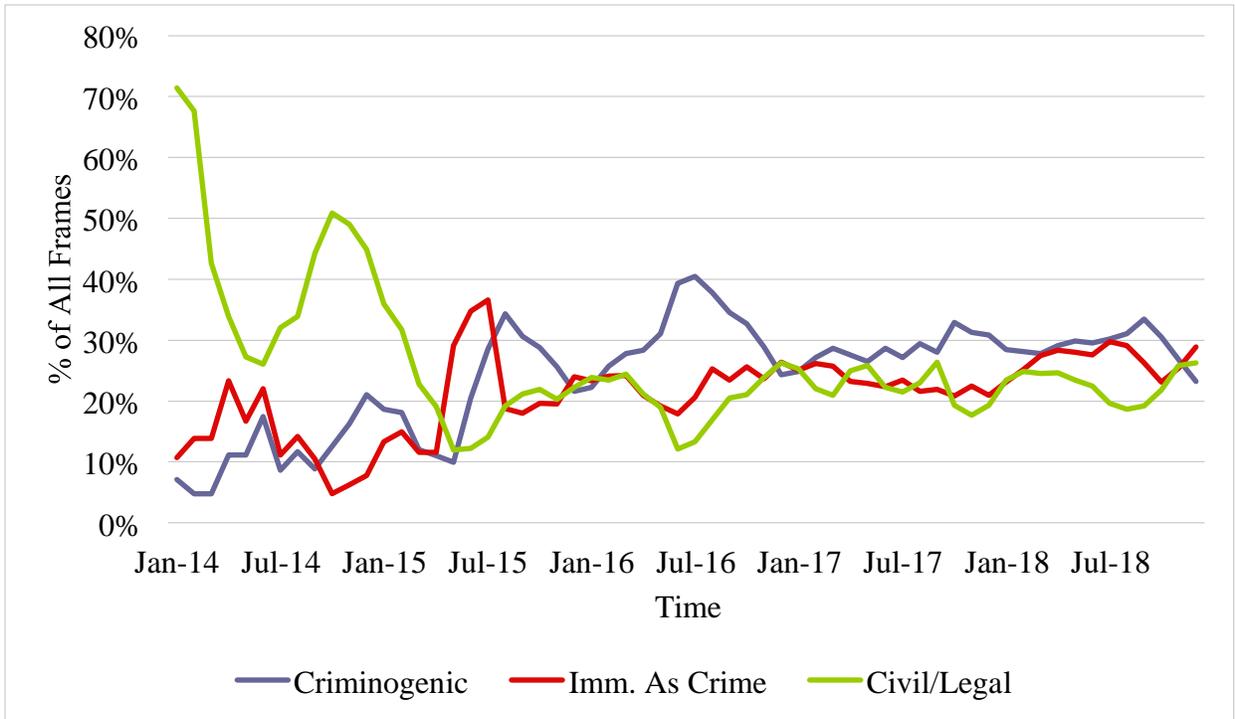
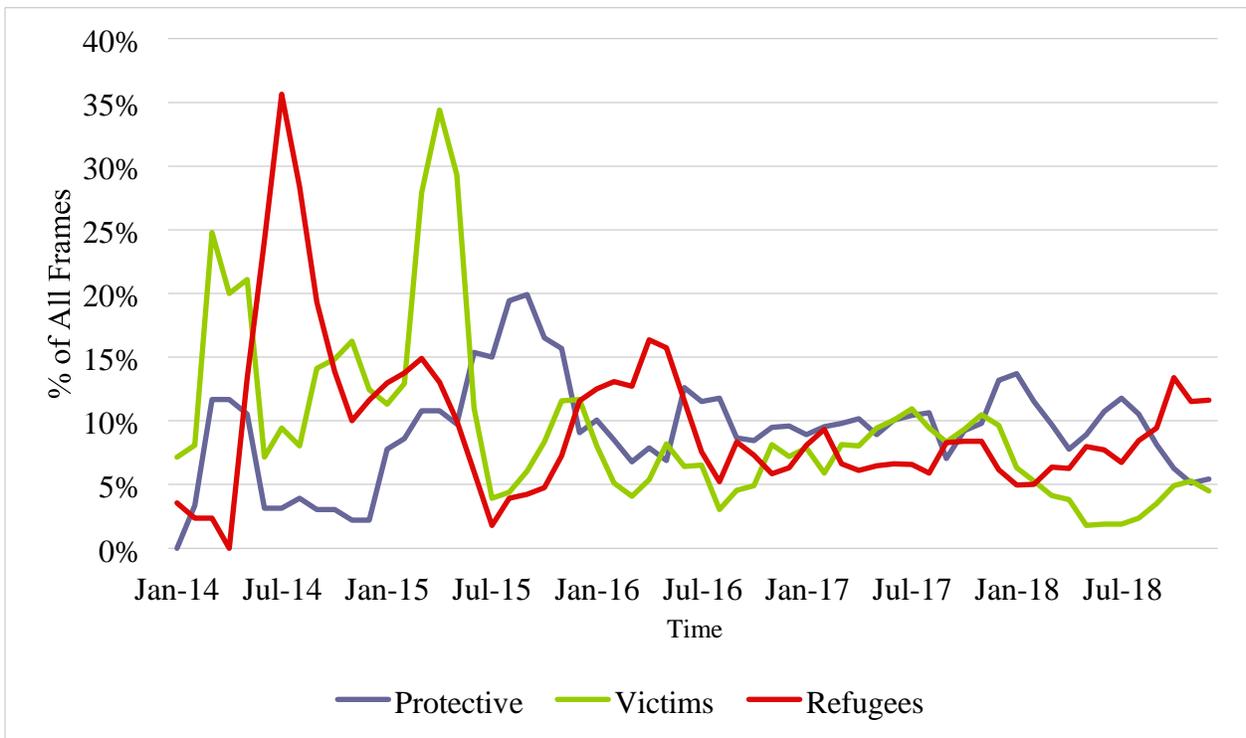Figure 2. Changes in Frame Prevalence Over Time, 2014-2018

Figure 3. Changes in Frame Prevalence Over time, 2014-2018

To further illustrate changes in framing over time, Figure 2 shows the monthly prevalence over the study period for the most prevalent frames (criminogenic, immigration as a crime, civil/legal), while Figure 3 does the same for the less prevalent narratives (protective, refugees, victims). Beginning with Figure 2, from 2014 to 2018, the prevalence of the civil/legal frame appears to decrease, excluding one spike in prevalence during the winter of 2014 (in correspondence with Policy Window 1, the announcement of the DACA expansion). Simultaneously throughout the 2014 to 2018 period, the criminogenic and immigration as crime frames steadily increase. The criminogenic frame first begins to increase in prevalence during the spring of 2014 (around the time of Focusing Event 1, the Central American Migrant Crisis)

and then subsequently spiking in the fall of 2015 (near the time of Focusing Event 3, the accidental murder of Kate Steinle by undocumented immigrant José Inez García Zárate). Likewise, the immigration as crime frame steadily increases over time, with one spike in prevalence occurring during the spring of 2014 (in correspondence with Focusing Event 1), and two notable spikes later occurring during the summer of 2015 around the time of Focusing Event 2, Donald Trump's presidential candidacy announcement.

Meanwhile, Figure 3 shows that although the prevalence of the victims frame decreases overall, two significant spikes in prevalence occur during 2014 and 2015. The first spike in prevalence of the victims frame occurs in spring of 2014 during Focusing Event 1 (the Central American migrant crisis), while the second spike occurs approximately one year later during spring 2015. While the protective frame overall increases in prevalence over time, there are four notable increase events as visualized by Figure 3. The first spike occurs in the spring of 2014 as the migrant crisis emerges, while the second spike appears during fall 2015 following the Kate

Steinle death. The third spike in the prevalence of the protective frame appears during the summer of 2016 prior to the presidential election of Donald Trump. Finally, the fourth spike in prevalence of the protective frame appears in the spring of 2018 in correspondence with the expiration of DACA and the emergence of a second Central American Migrant Caravan. Lastly, Figure 3 depicts the refugees frame gradually increasing over the 2014 to 2018 period, featuring two noteworthy spikes in the prevalence of this frame. The first spike in prevalence occurs during the spring and summer of 2014 as the Central American migrant crisis begins to make national headlines in the United States, while the second spike occurs during spring 2016.

Overall then, Figures 2 and 3 depict increases in the criminogenic frame, immigration as crime frame, protective frame, and refugees frame throughout the 2014 to 2018 period, while also showing decreases in the civil/legal and victims frames. Spikes in the prevalence of each frame tend to correspond with specific focusing events and policy windows as well. However, while instructive, the figures and tables presented above are only descriptive and cannot take into account that some of these patterns in immigration-crime framing may be due to external factors (e.g., larger national trends each year) or characteristics of news making (e.g., longer articles, more front page coverage) at specific points in time. To systematically examine how narrative framing might differ during policy windows and focusing events net of other important covariates, I construct a series of multivariate models.

Turning to the multivariate analyses, Table 2 displays the results of logistic regression models predicting the likelihood that a frame will be present in an article during any focusing event or policy window, including front page publication, logged word count, and year of publication with 2014 serving as the reference. Table 3 displays the same results of logistic regression models, but predicting the likelihood that a frame will appear in an article as a

function of each individual focusing event and policy window. For all models in Table 2 and 3, I cluster the standard errors across papers to account for unmeasured similarities in articles that appear in the same newspaper outlets.

Table 2. Logistic Regression Models Predicting the Odds of a Frame Appearing in an Article as a Function of Focusing Events, Policy Windows, and Other Key Covariates (n=1,720)

	Criminogenic	Protective	Imm. As Crime	Victims	Refugees	Civil / Legal
			Frames			
Focusing Event	1.092	1.210	1.273	0.804	1.279*	0.966
	(0.311)	(.269)	(.179)	(.194)	(.155)	(.982)
Policy Window	0.966	1.252	1.431*	0.499**	1.357	1.202*
	(.130)	(.254)	(.231)	(.119)	(.361)	(.100)
2015	8.163***	12.790***	3.207***	1.274	0.461**	0.847
	(3.069)	(4.668)	(.981)	(.362)	(.128)	(.179)
2016	8.500***	5.899***	4.622***	0.566*	0.558***	0.724*
	(2.935)	(1.532)	(.863)	(.144)	(.086)	(.117)
2017	11.569***	8.900***	7.549***	1.471*	0.781	1.393
	(4.676)	(3.268)	(1.477)	(.234)	(.175)	(.239)
2018	12.885***	7.507***	8.949***	0.577	0.714	1.532**
	(3.779)	(2.308)	(2.889)	(.171)	(.192)	(.203)
Word Count (ln)	1.101	1.022	1.286***	0.966	1.444*	1.216*
	(.098)	(.113)	(.068)	(.088)	(.246)	(.096)
Front Page	0.985	0.572**	1.305	0.844	1.026	1.168
	(.196)	(.105)	(.209)	(.213)	(.160)	(.193)
Constant	0.073***	0.031***	0.024***	0.220*	0.019	0.175**
	(.051)	(.025)	(.010)	(.161)	(.027)	(.096)
Pseudo R_2	.0678	.0432	.0691	.0317	.0198	.0220

Note: Odds ratios displayed with a standard error in parenthesis. All models included paper clustered standard errors to adjust for shared variance between articles published in the same outlet (*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.)

Beginning with Table 2, I note five key findings. First, there are few systematic differences in the likelihood of a frame appearing in an article during focusing events, except for one exception. Holding all other variables constant, articles published during a focusing event are approximately 28 percent more likely to include the refugee frame than articles not published during a focusing event (odd ratio = 1.279, *p*<.05). Yet, second, policy windows are more likely to include several frames (and less likely to include one frame). Specifically, articles published during a policy window are 43 percent more likely to include the immigration as a crime frame (odds ratio = 1.431, *p*<.05) and approximately 20 percent more likely to include the civil/legal frame (odds ratio = 1.202, *p*<.05), but are nearly 50 percent less likely to include the victims frame (odd ratio = .499, *p*<.01).

Third, Table 2 also shows that articles published from 2015 to 2018 have greater odds of the criminogenic, protective, and immigration as a crime frames being present within the article than articles published in 2014. Fourth, some frames are less likely to be present in articles over time. Specifically, the refugees frame is nearly 54 percent less likely to be present in articles published during 2015 and approximately 44 percent less likely to be present in articles published during 2016, as compared to articles published during 2014. Similarly, the civil/legal frame is less likely to appear in articles published during 2016 than articles published during 2014, although the likelihood of the civil/legal frame appearing in an article published during 2018 is 53 percent greater than articles published during 2014. Lastly, articles published on the front page of a newspaper are nearly 43 percent less likely to include the protective frame (odds ratio = .572, *p*<.01) than articles not published on the front page.

Table 3. Logistic Regression Models Predicting the Odds of a Frame Appearing in an Article as a Function of Focusing Events, Policy Windows, and Other Key Covariates

			Frames			
	Criminogenic	**Protective**	**Imm. As Crime**	**Victims**	**Refugees**	**Civil / Legal**
FE: CA Migrant Crisis	1.116	0.841	1.416	0.645*	5.087***	0.822
	(.687)	(.148)	(.719)	(.130)	(1.146)	(.179)
FE: Trump Candidacy	2.672***	1.857)	0.610*	0.572	0.482	0.464 ***
	(.568)	(1.045)	(.153)	(.173)	(.242)	(.096)
FE: Kate Steinle	3.654***	1.990	2.068***	0.691	0.533*	1.203
	(1.353)	(.908)	(.346)	(.463)	(.159)	(.283)
FE: Trump Election	0.471***	0.811	1.464***	1.494**	0.430*	1.964 ***
	(.080)	(.213)	(.097)	(.196)	(.177)	(.328)
FE: CA Migrant Crisis 2	0.840	0.649	0.893	0.603	1.924***	1.079
	(.347)	(.184)	(.312)	(.283)	(.229)	(.396)
FE: Kids in Cages	1.187	1.314	1.615	0.565	2.251**	1.089
	(.180)	(.359)	(.471)	(.292)	(.534)	(.307)
FE: Mollie Tibbetts	1.044	0.930	1.108	0.983	1.159	0.437 ***
	(.191)	(.231)	(.463)	(.511)	(.347)	(.062)
FE: 2018 Midterms	0.536*	0.497*	0.399*	1.526	1.960***	0.578 **
	(.145)	(.161)	(.159)	(1.617)	(.309)	(.105)

Table 3, Cont.

			Frames			
	Criminogenic	**Protective**	**Imm. As Crime**	**Victims**	**Refugees**	**Civil / Legal**
PW: DACA Expansion		0.968	0.594	0.189*	0.334	1.224
	1.396 (.720)	(1.211)	(.359)	(.157)	(.413)	(.495)
PW: Secure Communities	0.948	1.306	1.507	0.477*	2.173***	1.090
	(.138)	(.455)	(.326)	(.179)	(.298)	(.086)
PW: DACA Expiration	0.805	1.170	1.676	1.590	0.989	1.222
	(.176)	(.603)	(.560)	(.790)	(.664)	(.310)
2015	5.740**	8.018***	2.921***	1.223	1.090	0.875
	(3.044)	(3.164)	(.527)	(.397)	(.420)	(.131)
2016	10.581***	5.280***	4.195***	0.431**	1.190	0.595**
	(6.167)	(1.310)	(1.309)	(.128)	(.250)	(.093)
2017	12.684***	7.429***	6.941***	1.249	1.263	1.321*
	(7.329)	(2.932)	(1.650)	(.283)	(.492)	(.170)
2018	15.970***	7.683***	10.031***	0.422	1.029	1.725*
	(8.357)	(3.308)	(3.117)	(.257)	(.250)	(.411)
Word Count (ln)	1.148	1.045	1.281***	0.948	1.415*	1.207*
	(.109)	(.130)	(.074)	(.077)	(.241)	(.092)
Front Page	1.013	0.577**	1.305	0.832	0.996	1.148
	(.197)	(.103)	(.213)	(.205)	(.160)	(.188)

Constant	0.052**	0.032***	0.027***	0.292*	0.125**	0.194**
	(.049)	(.029)	(.011)	(.172)	(.019)	(.094)
Pseudo R$_2$	.0907	.0544	.0776	.0392	.0480	.0319

Note: Odds ratios displayed with standard errors in parenthesis. All models include paperclustered standard errors to adjust for shared variance between articles published in the same outlet (*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.)

Moving on to Table 3, I note five key findings regarding the likelihood that a frame will appear in an article as a function of each individual focusing event and policy window. First, as previously addressed, articles published during focusing events are overall more likely to include the refugees frame. According to Table 3, articles published during the first Central American migrant crisis (Focusing Event 1); second Central American migrant crisis (Focusing Event 5); Focusing Event 6, during which undocumented minors were detained in cages; and the 2018 U.S. midterm elections (Focusing Event 8) are all more likely to include the refugees frame than articles published outside these focusing events. Only articles published around the death of Kate Steinle (Focusing Event 3) and the U.S. presidential election of Donald Trump (Focusing Event 4) are less likely to include the refugees frame.

Second, similarly to Table 2, Table 3 indicates that articles published during both the announcement of the expansion of DACA (Policy Window 1) and the reinstatement of Secure Communities (Policy Window 2) are less likely to include the victims frame. With 2.173 greater odds (*p*<.001), the refugees frame is only more likely to be present in articles published during Policy Window 2.

Third, articles published following Donald Trump's candidacy announcement and the death of Kate Steinle are both more likely to include the criminogenic frame, but differ regarding the immigration as a crime frame. Articles published in conjunction with Trump's candidacy

announcement are 39 percent less likely to include the immigration as a crime frame, while articles published in response to the death of Kate Steinle have 2.068 greater odds ($p<.001$) of having the immigration as a crime frame present within an article. Likewise, articles published during Focusing Event 4 – during which Donald Trump was elected president and inaugurated – are more likely to include the immigration as a crime frame, victims frame, and civil/legal frame. Alternatively, articles published during this same time period are nearly 53 percent less likely to include the criminogenic frame and 57 percent less likely to include the refugees frame.

Lastly, articles published during the 2018 U.S. midterm elections (Focusing Event 8) are less likely to include four frames than articles not published during this time period: the criminogenic frame; the protective frame; the immigration as a crime frame; and the civil/legal frame. On the other hand, the refugees frame is 96 percent more likely to be present in an article during the 2018 midterm elections. Worth mention, is that only the articles published during Focusing Event 8 are less likely (over 50 percent) to include the protective frame.

DISCUSSION

Over the past several decades, the American political landscape has grown increasingly polarized on a variety of issues ranging from religious liberty to gun control, especially considering the advancements in communicative technology that afford Americans multiple platforms for information consumption, and consequentially, political participation (Fourney et al. 2017, Hare and Poole 2014). Although the issue of race has long been a critical point of contention in American politics and society, immigration, particularly along the Southern border, has reemerged over the past two decades as a fundamental element of both the Republican and Democratic Parties' platforms (Hare and Poole 2014). Within the rhetoric of immigration, particularly from Mexico and Central America, crime remains an important part of the debate as to how the foreign-born reshape communities and the fabric of the nation. Because the majority of Americans are not well-versed on the intricacies of immigration or crime and utilize information and opinions presented by the media to inform their beliefs, examining media behavior is crucial to understanding contemporary American beliefs and attitudes toward immigration and crime.

Several recent studies conclude that while newspaper readership is gradually declining as a consequence of increasing news media presence online, newspapers remain "a critical part of the American news landscape" and continue to impose significant influence on the American public regarding the immigration-crime link debate (Garrett and Stroud 2014, Pew Research Center 2019). Therefore, systematically examining the ways in which narratives and framing shift over time, particularly in relation with specific events, is imperative to understanding the multifaceted relationship between news media, agenda setting, and the American public. As such, the objective of this study has been to systematically examine changes in media narratives

in response to focusing events and policy windows, specifically asking: *how does media framing of immigration and crime change around focusing events and policy windows over the 20142018 period?*

First, I found that some immigration-crime frames are more prevalent than others during the 2014 – 2018 period. For example, the criminogenic frame appears in over half of all articles, while the immigration as a crime frame appears in 44 percent of articles. In contrast, the protective frame – which is most consistent with empirical research – appears in only 21 percent of articles (the refugee and victims frames appear even less frequently in immigration-crime articles). Because articles can contain multiple frames, some appear together in greater frequency. For instance, articles that contain the criminogenic frame are significantly more likely to also include the protective, immigration as a crime, and victims frames.

As a second major finding, some focusing events and policy windows are associated with a *greater* likelihood of some frames occurring as compared to others. When all focusing events are pooled together, only the refugee frame is more likely to be present. At the same time, Table 3 illustrates that when measured separately, independent focusing events are more likely to include multiple frames not limited to the refugee frame. For example, articles published following the death of Kate Steinle are significantly more likely to include both the criminogenic and immigration as a crime frames, while the refugee frame is actually *less* likely to be present.

Third, I note similar findings for policy windows, as well. When all policy windows are pooled together, both the immigration as a crime and civil/legal frames are more likely to be present. Similar to focusing events, when each policy window is examined independently, we find that additional frames are more likely to appear. For example, articles published following the Trump administration's announcement to reinstate Secure Communities are more likely to

include the refugees frame, while neither the immigration as a crime frame or civil/legal frame are more likely to be present in articles published during this period. Likewise, longer articles are also more likely to include the immigration as a crime frame, refugee frame, and civil/legal frame, likely due to the complex intricacies of the topics in which these frames appear, as they require more substantial explanation than other topics.

Finally, fourth, some focusing events and policy windows are associated with a *decreased* likelihood of some frames occurring as compared to others. For instance, while articles published during Trump's announcement of his intention to run for president are more likely to include the criminogenic frame, they are also less likely to include the immigration as a crime and civil/legal frames. As another example, articles published during both President Obama's immigration executive orders announcement and President Trump's reinstatement of Secure Communities are less likely to include the victims frame. Other characteristics of immigration-crime articles appear to decrease the likelihood of some frames, as well. Articles that are published on the front page of a newspaper are somewhat less likely to include the protective frame than articles not published on the front page of a newspaper.

Broader Impacts and Theoretical Relevance

Ultimately, this study contributes to ongoing research regarding the intersection of media and public opinion by highlighting discrepancies between the products of empirical research and the institutions of journalism and news media. Despite widespread consensus among criminologists that immigration is unassociated with violence in most communities (Ousey and Kubrin 2018), the newspaper outlets included in this study published articles utilizing the narratives most critical of immigration – the criminogenic and immigration as a crime frames – with greater frequency throughout the 2014 – 2018 period than any of the other frames. Indeed, these two

frames were used over twice as often the protective frame that best aligns with empirical research. In short, the national news media often provide distorted narratives of immigrants or the process of immigration.

Further, because frames are not equally distributed across each independent focusing event and policy window, these findings indicate that frames are strategically employed within articles, and that variations in framing are dependent upon the circumstances and context during which articles are published. Importantly, this finding aligns with Kingdon's multiple-streams framework, in which the "problem stream" emerges as an issue or set of circumstances capture the attention of a national audience and open the grounds for dialogue. It is during this national discussion that the media landscape systematically responds to events and issues by promoting or adhering to specific narratives, promoted by those who are either conforming or combating power structures in the political arena, that are then consumed by the general population. For example, my results indicate that news media narratives are not monolithic and do not wax and wane in one direction over time. Instead, frames increase and decrease as they are used by media (and the claim makers engaging media outlets) to highlight specific aspects of the immigration-crime debate when external events occur. Therefore, this study also aligns with the growing body of literature that acknowledges agenda setting as a calculated process by which editorial decisionmakers intentionally construct and impose narratives that both reflect and inspire the general public's detrimental association between immigration and crime.

My findings also speak to changes in news media behavior more broadly. For example, a key finding from the current study shows the criminogenic frame to be more prevalent among articles included in the sample than any other frame, particularly more so than the protective frame. While this expectation appears antagonistic towards news media outlets on the surface,

contemporary literature and theoretical frameworks of journalistic behavior acknowledge a shift in American news media reporting practices during the post-9/11 period, during which information-related programming gave way to attention-grabbing "trauma-driven content" (Serani 2008:240). Increasingly, in the current period's political atmosphere, trauma-driven content, especially when occurring during external focusing events, is overrepresented in news media publications and often depicts events with "an exaggerated importance, [facts] taken out of context" and "highly misleading portrayals" that are intended to reveal dangerous trends in immigration and crime (Martin 2018:119). Thus, my findings illustrate the role played by external events or specific policy periods in generating the opportunity for specific immigrationcrime content designed to grab attention.

More so, recent studies find that trauma-oriented narratives, specifically those that conceptualize a threat or "villain" beyond the limits of one individual, have an increased ability to amplify emotional responses to an event or issue, and "may promote [collective] development of intrusive thoughts about the event [or issue]" that can persist with socially detrimental effects (Holman et al. 2020:119). Often, media logic is the rationale behind such publications: media outlets wish to increase readership and viewing for financial gain and heightened status, rather than to incite widespread panic amongst the public. Because Americans primarily receive information regarding immigrants and crime from these outlets more readily than they do from academic sources, though, this tradition of sensationalized reporting cultivates an atmosphere in which the public is both desensitized to trauma and loss while simultaneously over aware of a predetermined threat that may not empirically exist, particularly as is the case with Latino immigrants. For instance, the accidental shooting of Kate Steinle by García Zárate became highly politicized as media coverage of Steinle's death reached national headlines in 2015.

Despite the ultimate acquittal of all murder and manslaughter charges brought against García Zárate in 2017, the narrative of dangerous immigrants lurking in the shadows of American society persisted throughout legal proceedings. Such dialogue further aggravated discrepancies within the immigration-crime link debate by encouraging the public to characterize immigrants as inherently threatening, as well as drawing criticism to the legality and safety of sanctuary cities.

Although this study does not measure the role of race in media coverage of immigrants and crime, a plethora of studies agree that race and ethnicity permeate discourse about the "overall social and economic well-being" of the United States (Rivera 2014:45), particularly with negative portrayals of Latinx immigrants (Moriearty 2010). For instance, a 2008 report by the Brookings Institute found that "coverage of Latinos and immigration" focuses "almost exclusively on undocumented [Latinx} immigrants and immigration, lacks important context, and often frames immigration as a crisis" (Reny and Manzano 2016:197). With consideration to the 2014-2018 period, the issue of Latinx immigrants and immigration became a focal point in the national news media landscape in mid-2015, and remains so, primarily as a result of Donald Trump's candidacy announcement, anti-immigrant rhetoric, and closed borders platform (Finley and Esposito 2019). As such, a reasonable assumption can be made about this study's findings that not only are immigrants framed negatively and dangerously more so than they are positively and sympathetically, as is the case with the criminogenic and immigration as a crime frame, but that the immigrants in question are overwhelmingly Latinx.

The findings of this study also conform to the body of literature revolving around contemporary media behavior in reference to the rarity of the protective and victims frames throughout the articles included in our sample. Although the victims frames can be considered

trauma-driven content, this frame places ownership of the trauma back onto American society and American institutions, as opposed to placing blame on immigrants themselves, and therefore creates a narrative that Americans, in general, are less likely to seek out (Serani 2008). As well, because the protective frame does not align with media logic – in the sense that this frame quells concerns about immigration and crime rather than generalizing immigrant perpetrators to the immigrant population – these findings were not unexpected.

In addition, the pattern of findings across the multivariate models suggests that, while some frames (e.g. the criminogenic, immigration as a crime, and civil/legal frames) are more prevalent than others (the protective, victims, and refugee frames), the majority of articles do not express sentiment that is fundamentally anti-immigration. Rather, they acknowledge the immigration-crime link and refute its assumptions by employing additional frames that often counter more antagonistic narratives (e.g., point and counterpoint). For example, although the protective frame appears in only 21 percent of articles included in our sample, as opposed to the criminogenic frame which appears in 55 percent of articles, these two frames often appear alongside one another. This suggests that a significant proportion of these articles are at least somewhat sympathetic toward immigrants and attempt to utilize empirical research concluding that immigrants are less crime-prone than Americans, rather than antagonistically portraying behaviors exhibited by the immigrant population as inherently criminal. As an example, Valverde's 2016 Tampa Bay Times article acknowledges Donald Trump's claim that Mexican immigrants are murderers and rapists – thereby employing the criminogenic frame – while going on to cite the American Immigration Council's report finding that immigrant males are significantly less likely to be incarcerated for violent crimes than their native-born white counterparts, in which the protective frame is employed. Put simply, media framing is complex

and involves the interplay between often competing narratives appearing during the same policy windows and focusing events, including occasionally within the same articles.

As previously noted, longer articles are more likely to include the immigration as a crime frame, refugee frame, and civil/legal frame than shorter articles in the sample. Articles which utilize these frames may be longer because the issues which these frames cover tend to be more complex, and time consuming, than topics presented using other frames. The criminogenic frame, for example, is often present in articles that quote Donald Trump during the 2014-2018 time frame. These articles are short, to the point, and typically opinion pieces – especially with consideration to the limited nature of Trump's claims, as well as readily available data that precisely contradicts such claims. Alternatively, as is the case with the immigration as a crime frame, refugee frame, and civil/legal frame, these articles tend to explore the intricacies of immigration, regional immigrant communities, and the socioeconomic conditions of the sending countries from which immigrants come and are, therefore, longer than articles in which other frames are present. Such a pattern relative to the length of articles is pertinent to understanding the relationship between media behavior and public opinion, especially considering changes in consumer behavior over the past two decades. As Molyneux finds in his 2017 study, while widespread media access via smartphone is advantageous for consumers because it increases access to news and information by proxy, this rapid, instantaneous access has created a "snacking" or "grazing" culture in which consumers spend more time browsing the news, but less time ingesting information and understanding issues in which society is concerned. Therefore, some immigration-crime frames likely reflect the need to write for the grazing public with shorter, more simplistic narratives.

Limitations and Future Research

Overall, when systematically measuring shifts in media behavior utilizing the frames, I find that frames do not appear arbitrarily over time, but rather correspond with specific events. Yet, this study is not without limitations that may direct future empirical endeavors. First, I only use data from seven of the largest national newspapers, rather than examining local or regional newspapers. It remains possible that policy windows and focusing events may provoke greater change in some places than in others, a point this study cannot address. Second, I also only utilize data from print newspapers, rather than pulling data from all Internet, television, and social media-oriented news outlets. Although many of the outlets in our sample circulate print articles as online supplements, it would not have been feasible for this study to capture all of the sources with articles that engage in the immigration-crime link debate. Future research would do well to include a variety of news media platforms, particularly featuring online-only platforms, in examining how media frame and compose narratives regarding immigration and crime.

Third, the temporal span of the articles included in this study ranges only from 2014 to 2018, while the association between immigration and crime has intensified in media presence and public opinion since the turn of the 21st century. While measuring Donald Trump's rise to the presidency is valuable for understanding media behavior over the past half-decade, especially considering that Trump became the primary political claims maker as early as his candidacy announcement, the immigration-crime link debate extends far back beyond 2014. Additional research systematically examining changes in framing and media behavior prior to 2014 may be insightful to understanding the degree to which Trump's rhetoric manipulated and informed national discourse (see for example, Harris and Gruenewald 2019).

Fourth, although this study is concerned with media behavior regarding immigration and crime, it does not address differences in media behavior regarding race or immigrants' countries

of origin. In the 2014 to 2018 period, concerns regarding the U.S.-Mexico border dominated

national dialogue regarding immigration and crime, during which Mexican immigrants became

the primary focus of the majority of articles included in the sample. The current study does not

measure or address differences in narratives between Mexican immigrants or refugees from

Central America or Syria, although these topics also flooded national discourse during this

period. While it is beyond the scope of the current study, future research might acknowledge the

role of race in media narratives and how they pertain to public opinion.

As socioeconomic conditions in sending countries continue to deteriorate and news

outlets continue to prioritize antagonistic narratives about the foreign-born, the

immigrationcrime link debate is likely to persist at the national scale for the foreseeable future.

Systematically examining media behavior as it responds to immigration and crime is pertinent to

understanding the intersection of public opinion, consumer behavior, and political outcomes,

particularly so as technological advancements expand further into the routine activities of daily

life. With widespread access to smartphone technology, Americans are consuming news at a

higher and quicker rate than ever before. As a result, American consumers neglect to critically

analyze information through an empirical lens, and therefore increasingly accept "fake news"

sources at a higher rate than before (Pew Research Center 2018). Overall, the burden of proof

falls upon American consumers to understand and navigate systematic changes in media

behavior around social and political events as a means to inform public opinion on immigration

and crime.

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Table 4. Pearson's Correlation Matrix for All Key Variables Across Sample of Articles. (n=1,720).

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
Criminogenic (1)	1.00										
Protective (2)	.27***	1.00									
Imm. As Crime (3)	.23***	.03	1.00								
Victims (4)	.17***	-.07**	-.12***	1.00							
Refugee (5)	-.04	-.01	-.01	.06*	1.00						
Civil/Legal (6)	-.03	-.09***	.36***	-.01	.09***	1.00					
All Focusing Events (7)	.00	.01	.04	-.06*	.04	.01	1.00				
FE: CA Migrant Crisis (8)	-.16***	-.08***	-.10***	.01	.13***	-.02	.33***	1.00			
FE: Trump Candidacy (9)	.11***	.14***	-.04	-.02	.06*	-.06**	.30***	-.03	1.00		
FE: Kate Steinle (10)	.11***	.14***	-.03	-.12	.06*	-.05*	.34***	-.04	.77***	1.00	
FE: Trump Election (11)	-.07**	-.04	.04	.00	-.06*	.03	.42***	-.05*	-.04	-.05*	1.00
FE: CA Migrant Crisis 2 (12)	.02	-.01	.05*	-.03	.02	.05	.24***	-.03	-.03	-.03	-.04
FE: Kids in Cages (13)	.07**	.04	.11***	-.05*	.05*	.06*	.35***	-.04	-.04	-.04	-.05*
FE: Mollie Tibbetts (14)	.05*	.01	.07**	-.03	.00	-.02	.31***	-.04	-.03	-.04	-.05
FE: 2018 Midterms (15)	-.00	-.03	-.02	-.01	.03	.00	.31***	-.03	-.03	-.04	-.04
All Policy Windows (16)	-.01	.01	.06*	-.03	.05	.06*	-.12***	-.06*	-.06*	-.06**	-.08**
PW: DACA Expansion (17)	-.10***	-.05*	-.09***	-.03	-.04	.01	-.07**	-.02	-.02	-.03	-.03
PW: Secure Communities (18)	.03	.04	.08***	-.02	.08**	.04	-.14***	-.05	-.04	-.05*	-.06*
PW: DACA Expiration (19)	.02	.01	.07**	-.01	.00	.05*	.06*	-.03	-.02	-.03	-.03
2014 (20)	-.28***	-.14***	-.20***	-.00	.05*	.02	.09***	.59***	-.06*	-.07**	-.08***
2015 (21)	-.01	.11***	-.10***	.06*	-.06*	-.06*	.03	-.08***	.43***	.48***	-.10***
2016 (22)	.00	-.06*	-.04	-.08**	-.04	-.11***	-.10***	-.12***	-.11***	-.12***	-.34***
2017 (23)	.09***	.05	.11***	.10***	.03	.09***	-.33***	-.12***	-.11***	-.12***	-.09***
2018 (24)	.11***	.02	.16***	-.08**	.03	.09***	.39***	-.10***	-.09***	-.10***	-.12***
Word Count (ln) (25)	.05*	-.00	.10***	-.02	.08***	.06**	.04	-.01	-.07**	-.07*	.07**
Front Page (26)	.00	-.07**	.07**	-.03	.02	.04	.03	.01	-.05*	-.04	.04

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

Table 4, Cont.

	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)	(19)
FE: CA Migrant Crisis 2 (12)	1.00							
FE: Kids in Cages (13)	-.03	1.00						
FE: Mollie Tibbetts (14)	-.03	.10***	1.00					
FE: 2018 Midterms (15)	-.03	-.04	-.03	1.00				
All Policy Windows (16)	.16***	-.06**	-.06*	-.06*	1.00			
PW: DACA Expansion (17)	-.02	-.03	-.02	-.02	.40***	1.00		
PW: Secure Communities (18)	-.03	-.05*	-.04	-.04	.78***	-.03	1.00	
PW: DACA Expiration (19)	.42***	.03	-.02	-.02	.43***	-.02	-.03	1.00
2014 (20)	-.05	-.07**	-.06*	-.06*	.08***	.39***	-.08***	-.04
2015 (21)	-.06*	-.09***	-.08**	-.08**	-.13***	-.05*	-.10***	-.06*
2016 (22)	-.08***	-.13***	-.11***	-.11***	-.19***	-.08**	-.15***	-.08***
2017 (23)	-.09***	-.13***	-.11***	-.11***	.24***	-.08**	.39***	-.08***
2018 (24)	.28***	.41***	.37***	.36***	.00	-.06**	-.12***	.27***
Word Count (ln) (25)	-.01	.04	.02	.03	-.05	-.10***	-.01	.00
Front Page (26)	.00	.04	.02	.04	.05*	-.01	.06*	.02

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.