

Words Matter: Immigration Rhetoric and its impact on public opinion

by

Aline dos Santos Oliveira

Submitted to the Board of Study in Political Science
School of Natural & Social Sciences
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts

Purchase College
State University of New York

May 2019

Accepted:

_____, Sponsor
Professor Karen Baird

_____, Second Reader
Professor Peter Schwab

Introduction

Immigration is a highly complex, salient political issue that vexes nearly every nation. In the United States, it is clear that immigration has been a controversial topic for years. The government has had several attempts in order to provide comprehensive immigration reform to either diminish the entry of new immigrant waves or make it more difficult for entry admission. Throughout history the different usage of language in policy, political speeches and news outlets is evident. The way in which immigration is addressed change depending upon the speaker and the audience. In other words, politicians meticulously craft rhetoric in order to manipulate the outcomes of their speech. It is clear that when it comes to politics, language and power are interconnected. Politicians use certain words in speeches or policies to cater to certain audiences. These words are purposefully placed depending upon the issue at hand. With regards to the issue of immigration in the United States, the words used by people in authority are intended to reach a certain group of audience. The main focus of this paper is to focus on immigration. More specifically, focus on the language used to address immigrants and how news outlets transmit news about immigration based on rhetoric given by presidents. This paper will also examine what effects, if any, does context and rhetoric have on public opinion.

The United States has had many different waves of immigration and the presence of immigrants has always been a contentious topic amongst the public. Throughout history the ways in which different groups of immigrants were perceived by the public and how news on immigration was provided to the public varied. Though immigration has always been a controversial topic, it was not a primary issue in politics until 1965 after the passage of the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, which catered to immigrants of whom had family

relationships in the United States, as opposed to those who were skilled workers.¹ Another policy that took place soon after was the Immigration Reform and Control Act, passed in 1986. The Immigration Reform and Control Act legalized millions of previously unauthorized immigrants.² After the passage of this law, immigration policy became an extremely controversial topic in Congress. Conservative news media and politicians began to refer to the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 as an amnesty law, which then brought the argument that all immigrants would be legalized. Since then, the public and Congress feared that if amnesty was given, immigrants would continue to enter the United States, thus perhaps resulting in more illegal immigration. Interestingly enough, in recent years immigrant population in the United States has increased to over 40 million according to the 2011 Census Bureau.³

In spite of most political speeches and policies attempting to provide support for comprehensive immigration reform, there is and there has been a strong partisan divide on how to handle immigration reform and how to properly address “illegal” immigrants from both politicians and the public. Because of this, we see different ways in which immigrants are addressed by US Presidents, legislative officials and news media.

The “proper” way of addressing out of status immigrants became a vigorously and sustained debate since the 1965 Act. On the conservative side of the spectrum, individuals want to identify out of status immigrants as “illegal aliens” or “illegal immigrants.” Conservatives argue that these immigrants broke the law by either overstaying their visas or entering the country without permission. Liberals on the other hand argue that describing out of status

¹ Chisthi, Muzaffar, Faye Hipsman, and Isabel Ball (2015). “Fifty Years On, the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act Continues to Reshape the United States.” *Migration Policy Institute*.

² Merolla, J., Ramakrishnan, S. K., & Haynes, C. (2013). "Illegal," "undocumented," or "unauthorized": Equivalency frames, issue frames, and public opinion on immigration. *Perspectives on Politics*, 11(3), 789.

³ Hainmueller, J., & Hopkins, D. J. (2014). The Hidden American Immigration Consensus: A Conjoint Analysis of Attitudes toward Immigrants. *American Journal of Political Science*, 59(3), 529-548.

immigrants as “illegal aliens” or illegal immigrants” is demeaning, and it consequently dehumanizes that group of people. Liberals tend to describe out of status immigrants as “undocumented immigrants.” Many governmental agencies have chosen to address out of status immigrants as “unauthorized immigrants” which is a more neutral and humane way of addressing immigrants.⁴

The purpose of this project is to analyze the extent that political discourse influences public opinion on immigration. What are the determinants of whether the “new wave of immigrants” are classified as deserving or undeserving to be in the United States? Furthermore, this project explores how specific words are utilized by politicians in their speeches depending upon the context in which the speech is given and how this affects public opinion. This project also explores the ways in which the media interprets rhetoric and how this impacts the way immigration is perceived. It is important to understand whether the language used by politicians has an influence on public opinion. The power of words is often disregarded, but words carry different meanings depending on how it is used. For instance, the word “alien” is heavily used when describing immigration and immigrants. However, the word itself has a much deeper meaning.

The usage of such words can often times lead to an idea that “illegal aliens” are not people. This becomes a problem because when the country is confronted with mass immigration, the usage of these words makes it difficult to humanize these groups of people and perhaps resulting in more restrictive frames and solutions for the issue of immigration. Consequently, it is also crucial to understand whether the amount of times immigration is addressed in a political speech and the different words used by politicians to address immigration leads to more or less

⁴ Ibid.

support, depending upon whether the politician has a more inclusive or restrictive approach to immigration reform.

In Chapter 1, this project will introduce information about how the United States immigration system functions and where the most controversial policies exist. I will discuss the implications of the immigration system and how these immigration policies are interpreted by the public. This will provide a basic understanding of how the immigration debate has developed.

In Chapter 2, an analyzes of the terminologies used to label immigrants, such as “Alien”, “Illegal” and “Undocumented” will be conducted, as well as the context in which the labels are used. In addition, I will explain the common public understanding of immigration. Specifically, this will analyze the strong connections between immigration, race, and culture. Finally, I will conclude with how public opinion on immigration has shifted over time to allow for a deeper study on how public opinion shifts based upon events.

In Chapter 3, the shifts in public opinion from the polls mentioned in chapter 2 will be further analyzed. I will examine the different reasons for the public opinion shifts as well as the presidential rhetoric that comes from them. In addition, I will analyze Presidential response with regards to immigration related events that may be contributing to the creation the studied public opinion shift.

In Chapter 4, I will examine both how politicians’ rhetoric is portrayed in media and how the situation that is causing the shift in opinion is portrayed in the media. Additionally, the quantity of language used to address immigration in the media will be studied.

In conclusion, I will summarize my findings from chapter 2, 3, and 4. I will piece together the relevant information from all chapters to convey how immigration rhetoric on impacts public opinion.

Chapter 1: The United States Immigration System and its History

The United States has been perceived as the land of opportunity for decades. People from all over the world come to the United States seeking a second chance. However, the immigration system in the United States has changed dramatically over the past century. Similarly, immigration discourse became very contentious as a result of the changes in the U.S. immigration system. Therefore, it is crucial to analyze and understand the historical timeline of the immigration system.

The three most important changes occurred from acts of Congress passed in 1924, 1965, and 1986. These three immigration acts were passed by Congress in order to change the basis of the immigration system in the United States. In this chapter, I will analyze the most contentious and important immigration acts while highlighting the controversies surrounding their different approaches. In short, there are different approaches throughout US history to address immigration. These different approaches have all resulted in outcomes that have been perceived differently by politicians, media, and the public.

The first major change to U.S. immigration came in 1924 with the passage of the Johnson-Reed Act.⁵ The act was known for its two major characteristics. First, the act “limited the number of immigrants allowed entry into the United States through a national origins quota.”⁶ The second major characteristic of the Johnson-Reed act is crucial to the origins of public opinion on immigration legislation because of its racially discriminatory motive. In short, the act “completely excluded immigrants from Asia” and is noted by U.S. Office of the Historian

⁵ “The Immigration Act of 1924 (The Johnson-Reed Act).” U.S. Department of State. Accessed January 22, 2019. <<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/immigration-act>>

⁶ Ibid.

as an act passed to “preserve the ideal of U.S. homogeneity.”⁷ Early immigration reform attempted to discriminate against racial groups that did not have an existing presence in the United States. More specifically, the act aimed not only to reject new Asian racial groups from immigrating to the United States but also to maintain the existing ethnic and racial identity of the United States in the 1920s. The reason for analyzing the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 is to display the root of modern American immigration legislation which was centered upon racial discrimination.

In 1965, U.S. immigration policy changed course with the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act, also known as the Hart-Celler Act. This act repealed the quota system that was implemented in 1920s, and it implemented a “preference system based on immigrants’ family relationships with U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents and, to a lesser degree, their skills.”⁸ The Hart- Celler act intended to end national- origins quotas as well as unite families of U.S. citizens or green card holders. However, since quotas were no longer established, after the passage of the act, the immigration wave began to change, bringing immigrants from Asia, Latin America and Africa. Consequently, the act completely shifted the immigrant demographics of the United States. As can be seen in Figure 1, the effects of the Hart-Celler act are significant.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸Chisthi, Muzaffar, Faye Hipsman, and Isabel Ball (2015). “Fifty Years On, the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act Continues to Reshape the United States.” *Migration Policy Institute*.

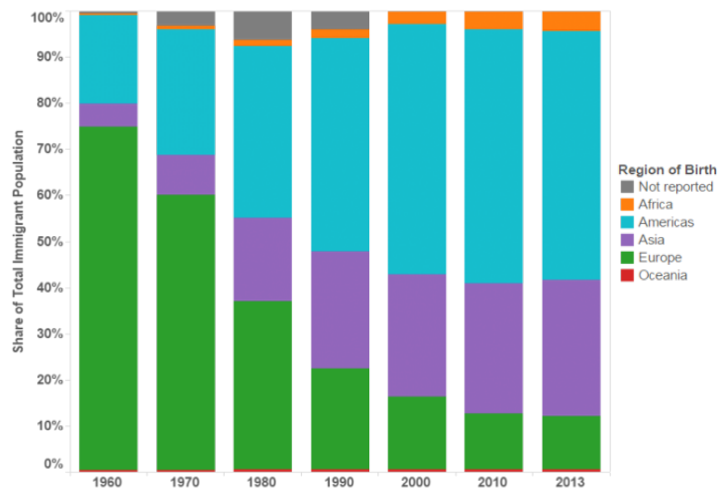


Figure 1. "U.S. Immigrant Population by World Region of Birth, 1960-2013" - Migration Policy Institute.

The act served as an opportunity for immigrants of other nationalities to cement their presence in the United States and American culture. While the Hart-Celler Act had a large impact on immigration reform, it gave light of a different problem: an increase in unauthorized immigration in the United States. This problem was later addressed by immigration legislation in 1986.

In 1986, the Immigration Reform and Control Act, or IRCA, was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Reagan. The fundamental principles of this legislation were known as the "three legs of the stool."⁹ First, the act provided more funding and security at the U.S.-Mexico border. Second, the act created "penalties for employers who hired unauthorized immigrants" in an attempt to deter employers from hiring undocumented workers and prioritize hiring authorized immigrants or citizens.¹⁰ Lastly, the act provided a path towards citizenship to immigrants who were present in the United States for five or more years.¹¹ This act was the first attempt by Congress to control the flow of immigration at the southern border while providing a comprehensive fix for unauthorized immigrants who had an established presence in the U.S. This

⁹ Chishti, Muzaffar, Doris Meissner, Claire Bergeron Muzaffar Chishti, Doris Meissner, and Claire Bergeron (2011). "At Its 25th Anniversary, IRCA's Legacy Lives On." *Migration Policy Institute*.

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Ibid.

legislation allowed for the highest ever number of green-card applications and holders. As can be seen in Figure 2, the number of lawful permanent residents, or green-card holders, increased dramatically after the passage of the IRCA.¹²



Figure 2 - “Annual Number of U.S. Legal Permanent Residents, Fiscal Years 1820-2013” - Migration Policy Institute.

This is incredibly important because a large portion of unauthorized immigrants immediately gained a path towards citizenship and became Americans. This created controversy in the United States amongst politicians as much of the public, and specifically, Republicans in Congress labeled this act as amnesty for individuals who had broken immigration law.

In specific, the IRCA legalized approximately 2.5 million immigrants.¹³ Additionally, poor enforcement of the law on employers who hired unauthorized immigrants assisted in the increase of unauthorized immigration.¹⁴ In essence, because of poor enforcement of the newly

¹² Chisthi, Muzaffar, Faye Hipsman, and Isabel Ball (2015). “Fifty Years On, the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act Continues to Reshape the United States.” *Migration Policy Institute*.

¹³ Merolla, J., Ramakrishnan, S. K., & Haynes, C. (2013). "Illegal," "undocumented," or "unauthorized": Equivalency frames, issue frames, and public opinion on immigration. *Perspectives on Politics*, 11(3), 789-807

¹⁴ *Ibid*.

passed IRCA regulations on employers, immigrants were still able to work for employers as long as employers did not get caught. This incentivized foreign nationals to immigrate to the United States seeking work even without authorization all while hoping that the law would change again and provide them with a path towards citizenship. According to a 2013 study on public opinion of immigration, “an estimated 11 million unauthorized immigrants [reside] in the United States, most of whom are long-term residents of the United States and unlikely to return to their home countries in mass numbers”¹⁵ Now, in 2019, there are just as many if not more unauthorized immigrants residing in the United States with similar circumstances. Whether it was the 1920s, 1960s, 1980s, or the 2010s, immigration has and will continue to be a contentious in American politics. For the purpose of this paper, it’s important to understand the context of American immigration legislation and the immigration system to address the question this paper seeks to answer.

There are common responses to immigration in the United States from the public. In specific, these are centered around “economic competition, ethnocentrism, concerns about norms and national identity” and other issues.¹⁶ It is common to hear complaints about immigrants taking American jobs, immigrants changing American culture and values, or disrespecting the culture and the country’s laws, rules, or regulations. However, along with the debate addressing the issue of immigration as a whole, “much of the floor debate and related media coverage [is] centered on the issue of illegal immigration.”¹⁷ In order to draw the public’s attention to illegal immigration, politicians are using policy framing as a tool to “shape public opinion.”¹⁸ For

¹⁵ Merolla, J., Ramakrishnan, S. K., & Haynes, C. (2013). "Illegal," "undocumented," or "unauthorized": Equivalency frames, issue frames, and public opinion on immigration. *Perspectives on Politics*, 11(3), 789.

¹⁶ Hainmueller, J., & Hopkins, D. J. (2014). The Hidden American Immigration Consensus: A Conjoint Analysis of Attitudes toward Immigrants. *American Journal of Political Science*, 59(3), 529-548.

¹⁷ Merolla, J., Ramakrishnan, S. K., & Haynes, C. (2013). "Illegal," "undocumented," or "unauthorized": Equivalency frames, issue frames, and public opinion on immigration. *Perspectives on Politics*, 11(3), 789-807

¹⁸ Ibid

example, in 2010 the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act, or DREAM Act, which would legalize immigrant students and those wishing to serve in the military, was brought up for debate. Those in favor of this legislation argued that “the beneficiaries of the bill were children who had no choice in whether or not to come to the United States.”¹⁹ On the opposite side of the aisle, conservatives argued that the bill “would open the door to a more general amnesty for the adult relatives of those children.”²⁰

It is clear that both sides are using this debate to frame the issue differently. On the liberal side, there are policymakers arguing that the bill is intended to develop, relieve, and assist minors. On the other side, the conservative policymakers argue that the bill will grant amnesty to adults who broke immigration law knowingly. Noticeably, the conservatives do not address whether or not the key issue is the development, relief, and assistance of children.

Unsurprisingly, the liberals do not address whether or not the key issue is the consequential amnesty for adults. This clearly demonstrates specific positioning of the two prominent political ideologies in the United States. In order to portray their stance, they purposefully manipulate their rhetoric to target those with the same beliefs and perhaps even persuade ambivalent voters into being against or in favor of immigration issues. In the following chapter, I will analyze the specific rhetoric crafted by politicians in response to certain policies or issues within American politics.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

Chapter 2: The Power of Words

Words are an incredibly influential tool present in our daily lives that can be used to shape a malleable public opinion. In other words, language can be crafted to influence others in whichever way the influencer intends to influence the audience. In politics, for instance, words are meticulously placed in policy or speeches to “inspire supporters, persuade the undecided, and undermine opponents.”²¹ Presidents in specific, are expected to use rhetoric to achieve a “desired result.”²² With regards to immigration, there are several ways in which immigrants are labeled depending upon a variety of factors. These labels are not just simple meaningless words, each carries a meaning depending upon who is providing the message and who is the audience for the message. It is important to understand the context and meaning of words used as descriptors for immigrants, and even the word “immigrant” itself. Additionally, it is important to analyze how presidents and the media use rhetoric to frame immigration and immigrants.

In various presidential rhetoric, we see different ways in which immigrants are classified or labeled. In the United States, it is estimated that there are 43.7 million immigrants living here with or without authorization.²³ However, the labeling and classification of immigrants can be quite confusing. For example, the word “alien” is commonly used when describing immigrants. The DHS defines the word alien as “any person not a citizen or national of the United States.”²⁴ However, the Oxford dictionary defines the word alien as “Belonging to a foreign country, unfamiliar and disturbing or distasteful, or supposedly from another world; extraterrestrial.” In

²¹ Núñez, D. Carolina. "War of the Words: Aliens, Immigrants, Citizens, and the Language of Exclusion." *Brigham Young University Law Review* 2013, no. 6 (2013): 1518.

²² Arthur, Damien and Joshua Woods. "The Contextual Presidency: The Negative Shift in Presidential Immigration Rhetoric." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 43, no. 3 (09, 2013): 468, 469.

²³ Batalova, Jeanne et al. "Frequently Requested Statistics on Immigrants and Immigration in the United States." *Migration Policy Institute*. February 8, 2018.

²⁴ "Definition of Terms." *Department of Homeland Security*. March 16, 2018. <<https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/data-standards-and-definitions/definition-terms>>

political rhetoric, the word “alien” is commonly used to classify immigrants as outsiders.²⁵ However, when using the word alien, which can have a negative connotation, rhetoricians are categorizing different types of immigrant into the same category. For example, a lawful permanent resident is an immigrant who has the authorization to work in the United States and receive many benefits that the nation offers citizens, with the exception of voting and serving jury duty. However, lawful permanent residents are not citizens, and would be categorized then by these definitions as “aliens.”

Lawful permanent residents contribute to the United States at a similar rate as citizens but are afforded fewer rights. Concurrently, unlawfully present immigrants, or those who are in the United States without authorization or exceeded their length of legal presence, are considered aliens. Typically, unlawfully present immigrants are referred to as “undocumented” immigrants. Immigrants themselves cannot be “illegal” regardless of their means of entry. A common misconception is that “undocumented” immigrants are “illegal” immigrants. The word “illegal” only applies to the means of entry for immigrants. Typically, “undocumented” immigrants either enter the United States by crossing a land border without the consent of the U.S. government or enter the United States at a legal port of entry and overstay their visa. The latter action, entering without permission, is considered illegal entry while the former is simply the accrual of unlawful presence after the expiration of their visa. Undocumented immigrants are in the technically aliens by DHS definition but oftentimes live in the United States unlawfully for years. An example of undocumented immigrants who are technically defined as aliens but have lived in the United

²⁵ Johnson, Kevin R. “The Social and Legal Construction of Nonpersons.” *University of Miami Inter-American Law Review*. January 1st, 1997. Pg. 264

States are DACA recipients or DREAMers. These are people who came to the United States at a young age and have lived in the United States for most of their life.

Therefore, words such as “alien” seek to categorize multiple different types of immigrants in the United States into the same category and label them as outsiders. Permanent residents, undocumented immigrants, and DACA recipients are all considered aliens because they are not U.S. citizens or nationals, even though many of them have lived in the United States for the majority of their life. This type of framing of immigrants as aliens can be analyzed even further. For example, as Kevin R. Johnson writes in *The Social and Legal Construction of Nonpersons*, “the concept of the alien has more subtle social consequences as well. Most importantly, it helps to reinforce and strengthen nativist sentiment toward members of new immigrant groups, which in turn influences U.S. responses to immigration and human rights issues.”²⁶ The terminology alone is dehumanizing immigrants and allowing for citizens to ignore the human rights of immigrants simply because of their status or authorization within the United States. The word “alien” has created a sentiment that an individual’s origin and whether or not their presence is authorized by the nation is more important than basic human rights.

The clearest and most pressing issue that results from this type of idea is that “alien” or “immigrant” has no color, race, ethnicity, gender, or religion other than what the U.S. citizens believe these words to be qualified by. According to the Migration Policy Institute, 45% of immigrants are Hispanic or Latino and the United States is a predominantly Caucasian, people who are non-Caucasian are often misidentified as immigrants even if they are U.S. citizens.²⁷ For

²⁶ Ibid. Pg. 265

²⁷ Batalova, Jeanne et al.” Frequently Requested Statistics on Immigrants and Immigration in the United States.” *Migration Policy Institute*. February 8, 2018.

example, it was reported in 2018 that Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency, or ICE, had kept a U.S. citizen in custody for deportation proceedings solely based on racial profiling.²⁸ Guadalupe Plascencia, a naturalized U.S. citizen was “briefly detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers in San Bernardino County and threatened with deportation.”²⁹ In court filings, it was demonstrated that ICE officers told her “Here, you are nobody,” referring to her place in the United States.³⁰ According to the American Civil Liberties Union, cases like Guadalupe’s occurs “very frequently” because ICE uses information that is outdated. It’s apparent in cases like these that being an “alien” has less to do with immigration status and more to do with race and ethnicity. Words such as “alien,” again, reinforce this understanding. Additionally, this verbiage is used time and time again in rhetoric by certain politicians and it reinforces a negative sentiment on immigration which is inherently tied to race.

The public cannot physically see immigrants, but rather they can see race and ethnicity, or hear accent and language. This is not a new concept, as “Irish immigrants in the 1800s were the subject of hostility. Near the end of the nineteenth century, Chinese immigrants suffered violence and bore the brunt of a wave of draconian federal immigration laws. Animosity directed at Japanese immigrants, as well as citizens of Japanese ancestry, culminated in their internment during World War II.”³¹ It is clear that “alien” and “immigrant” are inherently descriptors of the other, the outsider, and the immigrant group that can be defined by their race, ethnicity, color, accent, or language. In the following paragraphs, I will analyze data from Gallup

²⁸ Hauser, Christine. “U.S. Citizen Detained by ICE is Awarded \$55,000 Settlement.” *The New York Times*. October 29, 2018.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Johnson, Kevin R. “The Social and Legal Construction of Nonpersons.” *University of Miami Inter-American Law Review*. January 1st, 1997. Pg. 266

polls on the topic of immigration attitudes and search for the root causes of the attitudes. The public opinion is largely based upon interpretation of the media and specific words used by people in power. This analysis of public opinion will provide a better understanding of the correlation between public opinion and rhetoric.

The issue of immigration in America is not new but has rarely become as divisive as it is in today's America. According to Gallup, about 31% of Americans believe that immigration should be decreased in the U.S.³² However, 37% believe immigration should be kept at its current level, and 30% believe immigration should be increased.³³ Historically, this is unusual as for the past 30 years at least 40% of Americans believed immigration should be decreased. Additionally, Americans rarely felt that there should be more immigration as the belief that there should be more immigration hasn't passed 20% between 1968 and 2012.³⁴ In 2012 and 2013, there was an increase in sentiment that the U.S. should have more immigration and a sharp decrease in the belief that the U.S. should have less immigration.³⁵ The reason for this could be potentially attributed to the media response to the DACA program and the DREAM Act, which will be further analyzed in chapter 3. Additionally, there was an increase in the belief that immigration should be decreased in 2018. This can be attributed to the 2018 migration crisis which will also be further analyzed in chapter 3.

It is evident that public opinion does not change on its own and sentiment shifts based on the perception and portrayal of events. It can be seen that public opinion favoring more

³² Gallup, Inc. "Immigration." Gallup.com. Accessed March 2019.
<<https://news.gallup.com/poll/1660/immigration.aspx>>.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

immigration increases in 2016 as the belief that immigration should be decreased has fallen to an all-time low in 2019.³⁶ In order to understand the shift in public opinion from 2016 to 2019, which can be seen in graph 1 below, events and rhetoric that led to such a shift must be analyzed. It is very possible that this shift is correlated to rhetoric and media coverage of Donald Trump because 2016 was the year of a presidential election.

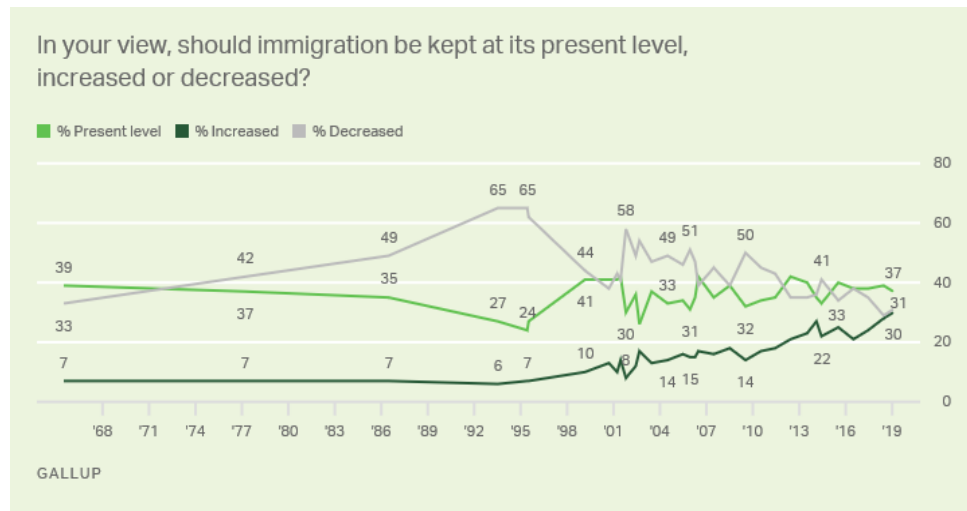


Figure 3 - "Immigration." Gallup

Public opinion on immigration is largely formed based upon the information that is available to the public. In other words, the language used to address immigration or large events related to immigration may impact how certain audiences understand and conceptualize the issue at hand. In the following chapter, an analysis of the instances in which public opinion of immigration shifts will be done. Additionally, the media portrayal of the causes for the shift in public opinion will be studied as well as the presidential responses to the issue. Media plays an important role in informing the public and therefore a cross-examination of different media sources is required to better understand the influence of words on public opinion of immigration.

³⁶ Ibid.

Chapter 3: Rhetoric in Context

Public opinion on immigration has been rather consistent throughout American history. However, we see that certain circumstances can drastically change Americans' opinions on immigration. In the previous chapter, I analyzed these changes and gave brief insight into the causes of public opinion shifts. In this chapter, I will further analyze these changes and the media reaction to the events that led to the public opinion shift. Furthermore, an analysis of the language used to address the circumstances will be conducted.

In order to ensure that this analysis is unbiased, I will study events related to immigration from the past 4 presidencies. Firstly, I will analyze the 1994 Cuban Raft Exodus and the media and political reaction under President Clinton. Next, I will analyze the 2001 September 11 Attacks and the media and political responses under President Bush. I will then analyze the response from the DACA program under President Obama. Lastly, I will analyze the media and political response to the 2018 Migrant Caravan under President Trump.

1994 Cuban Raft Exodus

In 1994, the United States received a large influx of Cuban immigrants due to economic and political crises occurring in Cuba. These crises stemmed from “the cut off of Soviet assistance fueled the frustration with declining living standards,” which inevitably led to infrastructure failure within the country.³⁷ This left many Cubans looking for a better and more stable life for themselves and their families. As a result, many Cubans took to the streets of Havana in 1994 to protest the government of communist leader Fidel Castro and pled for the

³⁷ U.S. Department of State. < <https://1997-2001.state.gov/regions/wha/cuba/migration.html>.>

ability to emigrate without facing penalties.³⁸ Consequently, on August 13th, 1994, Castro allowed for the Cubans to emigrate by “letting disaffected Cubans take to the sea.”³⁹ Known as the *Balsero* crisis, approximately 31,000 Cubans fled by sea to the United States in the month of August alone.⁴⁰

President Clinton's response was based on policy and little rhetoric. Accordingly, just a few days after “President Bill Clinton ordered the U.S. Coast Guard to transfer the rafters to U.S. military bases in Guantánamo and Panama.”⁴¹ In essence, this policy was crafted to avoid “a prolonged, massive, and chaotic boatlift.”⁴² Clinton wanted to avoid a humanitarian disaster and instead buy some time to solve the larger problem. According to Cuban migrants who were interviewed during the 1994 crisis, the immigration would not stop until Fidel Castro changed the policy.⁴³ In addition, migrants noted that the conditions in Guantánamo and Panama were preferable to Cuba.⁴⁴ With that being said, these 31,000 migrants were not permitted to enter the United States legally until they returned to Cuba and came through legal ways.⁴⁵ In part, this can be attributed to the “growing anti-immigrant sentiment across the country.”⁴⁶ As can be seen Gallup polls on immigration, 65% of Americans surveyed in 1993 believed overwhelmingly that

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Duany, Jorge. "Cuban Migration: A Post revolution Exodus Ebbs and Flows." Migrationpolicy.org. March 07, 2018. <<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/cuban-migration-postrevolution-exodus-ebbs-and-flows>>

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Lama, George De. “Cuban Refugee Crisis: Frustration and Maybe Hope." Chicagotribune.com. September 01, 2018. <<https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1994-08-28-9408280259-story.html>>

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ “Cuba: U.S. Response to the 1994 Cuban Migration Crisis.” *United States General Accounting Office: Report to Congressional Requesters*. National Security and International Affairs Division. September 18, 1995.

⁴⁶ Lama, George De. “Cuban Refugee Crisis: Frustration and Maybe Hope." Chicagotribune.com. September 01, 2018. <<https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1994-08-28-9408280259-story.html>>

immigration needed to be decreased while only 27% believed immigration should be increased.⁴⁷ For the purpose of this chapter, the belief that immigration needs to be decreased is considered an anti-immigrant perspective while the belief that immigration needs to be increased is considered to be a pro-immigrant perspective. It can be therefore understood that even prior to the 1994 Cuban migration crisis most Americans did not believe the U.S. needed more immigration.

In 1995, President Clinton shifted his policy on Cuba when he announced the “wet foot, dry foot” policy.⁴⁸ In short, this policy rescinded the previous detention policy where Cuban migrants caught at sea were detained in Guantanamo or Panama.⁴⁹ Instead, those caught at sea were returned back to Cuba and repatriated.⁵⁰ However, migrants who were not caught at sea and who landed on U.S. soil were immediately admitted as refugees.⁵¹ After this crisis ended in 1995, Americans felt exactly the same as they did in 1993 with 65% believing that immigration should be decreased. It is intuitive that Americans who believe immigration should be decreased are not in favor of immigration.

The neutral stance that Clinton took while handling the migrant crisis did not create a shift in public opinion of immigration. The media coverage of this event in history did not polarize the situation and instead presented the stories of migrants. With that being said, the outlets themselves did present different points of views of the crisis. For example, a New York Times article published in 1996 entitled “*Last of Refugees From Cuba In '94 Flight Now Enter*

⁴⁷ Gallup, Inc. "Immigration." Gallup.com. <<https://news.gallup.com/poll/1660/immigration.aspx>.>

⁴⁸ Duany, Jorge. "Cuban Migration: A Post revolution Exodus Ebbs and Flows." Migrationpolicy.org. March 07, 2018. <<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/cuban-migration-postrevolution-exodus-ebbs-and-flows>.>

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

U.S.” outlines stories of Cuban immigrants themselves.⁵² In addition, the author gives voice to Arthur C. Helton, who is the “director of migration programs of the Open Society Institute, a New York-based research organization involved in refugee issues.”⁵³ In the article, Arthur notes that the way in which the Clinton Administration handled the situation “was a successful form of migration management but it was done at the expense of the respect for basic human rights.”⁵⁴ It is evident that in this article, the author intends to give voice to individuals who lived and studied the migrant crisis all of which believed that this crisis was a crisis of human rights. Simply put, media outlets serve as vehicles for information to flow to the public. However, the sources that the author receives the information from can heavily influence the narrative of the story.

In the same year, the Wall Street Journal published an article entitled, “*Cuba-Born Expert Backs Cuts in U.S. Immigration*” where the author pushes an anti-immigrant narrative.⁵⁵ For example, the author of the article uses information from Harvard Professor George J. Boras, an immigration economist.⁵⁶ The author portrays the immigrants from the Cuban migrant crisis not as refugees or individuals in need of humanitarian aid but instead as immigrants who are “a drain on the national economy.”⁵⁷ The author goes on to paraphrase from Professor Boras and states that “immigrants these days are less skilled, less educated and more likely to go on welfare than natives,” a sharp contrast from conceptualizing the situation as a humanitarian crisis.⁵⁸ In both of

⁵² Navarro, Mireya. "Last of Refugees from Cuba in '94 Flight Now Enter U.S." The New York Times. February 01, 1996. <<https://www.nytimes.com/1996/02/01/world/last-of-refugees-from-cuba-in-94-flight-now-enter-us.html>>

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Bob Davis Staff Reporter of The Wall Street Journal. "Cuba-Born Expert Backs Cuts in U.S. Immigration." The Wall Street Journal. April 26, 1996. <<https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB830473614115429500>>

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

these articles, the authors address the Cuban migrant crisis from different perspectives. This is common in the United States as we have a free press and diverse political views. However, this type of media seemed to have little-to-no influence on Americans as public opinion on immigration did not shift.

It is possible that this can be attributed to the not-yet-developed mass-media platforms such as social media and internet news websites. There just was simply not enough space in the American public for a debate on this issue when politicians did not provoke or incite further discourse. As will be seen in the following sections, the development of new technology allowed for a free-flow of mass information readily available at the hands of the public which has streamlined the ability for the public to form opinions. However, at this time in history, there was simply not enough access to the rigorous debates that we see in modern-day America.

2001 September 11 Attacks

On September 11th of 2001, the United States was attacked by a foreign terrorist group known as al-Qaeda. The group is known for its international terrorist network and radical views attacked the United States killing thousands of American civilians. In short, the goal of the al-Qaeda terrorist network is “to rid Muslim countries of what it sees as the profane influence of the West and replace their governments with fundamentalist Islamic regimes.”⁵⁹ The attack was an act of “retaliation for America’s support of Israel, its involvement in the Persian Gulf War and its

⁵⁹ "Al-Qaeda (a.k.a. Al-Qaida, Al-Qa'ida)." Council on Foreign Relations. <<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/al-qaeda-aka-al-qaida-al-qaida>>

continued military presence in the Middle East.”⁶⁰ For the purpose of this project, I will not be critically analyzing the events that led to the 9/11 attacks but rather the response to the attack.

The 9/11 terror attacks radically shifted public opinion on immigration as the public felt threatened non-white foreigners. In the past, it was common understanding that immigration could be perceived as an economic or cultural threat to Americans. However, with the 9/11 terror attacks, the public felt their security was threatened. Unlike President Clinton, President Bush did not take a neutral stance on immigration. President Bush took a tough stance on immigration with sky-high approval ratings. Less than two weeks after the attacks, President Bush’s approval ratings sat at 90%, with his approval ratings staying above 60% until 2003.⁶¹ The course was then set for the Bush administration, who with little-to-no public disapproval, laid the groundwork to intertwine the issues of immigration and national security.

For example, the American Bar Association cites the 9/11 attacks creating an “an emphasis on national security” which consequently “seeped into U.S. immigration laws, policies, and agencies.”⁶² This can be attributed to the fact that foreigners, regardless of their reason for coming to the U.S., enter the U.S. through crossing land borders or through ports of entry. These means to enter the country were then “framed as potential sources of vulnerability,” which inevitably created a stigma that immigration was threatening national security.⁶³ In addition to this, the 2002 Homeland Security Act passed by a majority held Republican Congress put immigration services “under the umbrella of the newly created U.S. Department of Homeland

⁶⁰ "9/11 Attacks." History.com. February 17, 2010. <<https://www.history.com/topics/21st-century/9-11-attacks>>

⁶¹ “Presidential Approval Ratings -- George W. Bush.” Gallup, Inc. <<https://news.gallup.com/poll/116500/presidential-approval-ratings-george-bush.aspx>>

⁶² “9/11 and the Transformation of U.S. Immigration Law and Policy.” *American Bar Association*. June 30, 2017.

⁶³ *Ibid*.

Security.”⁶⁴ The United States government, led by Republican President George W. Bush, and a republican controlled Congress, eliminated the Immigration and Naturalization Services and created three new departments all “within [the] DHS: the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE),” all serving different purposes.⁶⁵ Both CBP and ICE were created to protect national security interests while the USCIS was created to process immigration applications and visas.⁶⁶ In doing this, the U.S. government cemented immigration as a threat to security. However, there are many reasons that foreign-nationals try to immigrate to the United States unrelated to terrorist activities or national security threats.

Many immigrants come to the United States looking for asylum and fleeing persecution from corrupt governments. Even so, the United States “imposed restrictions on arriving aliens, including asylum seekers.”⁶⁷ While the policy changed, the reasoning behind immigration never has. With that being said, this type of policy change which was implemented at every level of the U.S. government, created an overwhelming sentiment that immigration was bad because it was a threat to American lives regardless of the reason for immigration. In October of 2001, just one month after the 9/11 attacks, 58% of Americans believed immigration should be decreased.⁶⁸ Just four months before that in June of 2001 approximately 41% of Americans believed immigration should be decreased, a minority held opinion.⁶⁹ It is clear that the 9/11 attacks caused a shift in public opinion and that immigration is inseparably linked with the 9/11 attacks

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Gallup, Inc. "Immigration." Gallup.com. <<https://news.gallup.com/poll/1660/immigration.aspx>>

⁶⁹ Ibid.

because the attacks were committed by foreign-nationals. Consequently, it was not until 2012 that public opinion on immigration began to shift.

Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals

In 2012 at a speech in the Rose Garden, President Barack Obama announced new executive immigration policy which would become known as Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals or DACA. This came in response to the failure of Congress to pass the DREAM Act, which would give a pathway to citizenship for individuals who met specific qualifications. These qualifications were nothing absurd or unreasonable, and the DREAM Act itself was a piece of bipartisan legislation. In fact, the first version of the DREAM Act brought to the Senate was introduced by Republican Senator Orrin Hatch on August 1st, 2001.⁷⁰ While the qualifications for the DREAM Act changed slightly between 2001 and 2011, the intention remained the same: to provide a path to citizenship for unauthorized child immigrants who were more often than not brought to the United States by their parents.

As President Obama noted in his 2012 speech at the Rose Garden, “these are young people who study in our schools, they play in our neighborhoods, they’re friends with our kids, they pledge allegiance to our flag. They are Americans in their heart, in their minds, in every single way but one: on paper.”⁷¹ President Obama’s stance and rhetoric regarding this issue were clear. He used his political influence not to blame children for the actions of their parents, but rather to humanize individuals covered under the DREAM Act, also known as DREAMers.

⁷⁰Hatch, and Orrin G. "S.1291 - 107th Congress (2001-2002): DREAM Act." Congress.gov. June 20, 2002. <<https://www.congress.gov/bill/107th-congress/senate-bill/1291>.>

⁷¹ "Remarks by the President on Immigration." National Archives and Records Administration. <<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2012/06/15/remarks-president-immigration>.>

Obama acknowledged that DREAMers attend U.S. schools, are our neighbors, and our fellow Americans every way except on paper. His logic was not flawed, as immigrant children can attend U.S. public schools under the guidance of the Supreme Court case *Plyler v. Doe* regardless of their status because they are children.⁷² Obama noted in his speech that “The bill hasn’t really changed. The need hasn’t changed. It’s still the right thing to do. The only thing that has changed, apparently, was the politics.”⁷³ This holds true, as only 3 Republicans voted in favor of the 2010 version of the DREAM Act that was voted on by the Senate: “Robert Bennett of Utah, Richard Lugar of Indiana, and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska.”⁷⁴ This version failed to pass 55-41 as Republicans blocked Democrats from taking a final vote on the bill.⁷⁵ Republicans such as Jeff Sessions, the then-Senator from Alabama, vigorously opposed the DREAM Act. Sessions, one of the key leaders in opposition of the DREAM Act, said on the Senate floor that the bill “is a law that at its fundamental core is a reward for illegal activity.”⁷⁶ This type of negative rhetoric clearly linked DREAMers with those involved in illegal activities. However, DREAMers entered the United States as children with little decision-making ability as their parents more often than not have brought them here with them.

In the closing remarks of the June 2012 Rose Garden speech, Obama stated that “effective immediately, the Department of Homeland Security is taking steps to lift the shadow

⁷² "Public Education for Immigrant Students: Understanding *Plyler v. Doe*." American Immigration Council. June 15, 2017. <<https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/plyler-v-doe-public-education-immigrant-students>>

⁷³ "Remarks by the President on Immigration." National Archives and Records Administration. <<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2012/06/15/remarks-president-immigration>>

⁷⁴ Herszenhorn, David M. "Senate Blocks Bill for Young Illegal Immigrants." *The New York Times*. December 18, 2010. <<https://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/19/us/politics/19immig.html>>

⁷⁵ *Ibid*.

⁷⁶ Wong, Scott, and Shira Toeplitz. "DREAM Act Dies in Senate." *POLITICO*. December 20, 2010. <<https://www.politico.com/story/2010/12/dream-act-dies-in-senate-046573>>

of deportation” from DREAMers, albeit without a promise to a path towards citizenship.⁷⁷ This was clear, as Obama continued by stating that “this is a temporary stopgap measure that lets us focus our resources wisely while giving a degree of relief and hope to talented, driven, patriotic young people.”⁷⁸ This policy, which eventually became DACA, mirrored the DREAM Act in many ways but did not provide a path towards citizenship.

Instead, DACA provided employment authorized and deferred action on deportation for individuals who entered the United States before June of 2012 and before the age of 16. In specific, individuals could apply to the DACA program if they met the following criteria: “under the age of 31 as of June 15, 2012; came to the United States before reaching your 16th birthday; have continuously resided in the United States since June 15, 2007, up to the present time; were physically present in the United States on June 15, 2012, and at the time of making your request for consideration of deferred action with USCIS; had no lawful status on June 15, 2012;” be enrolled in school, and not have been convicted of a felony.⁷⁹ DACA both humanized DREAMers and opposed the negative immigrant rhetoric by allowing DREAMers to participate in the U.S. labor force. This type of immigration policy and rhetoric from then-President Obama shifted American public opinion on immigration as more and more Americans understood that immigrants are not security threats but instead they are neighbors, friends, and fellow Americans. In fact, two years after the announcement of the DACA program, positive public opinion on immigration hit an all-time high as 27% of Americans believed the U.S. needed more

⁷⁷ "Remarks by the President on Immigration." National Archives and Records Administration. <<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2012/06/15/remarks-president-immigration>.>

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ "Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)." USCIS. February 14, 2018. <<https://www.uscis.gov/archive/consideration-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca>.>

immigration, a significant increase from 17% in 2010.⁸⁰ In short, DACA seems to have impacted the opinion of the public. As the DACA program grew more popular it became more known to Americans and so did the recipients of the program. Employers began to hire people with DACA and the profile, face, and even language of an “immigrant” no longer became foreign but rather familiar.

In many ways, the creation of the DACA program was a pivotal moment in U.S. history in regard to public opinion on immigration. The speech that President Obama gave to the public created space for people to think more critically about immigration and immigrants. This point in modern history is when individuals decided to form concrete opinions. While negative rhetoric may have seemingly increased in quantity since the creation of the DACA program, it hasn't significantly created a negative public opinion. As you will see in the following section of this chapter, the increase in negative rhetoric by U.S. politicians in the 2010s is instead correlated with an increase in support for immigration.

The 2018 Migrant Caravan

In October of 2018, a group of Hondurans left the dangerous city of San Pedro Sula to flee from crime.⁸¹ Travelling on foot, these Hondurans joined with other individuals seeking to flee their homes in the countries of Guatemala and El Salvador. Together, the group of migrants sought asylum in the United States because their homes and families were no longer safe. It is estimated that the group of migrants, also known as the migrant caravan, consisted of roughly

⁸⁰ Gallup, Inc. "Immigration." Gallup.com. <<https://news.gallup.com/poll/1660/immigration.aspx>.>

⁸¹ "Migrant Caravan: What Is It and Why Does It Matter?" BBC News. November 26, 2018. <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-45951782>.>

10,000 individuals seeking asylum.⁸² The caravan was the focus of many U.S. politicians and the public. In the following paragraphs, ways in which different politicians including President Trump reacted to the crisis will be analyzed.

The 2018 Migrant Caravan was a pivotal moment in the Presidency of Donald Trump and for the U.S. public. Many individuals saw the caravan as a group of individuals fleeing their homes and seeking better lives. For example, BBC News reported that migrants themselves say they “are leaving their respective countries in the hope of building a better future for themselves and their families.”⁸³ In addition, many of these migrants are seeking refuge from violence and extortion from gangs. According to reporting done by BBC, “many [migrants] are travelling with their children whom they do not want to fall prey to the gangs.”⁸⁴ It can be generally understood that this is a humanitarian crisis whereby individuals are fleeing their home countries in search of safety from violence. However, President Trump has taken a different approach and understanding of the situation.

On October 29, 2018, Trump tweeted out the following: “Many Gang Members and some very bad people are mixed into the Caravan heading to our Southern Border. Please go back, you will not be admitted into the United States unless you go through the legal process. This is an invasion of our Country and our Military is waiting for you!”⁸⁵ In this tweet, it can be understood that Trump believes that many of the migrants themselves are gang members. This is counterintuitive, because a variety of sources including BBC and Amnesty International, both

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Fabian, Jordan. "Trump: Migrant Caravan 'is an Invasion'." TheHill. October 29, 2018. <<https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/413624-trump-calls-migrant-caravan-an-invasion.>>

have recorded contradictory information. The migrants themselves are fleeing gang members and gang violence. In addition, Trump does not see this as a humanitarian crisis, rather an “invasion” of our country. These migrants had every right to plea for asylum, but Trump “issued an order denying the possibility of asylum to migrants crossing the southern border illegally” which “has since been halted by a US federal judge.”⁸⁶ The move by Trump to issue an executive order was more political than practical because under current immigration law, migrants have the right to plea for asylum insofar as that they are present in the United States. According to BBC, “is a legal obligation to hear asylum claims from migrants who have arrived in the US if they say they fear violence in their home countries,” which further demonstrates the politicization of this crisis by President Trump.⁸⁷

With this crisis, Trump has attempted to legitimize immigration as a threat, as the Bush administration did post-9/11. By writing that “our military is waiting” for the migrants, Trump further pushes the narrative that the caravan was a threat to national security and completely disregarded the obligation under current U.S. law to hear asylum cases. In a speech during the 2018 Midterm elections, Trump went even further to politicize this and said, “if you don't want America to be overrun by masses of illegal aliens and giant caravans, you'd better vote Republican.”⁸⁸ The usage of the word “overrun” stands out here because it implies that the United States will be overtaken. Merriam-Webster defines the word “overrun” as: “to defeat decisively and occupy the positions of” or “invade and occupy or ravage.”⁸⁹ In short, Trump was

⁸⁶ "Migrant Caravan: What Is It and Why Does It Matter?" BBC News. November 26, 2018. <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-45951782>.>

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ "Migrant Caravan: What Is It and Why Does It Matter?" BBC News. November 26, 2018. <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-45951782>.>

⁸⁹ Merriam-Webster. <<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/overrun>.>

using his position as President to influence voters to cast their ballots for Republicans because they would stop an “invasion of immigrants” that is actually not an invasion but rather a humanitarian crisis. Taking all of this into account, public opinion has shifted dramatically shifted over the course of the migrant crisis which began in October of 2018.

According to Gallup, pro-immigration sentiment in the United States hit an all-time high in January of 2019. In the poll, 30% of people believed that immigration should be increased while 31% believed immigration decreased and 37% believed immigration should be kept at its current level.⁹⁰ Not only is pro-immigration sentiment at an all-time high, anti-immigration sentiment is statistically at an all-time low. Anti-immigration sentiment has only been lower than 31% once, in 2018, since 1965 when Gallup started conducting immigration sentiment polls. While it cannot be asserted that the migrant caravan caused this shift, there certainly a correlation between the shift in public opinion on immigration and the Trump presidency. As can be seen in figure 1, public opinion on immigration has drastically shifted since 2016 which was the year of the most recent Presidential election.

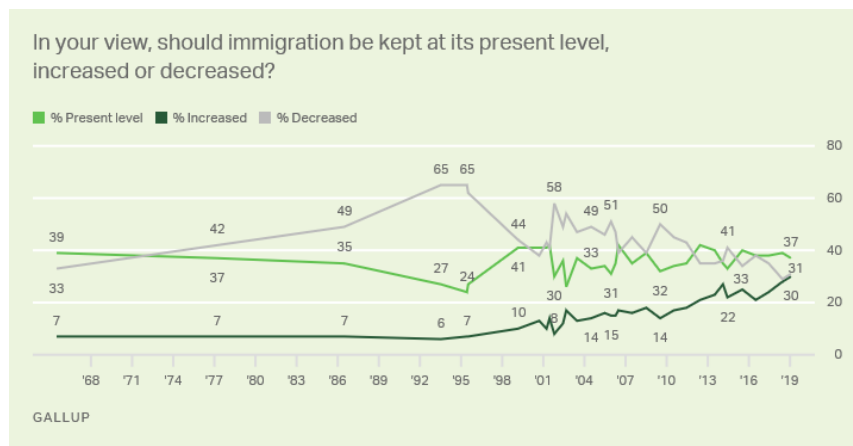


Figure 3. Gallup.

⁹⁰ Gallup, Inc. "Immigration." Gallup.com. <<https://news.gallup.com/poll/1660/immigration.aspx>>

As can be seen in figure 1, the dark green line which represents the belief that immigration should be increased has shifted positively about 10% while the grey line that represents the belief that immigration should be decreased has negatively shifted about 10%. It is very likely that the Presidency of Donald Trump and the reinvigorated debate on immigration has a lot to do with this shift. While there is nothing in my research to suggest that this is causative, a further analysis of how media has portrayed immigration events must be completed. In the following chapter, I will analyze how the media has portrayed the events outlined in this chapter and search for some of the keywords that were identified in Chapter 2 of this project.

Chapter 4: Framing of Immigration

It is clear we see a shift in public opinion when immigration issues come to the forefront of political debate. However, the rhetoric and framing of the issues by politicians and media can drastically affect the debate and public opinion. In this chapter, an analysis of immigration framing will be studied. Two research articles that have analyzed immigration framing will be presented. Both of these articles analyze how often immigration framing occurs, however, in different ways. In addition to this, I will use the terms negative or positive to indicate how immigration was framed based upon the results of the articles. The term negative frame will be defined as when individuals or groups frame immigrants as threats, outsiders, or non-humans. The term positive frame will be defined as when individuals or groups frame immigrants as friends, neighbors, and humans.

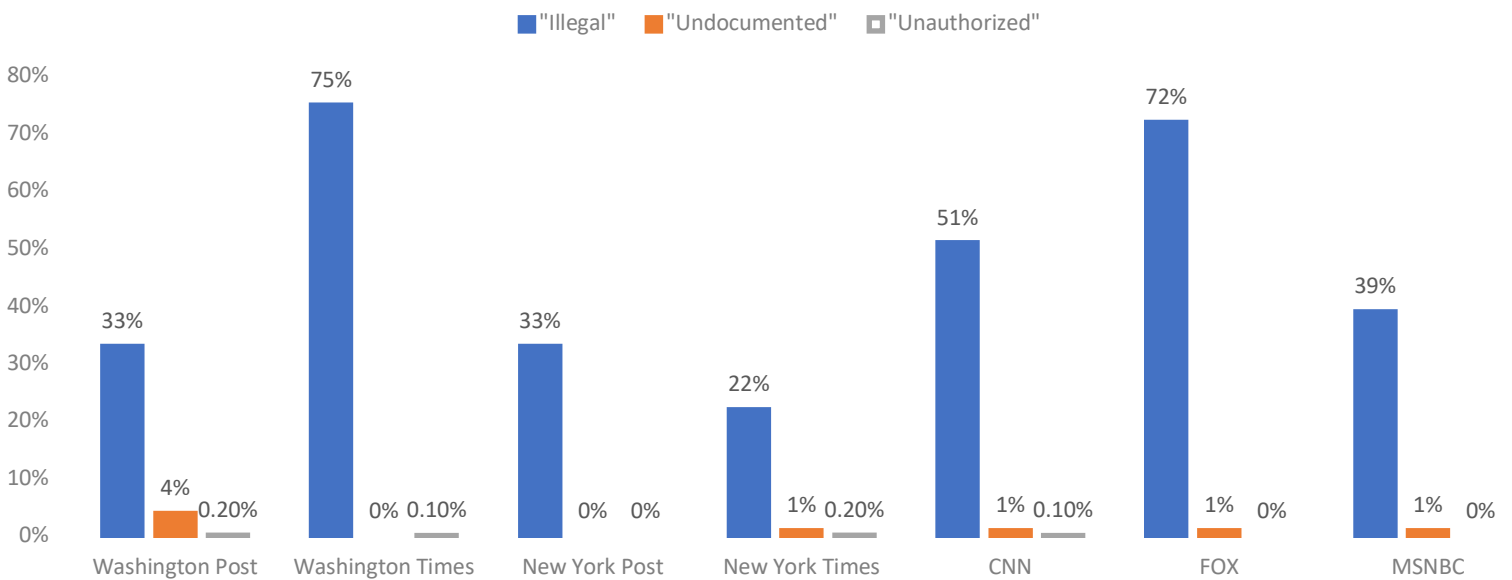
One of the most effective means to influence public opinion on immigration is the use of media. In a research article titled *“Illegal,” “Undocumented,” or “Unauthorized”: Equivalency Frames, Issue Frames, and Public Opinion on Immigration*, a study of immigration framing in media is conducted. For the study, the authors analyzed how often the words, “illegal,” “undocumented,” or “unauthorized” were used in articles related to immigration between 2007 and 2011.⁹¹ In order to ensure the study was unbiased, the authors analyzed articles from the Washington Post, Washington Times, New York Post, New York Times, CNN, FOX, and MSNBC. These media outlets all have different ways in which they frame issues and tend to lean liberal or conservative.⁹² For example, it is common knowledge that the Washington Post, New

⁹¹ Merolla, J., Ramakrishnan, S. K., & Haynes, C. (2013). "Illegal," "undocumented," or "unauthorized": Equivalency frames, issue frames, and public opinion on immigration. *Perspectives on Politics*, 11(3), pg. 789, 790.

⁹² Ibid

York Times, CNN, and MSNBC are generally more liberal in their reporting while the Washington Times, New York Post, and FOX are generally more conservative. The term “illegal” seems to be used more often by media outlets that are typically labeled as conservative and used less often by the media outlets that are typically considered liberal. However, CNN, a relatively liberal news outlet, used the term “illegal” 51% of the time in articles related to immigration. In table 4, the results of the studied can be analyzed.

Table 4: Variations in use of "illegal," "undocumented," and "unauthorized," 2007 to 2011



Merolla, J., Ramakrishnan, S. K., & Haynes, C. (2013). "Illegal," "undocumented," or "unauthorized": Equivalency frames, issue frames, and public opinion on immigration.

In table 4, we see an overwhelming use of the term “illegal” by different news outlets. The term “illegal” is used across the board by both typically liberal and conservative outlets. For the purpose of this chapter, I define the word “illegal” as negative framing of immigrants. The term “undocumented” was very rarely used between 2007 and 2011. For the purpose of this

chapter, I define the word “undocumented” as positive framing of immigrants. It is evident that news media during this time period used “illegal” far more often than “undocumented” or “unauthorized” and contributed towards the negative framing of immigrants.

In the research article *The Contextual Presidency: The Negative Shift in Presidential Immigration Rhetoric* by Damien Arthur of West Virginia State University and Joshua Woods of West Virginia University, an analysis of immigrant framing is conducted. In their research, Arthur and Woods analyze the framing of immigrants between 1993 and 2011. In order to conduct such a study, Arthur and Woods relied heavily on the “American Presidency Project to determine presidential speeches by keyword from January 20, 1993, through November 7, 2011.”⁹³

In short, an increase in negative immigration framing can be seen after the events of 9/11. As was discussed in chapter 3, the events and actions that followed 9/11 by the Bush administration lead to the framing of immigrants as security threats and not as friends or neighbors. In graph 4 on the following page, the shift can be seen occurring between 2001 and 2006 and finally normalizing in 2008.

⁹³ Arthur, Damien and Joshua Woods. "The Contextual Presidency: The Negative Shift in Presidential Immigration Rhetoric." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 43, no. 3 (09, 2013): 470.

Presidential Speeches on Immigration

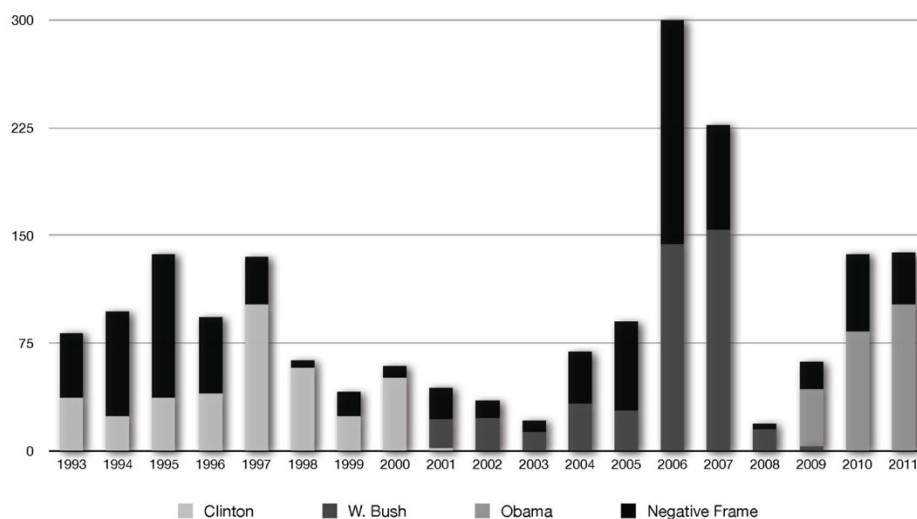


Table 5. “Presidential Speeches on immigration Differentiated by year and the Presence of a Negative Frame” – *The Contextual Presidency*

It’s clear that negative framing becomes less common during the years where immigration is a non-salient issue. Additionally, negative framing becomes more common during the years where immigration is a salient issue. For example, in 1994 during the Cuban Raft Exodus as was discussed in chapter 3 made immigration a salient issue which could explain why the amount of negative framing increased between 1993 and 1995. However, between 1998 and 2000, negative framing is almost non-existent as immigration was not a particularly hot topic in politics.

Perhaps the most interesting thing about immigration framing is that neither negative or positive framing seems to have a specific correlated impact on public opinion. For example, negative framing doesn’t create a more negative public opinion on immigration and positive framing doesn’t necessarily create a more positive public opinion on immigration. As was discussed in chapter 3, the 2018 Migrant Crisis was met with vast negative framing of immigrants. Concurrently, we saw that negative framing was correlated to a more positive public

opinion of immigration in this instance. However, after 9/11, the negative framing of immigrants was correlated to a more negative public opinion of immigration.

Both presidential rhetoric and media portrayal of immigrants has a correlative effect on public opinion. While negative framing seems to occur more often during times where immigration is a salient issue, there is no specific correlation between the type of framing and the positive or negative shift in public opinion on immigration.

Conclusion

Immigration has always been one of the most complex issues facing the United States public. While every nation in the world faces their unique issues with immigration, the United States has a history of discriminating against immigrants. The immigration acts passed in 1924, 1965, and 1986 drastically redefined our immigration system. Most notably, the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 gave a path to citizenship for millions of previously ineligible immigrants. At this point, the “face” of the word immigrant became different in color, language, ethnicity, as the previous waves of immigrants were whiter and ethnically similar to the general population in the United States. The usage of the word “immigrant” has become more and more about color, language, and ethnicity and less about nationality. As a result, the word “immigrant” has become synonymous with “the other,” which was defined in chapter 2 as “alien.” Therefore, the framing of immigrants has become more active when issues about immigration become salient. In addition, the ethnic and racial majority in the United States continues to dwindle as an increase in immigration has added to a more diverse population.

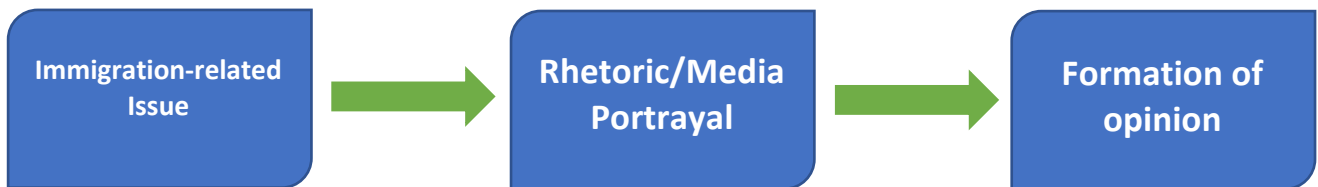
With regards to immigration, the amount of times immigration is addressed by a politician and the rhetoric used does not solely create a shift in public opinion. However, rhetoric and context together can then influence public opinion on immigration. When individuals are able to visualize and comprehend the issues of immigration, even minimally, it is easier to form an opinion. Additionally, the portrayal of immigration related events, along with the different political stances related to immigration can influence the way in which the public forms an opinion on immigration.

Public opinion on immigration is largely formed based upon the information that is available to the public. In other words, the language used to address immigration or large events

related to immigration may impact how certain audiences understand and conceptualize the issue at hand. It is evident that public opinion does not change on its own and sentiment shifts based on the perception and portrayal of events.

As seen in the flowchart below, public opinion is typically formed not just through listening to rhetoric alone. The process of forming an opinion on immigration, whether it is supportive or unsupportive, depends on the following on the context and the portrayal of the context to the public.

Flowchart of Public Opinion Formation



Regardless of the public's political stance, conservative or liberal, the portrayal of an immigration event is crucial to the understanding of the issue at hand. Certain news outlets will portray immigration related events based upon the news stations bias. However, as mentioned in previous chapters, people with ambivalent views on immigration typically form more informed stances on immigration as the issue becomes salient. Their views will likely be affected by the portrayal of the event in media and the rhetoric from politicians in their sphere of influence.

References

"9/11 Attacks." History.com. February 17, 2010. <<https://www.history.com/topics/21st-century/9-11-attacks>>

"9/11 and the Transformation of U.S. Immigration Law and Policy." *American Bar Association*. June 30, 2017.

"Al-Qaeda (a.k.a. Al-Qaida, Al-Qa'ida)." Council on Foreign Relations. <<https://www.cfr.org/background/al-qaeda-aka-al-qaida-al-qaida>>

Arthur, Damien and Joshua Woods. 2013. "The Contextual Presidency: The Negative Shift in Presidential Immigration Rhetoric." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 43 (3): 468-489.

Batalova, Jeanne et al." Frequently Requested Statistics on Immigrants and Immigration in the United States." *Migration Policy Institute*. February 8, 2018.

Bob Davis Staff Reporter of The Wall Street Journal. "Cuba-Born Expert Backs Cuts in U.S. Immigration." The Wall Street Journal. April 26, 1996. <<https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB830473614115429500>>

Chishti, Muzaffar, Faye Hipsman, and Isabel Ball (2015). "Fifty Years On, the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act Continues to Reshape the United States." *Migration Policy Institute*

Chishti, Muzaffar, Doris Meissner, Claire Bergeron Muzaffar Chishti, Doris Meissner, and Claire Bergeron (2011). "At Its 25th Anniversary, IRCA's Legacy Lives On." *Migration Policy Institute*.

"Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)." USCIS. February 14, 2018. <<https://www.uscis.gov/archive/consideration-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca>>

Cuba: U.S. Response to the 1994 Cuban Migration Crisis." *United States General Accounting Office: Report to Congressional Requesters*. National Security and International Affairs Division. September 18, 1995.

"Definition of Terms." *Department of Homeland Security*. March 16, 2018. <<https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/data-standards-and-definitions/definition-terms>>

Duany, Jorge. "Cuban Migration: A Postrevolution Exodus Ebbs and Flows." *Migrationpolicy.org*. March 07, 2018. <<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/cuban-migration-postrevolution-exodus-ebbs-and-flows>>

Fabian, Jordan. "Trump: Migrant Caravan 'is an Invasion'." *TheHill*. October 29, 2018. <<https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/413624-trump-calls-migrant-caravan-an-invasion>>

Gallup, Inc. "Immigration." Gallup.com. Accessed March, 2019. <<https://news.gallup.com/poll/1660/immigration.aspx>>.

Hainmueller, J., & Hopkins, D. J. (2014). The Hidden American Immigration Consensus: A Conjoint Analysis of Attitudes toward Immigrants. *American Journal of Political Science*, 59(3), 529-548.

Hatch, and Orrin G. "S.1291 - 107th Congress (2001-2002): DREAM Act." Congress.gov. June 20, 2002. <<https://www.congress.gov/bill/107th-congress/senate-bill/1291>>

Hauser, Christine. "U.S. Citizen Detained by ICE is Awarded \$55,000 Settlement." *The New York Times*. October 29, 2018.

Herszenhorn, David M. "Senate Blocks Bill for Young Illegal Immigrants." *The New York Times*. December 18, 2010. <<https://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/19/us/politics/19immig.html>>

Johnson, Kevin R. "The Social and Legal Construction of Nonpersons." *University of Miami Inter-American Law Review*. January 1st, 1997. 264-292.

Merolla, J., Ramakrishnan, S. K., & Haynes, C. (2013). "Illegal," "undocumented," or "unauthorized": Equivalency frames, issue frames, and public opinion on immigration. *Perspectives on Politics*, 11(3), 789-807.

"Migrant Caravan: What Is It and Why Does It Matter?" BBC News. November 26, 2018. <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-45951782>>

Navarro, Mireya. "Last of Refugees from Cuba in '94 Flight Now Enter U.S." *The New York Times*. February 01, 1996. <<https://www.nytimes.com/1996/02/01/world/last-of-refugees-from-cuba-in-94-flight-now-enter-us.html>>

Núñez, D. Carolina. "War of the Words: Aliens, Immigrants, Citizens, and the Language of Exclusion." *Brigham Young University Law Review* 2013, no. 6 (2013): 1518-1562.

Lama, George De. "Cuban Refugee Crisis: Frustration and Maybe Hope." *Chicagotribune.com*. September 01, 2018. <<https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1994-08-28-9408280259-story.html>>

"Presidential Approval Ratings -- George W. Bush." Gallup, Inc. <<https://news.gallup.com/poll/116500/presidential-approval-ratings-george-bush.aspx>>

Public Education for Immigrant Students: Understanding Plyler v. Doe." American Immigration Council. June 15, 2017. <<https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/plyler-v-doe-public-education-immigrant-students>>

"Remarks by the President on Immigration." National Archives and Records Administration.

< <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2012/06/15/remarks-president-immigration>.>

“The Immigration Act of 1924 (The Johnson-Reed Act).” U.S. Department of State. Accessed January 22, 2019. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/immigration-act>

Wong, Scott, and Shira Toeplitz. "DREAM Act Dies in Senate." POLITICO. December 20, 2010.

<<https://www.politico.com/story/2010/12/dream-act-dies-in-senate-046573>.>