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## Mexican and Northern Triangle Perspectives on Migration: Identifying and Assessing Strategic Narrative Alignment



Project Report  
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# **The Borders, Trade, and Immigration Institute**

A Department of Homeland Security Center of Excellence  
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# **MEXICAN AND NORTHERN TRIANGLE PERSPECTIVES ON MIGRATION: IDENTIFYING AND ASSESSING STRATEGIC NARRATIVE ALIGNMENT**

Research Report | January 2021

## **ABOUT MESA**

The Media Ecology and Strategic Analysis (MESA) is an interdisciplinary group with a broad mission to address the rising need for strategic narrative assessment as a tool for promoting cooperative assistance and creating community power. For more information on the MESA Group, please visit <https://mesagroup.okstate.edu>.

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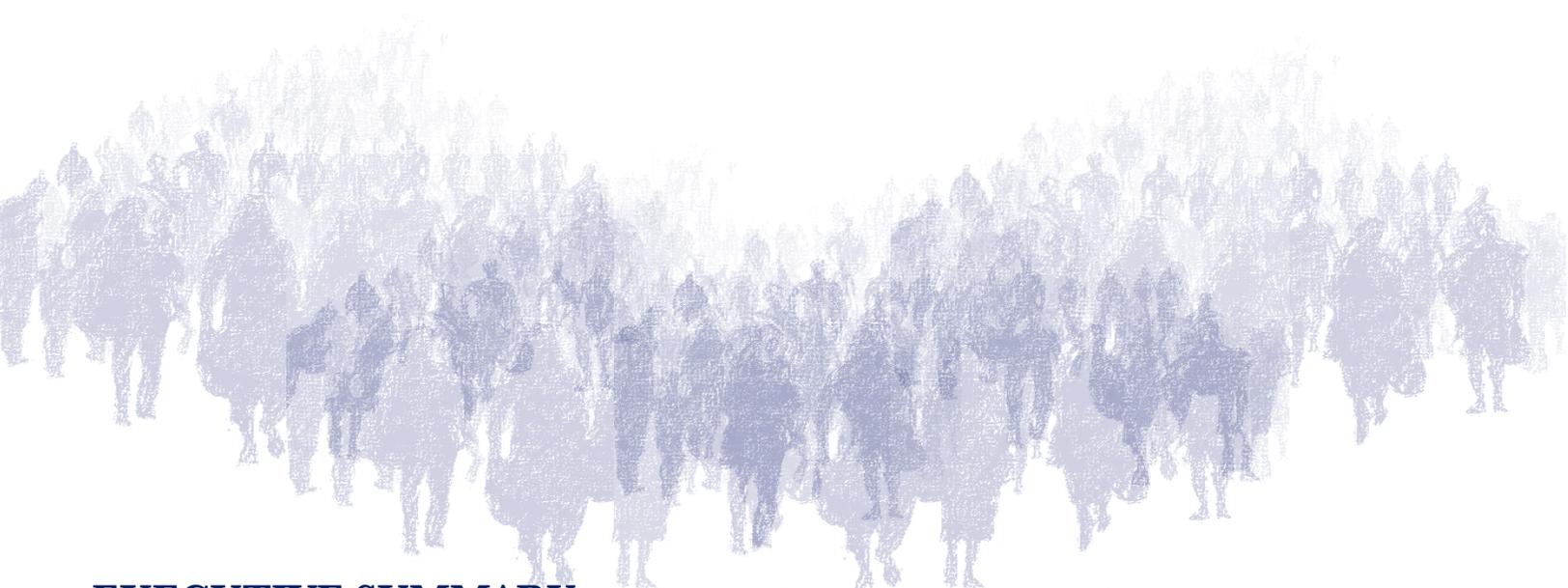
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## ACRONYMS

|         |  |         |  |
|---------|--|---------|--|
| ACLU    | American Civil Liberties Union                                     | IMPIC   | Immigration Policies in Comparisons                                      |
| AI      | Artificial Intelligence  | INM     | Institucion Nacional de Migración (National Migration Institute, Mexico) |
| APTC    | Australian-Pacific Technical College                               | IOM     | International Organization for Migration                                 |
| BMZ     | Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (Germany) | KNOMAD  | Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development                |
| CA      | Central America  | KWIC    | Key words in context   |
| CAM-ARO | Central American Minors Affidavit of Relationship                  | MEDAM   | Mercator Dialogue on Asylum and Migration                                |
| CARSI   | Central American Regional Security Initiative (US)                 | MPC     | Migration Policy Center  |
| CDG     | Center for Global Development                                      | MPI     | Migration Policy Institute   |
| CFR     | Council on Foreign Relations                                       | MPP     | Migration Protection Protocols; Trump-era legislation                    |
| CICIG   | International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala             | NGO     | Non-Governmental Organization  |
| CRRF    | Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework                           | NLTK    | Natural Language Toolkit   |
| CSIS    | Center for Strategic and International Studies                     | NT      | Northern Triangle  |
| DACA    | Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals; Obama-era legislation      | OECD    | Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development                    |
| DHS     | Department of Homeland Security                                    | OSU-IRB | Oklahoma State University-Institutional Review Board                     |
| ERIN    | European Reintegration Network                                     | OTM     | Other Than Mexican   |
| ESL     | English as Second Language   | POS     | Parts of Speech  |
| EU      | European Union   | PR      | Public Relations   |
| FAO     | Food and Agriculture Organization                                  | SA      | South America  |
| FCMP    | Family Case Management Program                                     | SA      | South Africa   |
| FMUMP   | The Forced Migration Upward Mobility Project                       | SIYP    | Salesian Institute Youth Projects  |
| GFMD    | Global Forum on Migration and Development                          | TCM     | Transatlantic Council on Migration                                       |
| GIZ     | Corporation for International Cooperation (German)                 | UK      | United Kingdom   |
| ICE     | Immigration and Customs Enforcement                                | UN      | United Nations   |
| ICMPD   | International Centre for Migration Policy Development              | UNHCR   | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees                            |



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following study represents over a full year of investigation into the underlying catalysts, structural challenges, associated opportunities, as well as the narrative packaging and surrounding discussions concerning migration coming from the so-called Northern Triangle of Central America (i.e. El Salvador, Guatemala, & Honduras).

Researchers employed a mixed-method design to answer three primary research questions related to Northern Triangle migration using narrative theory as a framework to assess both the quantitative and qualitative project data. Data for the project included three primary sources: 1) over fifty migration policy briefings published in the last five years; 2) forty in-depth interviews conducted by the researchers with key migration-related stakeholders; 3) over 50,000 news media articles covering migration from the United States, Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras spanning four time-periods going back as far as twenty years (1999-2019).

In addition to the final report offered here, researchers developed an online user-interface for DHS to conduct further analyses of the media data collected, including key word in context (KWIC), associated words, sentiment analysis, and cluster analysis of specific search terms.

### Key Narrative Themes

The study reveals the following narrative commonalities across the three data sets:

- 🌐 The underlying causes of migration from the Northern Triangle stem from gang-related violence, government corruption, vast wealth inequalities, failing state-level institutions, lack of land access for rural-indigenous populations, and climate change. Migrants from the Northern Triangle are largely comprised of families fleeing for their lives.
- 🌐 The transitory route for migrants is incredibly dangerous; cartels, gangs, and human smugglers have created an organized business out of trafficking Northern Triangle migrants that is as profitable as the illicit drug trade. The volume of vulnerable people fleeing the region combined with pre-existing cartel-smuggling infrastructures, lack of educational and vocational resources, as well as regional poverty make abuse along the migratory route a pervasive reality. Death happens all along the migratory route, including within the United States. Despite these dangers, migrants are reported as still willing to attempt the

journey; as home conditions, primarily in Northern Triangle countries, are viewed as worse than the risks associated with traveling to the US.

- ④ The US immigration system is outdated and unsuited to handle the volume of asylum-seekers coming from the Northern Triangle. Backlogged court systems, shifting and inconsistently applied migration rulings, prolongingly-delayed detentions and perceptibly cruel enforcement-focused policies incentivize migrants to use human smugglers and risk illegal entry rather than attempt legal processes of entry. Trump administration alterations to asylum-seeking protocols are said to further exacerbate regional problems. The US asylum seeking process is compared to prison.
- ④ The politicizing of migration rhetorically in the US further complicates the associated processes and prevents workable community solutions from being reached. US policy related rhetoric has problematically shifted towards security related concerns, eclipsing debates on work visas and immigration reform. The US populace is largely misinformed about the current state of migration along the southern border. The Trump administration's use of "Fortress America" rhetoric and demeaning public characterizations of migrants, and migrant communities, creates unnecessary and counterproductive complications.
- ④ Stakeholders discuss solutions that require a multi-faceted, regionally coordinated, long-term approach, emphasizing the need for: facilitating regional, grassroots-level, NGO-led economic development (particularly among rural-indigenous populations); taking active oppositional measures and stances against corruption; overhauling the adjudication process in the

US for asylum seekers; creating viable and equitable regional burden-share partnerships (including Canada, Costa Rica, and Panama, as well as the US); developing programs that better assimilate migrants within destination countries; developing and deploying targeted vocational training to migrants that move them into needed mid-management career tracks in the US.

- ④ Narrative shifts and appropriate linguistic terminologies are discussed at length, but notable findings include: appropriately distinguishing terms such as migrant, refugee, and asylum seeker; reducing or eliminating the use of terms such as illegal, undocumented, and alien; eliminating broad categorizations of migrants as criminals by US politicians and officials; capitalizing on self-identifying terms used among migrants such as "asylees" and "new Americans."
- ④ US policy should include humanitarian lenses to reframe current issues. The policies in place to deter migrants are shown to be ineffective in that despite the dangerous and harsh conditions, migrants still journey to the US. Stricter border security only pushes migrants to take more dangerous paths rather than addressing root causes of migration.
- ④ Throughout migration policy briefs, six key lessons emerged: the need for cooperation and enhanced partnership between origin and destination countries; a comprehensive policy that promotes growth and development from within fixing underlying issues; development and execution of information campaigns to combat misinformation among migrants; replacing illegal migration with regular migration; increasing administrative capacity for swift and timely decisions; keeping migration policy up-to-date and fact-based.



## CHAPTER 1 | INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

The debates, and decisions, in the US over migration-related policies have highlighted a dangerous inability to enact a shared course of action addressing the problem of migration coming from the so-called “Northern Triangle.” This inability has resulted in the longest US government shutdown in history, the mobilization of US military forces along the southern border (Massey, 2020), garnered the US international condemnation for its treatment of migrants, exacerbated challenges of trade, tourism, and security between the US and Mexico (Gantz, 2019), created confusions that have emboldened migrants to risk illegal entry into the US at alarmingly large numbers, and led to short-term, asymmetric approaches focused primarily on migration enforcement. The topic of migration has matriculated into US political conversations, manifesting as campaign trail and debate stage talking points for candidates; with significant divisions in approaches between Republican and Democratic parties.

That US approaches to migration management have vacillated so considerably between recent presidential administrations is demonstrative of pressures created by the staggering instability of the Northern Triangle; as El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras are all struggling

with rampant insecurity, fragile political and legal systems, as well as spiraling levels of wealth inequality and unemployment (Congressional Research Service, 2020). Migration from the Northern Triangle into the US has increasingly accelerated humanitarian and political crises that require urgent attention from US decision-makers; particularly given the recent challenges stemming from covid-19 and catastrophic storm system damage to the region (Brito, 2020). However, viewing these crises from solely a US perspective, with researchers and policymakers attempting to discern tactical policies aimed to deter migration into the US, is short-sighted and ignores migration's transnational nature and causes. In many instances, the problems associated with migration stem from perceptual gaps in US and Central American societies' understandings of what their governments should be doing to address perceived challenges. These differences are often more perceived than real and require analysis regarding how language from both sides may aid or inhibit common concerns and mutually beneficial solutions. US foreign assistance is said to work best when commonly identified concerns guide investments into sustainable diplomacy (U.S. Global Leadership Coalition, 2019).

The following study views irregular migration as a broader, global phenomenon that no singular state entity can hope to solve alone. Large-scale, unanticipated migration demonstrates the limitations of managing migrant flows unilaterally, requiring states to cooperate through multilateral means (Newland, 2019b). Individual state solutions to large-scale irregular migration places burden on peripheral states that are unsustainable and pose long-term dangers to all. State collapse, trade war, political violence, and kinetic military conflicts are all real possibilities when discussing the potentialities resulting from large-scale migration (Docquier, Ruysen, & Schiff, 2018), requiring every nation-state in Central and North America to reflect on those potentials when discussing solutions (Docquier et al., 2018).

However, both contemplating potential outcomes of, and offering potential solutions to, the crisis of migration requires a common communicative framework of understanding among all those to whom such outcomes and solutions would have consequences. Action toward a genuinely mutually beneficial outcome can only be achieved with an ability to assess one's action in relation to how others perceive both the problem and the actions taken toward it. Thus, if a solution to a problem requires multiple actors, then the formulation of that solution requires, as a prerequisite, the construction of a shared perspective of the problem established through effective communication. Such perspective identifies a number of operational gaps concerning DHS migration-related actions.

The benefits of such perspectives for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) are many: first and foremost, a narrative contextualization of perspectives on migration enables DHS officials to have a clearer sense of how US actions are perceived in relation to migration, including what actions have been viewed as beneficial, harmful, and

unintelligible. Second, DHS officials can utilize shared perspectives on migration to explain US actions addressing migration to the peoples of Mexico and the Northern Triangle in ways that possess commonly understood standards supporting cooperative efforts. Third, an exhaustive and summarized review of comprehensive migration management plans matched against perspectives from stakeholders provides valuable insight toward planned programming addressing migration.

## **Project Goals and Objectives**

The purpose of this project is to provide a comprehensive perspective on migration coming from the Northern Triangle by exploring communication-related barriers that influence how stakeholders comprehend the issue. Using narrative as a tool, this study aims to identify points of common concern, preferred solutions, and value standards for action. To construct a shared perspective on the crisis of irregular migration, the project here, building upon prior work (See Cooley, Hinck, & Sample, 2020) specifically examining Northern Triangle migration for the DHS, took on the following objectives:

### *Objective 1:*

Compile and evaluate academic literature, as well as government and NGO program proposals concerning effective comprehensive approaches to migration management: including migrant worker programs, workforce & vocational training, assisted voluntary return and reintegration programs, and migrant educational programs. A detailed understanding of these programs, their offerings, and the required infrastructure/costs are necessary in order to assess stakeholder and media perspectives cogently.

## *Objective 2:*

Provide comprehensive stakeholder perspectives on what the humanitarian, economic, and political crises associated with migration are as well as perspectives on how to best address those crises through policy. These perspectives are seen as necessary in order to construct a shared standard of mutually beneficial action toward migration at an international policy level and necessary to validate media narratives.

## *Objective 3:*

Provide comprehensive stakeholder perspectives on border area humanitarian, resource and legal crises associated with migration, as well as perspectives on how to best address those crises. These perspectives are necessary to construct a shared standard of the acceptable movement of migrants across borders within the communities they travel, as well as revealing those practices/resources deemed necessary at a local level. Furthermore, these perspectives help validate narratives found in media.

## *Objective 4:*

Provide a clear narrative framework explaining US policies and actions aimed at addressing migration in ways that Mexican and Central Americans would understand as being in pursuit of a shared, mutually beneficial action.

In order to accomplish the outlined objectives, this project deploys a mixed method research design triangulating findings from:

- Qualitative assessments of migration policy literature.
- Qualitative assessments of in-depth interviews with stakeholders.
- Quantitative, human-in-the-loop AI assessments of US, Mexican, Guatemalan, Honduran, and Salvadoran news media reporting of migration spanning the last 20 years.
- Qualitative narrative analysis of topic clustering, text-mining, and key word in context (KWIC) analyses of US, Mexican, Guatemalan, Honduran, and Salvadoran news media covering migration.



## CHAPTER 2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

Migrants from the Northern Triangle (NT)- El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras- have moved to the United States in droves since the 1990s (Cruz, 2015). A myriad of push factors escalated this movement within the past five years; in particular, the area has been plagued by extreme violence, governmental corruption and poverty. Organized crime has run rampant due to a corrupt political system (Brenden et al., 2017). Many people have, or know someone who has, experienced kidnapping, extortion, or sexual violence (Nelson-Pollard, 2017). Regular recruiting of young men from these areas into gangs increases the likelihood of migration; if targeted young men do not join the soliciting gang, they and their families are threatened with violence, evoking a flight response. Not only are young men targeted, but gender-based violence directed towards young women is also prevalent in NT (Gilbert, 2018; Medrano, 2017). Moving internally within the country is not a viable option for many of these individuals. When migrants move internally, they often receive continuous threats of gang violence, extortion and corruption (Knox, 2017). The gangs have thrived because El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras are geographically situated to serve as a corridor for drug movement between South and North America. The corrupt political systems of the region fail to address these patterns of organized violence, thus aiding in the region's overall decline (Lluberes, 2017).

Weak governmental infrastructure allows violence to run rampant throughout the NT. Governmental and local law officials continually look the other way, resulting in low confidence levels in their abilities (Eguizábal et al., 2015). A lackadaisical approach to policy and regulatory enforcement creates a cyclical pattern of violence; where victims are unlikely to report the crimes committed against them, and offenders unlikely to be punished. Past studies attribute a lack of economic and educational opportunities to regional decline. Many individuals are forced to join gangs to support their families financially, due to relatively few available employment options in the community. A key industry in decline is coffee production. Thousands of residents in the NT depend on the coffee industry for their income. However, droughts, crop disease, and lack of accessible land have left thousands without an income (Lynch, 2019). These communities have been largely neglected by authorities; receiving little to no help from their government, forcing them to find work elsewhere or starve.

### **Narrative Insights of In-depth Interviews**

Interviews are an important, in-depth tool that allows the interviewee to tell information to the interviewer in the context of an interpersonal exchange. The interview allows participants to map new, or form clearer, mental images of

events from their own perspective; that is, events are (re)created based on their point of view through the exercise of an interview (Muylaert, Sarubbi Jr, Gallo, Neto, & Reis, 2014). As a result, in-depth interviews are a collaborative effort of knowledge transfer between the interviewee and interviewer (viz. a shared story emerges as part of the in-depth interview process).

When conducting qualitative research, interviews are the primary method to collect data; they provide insight into understanding opinions, experiences, and behaviors (Rowley, 2012). According to researchers at the University of Florida, the key characteristics of in-depth interviews are: open-ended questions, semi-structured format, active listening skills, and recording of the responses (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2011). Open-ended questions allow the interviewee to frame their answer in their own words, while a semi-structured format enables the interview to flow as questions change in response to answers. An in-depth interview may appear to be a normal conversation on the surface, but the objective is to travel with the interviewee as their story unfolds.

Past research involving Northern Triangle migration has utilized in-depth interviews as an approach to answering research questions. Gonzalez (2019) used in-depth interviews to examine migratory effects on maternal parenting styles, and Infante et al. (2012) used in-depth interviews to assess the impact of violence on migrants. Lusk et al. (2019) focused exclusively on interviewing migrants to investigate the exact ways in which violence compels migration. Schmidt and Buechler (2017) explored how women cope with physical and sexual violence on the migrant route. Additionally, the Women's Refugee Commission (2012) report used in-depth interviews to gain better background knowledge of the overall migratory process from officials, experts, and migrants, as well as gain insight

into how migrants come to find themselves in US custody.

## **Narrative Insights of News Media**

The importance of news media in bringing to audiences relevant and meaningful ways to process and understand a given issue has long been a subject of scholarly inquiry (Entman, 1993; Goffman, 1974; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). News media is an important cultural site where members ritualistically come to view the world in a particular way at a specific time (i.e. Carey, 2009) with media depictions of immigrants influencing how audiences come to view migrants; typically through metaphors of them being unclean or pollutants of society (Cisneros, 2008) leading to their dehumanization (Esses, Medianu, & Lawson, 2013). National media from around the world have been found to cast migrants as economic opportunity seekers, terrorists, asylum seekers, and threats to state interests (e.g. Innes, 2010) while providing a limited voice to refugees to share their plight or motives for leaving their homes (Georgiou & Zaborowski, 2017). The power of these media narratives cannot be understated as they influence public opinion and policy related to how to treat migrants (Blinder & Allen, 2016).

Unfortunately, most scholarship related to media coverage of Latin American migration has taken the perspective of host-nation media (Palau-Sampio, 2019); with Muñiz's (2011) study on news frames in Mexican digital press and Lirios et al. (2013) examination of migrant insecurity in Mexican print media among a handful of notable exceptions. Palau-Sampio (2019) in particular points out the fundamental flaws and limitations of traditional news media coverage from host-nations and, so-called, transit-nations in accurately contextualizing and providing more humanizing frames of reference to the issue of migration, both calling for, and undertaking in the study itself, ethnographic and narrative analyses of Central American

media platforms in order to reshape conversations on migration in ways that give more discursive agency to the migrants themselves (Palau-Sampio, 2019).

Within this view of research, we argue that a more comprehensive understanding of Northern Triangle migrants, and the impacts of migration, can be further gained by examining narratives that share the perspectives of how countries and migrants from affected nations view the migrant crisis. Thus, understanding the Central American and Mexican perspectives and ideas for combating the complexities that underlie migration is necessary in order to understand what a good action addressing migration is. However, we argue these perspectives can only be acquired through an understanding of regional narratives that emphasize narrative as a tool for perspective sharing.

## **Media Narrative as a Form of Perspective Sharing**

As rhetorical scholar Walter Fisher (1984) notes, human beings are not logically-rational actors weighing the consequences of their actions, but narrative beings coming to understand the world through the stories we tell ourselves through narrative logic/reasoning. Narrative, then, sets the stage of understandings, including constraints on the imaginable and actionable. As MacIntyre (2007) argues, it is through a narrative that we are able to discern what a standard of good action is among people. Importantly, narratives, and the stories that comprise them, are the means by which we are able to see our own action in relation to one another. Because of this, we are able to evaluate whether an action would be considered "good" among members of a community, as well as providing us with an understanding of a "bad" action. This means that narrative analysis facilitates an understanding of the various social constraints and imaginings that define good and bad action on an issue across communities; in

doing so, we better appreciate how external actions offered to those communities directed toward an issue are perceived.

Narratives constructed in news media represent key sensemaking devices by which audiences come to understand their world, including the most pressing challenges, potential solutions, and consequences communities face (Hinck, Cooley, & Kluver, 2019). While humans universally make sense of their world through narrative structures that tie together the past and present to a suggested future, narratives nonetheless are culturally bound (Fisher, 1984). The culturally situated nature of narrative sensemaking can lead to misunderstanding and narrative divergence if ignored; but transnational narrative alignment is possible when communities face a shared problem and address it through mutual understanding (Proedrou & Frangonikolopoulos, 2012). Narratives constructed and projected in national media ecologies thus play an important role in promoting mutual understanding because it is in such media spaces that cultural understandings, through narratives, are contested, affirmed, and legitimized (Miskimmon & O'Loughlin, 2017; Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, & Roselle, 2013).

Narrative analysis of news media brings together elements of agenda setting and framing. Agenda setting relates to what topics are most reported upon by news media influencing audience perceptions of the most prominent issues they currently face (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Framing relates to how those issues are reported, including which aspects of the story are emphasized over others (Entman, 1993, 2008). Narrative analysis, however, goes beyond short-term snap-shots of events to take into account the larger picture of how events are tied together across time (Hinck et al., 2019; Miskimmon et al., 2013). Narratives therefore include description of acts, agents, scene, instruments, and purpose emplotted over time (Burke, 1969). Importantly, narratives also

include argument structures relating to questions of fact, policy, and value detailing debates over what is occurring, interventions relating to future action, and standards by which we judge good, or morally correct actions (Rieke, Sillars, & Peterson, 1997).

From all of this, we can identify when certain narratives converge or diverge based on common themes or topics, similar factual claims, alignment of policy evaluations and stated value standards. Doing so allows for greater reflexivity in practice and intentional alignment of narrative themes with target audiences. Importantly, however, as PR theorists note, messaging alone cannot solve one's problems, with action having to align with messaging (Therkelsen & Fiebich, 2001). Thus, analysis of media narratives provides both a window to understand foreign audiences' beliefs, as well as how one's own actions are understood by others.

Because of this, narrative analysis and narrative critique play important roles in understanding migrant flow solutions. Narrative analysis, then, functions as a way of identifying societal perspectives on issues of importance to the political collectives they emerge from, allowing for the identification of standards of perceived good, and/or mutually beneficial, action. In the context of Northern Triangle migration to the US, this requires scholars and US policymakers to seek out how these nations, in addition to the migrants themselves, describe the issues facing their political communities in order to address the underlying problems entangling them all.

More pragmatically, narrative analysis identifies those publicly binding, and commonly agreed, stances taken on an issue presented as rationally good actions within its narrative logic. This identifies opportunities for both cooperation and leverage, and aids in developing narrative positions and potential counter-narrative positions explaining US actions addressing migration through international aid and

policies. Further, migrant communities learn, at least in part, about the potential payoffs and costs regarding migration to the US through their regional media landscape. Thus, narrative analysis of regional news coverage of migration can reveal the stories and voices of migrants traveling to the US explaining their personal motivations, as well as identify shifts in these narratives over time in response to actions taken by the US, Northern Triangle countries, and important regional nations such as Mexico.

## **Triangulating Narratives Across Interview and News Media Data**

Today's globalized world has brought individuals, civil society actors, and governments closer than ever before resulting in a global networked society facilitated by communication (Castells, 2008, 2009). While mass media still plays an essential role in defining how communities understand their world, analysis of news reporting requires frameworks that capture multi-level environments among actors, news reports, and policy makers from the local to global and back (Gilboa, Jumbert, Miklian, & Robinson, 2016). In recognizing the intrinsic difficulties Mexican and Central American news media experience when reporting on such a sensitive topic, this study adds in-depth interviews with migration experts and stakeholders.

Evaluating the systematic structure of individual and community narratives is an important factor in crafting intelligible policy. Crow and Lawlor (2016) argue that narrative frameworks impact policy discussions in that "narratives used by media, stakeholders, and citizens [are used] to describe policies, problems, and opponents [that] can be powerful in the context of shaping public opinion and policy agendas" (Crow & Lawlor, 2016, p. 475). Thus, narrative policy frameworks "attempts to integrate narratives as a series of empirically identifiable and measurable variables in a more clearly articulated manner" (Crow & Lawlor, 2016, p.

475). While simple, powerful messages influence public opinion on global policy issues, they can also undermine cooperative goals by minimizing the space for dialogue among stakeholders. Instead, focusing on the discursive elements of policy discussions by identifying, analyzing, and synthesizing publics' construction of persuasive arguments and counter-arguments from multiple stakeholders provides feedback for organizations to reflexively understand how their actions are understood, leading to the constitution of communities with shared meaning (Proedrou & Frangonikolopoulos, 2012).

In addition to taking societal level views on migration, taking an individual perspective places emphasis on personal narrative, including interpretations of the events unfolding before them. Thus, interviewing migrants about their journey opens up the narrative and reflects how that event happened in their own life (Fedyuk & Zentai, 2018). Additionally, interviewing individuals who work in the field—policy experts, shelter workers, law enforcement—provides their experience working with both the migrants and the policies surrounding the system. These individuals see both sides of the coin. Meanwhile, journalist and academic perspectives provide more commentary and comparison; they provide written accounts of events they hear, witness, or research that shines light on the situations that occur for these migrants.

Narrative analysis, however, goes beyond just analyzing discourse by including a strategic component; allowing actors greater influence in reaching their goals. As Roselle et al. (2014) argues, “strategic narrative is soft power in the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (Roselle et al., 2014, p. 71) and claims that narratives,

explain the world and set constraints on the imaginable and actionable, and shape perceived interests. States – with particular characteristics or identities – are actors within the international system as we understand it today. Narratives can be a power resource setting out what characterizes any state in the world, or how the world works. (p. 76)

Thus, understanding the narrative landscape DHS operates within in relation to the problem of transnational migration allows officials to construct and project narratives capable of influencing their operating environment. The concept of strategy in the analysis of narrative in this study considers what actions are being imagined, promoted, and constrained on a given subject within a given community; and identifies a good action as one claimed as legitimately being in search of the public “good” toward some mutually beneficial end. Strategic narrative analysis of US, Northern Triangle & Mexican news media coverage of migration as well from migrants and migration-related stakeholders therefore provides insight into how migration is understood and what mutually beneficial actions concerning solutions to migration are being discussed. This gives an advantage in the considerations of how US policies and actions offered to help address migration-related crises are (mis)perceived by Mexico and Northern Triangle nations with such narratives, when aligned with how other actors understand the problems, causes, and solutions related to migration, can inform effective policy making and messaging in pursuit of DHS goals.

To that end, the study proposes the following research questions:

# Research Questions

RQ1: How do key migration stakeholders thematically discuss the underlying structural causes of migration?

RQ1.1: What references do they draw upon, what are the common discussion points, how do the themes come together to paint a larger perspective from each of our groups?

RQ2: How do key migration stakeholders thematically discuss the fundamental benefits, challenges and difficulties caused by, associated with, migration?

RQ2.1: What areas are brought up (NT region, migration law, border policies, cooperatives actions, etc.)? How do the themes come together to paint a larger perspective across media and stakeholders?

RQ2.2: What are the solutions offered?

RQ3: What are the key narratives concerning migration from stakeholders and news media?

RQ3.1: How does US, NT, and Mexican media narratively discuss migration over time?

RQ3.2: What are the thematic shifts in media reporting on migration?

RQ3.3: What terms are seen as important to distinguish from, what challenges/opportunities are present by rhetoric within our themes?

RQ3.4: What is the value of information campaigns?

RQ4: What are the best examples of migration policy practices from around the world, as provided by the nonprofit community? What lessons can we learn from various migration policy reviews?



## CHAPTER 3 | METHODOLOGY

To answer the research questions and meet the objectives outlined, this study deploys a mixed methods design, triangulating data across three different methodologies: qualitative analysis of migration policy briefings, in-depth interviews with migration policy stakeholders, and AI-human- in-the-loop quantitative analysis of news media coverage of migration from US, Mexican, Salvadoran, Honduran, and Guatemalan sources.

### Policy Briefs

First, researchers conducted systematic qualitative assessments of migration policy literature. The review of policy briefs took an inductive and interpretive approach. Using qualitative content analysis, researchers systematically analyzed policy briefs, reports, and policy essays published on the subject of migration within the last five years (publication dates 2015-2020). The policy briefs were identified through an open source search using relevant keywords and snowball sampling. A total of 57 policy briefs from 20 organizations

are included within this study. Table 3.1 lists all organizations included in the policy documents review. The review took the Immigration Policies in Comparison (IMPIC) typology as a base toward further investigating labor migration policies, refugees/asylum seeker policies, and return/reintegration policies. This was chosen because these policy fields are the most widely discussed within the materials. The policy briefing review was guided by the following considerations: best examples of migration policy practices, suggested improvements to existing migration policies, and lessons learned from various migration policy post-assessments.

### Stakeholder Interviews

Second, researchers initiated contact with over 200 migration-related stakeholders; as well as members of the migrant community who had entered the US without legal status<sup>1</sup>. A stakeholder is broadly defined by Merriam-Webster as, “one who is involved in or affected by a course of action<sup>2</sup>” and by the American

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<sup>1</sup> Of note, the initial proposal for this study included site-visits to Mexico and border communities in the US; due to COVID-19 restrictions on travel and accessibility the

project pivoted to internet-based interviews in substitution.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/stakeholder>

Society for Quality as any, “individual or group that has an interest in any decision or activity of an organization.”<sup>3</sup> Here, migration policy stakeholders were identified as those individuals whose occupation, volunteer function, expertise, and/or life experience made the subject of US migration policy and/or migration coming from the Northern Triangle a key interest with which they could discuss their insights. Numerous snowball samples were conducted across a variety of experts as individuals responded to initial outreach efforts.

Researchers generated a list of possible participants by canvassing migration policy centers across the globe, migrant shelters in the US, Mexico, and Northern Triangle, migration vocational training centers, journalists & filmmakers covering migration, academics with migration and/or Central American specializations, faith-based organizations with relief efforts in the Northern Triangle, immigration lawyers in the US specializing in asylum cases, law enforcement from the US and Mexico, as well as reaching out to migrant communities in the US.

Table 3.1  
*Organizations included in the policy documents review*

| Abbreviation | Name  | Website  |
|--------------|---|--|
| WOLA         | Washington Office on Latin America                        | <a href="http://www.wola.org">www.wola.org</a>   |
|              | Bipartisan Policy Center                                  | <a href="http://www.bipartisanpolicy.org">www.bipartisanpolicy.org</a>                               |
| CGD          | Center for Global Development                             | <a href="http://www.cgdev.org">www.cgdev.org</a>   |
| CSIS         | Center for Strategic and International Studies            | <a href="http://www.csis.org">www.csis.org</a>   |
| CFR          | Council on Foreign Relations                              | <a href="http://www.cfr.org">www.cfr.org</a>   |
|              | Creative Associates International                         | <a href="http://www.creativeassociatesinternational.com">www.creativeassociatesinternational.com</a> |
| GFMD         | Global Forum on Migration and Development                 | <a href="http://www.gfmd.org">www.gfmd.org</a>   |
| KNOMAD       | Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development | <a href="http://www.knomad.org">www.knomad.org</a>   |
| ICMPD        | International Centre for Migration Policy Development     | <a href="http://www.icmpd.org">www.icmpd.org</a>   |
| IOM          | International Organization for Migration                  | <a href="http://www.iom.int">www.iom.int</a>   |
|              | Justice in Mexico   | <a href="http://www.justiceinmexico.org">www.justiceinmexico.org</a>                                 |
| MEDAM        | Mercator Dialogue on Asylum and Migration                 | <a href="http://www.medam-migration.eu">www.medam-migration.eu</a>                                   |
| MPC          | Migration Policy Center                                   | <a href="http://www.migrationpolicycentre.eu">www.migrationpolicycentre.eu</a>                       |
| MPI          | Migration Policy Institute                                | <a href="http://www.migrationpolicy.org">www.migrationpolicy.org</a>                                 |
|              | OECD Migration Policy Debates                             | <a href="http://www.oecd.org/migration">www.oecd.org/migration</a>                                   |
| FMUMP        | The Forced Migration Upward Mobility Project              | <a href="http://www.fmump.org">www.fmump.org</a>   |
| TCM          | Transatlantic Council on Migration                        | <a href="http://www.migrationpolicy.org">www.migrationpolicy.org</a>                                 |
| UNHCR        | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees             | <a href="http://www.unhcr.org">www.unhcr.org</a>   |
|              | World Bank Group  | <a href="http://www.worldbank.org">www.worldbank.org</a>   |
| WZB          | WZB Berlin Social Science Center                          | <a href="http://www.wzb.eu">www.wzb.eu</a>   |

<sup>3</sup> <https://asq.org/quality-resources/stakeholders>

Respondents to initial outreach efforts were sent electronic copies of the OSU-IRB approved oral informed consent, as well as a list of questions to guide the interview (see Appendix A). Interview participants agreed to take part in the study on the condition of confidentiality given the sensitive nature of some of the discussions. Interviews were led by a specialist in in-depth interview methodology and were semi-structured in nature.

Researchers asked interviewees a series of open-ended questions to allow the interviewee to give their perspectives in a detailed manner. Questions were formatted to allow the interviewee be guided within a structure, while not influencing their answer. This was chosen due to the expected variety of answers based on the complexity of the issue, as well as the varied backgrounds and specialties of those interviewed. Questions asked included perspectives on the primary causes of immigration, practical fixes (if unconstrained by budgets and resources), the role the US could potentially play in the region going forward, as well as questions pertaining to each interviewee's area of specialty. Interviews were conducted in the native language of the interviewee; either in English or Spanish.

All interview recordings were stored on a password protected cloud service, as well as a password protected portable hard drive. Transcriptions of the recorded interviews were completed in order to remove all identifying information from the data analyzed. Following the interview, participants were asked for a list of other potential interview candidates within their network and were offered the opportunity to review the final project report prior to its dissemination to DHS; as an integrity check ensuring confidentiality and accuracy.

A total of 40 migration stakeholders were interviewed for this project including: renowned migration policy experts and academics; award-

winning migration documentary filmmakers; internationally recognized journalists; migrant shelter workers and relief/development volunteers working in the US, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Mexico; migrant vocational trainers and resettlement officers; immigration lawyers, US border law enforcement and DHS personnel; migrants who entered the US without legal status. Interview transcripts were inductively assessed for codes and themes using a grounded theory approach.

Themes and codes were then organized and summarized around the three primary research questions of the study; with particular attention given to the narrative structure (act, agent, scene, instrument, purpose) of each interview. Table 3.2 lists a breakdown of interview participants by stakeholder classification.

## News Media Coverage

### Data Collection

Data analyzed from the media component included news articles from Mexico, US, and NT sources spanning from January 1999 to December 2019. To determine how narratives on migration have shifted over time data was split into four time periods based on major legislative debates over US immigration reform:

- ④ Time Period 1: One year before and after Congress's passing of the 2000 Legal Immigration Family Equity Act.
- ④ Time Period 2: The 2005-2007 US House and Senate debates on immigration.
- ④ Time Period 3: One year before and after the 2012 DACA and 2013 Gang of Eight debates.
- ④ Time Period 4: Coverage from 2015 to 2019.

Table 3.2  
*Interview participants by stakeholder classification*

| Stakeholder category | Examples of stakeholders  | Number of interviewees |
|----------------------|---|------------------------|
| Policy experts       | Renowned migration policy experts; IGO migration expert; NGO migration expert; immigration lawyers; resettlement officers | 13                     |
| Shelter workers      | Migrant shelter workers; relief/development volunteers; missionaries; shelter volunteers                                  | 10                     |
| Academics            | Policy professors; director of academic center; migration researchers   | 6                      |
| Vocational trainers  | Migrant vocational trainers   | 3                      |
| Migrants             | Migrants who entered the US without documentation   | 3                      |
| Journalists          | Award-winning migration documentary filmmaker; NT journalists   | 3                      |
| Law enforcement      | US border law enforcement officer; DHS officer  | 2                      |

Data was primarily collected utilizing the Dow Jones Factiva international news archive made available by Oklahoma State University. Additional archives including Gale World Scholar as well as individual online newspapers were used to collect Mexican news reports from time period 1 and Northern Triangle countries from time periods 2, 3, and 4.

Search terms used to collect news articles for analysis included: immigrant/immigration and migrant/migration, translated in both English and Spanish.

For the US sources, articles were collected from the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Wall Street Journal*. Mexican sources included *El Norte*, *Word*, *Reforma*, *Mura*, *El Universal*, *El Financiero*, and *La Jornada*. NT sources included *La Tribuna*, *Presna Libre*, *El Diario de Hoy*, *El Siglo*, *Diario co Latino*, *Diario de Centro América*, and *El*

*Nuevo Dia*. Articles were systematically random sampled at over a 99% CI (confidence interval). In total, 53,441 articles were collected: 17,772 from Mexico, 27,600 from the US, and 8,069 from NT (See Table 3.3).

### Data Analysis

To identify the narratives reported in US, Mexico, and NT news media on migration, researchers employed multiple AI human-in-the-loop methodologies.

First, to identify the overarching narrative structures present in the reporting, researchers trained their own supervised machine learning algorithm to identify issues related to: region of migrant origin, responsibility for managing migration, voices reported, argument type, migrant emotions, perceptions of migrants, reasons for migration, discussion of migrant journey and immigration policies.

Table 3.3  
*Articles collected for analysis*

|               | <b>US</b>    | <b>Mexico</b> | <b>NT</b>   | <b>Total</b> |
|---------------|--------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|
| Time Period 1 | 2900         | 1514          | NA          | <b>4414</b>  |
| Time Period 2 | 6600         | 4400          | 397         | <b>11397</b> |
| Time Period 3 | 5100         | 3058          | 1707        | <b>9865</b>  |
| Time Period 4 | 13000        | 8800          | 5965        | <b>27765</b> |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>27600</b> | <b>17772</b>  | <b>8069</b> | <b>53441</b> |

Second, researchers identified individual narrative themes by using topic clustering algorithms comparing news content by region and time period. Six clusters for each country’s reporting during the time period were produced with human analysis summarizing exemplar articles from each cluster. To further validate the narrative themes present, researchers also categorized the top 75 parts of speech (POS) in conjunction with keyword-in-context (KWIC) from each country’s reporting during the four time periods around words correlating with “migrant” and “migration”. These terms were then grouped by the five elements of a narrative, including acts, agents, scene, instruments, and purpose/motive. The KWIC analysis provided contextual depictions of how these terms were discussed allowing for identification of additional key narrative elements.

Finally, researchers identified a list of key terms for valence analysis to determine their emotional nature of their usage. A valence algorithm trained on Twitter data identified average valence scores of sentences mentioning each term.

### **AI Algorithms**

Relevant news articles were manually extracted into files containing the news articles and separated into folders based on region and time period. Individual articles were recovered using

heuristic splitting rules determined from the data, and duplicate articles were culled by computing a Jaccard similarity score between each article and previous articles, dropping those with a score greater than 0.8. US articles were filtered to only those that contained mentions of any of the following: Mexico, Northern Triangle, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Central America, or Latin America.

Because articles can vary in length and may discuss several topics, each article was split into non-overlapping windows containing five sentences (smaller windows sometimes appear due to sentences at the end of each article). These windows were then filtered to those that contained 'migrant', 'immigrant', or variants of the two words.

### *Sentiment Analysis*

Sentiment analysis was performed using the VADER (Valence-Aware Dictionary for Sentiment Reasoning) model (Hutto & Gilbert, 2014). VADER uses both a lexicon of words with associated valence scores and a set of rules for modifying valence scores, including capitalization, punctuation, and modifier words. Although VADER is tuned for analysis of social media, the original paper shows that the algorithm generalizes to other contexts. After scoring each five-sentence window, researchers

analyzed the mean scores of windows containing various terms/phrases.

### *Clustering*

After splitting into windows, common words were removed to identify the unique terms associated with each cluster. For this we used a set of common English words, a collection of words that often appear in news media<sup>4</sup>, and a small set of custom words based on manual inspection of the data. All remaining words in each window were stemmed using standard tools from the NLTK library (Bird, Loper, & Klein, 2009), reducing words to their word stem, base or root form.

To facilitate insight discovery at multiple levels of granularity, several groups of windows were analyzed: all windows together, windows from each region (separately), windows from each time period (separately), and windows from each pair of region and time period. Since there were 3 regions and 4 time periods, in total there were 20 analysis groups.

To produce numeric vectors that can be used by clustering algorithms, the windows were vectorized by computing tf-idf (Spärck Jones, 2004) scores for the 1000 most frequent words and two-word phrases. These scores depend both on the number of times a term appears in a window and on how many different windows in which it appears, and are normalized to avoid long windows from producing excessive scores.

Once vectorized, the data was clustered using the KMeans method (MacQueen, 1967). The number of clusters used differed based on the windows considered: the analysis group with all windows was partitioned into 20 clusters, all windows in a given region or time period were

partitioned into 12 clusters, and all windows in a given region/time period pair were partitioned into 6 clusters. For each cluster we computed the 10 closest windows to each cluster centroid and the 20 words with the highest tf-idf score for the cluster's centroid. The latter was also used to describe each analysis group, averaging over all windows in each group.

To visualize the data, the tf-idf scores were projected into 2 dimensions using principal component analysis (Pearson, 1901). The scikit-learn (Pedregosa et al., 2011) Python library was used for vectorizing, clustering and visualization.

### *Classification*

For classification, 5 sentence windows were labeled by a human coder for each of the 20 classification problems. The data was preprocessed in a manner similar to the clustering task, with minor differences. Tf-idf scores were again used, keeping only the 300 most important terms.

A grid search was performed to select the best of several machine learning models and their associated hyperparameters, using three-fold cross validation to ensure statistical validity. We considered k-nearest neighbors, small neural networks, several support vector machine algorithms, and several random forest ensemble algorithms. The grid search also tuned a few parameters related to vectorization of the text. The mean cross-validated balanced accuracy ranged from a high of 73.5% (the 'economy' category) to a low of 20.3% for the problem of determining whose ideas/experiences were being presented. We note that this last classification problem has 8 classes, so any accuracy above 12.5% is better than chance.

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<sup>4</sup> Derived from "A huge list of stopwords collected from millions of news articles"  
<https://github.com/vikasing/news-stopwords>



## CHAPTER 4 | INTERVIEW FINDINGS

### Integrated Interview Findings

The following chapter highlights the key narrative findings common across all interviews. The findings are organized by research question. Then, we expand on the integrated

findings by offering specific details into how each group of stakeholder responses fit into the project's research questions.

RQ1: How do key migration stakeholders thematically discuss the underlying structural causes of migration?

The stakeholder interviews describe the underlying structural causes of migration coming from the Northern Triangle (NT) as a complex storm of interwoven factors; across which violence is the most pressing and prominent theme. All of the stakeholder groups spoke about staggering levels of violence and extortion in the Northern Triangle that mars civil society, disrupts livelihoods, and forces people into desperate decisions in order to protect themselves and their family.

Interviewees attributed violence to pervasive corruption; starting with socio-political elites and matriculating down to every level of society. Corrupt governance is said to

perpetuate historically weak and compromised state institutions, rendering them incapable of stemming gang violence or addressing socio-economic inequalities. Corruption further contributes to already vast gaps in wealth inequality throughout the Northern Triangle; fostering violent, transaction-oriented fiefdoms of coalesced power. As one interviewee noted, at the end of the day, *"it's all about the money."* Unrelenting, unrestrained contestation for control of economically-profitable spaces breeds toxic violence. As a consequence, the foundational lack of safety, incessant extortion, woefully corrupt and, resultantly, under-resourced state systems are largely credited by interviewees as driving migration.

This is not to detract from other important themes within stakeholder narratives on the drivers of migration, simply to call attention to the fact that interviewees view the other factors catalyzing migration as foundationally linked to economic-incentivized violence and corruption. Violent conditions exacerbate the other motivating factors; particularly, pervasive gang-violence that is ideologically structured around maximizing profit and control.

Thus, the economic push and pull factors catalyzing migration are discussed as related to poverty and economic opportunity respectfully. Notable thematic distinctions arise throughout interviewee narratives concerning economic catalysts for migration:

- 🌐 Economic migration first becomes an issue of internal displacement; as people move from rural areas to nearby urban areas in search of stability.
- 🌐 Rural migration is said to be undergirded by a lack of land access for rural farmers. Export-oriented agriculture companies use economic leverage, political leverage, and force to prevent rural farmers from having enough land to sustain communities or increase economic capacities.
- 🌐 Climate change exacerbates the aforementioned land access difficulties. Years of intense drought coupled with unseasonably intense storms and flooding makes crop failure more likely, as well as more devastating.
- 🌐 Rural migrants are often indigenous peoples who speak native- dialects as their primary, and sometimes only, language. Indigenous migrants face cultural and linguistic discriminatory barriers in the NT; becoming easy targets for exploitation as they move into urban areas.

The business of human-trafficking is said to rival, and in some cases exceed, drug-trafficking profitability for cartels; the implications of which further catalyze migration. Human smugglers take advantage of poorly understood, frequently changing, US immigration and asylum policies; advancing “*now or never*” arguments to would-be migrants in order to incentivize attempts to enter the US and justify prices. Migrants who are deported back to their country of origin often find themselves in cyclical debt traps to smugglers and cartels; forcing them to continually re-attempt entry to the US. Further, the tremendous backlog of cases in US immigration court system incentives attempts at illegal entry; as asylum backlogs make asylee claims unlikely to be heard in a reasonable timeframe, while deportation backlogs make illegal entry more appealing. The ambiguity surrounding US immigration policies, associated costs and backlog of legal entry, and ability to stay in the US without documentation aids human smugglers in incentivizing illegal entry.

Technological and global social media connectivity is a key influencer of migration, as is the relative ease with which people can travel vast distances using modern transit. In particular, family connections in the US and remittances sent home demonstrate lifestyle disparities and possible opportunities for prosperity that embed migration as a known, and considered, option. The US is romanticized as a destination; as a consequence, migrants are often woefully uninformed of the migration process and not fully considerate of all of the potential risks. Though the physical dangers of the migratory route are relatively well-known in the NT, the combination of push factors (i.e. crippling violence, poverty, crime) and pull factors (i.e. access to land, search for safety, economic opportunities) overwhelm alternatives of staying for many.

Finally, many of the stakeholder groups noted that migration is a naturally occurring, historic,

human phenomenon; impossible to genuinely contain, though possible to intelligently direct and steer toward developmental goals. The confluence of historical, climate, institutional, economic, and criminal factors driving migration from the Northern Triangle, all underpinned by catastrophic violence, have altered the demographics of migrants entering the US. Stakeholders noted that while young, opportunistic males seeking labor continue to come to the US, women and families fleeing violence now comprise the majority of migrants attempting to enter the US. This shift in demographics from individuals to family units blurs the ability to distinguish economic and safety-seeking migration.

Stakeholders most frequently discussed intolerable violence, systemic corruption, institutional failure, vast wealth inequality, US immigration court case backlogs, lack of rural land access, and the innate human tendency to seek safety, stability, and prosperity as the main catalysts to migration from the NT.

The larger perspective painted is that of significant regional instability; driven by elite and institutional corruption that has stripped away the ability of NT states to offer protection against criminal exploitation of citizens, respond to financial and environmental crises, or offer needed social welfare programs. The scope of the problem presented is said by stakeholders to require cooperative solutions that are both regional and international.

RQ2: How do key migration stakeholders thematically discuss the fundamental benefits, challenges and difficulties caused by, associated with, migration?

### *Challenges and Difficulties*

As violence is cited as a primary reason for migration, stakeholders focus most prominently on describing the scope of damages caused by gangs, cartels, and systemic corruption; as well as outlining their perspectives on addressing the respective challenges.

The most notable and consistent theme among stakeholders is that migrants fleeing from the Northern Triangle enter a vast, organized, dangerous, and often cruel human trafficking network; *“no one crosses the border without paying.”*

The US asylum process is described as detention; where individuals’ lives are put on hold for extended, sometimes ambiguously-indefinite periods of time. Shelters and detention facilities are sparsely resourced; particularly ill-equipped for stays of extended durations. Recent US policies, such as the

Migration Protection Protocols (MPP) are described indignantly; as prioritizing enforcement to a humanitarian fault. Once inside detention centers, it becomes difficult for migrant-asylum seekers (asylees) to gain access to legal counsel and translation services often critical for successfully verifying identity and establishing the claim for asylum.

The US asylum process is seen as outdated and ill-suited to handle the influx of migrants seeking to establish residency on the basis of being a failing-state refugee. Language barriers from rural indigenous migrants who speak little or no Spanish creates further complications. Administrative processes are often unclear; the system is backlogged and overloaded. Ultimately, the detention process is described as prison-like with little chances of establishing the veracity of claims made. Legal entry into the US based on asylum seeking status is described as a lengthy, expensive, and exhaustive process.

A broad scope of policies and restrictions made by the US to reduce legal entry are described as incentivizing illegal entry attempts and contributing to the criminal cartel control of human smuggling into the United States. Rather than attempt the legal US entry process, migrants prefer to use human smugglers (coyotes) to navigate crossing expenses with criminal networks on their behalf in payments ranging from “\$2,000 to \$12,000 per person,” depending on accommodations. The preparatory training for migrants crossing the border under the direction of criminal groups can take months and has become increasingly dangerous in recent years. Migrants are often given backpacks filled with few provisions and left to navigate harsh ranchlands, some are left in “stash-houses” for months, some held for ransom, others indiscriminately pressed into dangerous services; many die. Those that cannot make payments are described as being forced into becoming drug mules; violence against women is common-place. Vulnerable migrants are victimized and traumatized frequently throughout the migration journey.

Upon successful entry into the US, migrants and asylum-seekers, whether legal or undocumented, face significant obstacles and barriers. The US lacks developed social infrastructures necessary to facilitate cultural integration; specifically lacking are public transit services, available civic spaces for cultural exchanges, affordable housing, and devoted community resources on local levels to help foster integration. Migrants within the US system often have court hearings significantly distanced from their established locations, making attendance problematic. Establishing oneself within the US is described as a lengthy and expensive process for migrants. Language barriers create significant employment challenges; particularly for indigenous migrants who speak native-dialects. Few employment opportunities exist that allow migrants to develop skills and experience necessary for management or mid-level management careers.

For undocumented migrants, a pervasive inability to participate fully in society comes with numerous difficulties, often linked to lack of access to the formal economy, including: the inability to obtain a drivers’ license, insurance, bank account, or gain meaningful employment beyond the often manual or basic-labor work available in the shadow economy (e.g. construction, harvesting agriculture, dishwasher, hotel housekeeping, etc...). US businesses that do hire undocumented migrants often have exploitative practices and workers have little protections or recourse from such abuse. Some stakeholders discuss cases where migrants are held in slave-like conditions or are not paid for their work as initially agreed upon. Migrants face discrimination, legal barriers, and political stigmatization that largely keeps them in the shadows of society. Limited social mobility and reported feelings of powerlessness, fear, and discouragement were commonly mentioned themes. Migrants are described as fearful of authority and hesitant to report crimes out of concern for being deported.

As migrants leave the Northern Triangle, origin countries suffer economic and societal costs as a result of remittance dependence, fractured families, and stress on the remaining population that emerges from their departure. Vital generational skills are lost, creating economic vacuums that demoralize and deplete communities further. A lack of dialogue and genuine commitment among origin countries and the US, as well as the US withdrawal from the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration, is said to create additional difficulties for the people of the Northern Triangle.

### *Opportunities and Solutions*

The most common theme among stakeholders when discussing opportunities and solutions to the crisis of Northern Triangle migration is that long-term planning, regional, and international solutions are required. Migration is

fundamentally a regional issue and should be addressed by the region; this includes assistance from nations such as Canada, Panama, Costa Rica, as well as the US and Mexico. Measures aimed at reducing US-Mexico border crossings are viewed as counterproductive and short term oriented, as cartels make more money through such restrictions and underlying catalysts become further amplified. Long term, regional and coordinated responses are the most common discussed solutions; requiring cooperative partnerships and vision.

Stakeholders note the importance of the US taking an active, and visible, stance against corruption in the region; even if such efforts are in a figurehead capacity, they are seen as critically important. Economic interventions are described as requiring local-level input across all aspects of implementation. Stakeholders point out that NGOs and other organizations already working in the region should be further empowered and utilized; particularly important are investments in programs that help create entrepreneurial opportunities in the region. Change must begin at the community level; creating pockets of stability that can be further linked together economically. Facilitating opportunities for education and employment along the migratory route and as part of the migratory process, can reduce transit violence and speed integration efforts.

Addressing rural migration is seen as a more logical initial effort, rather than attempting to focus directly on gang and urban related violence. Local leaders, particularly indigenous leaders, are described as vital to effectively tailoring program solutions to local needs. Economic interventions are said to require an accompanying blend of reactive first responder actions to provide basic assistance. In sum, a holistic, multi-layered cooperative approach among developmental actors, lending institutions, civil society, and businesses is

required to effectively begin solving the NT migration crisis.

Further, comprehensive reform and overhauls to the US immigration system are said to be required in order to release mounting societal pressures and regional violence. Virtually every stakeholder offered harsh criticisms for current US immigration policies, with several calling for complete, systematic overhauls in order to meaningfully address the growing challenges. While opinions differed on solutions, addressing the backlog of asylum-seeking court cases is seen as absolutely critical. Creating a fair, clear, timely and dignified process for adjudicating asylum claims is said to be a necessary priority for the US. Allowing asylum-seekers to make asylum claims in their native language was also mentioned as potentially helping establish identity and expedite the process.

Better resourcing and equipping the administrative side of the US migration process was another common theme among stakeholders. The resources discussed as needed include: hiring more staff to process applications, more judges to process claims, focusing on hires with social work backgrounds rather than law enforcement, eliminating red-tape for law enforcement officers, and offering more technical solutions to assist in border monitoring. In sum, stakeholders describe the need to advance a holistic plan toward simplifying regular and managed migration to prevent irregular and illegal migration at all costs.

Finally, for those already in the US, creating programs that provide protective status, career advancement opportunities, and a way out of the shadows of society is needed to help the US capitalize on the innovation, drive, and work ethic that a migrant workforce can bring.

### RQ3: What are the key narratives concerning migration from stakeholders?

The most common and consistent theme among stakeholders when discussing societal narratives on migration was that the Trump administration's intentional rhetorical demonizing and criminalizing of the migrant community has been immensely hurtful and damaging. Such rhetoric is considered unfair, degrading, and utterly political in nature. Further, such demeaning rhetoric from the nation's highest office normalizes micro-aggressions toward migrants across lower levels of society; racism becomes part of the migrant experience in US communities. The portrayal of migrants as rapists, job stealers, and as writ large enemies is seen as callously diminishing the contributions of migrants to the US communities to which they are a part of; unnecessarily inflicting hate on an already vulnerable group that largely seeks to stay unnoticed.

The broad consensus among stakeholders was that political rhetoric surrounding migration at best, served only to limit the ability of communities to reasonably consider ways to manage migration related issues cooperatively and inclusively; at worst creating a toxic fear of migrants. The rise of a so-called "*Fortress America*" narrative that views the outside world with suspicion and angst was described as

contributing to an inability to sensibly discuss ways to better manage migration flows and integrate migrants into communities.

Some stakeholders noted that narratives in the US concerning migration are stuck in a 1990s mentality; filled with images of Mexican agricultural workers, rather than asylum seeking families. US citizens are seen as largely in the dark about the scope of challenges facing migrants fleeing the Northern Triangle, as well as possessing little knowledge on US immigration processes. Educating US citizens about current migration challenges is seen as a way of future-proofing the US immigration system; allowing citizens to have a voice in building a more flexible immigration system.

Finally, stakeholders pointed out words such as, illegal, undocumented, alien, and refugee carry negative, and in some cases dehumanizing connotations. The preferred terminology, mentioned by numerous stakeholders, when discussing migrants was "*New Americans*;" simultaneously reflective of their pre-existing status as continental Americans, demonstrative of their specific newness to the United States, and illustrative of the fresh start ahead of them in the land of the free.

## Expanded Interview Findings

RQ1: How do key migration stakeholders thematically discuss the underlying structural causes of migration?

RQ1.1: What references do they draw upon, what are the common discussion points, how do the themes come together to paint a larger perspective from each of our groups?

### *Migrants*

Migrants discuss the causes of migration through several push factors (poverty, crime, violence) and pull factors (search for safety, economic opportunities, and access to land). Notably, migrants distinguish gender differences in relation to the factors motivating migration; men are described as more likely to be in pursuit of economic opportunity, and women are described as more likely to be directly fleeing violence. As one migrant notes, “*Women [are] more concerned with violence and protecting their children. Men [are] more concerned with economic opportunity.*” Another migrant shared that his “*mother told him to get a better and safer job in the U.S. due to rising gang violence.*”

Crime and violence are cited most often as the underlying cause for migration. Respondents often talk about increasing levels of violence, suffering, and exploitation in their home countries forcing people to flee. One respondent noted, “*Promises of wealth in the U.S. are not a reality, but the safety is. Hard work, but worth it.*”

Economics are often discussed as both a pull and push factor. One migrant reports that his migration journey was “*spurred on by lack of land access*” and that he migrated to the US to “*earn money to purchase land.*” He further acknowledges his “*migration [was] spurred by a want to escape*

*poverty,*” and that the risks were “*not fully considered in the moment.*” Another migrant shared that the Bracero program<sup>5</sup> “*gave many Mexicans a taste of life in the U.S.,*” and that rural United States destinations appeal to undocumented migrants because of lower costs of living and well-paying manual labor jobs.

### *Policy experts*

Policy experts often discuss migration as a historic human phenomenon; “*migratory movements of people [are] natural ... [migration] cannot really be controlled.*” However, they attribute the most recent upward trends in migration globally to technology developments, mobility increases, global violence, climate change, and vast resource inequalities. Policy experts also note a recent shift in migrant demographics, with an increased number of families fleeing instability rather than individual labor/opportunity seekers. This increase in familial migration creates difficulties in distinguishing between violence or economic motivated migration.

Policy experts view the history of violence in the region as a leading cause of the failed socio-governmental infrastructure contributing to mass migration. A large socio-economic gap compounded by a lack of resources, gang violence, and corruption have forced individuals in the Northern Triangle to face two dangerous

providing them with minimum wages, adequate living conditions, protections from forced military service, and guaranteed deposits into saving accounts in Mexico.

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<sup>5</sup> The Bracero program started in 1942 and allowed Mexican workers opportunities at the US farms,

realities: stay at home or pack up and attempt migration. Staying where they are leaves them pervious to violence because elites and criminal organizations are above the law due to a weak criminal justice system. As one respondent said, *“Staying home can be more dangerous than attempting migration because of gang violence.”* Another elaborated: *“All three countries, particularly El Salvador and Honduras at the time, had extreme levels of homicides; people felt insecure in their communities, but also felt that the government was either unable or unwilling to protect them.”*

Violence is frequently cited as a cause for asylum claims - claims which are often rejected because of migrants' inability to obtain legal assistance, language resources, or financial resources required to go through the entire asylum process. Asylum seekers are described as simply being glad to get out of the line of fire. As one policy expert describes it, *“Being here in the U.S., even in detention or waiting a long time for process, or even being separated from family members, it is worth it to them to stay alive.”*

Notably, migration is described as a profitable business for smugglers, local corrupt authorities, and gangs. As smugglers *“prey on migrants in countries of origin, corrupt authorities prey on them in transit nations.”* Migrants are in *“desperate situations in their own countries,”* and they *“put themselves into debt and risk a violent journey to sometimes be deported, where criminal organizations take advantage yet again.”* This creates a vicious cycle where migrants get caught in debt traps that force them to continue attempts at reentry.

Climate change is often discussed as an underlying catalyst to migration. A lack of income and general food insecurity due to years of drought, crop failure, and torrential storm systems drive rural and indigenous populations first to local cities, where they often experience exploitation that drives their migration. As farmers leave the countryside, money is not cycled back into rural economies, which is necessary for other services to be available,

further impoverishing the area. Finally, such exodus takes skills, experience, and cultural knowledge out of rural communities, demoralizing areas.

### Academics

When discussing causes of migration, academics distinguish between push and pull factors and spend more time focusing on the first category. Among push factors, the following picture emerges: economic conditions, corruption, inequality, and violence all contribute to migrants leaving their homes.

Violence is one of the most frequently discussed push factors, for the threat of life and livelihood is a real concern. As one academic put it, *“The sort of violence that we're seeing in the region having to do with criminal violence and other forms of violence that are the drivers of the current migration crisis and are issues that were never truly addressed.”* Violence is often described as systematic, extremely organized, and unprecedented: *“Violence that I saw in my time in El Salvador eclipses what most see in their entire lives.”* People are forced to pay *“impuesto de guerra”* - the war tax - and are often caught as collateral damage between opposing gangs. Violence toward women and indigenous people are of particular note. One academic describes the situation in detail:

*In Mexico, the women would gather on this bus to go to this factory outside of town, never seen again. Because they said what happens is guys chase them and gang rape and kill them. Very rotten, in the desert. It happens all the time.*

Another offers his perspective on violence towards indigenous people: *“One can be killed for being indigenous; persecuted for advocating for environmental rights.”*

Violence is closely associated with the economic push factors, for *“violence is used to extract resources from the economy, and to become a power player.”* When discussing economic push factors, interviewees generally reference competition for

scarce resources in the region and share perspectives on two-step migration patterns. First, people migrate from rural regions to urban areas because of displacement from land (internal migration). Then, they embark on longer migration journeys to the North (external migration).

Violence is also closely related to corruption. As one academic describes it,

*And so it's more about the violence and the corruption and the sort of lack of overall governance, domestic violence of all kinds etc. That is really pushing people to leave. I don't think that many governments in the region think that immigration is necessarily a bad thing because it releases pressure.*

In many instances, Central American governments put considerations of power before considerations of compassion, which contributes to “*endemic and expected corruption.*” Academics are also keen to point out that recent efforts to combat corruption (such as UN-sponsored CICIG in Guatemala) have been undermined by the Trump administration.

Structural inequality is a commonly discussed push factor. Specifically, the lack of access to land and farming is determined as a major cause of migration. For example, one interviewee said, “*Neoliberal economic policies that continue to kind of favor large multinational corporations instead of smaller peasant farmers have also exacerbated land inequality issues and have contributed then to more recent waves of migration.*”

Academics discuss the pull factors less often, though when mentioned are said to stem from the same problems within the region.

Economics is certainly a migration pull factor.

In rural Guatemala, for example, it is “*rare to find a community that has not been touched by migration in some way,*” because many have moved North for better economic opportunities. One respondent elaborated: “*People are asking their relatives to build them these [big] homes that they'll have then to return to. And they're much bigger and much more*

*modern than other homes.*” Safety is another important pull factor. As one academic describes it, migrants believe the United States is...

*a very safe place to live, a safe place to raise a family, a place where their children would be able to go to school, where there's services like that that their children can do despite being indigenous, for example, and you know a place where it's not necessarily free of racism, but where they're not daily living under a threat for their lives.*

### Journalists

When discussing causes of migration, journalists tended to report on migration in light of survival. Survival can be expanded into a multitude of factors, though it most commonly consisted of fleeing from violence, economic hardship, and food insecurities. Violence is cited as one of the key survival factors causing NT migration. Acts of violence ranged from extortion, harassment, and forced recruitment. If migrants chose not to cooperate, the consequences tended to be severe. One journalist quotes a migrant who describes himself as “*running not because of the economy... It was my son, I couldn't leave them there, I couldn't leave my daughter. I had no choice; I had to get out of there.*”

Economic hardship and food insecurity are other motivations presented by journalists. Rural communities are particularly vulnerable to climate change-driven crop failures. As one respondent put it, “*Failure of the Guatemalan coffee harvest was the first wave of substantial climate migration that the US has seen.*” Another interviewee elaborated:

*People will do whatever is necessary to try to stay alive, keep their families healthy, fed and well. So, when you're not able to raise enough money to send your kids to school, you will migrate because you've seen others doing it and others benefiting.*

Among other influencing factors is the belief that because many have gone through the process and finished the journey, one can do it,

too. This belief is fueled by both personal accounts of family members and friends as well as disinformation supplanted by smugglers. Clearly one's social circle carries a great amount of weight: *"If my brother made it, I can make it..."* The situation is further compounded by a *"blind faith"* that is *"born of desperation in many instances and born of mind setting by people promoting their services as smugglers and people promoting welfare out of material goods."*

#### *Shelter workers*

When talking about causes of migration, shelter workers frequently discuss the change in migration demographics in the past two decades. Single men seeking jobs no longer constitute the primary migration group. Rather, there are more families seeking economic opportunity and refuge from violence. Many migrants leave development programs because they are still willing to do what is necessary to get to the US, and one respondent estimated that up to 80% of migrants mark the US as their final destination. According to shelter workers, migrants also pursue illegal crossings because they are denied viable paths of legal entrance.

Rural living conditions are cited as potential causes of migration problems. Shelter workers link rural living conditions to extremely poor health care, dental care, diets, and limited access to clean water. One respondent describes rural NT houses as *"adobe straw homes with corrugated tin roofs that are not sealed all the way around... dirt floors, for the most part."* Furthermore, men in rural areas frequently abuse and abandon their families, leaving their children susceptible to gang culture.

When discussing causes of migration, shelter workers maintain that the United States has frequently intervened in Northern Triangle politics since the Cold War, and it has

consistently refused to acknowledge that it has contributed, at least in part, to the instability of the region. As one respondent put it, *"The United States needs to recognize that it did play a role in leading the Northern Triangle to its current circumstances."* Respondents also highlight that the United States has continually come in with solutions that only address one aspect of the issue and often succeeds in merely crippling the local economy.

#### *Law enforcement*

Law enforcement participants discuss two causes of migration: violence and ineffective US policies. The United States is viewed as an intervening state in matters of other countries, which contributes to *"economic instability ... and other issues that in turn can cripple that economy."* A more holistic plan to managing migration is clearly preferable to the law enforcement personnel. The second identified cause of migration is violence in the region, with highly powerful and ruthless cartels and gangs being responsible. As one participant commented:

*The most common issue I saw was just extreme violence where they were. A lot of them ... are families with young kids whose parents just really wanted to give them the ability to grow up and not be forced into gangs. A really common story I heard was families that had been targeted by cartels or gangs that had wanted their younger sons to work for them, and when the families would resist, their homes would be burned down, their sons would be forcibly taken or their daughters would be kidnapped in order to get to the son. And at that point, they felt like they didn't have a choice.*

#### *Vocational trainers*

Vocational trainers do not discuss causes of migration in their interviews. Their responses most directly spoke to RQ2 and are used in that capacity.

RQ2: How do key migration stakeholders thematically discuss the fundamental benefits, challenges and difficulties caused by, associated with, migration?

RQ2.1: What areas are brought up (NT region, migration law, border policies, cooperatives actions, etc.)? How do the themes come together to paint a larger perspective across media and stakeholders?

RQ2.2: What are the solutions offered?

### *Migrants*

Migrants spend a lot of time describing challenges along the migration route. They report that the preparation/training for border crossing can take months and that migration has become “*far more dangerous in recent years.*” According to interview participants, very few people attempt the asylum option, and, instead, they prefer to pay a smuggler. As one migrant puts it, “*Without proper papers, a coyote is the only real option.*” Migrants clearly voice major difficulties associated with human smugglers. They discuss very organized operations by smugglers, difficulty in “*money transfer negotiations,*” the likelihood of migrants being taken advantage of, malign smugglers who “*kidnap and harm the people,*” and significant price increases in smuggling services (“*from \$2000 in early 2000s to more than \$8000; up to \$12,000 for aircraft passage*”).

Once in the US, migrants face other challenges: lack of social infrastructure and exploitative business practices. Among social infrastructure difficulties are inability to get a driver’s license, insurance, bank account, and other factors that are “*crippling problems in terms of social mobility.*” Business exploitative practices is another major challenge. According to migrants, there is “*little worker protection for undocumented migrants.*” Even though migrants “*have options for labor, unjust treatment by employers is common.*” One quote illustrates this point well: “*Sometimes businesses will hire migrants, have the work completed, and then pay them far less than agreed or not pay them at all.*” Additionally, “*when businesses get in trouble for hiring*

*undocumented migrant labor, migrants themselves lose out on pay for work they have done.*”

When dealing with the US immigration bureaucracy, migrants feel scared, powerless, and discouraged. One respondent shared that the process of status changes at the US-Mexican embassy felt “*unprofessional*” as “*people [were] crammed in,*” and the process cost \$17,000 in “*attorney fees and immigration fees and travel fees.*” Lastly, migrants refer to the cycle of migration and violence: When “*undocumented immigrants are deported with a criminal record, [it is] making it easier for them to join the gangs.*”

Migrants also briefly discuss solutions. Better administrative processes (e.g. more staff processing migrant applications, more resources, more employees with backgrounds in social work instead of law enforcement) are among the solutions. Other solutions are tied to the US leaders fostering more respect and recognition of migrant workers and communities. For example, one interviewee said, “*Fostering a sense of respect for the work that migrants do would go a long way to building relationships and easing fears.*”

### *Policy experts*

Policy experts discuss smugglers and media as major contributors to migration challenges. The abundance of wrongful information perpetrated by smugglers and media has led to a lot of people being easily misled. As one interviewee said, “*Media attention increased the ability of smugglers to spread false rumors and drive migration numbers up.*”

Another challenge is that migrants are fearful of authority and are hesitant to report crimes out of fear of being deported. Programs that address this issue by allowing special protective status if impacted by crime are one way of mitigating this concern.

When discussing asylum difficulties, policy experts point out that it is extremely difficult for asylum seekers to obtain legal help once placed in detention, which is frequently compared to prison. The problems with this system include the language barrier (i.e. inability to communicate stories/evidence inhibits qualification for asylum) and the long periods required to adjudicate their cases. Additionally, once asylum seekers are in the system, they are kept in locations other than the US, making attending immigration court hearings problematic. This further contributes to migration system challenges. As a result, only a fraction of asylum-seekers are granted status. One respondent provided more details:

*People have been assaulted, kidnapped, extorted while in the program because they are essentially being forced to sit in limbo... 65,000 people have been put through the program since 2019 and less than 1% have been granted asylum. About 600 people total have been granted asylum out of about 60,000.*

As violence is cited as a primary reason for migration, a focus on stopping gangs and cartels seems like a natural solution. However, policy experts maintain that cartels are extremely difficult to counter and defeat. Cartels in many ways “can be viewed as effectively a business; they act like a business and operate as such. The big difference is that they use violence and are completely willing to do horrific, awful, horrible things to keep money flowing.” Tightening the US-Mexico border is viewed as counter-productive to mitigation efforts, as cartels make more money through fewer people crossing. One interviewee expanded on this notion:

*Not surprisingly, supply and demand says that as the US government has made it more and more*

*difficult to cross the border in recent years, the costs have gone up because the cartels recognize that tighter borders are better business.*

Mass migration also leaves its negative imprint on origin countries. As migrants leave, their nations incur economic and societal costs as a result of remittance dependence, fractured families, and stress on the remaining population that emerges from their departure. Experts warn that a large number of communities are left without “vital generational skills.”

Another challenge is the lack of dialogue and real commitment among countries, and the US withdrawal from the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration creates additional difficulties. Migration, according to one interviewee, is “a regional issue and should be managed as a region. Panama, Canada, and Costa Rica should also be involved in helping NT.” Overall, most policy experts agree that migration issues need to be addressed by regional responses and demand shared commitment and cooperation globally among countries.

Policy experts are eager to offer their solutions to migration problems: cooperation and coordinated responses, economic partnerships, an expanded US role, and basic assistance. Long term, regional and coordinated responses are at the heart of policy expert solutions. This will require cooperative partnerships among the U.S. and origin countries. Effective economic policy should create opportunities within origin countries and provide populations with “the ability to stay in their home countries.” Changes need to start at the community level, suggests one expert. It is necessary to establish safety and development opportunities so people will stay within their homes. Moreover, legal working contracts or maquiladoras may be an effective means of facilitating opportunities for education and employment and may be helpful in preventing violence. What is undeniable to policy experts is that development will require organized cooperation among developmental

actors, lending institutions, civil society, and businesses in order to be effective. Additionally, economic action should be accompanied by a blend of reactive/ first responder actions providing basic assistance (i.e. food, water, shelter, and security). In sum, these solutions require “*thought and foresight, and planning, and compassion, and practical flexibility.*”

Since rural communities in the NT are especially vulnerable, they should be addressed with additional care, according to some policy experts. They maintain that stability and order are vital within these rural communities. It will require long-term “*real solutions towards ensuring stability,*” including “*addressing the very real issue of violence, extortion and discrimination against indigenous and farming communities.*”

Policy experts are most vocal about the US’s special role in solving the migration problem (at least 8 of them specifically commented on this). First, experts say it is the responsibility of the US to stand up to the corruption taking place in the NT. They argue for long-term investments to tackle corruption. While organizations such as CICIG were beneficial, there is a greater need for professional policing. As one expert comments, the US should ...

*give financial and technical assistance to NT, but also use political pressure to encourage progress addressing impunity and ensuring that there is a price to pay when progress being made to strengthen the rule of law and combat corruption is curtailed by government decisions.*

Second, the US needs a systematic overhaul of its immigration system, with the ability to rapidly adjudicate cases in a fair and dignified manner, disincentivizing immigrants without strong claims. Additionally, modifications to the system should allow asylum seekers protection and humane treatment while their claims are being processed; as well as clearly-defined criteria for granting asylum, allowing faster retrieval and verification of facts to bring asylum cases to quick and fair conclusions.

Policy experts are also eager to give examples of successful programs, such as the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), Family Case Management Program, and community-managed asylum programs. Additionally, policy experts call for future proofing of the US immigration system. One respondent put it best:

*When we're thinking about our immigration system... the core thing we need is to have a flexible immigration system that's future proof. You need to have an immigration system that can adjust to different types of flows, whether that be changes in legal immigration or irregular immigration. Flexibility is going to be very important for a system that can sustain itself over time.*

### Academics

To answer this research question from the perspective of academics, we separated responses according to three major themes: migration impacts, solutions for addressing the situation, and obstacles/impediments to these solutions. Each theme will be discussed in detail. Psychological, economic and social impacts of migration dominated the conversation.

Psychological impacts are associated with voids that migrated populations leave within their families. A very pronounced phenomenon is “*fatherless communities.*” It is especially prevalent in Guatemala, where some communities “*have been gutted of males or other folks that are critical for the stability and development of those communities.*”

According to academics, families often report, “*even though we're better off economically than we've ever been, it just really was not worth it to be separated from our families like that in order to move ahead.*” Suicides are among other psychological impacts discussed.

Migrants also contribute to economic vacuums within their home communities “*that would be difficult to restore or regain after so many people have left or were planning on leaving.*” Additionally, displacements are often associated with loss of

skills. This phenomenon is best captured by one respondent, “*Displaced people do not have opportunity to thrive economically, a knowledge gap is created; skills are lost to societies. When returned home, they lack skills and education.*”

Social impacts of migration are tremendous, especially for youth and women. Within the region, women are often used as a form of currency, and youth are “*targeted and threatened to join gangs or forced into relationships with gang members.*” When pursuing migration, most people are not willing to cut ties with their home communities, and “*if they do find themselves having to leave permanently for various security reasons, they’re really keen on keeping those kinds of kinship and community ties alive and vibrant through this transnational space.*”

Academics spend a lot of time discussing solutions to the current situation. As the scope and the nature of the migration challenges changed over time, academics consistently call for reforms, sustainable change, and a more robust immigration process. Harsh criticism of the current US policy is abundant, as some examples convey it: “*complete overhaul of migration system should be considered*” and “*take current immigration policy and crumple it up in a ball and throw it into the trash can.*” Reform is seen as inevitable, as the refusal to reform will lead to more violence and displacements. One academic closes with John Kennedy’s quote: “*Those who refuse to reform make revolution inevitable.*”

Investments in the NT region, with a focus on entrepreneurship initiatives and sustainable solutions, is the most frequently mentioned theme within solutions provided by academics. Foreign investments are viewed as critical in the stabilization of these countries. These investments are best directed towards educational efforts, micro-investments into local communities, and technical assistance. Small NGOs and local organizations are positioned best at stabilizing and bolstering self-sustaining communities. As an example, one respondent

shared his personal experience working with the farming community near Cuilapa, Guatemala. His project involved a partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). He said,

*I think that what really impressed me about FAO was the fact that they were really teaching sustainable farming methods. So they would show up with their team of people. If a grower said, ‘yes, I’m willing to work with you,’ they said, ‘well, we’ve got a list here of 15 or 20 different sustainable practices we’d like for you to try. Pick eight or ten of these and try it for X amount of years and then let us know.’ We’ll keep working with you, but we want to see what happens. Oh, my goodness. Huge difference.*

Another quote from the same participant captures notions of sustainability particularly well:

*It’s one thing to grow corn. Well, that’s great. But, you know, if all you do is grow corn and then you sell it and you eat it. You’re still hand to mouth, but if I say a corn area could develop where they had their own mill, they could mill it, they could create flour, cornmeal, etc. Then if you added to that some kind of a system where they were going to add even more value to that product by baking it or whatever they’re going to do. Oh, my goodness, things that could happen.*

Another solution, provided by academics, is grounded in simplifying regular and managed migration in order to avoid irregular and illegal migration at all costs. They back their argument with a notion that migration is a natural process: “*people are going to move for economic resources; it is historic and natural; attempting to clamp the flow too hard causes others disruptions.*” Migration, academics say, is becoming even more important in a global system, which “*by definition has flows of people and money ... constantly.*” In order to answer the question of...

*how do we make El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras a better place is to allow the flow to move around and create wealth; and that wealth, some of it goes back and makes for nicer towns and nicer villages and hopefully better political systems.*

Academics are very keen on discussing challenges and impediments to solutions, and this is the third big theme that emerges within their answers to RQ2. In broad strokes, the obstacles include harmful policies and practices, perception of migration as an unmanageable issue, and a growing number of migrants. The currently established policies are viewed as being “*not holistic,*” not “*coordinated,*” not “*multidisciplinary approaches*” that are largely “*about mitigating the symptoms of the crisis.*” The harmful practices include the use of police and military “*to go after these gangs or criminal organizations [that] has actually made things worse and has only increased violence in many respects.*” The barriers are also considered by academics to not be effective, as “*people have already made up their mind and have little options.*”

At least three responders said that the perception of migration as an unmanageable issue is a real obstacle to overcoming the problem. As one person said:

*the perception is that it is not manageable, that it's a drain on our resources and that rhetoric seems to dominate our discourse; and it impedes us from really tackling the problem in a serious, complex way because this is a serious, complex problem.*

Another participant said that the “*leaders often exacerbate political resource conversations as finite in terms of needed human capacity (and, therefore, arguing against external labor) against that of needed material resource protection (and, therefore, arguing for rigorous enforcement of boundaries).*” The growing number of migrants is also discussed as a challenge to the proposed solutions. Several academics view resettlement as not a viable option for the current levels of global displacement because “*there is less and less willingness in the countries that could resettle them to take them.*”

#### *Journalists*

When journalists discuss challenges of migration, they are keen to point to physical and psychological hardships along the route.

Migrants entering the US after crossing the border illegally are often injured (e.g. snakebites, broken legs, etc...), dehydrated, and malnourished. Migrants, especially young women and children, are also prone to physical abuses along the trail. One respondent cites RAICES, a legal counsel organization which reports that 60% of minors are sexually abused in the journey along the border. Additionally, psychological traumas, caused by border crossings as well as violence suffered under gangs, have a profound impact on migrants' well-being. For example, one journalist described a woman who could not utter her name in front of the judge because she “*broke down .... [and] was so unprepared to talk about the death of her husband. That's something that requires several months of therapy.*”

Administrative hurdles are also often cited. According to journalists, current US laws have profound effects on migration: legal pathways are difficult to pursue because they are costly and extremely time-consuming. Many migrants who genuinely qualify for asylum are facing a severely backlogged and overloaded system. Moreover, the zero-tolerance policy prevents migrants who entered illegally from pursuing a legal course of action. Additionally, language difficulties and cultural differences contribute to the problem. One respondent illustrated the example:

*It's just not obvious to the people who are going through this, what of their terrible experiences are going to qualify them for asylum in a context in which people are traumatized and dealing with strangers. And in an unfamiliar country, it's very hard to ensure that all of the relevant facts will come out in sufficient time.*

Criminal enterprises are a major problem, according to journalists, and migrants are described as “*commodities for the cartels.*” Essentially, criminal networks act as border gatekeepers since they largely control who gets in and out. They make migrants pay and send large groups towards a specific location to

distract border patrol attention to allow for smuggling on the side. Additionally, migrants are forced to carry drugs across the border in exchange for payments.

### *Shelter workers*

Shelter workers present migrants as an extremely vulnerable group and consider it to be one of the biggest issues in migration. When crossing illegally, migrants are often brought into a situation of labor trafficking. As one interviewee shared, they “*were essentially held as slaves, ... kept in this little house, no heat, no running water while they worked as much as possible over 12-hour days on construction projects.*” Another respondent shared that he had heard of “*countless stories of women who are sexually assaulted on their way from the Northern Triangle to the United States.*”

When crossing legally, migrants also face major difficulties. It is a strenuous process for asylum seekers to enter the US as there are very few pathways. Additionally, the process is often very expensive, involving costs such as getting a translator, paying for bus tickets, flights, court, etc... According to shelter workers, US policies force migrants into the shadows rather than helping them contribute to the system. Shelter workers extensively discussed COVID-19 related difficulties. Consistently throughout 2020, COVID-19 complications forced caregivers at various shelters to transition from “*face-to-face interactions to remote assistance,*” making it significantly harder for migrants to receive health care. COVID-19 has also forced shelters to operate at reduced capacity, both in terms of staffing and migrants, while health locations have fewer staff and longer wait times to dispense care. Fears of transmission have prompted countries to close their borders, while shelters are unable to help migrants fill out government paperwork to receive healthcare. This results in migrants being trapped in a country or region with significant barriers to

healthcare access; and the lack of contact with family further raises anxiety among migrants.

Solutions to the migration problem need to be implemented at the grassroots level, according to shelter workers. These include both addressing violence and helping create economic opportunities. Local leaders, particularly indigenous leaders, need to be included in the solution to effectively tailor the solution to local needs. It is important to focus on investing in the next generation to become entrepreneurs in sustainable businesses to both retain populations and restore the local economy.

Several programs and recommendations emerged within conversations with shelter workers. For example, the Central American Minors Affidavit of Relationship (CAM-ARO) has demonstrated effectiveness in reducing the number of unaccompanied minors arriving at the US-Mexico border by getting clearance beforehand and obtaining knowledgeable legal assistance. Naturally, another recommendation emerges - to find ways to “*better coordinate between shelters and governments.*” Shelter workers could receive more extensive training to help and advise migrants in a variety of ways. It is apparent that the current lack of communication between shelters and governments results in blind spots in the governments’ decision making, as well as contributing to the lack of assistance to shelters. Expanding NGO work and cooperation with governments is another recommendation. According to shelter workers, NGOs are frequently stepping up to provide assistance that governments are unable or unwilling to provide, including food, shelter and transportation to distant immigration courts. Without NGO assistance, the humanitarian problem the US would face would be considerably more serious and urgent.

Several shelter workers across the country refused to take part in this study due to

expressed distrust, disgust, and disdain for US government officials.

### *Vocational trainers*

Vocational trainers spent the majority of their time highlighting the initial challenges that migrants face in the United States. Assimilating into a new country is difficult especially with little resources, working a low-paying job and the loss of their former community.

When first arriving in the United States, migrants face a language barrier. Learning English is the first hurdle to overcome to obtain a decent job, says one vocational trainer. The same trainer would, "...*integrate a system like ours.*" of teaching English to the migrants right away to help set them up for success later on. The initial cost of establishing oneself is costly to migrants. While vocational trainers see some immigrants come already financially stable, most require assistance. According to one trainer, a system that could help with the initial upfront costs would benefit in dividends long term. The main answer to these problems is a "*program that's well thought through and is truly designed to make an immigrant self-sufficient.*" This would include a system that would help immigrants obtain a driver's license, provide education, financially stabilize and self-diagnose other needs migrants might require to establish themselves.

Another challenge for migrants is obtaining employment that will develop into a career. Typically, migrants fill a position in high-demand industries because they are willing to hire these workers. As one trainer said, "*They may come and get a job, but that's not a career for them to build up on top.*" An offered solution to this problem is creating a program (or a series of localized programs) designed to develop infrastructure for migrants to become self-sufficient. Once they become self-sufficient, they can become producers in the economy.

After leaving their home country and resettling, migrants experience feelings of isolation and alienation. These individuals find themselves without a community or sense of belonging. One vocational trainer said that the classes she taught had morphed into a community; students came to class because they felt like they belonged to a group of people. The feeling of alienation for immigrants is similar to that of a home renter- the feeling of being evicted at any moment without notice. Without the sense of 'home' there is a lack of motivation to participate and contribute. However, when there is a feeling of community it "*helps people feel successful*" and spurs them to continue on.

### *Law enforcement*

Law enforcement officers spent a large part of their interviews discussing challenges of migration. They refer to migration as a difficult process (hard to plan, costly and highly dangerous). High costs are associated with the asylum process, hiring translators, paying for transportation to the court date(s), and paying cartels, gang members, and/or smugglers (coyotes). If migrants cannot pay, cartels press them as drug mules and hold them for ransom until all money is received. If migrants die during their journey, cartels extort their families for the money.

Once migrants arrive in the US, they face another challenge: the outdated US policy incapable of handling current migration issues. In short, the US Government isn't "*prepared for a large influx;*" the system "*is not set up for people to succeed in trying to enter the U.S. and starting a new life;*" and "*following guidelines and due process makes [civil service] jobs difficult.*" The language barrier is also contributing to migrants' challenges once in the US:

*you're trying to get to the US, [and] what ends up happening is you get to the border, you suddenly have to apply in a language that you don't know and you [are] filling out legal documents in a language you*

*don't know, which would be hard even in a native language.*

Migration as a dehumanized and political issue is often discussed in the context of challenges and obstacles. As one respondent put it, *“You turn away the human side of the issue in favor of boiling it down to these almost inconsequential terms and titles and taking away the humanity of the issue.”* When talking about solutions to these challenges, one respondent offered his viewpoint: *“if you take away the type of stigma and the really negative view of immigration that we see a lot right now, then you can actually have an open discourse about it.”* In another quote, the same respondent addressed the lack of political will to fix the problem: *“Creating better processes for people to enter the US, but I think that type of ... mental paradigm needs to be shifted in order to actually open the door for creating these better processes.”*

Law enforcement officers also discuss impacts of migration on civilians. For example, they mention farmers and ranchers losing livestock due to cartels breaching fences, civilians at risk of targeting by pseudo-cops, and cartels driving through people's property and causing major damage.

Solutions to existing problems, as offered by law enforcement officers, fall under two categories: technical solutions (such as expediting technical possibilities needed to track border crossings) and personnel recommendations (such as eliminating red tape when possible and letting officers get needed information; providing more personnel; and eliminating bribery via extended background checks and good communication).

### RQ3: What are the key narratives concerning migration from stakeholders?

#### *Migrants*

*“Migrants as enemies”* is the rhetoric that is often brought up as very problematic. As one respondent said, *“rhetoric criminalizing undocumented workers as violent is hurtful and damaging.”* According to migrants, the *“unfair”* rhetoric originates within the US administration, bringing *“micro-aggressions of overt racist comments as part of the experience in the community”* and further perpetrating discrimination against migrants. One respondent presents his idea of a dream - a world, where *“we would have a license to drive; a renewable permit that is paid for in exchange for a feeling of tranquility; without fear of being taken advantage of and without fear of ICE deportation.”*

#### *Policy experts*

Policy experts share that executing information campaigns is hard and the effectiveness is

difficult to measure. According to one interviewee, potential migrants learn more about the migration process from social networks than official information campaigns. They see both good and bad experiences, and many times, the *“individual exceptionalism”* mentality wins. As one expert puts it, *“My experience will be different... That won't happen to me. That happened to that other person, not me.”* Another respondent corroborated that focusing on *“losing your life”* narrative within information campaigns is ineffective. Rather, information campaigns should focus on the low chances of succeeding in the migration journey. Another policy expert shared that information campaigns can be helpful to combat disinformation spread by smugglers. Specifically, it might be fruitful to explain to potential migrants how the asylum system works and that it is *“not really set up for people who just had [their] small business extorted.”* However, this is not the viewpoint that was shared by all policy

experts we interviewed. As one respondent observed, “*the [US] policy changes so often that the information campaigns are ineffective.*” He further added on behalf of migrants: “*that was our experience six months ago, but how do we know if that's going to be our experience now?*”

### Academics

Many academics are keen to point out that migration is presented as a political issue. As one respondent put it, “*this issue is demagogued, it's politicized, is used for some political gain.*” This trend only compounds the real challenges of migration, making the situation worse. Political rhetoric on migration is seen as “*short-term oriented and causing long term problems,*” with US media contributing to further polarization. The real wall, according to academics, is the US political situation that “*prevents an evolution on migration discussions and approaches.*”

Two major themes emerge in the discussion of rhetoric that surround migration: the rhetoric of “migrants as enemies” and the rhetoric of “Fortress America.” According to academics, the “migrants as enemies” narrative often originates within US administration communications, as well as news media, and contributes to the isolationist policies that other wealthy nations adopt in following US lead. Such rhetoric is also counterproductive to solving the larger migration problem. Academics are vocal for the “*need to eliminate narratives that migrants are an inherent danger*” and “*need to eliminate these zero-sum game narratives.*” Instead, they promote that the “*threat narratives [are to be] replaced with cooperative regional narratives.*”

The rhetoric of “Fortress America” is explained as the “*underlying idea that the world will eventually implode and we need to barricade ourselves in before that happens.*” The “Fortress America” rhetoric, a fear-driven narrative, is seen as harmful to solving the migration problem because it “*prevents ... a will to address underlying stability issues in Central America.*”

### Journalists

Journalists express their concern for the information ecosystem that migrants have. For example, they share that migrants do not understand what asylum is and how to apply for it. As one journalist put it:

*people think that asylum is [something that] you ask for. And as long as your intentions are good and you're here to work, we'll see that you're a good person and I'll let you in.*

Information on who qualifies for asylum and how the asylum process works may be beneficial for potential migrants.

### Shelter workers

Shelter workers discuss the need for less harmful rhetoric towards migrants. They share that migrants often discuss how they feel unwanted within the United States, how they are portrayed as stealing jobs and being “*shadow rapist(s).*” Alternatively, as one shelter worker said, a more productive and preferable term would be “*New Americans.*”

### Vocational trainers

Vocational trainers pointed out that the words ‘refugee’, ‘illegal’ and ‘undocumented’ carry negative connotations. One vocational trainer said that it did not matter if people were, or were not, undocumented, members of society were associating them as undocumented. To combat this harsh rhetoric, vocational trainers suggest calling these individuals “*New American.*” There is no room to misinterpret this label; the term simple means, “*...they are American but new to the country.*” Changing this language would open up society’s, “*...perspective of that person and their thoughts about them.*”

### Law enforcement

Law enforcement officers do not discuss rhetoric about migration, with an exception of

one narrative: “America as a country of immigrants.”

As one respondent puts it:

*I think it needs to be the United States policy and my priority to welcome these people and to continue*

*building upon being a great nation by embracing other thought processes and cultures and coming together to create something new and incredible.*

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## CHAPTER 5 | MEDIA FINDINGS

To determine how US, Mexico, and NT media narrate discussions on migration, the following chapter presents a summary of each media system's narrative themes and shifts over time. The purpose in doing so is to identify key drivers of each nation's migration narratives, including areas of divergence and convergence that contribute to preventing or enhancing, respectively, mutual understanding and cooperation.

We begin by presenting each media system's overarching narrative depiction of migration, drawn specifically from the KWIC analysis of the top 75 words surrounding mentions of "migrant" and "migration" by time period, and the narrative themes identified from our AI topic clustering. We then go into greater detail regarding the key emergent narrative themes, including areas of similarity and difference. For a more detailed breakdown of each media system's migration narratives by time period, see the country profiles in appendices B, C, and D.

Finally, we present results from the trained AI algorithm revealing quantitative comparative insights into the narrative structures on migration over time. Factors included are region of migrant origin, responsibility for managing migration, voices reported, argument type, migrant emotions, perceptions of

migrants, reasons for migration, discussion of migrant journey, and immigration policies.

### Summary of Synthesized Narrative Findings in US, NT, and Mexican Media

- 🌐 All three regions are frustrated by US partisan politics in the midst of a humanitarian crisis.
- 🌐 All nations increasingly recognize interconnectivity of migration.
- 🌐 National leaders play the largest role in immigration rhetoric and policy solutions.
- 🌐 Non-state actors contribute to aid, policy reform, and data collection.
- 🌐 Racial tensions increase over time as US deterrence policies and rhetoric change.
- 🌐 Mexico and the US only recently recognize Northern Triangle in the immigration crisis.
- 🌐 Mexico and the Northern Triangle prioritize humane treatment and describe victimization.
- 🌐 Mexico and US primary concerns evolve from economic considerations to quality of life.
- 🌐 US discusses immigration in terms of policy and economics.
- 🌐 US policy solutions address migrant movement, not causal mechanisms.
- 🌐 US partisan politics block meaningful policy developments.

- 🌐 US rhetoric toward migrants becomes increasingly antagonistic.
- 🌐 Mexico immigration policy becomes increasingly multilateral and less subordinate to US.
- 🌐 Northern Triangle media most frequently illuminates immigrant human experiences.
- 🌐 Northern Triangle exhibits greatest capacity for multilateral cooperation.

## Implications and Suggestions for Narrative Alignment in Support for US Migration Goals

- 🌐 Need for consistent, overarching narrative regarding US migration policy goals: US media narratives stress “enforcement actions” while lacking narrative purpose; ambiguity of US actions creates a pull for more migrants to come to the US, breeding uncertainty over implementation of harsher policies.
- 🌐 Reframe US policy actions within a humanitarian lens: Shift value claims away from border security to human rights while presenting US moral leadership, including anti-corruption efforts and international aid.
- 🌐 Avoid actions viewed as criminalizing migration; recognize migration as a right while separating the issue from US migration enforcement policies.
- 🌐 Garner partnership support by praising or recognizing Mexico’s actions to combat

migration; emphasize continued partnerships to enhance bilateral cooperation, including civil society partnerships.

- 🌐 Rhetoric announcing harsher immigration policies lead to increased migration, especially illegal migration: Policies deterring migration prove ineffective with migrants described as still willing to travel to the US despite harsh conditions both on the journey and living conditions in the US.
- 🌐 US support is needed to address the root causes of migration, not its manifestations: US border security policies only push migrants to take more dangerous paths. Mexican and NT media stress economic and social issues as the root cause, with evidence of declining Mexican immigration once economic and social conditions in Mexico relative to the US improve.
- 🌐 US narratives are increasingly polarized: Over time, US media narratives move from consideration of broader policy reform, such as guest-worker and visa programs, to more polarized discussions of pro-vs anti-amnesty concerns and border security investment. Amnesty is a key wedge issue for US audiences, but not for Mexican or NT audiences.

The following research questions guided our media analyses:

RQ3.1: How does US, NT, and Mexican media narratively discuss migration over time?

RQ3.2: What are the thematic shifts in media reporting on migration?

## RQ3.1: How does US, NT, and Mexican media narratively discuss migration over time?

To answer RQ3.1, we begin with an overview of each country's overarching narrative depiction of migration identified by integrating their sub-narratives over time from their Top 75 KWIC and ML Clusters. We then provide a more detailed breakdown of key narrative themes, including areas of convergence and divergence.

### **Mexican Media Themes and Shifts from Top 75 KWIC and ML Cluster Analysis**

Mexican media narratives shift significantly between the first two and last two time periods. At first, Mexican narratives narrowly discuss migration in terms of Mexicans seeking low-paying jobs in the US, with significant discussion on the policy dimension of immigration within the context of the US-Mexican bilateral relationship; albeit with some transnational dimensions highlighting the structural drivers of migration as primarily economic.

As the Mexican economy improves, the narratives shift to Central Americans traveling through Mexico to the US in search for economic opportunity; fleeing poor conditions in their country of origin. Mexican authorities are consistently reported as enacting immigration policies, and over time, able to do so more humanely. However, as US politicians debate immigration reform by focusing on strengthening the border and making it harder for migrants to enter the US, CA migration continues to rise; leading to a substantial increase in organized crime and human trafficking.

The result is a growing humanitarian crisis as well as destabilizing Mexican society with migrants vulnerable to acts of violence and inhumane treatment; feeding into value claims regarding US policy as xenophobic and racist.

There are repeated calls for treating migrants with dignity and respect. Thus, emphasis is increasingly placed on acts committed against migrants. The scenes, or context of migration, include the rising number of Central American (CA) migrants, failed political negotiations on immigration reform, and an increasingly dangerous journey where migrants are vulnerable to organized crime and human rights violations.

### **NT Media Themes and Shifts from Top 75 KWIC and ML Cluster Analysis**

NT media reporting focuses on the structural drivers of migration, taking a transnational lens in describing migration and the associated actors. Migration is presented as a right in stark contrast to later depictions of the Trump administration's policies perceived as criminalizing migration. Thus, NT media present a balanced mix of value and policy claims related to migration.

Structural drivers remain consistent throughout the reporting, emphasizing CA migrants fleeing their country of origin due to poverty and concerns over safety; albeit with growing emphasis on the latter. This emphasis over time prompts more coverage of asylum related claims in period 4. Despite the diverse and severe abuses migrants face on their journey, migrants are shown as viewing the travel as worth the risk to pursue a better life in the US. The structural drivers, in addition to the necessary pathway through Mexico to travel to the US, marks migration as a transnational issue.

The presentation of migration as a transnational issue includes coverage of international human rights organizations and civil society actors helping aid migrants, with calls for support to help defend and protect

migrants; who are seen as a vulnerable population. Because of the violent and poor conditions migrants seek to escape in origin countries, migration itself is viewed as a human right. US policies are seen as not addressing the causes of migration and instead critiqued as criminalizing migration and punishing migrants. Anticipation of further US security restrictions to migration only serves to motivate migrants to take the journey immediately; with migrants shown as repeatedly attempting the journey despite its risks.

### **US Media Themes and Shifts from Top 75 KWIC and ML Cluster Analysis**

US media reporting on migration emphasizes the actors and acts associated with migration. Actors are primarily Mexican migrants; though there are later shifts to Central Americans and US politicians debating immigration reform. Discussion of migration policies initially centers on discussions of guest worker programs, but shifts more toward value concerns such as amnesty and border security. The scenes of migration focus on the increasing rise of migration, the perils migrants face during their

journeys to the US, as well as the locations of migrant entry.

Discussion on how various instruments or intervention mechanisms can resolve the root causes of migration are generally overlooked. Rather, discussion centers on value judgements, such as assessments of amnesty programs and security related mechanisms. US coverage notes that strict migration enforcement leads merely to pushing migrants toward greater risk taking when travelling to the US; failing to reduce the number of entering migrants.

In sum, the narratives present in US media remain relatively stable in their overarching plotline. Migrants are shown as illegally entering the US for economic opportunities, requiring the US to protect its borders. Addressing residency or guest worker policies is seen as secondary, leaving migrants to attempt dangerous and illegal travel to the US to circumvent border security policies. The US migration system is seen as overwhelmed and stressed to maximum capacity.

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## **Summary of Key Findings Related to Narrative Shifts by Country**

### **United States**

#### *US Discusses Immigration in Terms of Policy and Economics*

Throughout all four time periods, the United States media narratives on migration focuses primarily on national security, and the impact of migrants on domestic policies and economics.<sup>6</sup> Time periods three and four show increasing acknowledgement of the difficulties migrants face prior to, during, and after their

journeys. Until period four, most sources fail to address external conditions beyond economic opportunities as causing individuals to migrate.<sup>7</sup>

Sources in the US offer less information on causal mechanisms and nuances like crime and violence, humanitarian implications, political failures, and human dignity. This is markedly different from Mexican and Northern Triangle media, which centralize such topics in media

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix D: Cluster Frequency Summary, US1-4

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix D: Cluster Frequency Summary US3, 4; Narrative Elements: US1-4; Cluster Theme Description: US3-1, 2; US4-0, 1, 3

and public discourse.<sup>8</sup> US media paints a picture of migration that understandably reflects domestic impacts to explain the shaping of US policy considerations. Such narratives fail to offer US citizens information on the range of complexities contributing to the migration crisis and structural violence; as provided in Mexico and Northern Triangle media.

*US Policy Solutions Address Migrant Movement, Not Causal Mechanisms*

US language and legislation shows the evolution of national priorities, consistently implementing policies to address economics and security above other factors.<sup>9</sup> Legislation discussions begin with a focus on the economy through guest worker programs and visas but soon shift to a heavier emphasis on national security, creating harsher border enforcement and amnesty policies.<sup>10</sup> Although the US works more frequently with governments of Mexico and later the Northern Triangle, most US policies result from fears of the economic drain or criminal activity that migration could have on the nation.<sup>11</sup>

As American policies grow increasingly focused on enforcement mechanisms like arrest and detainment alongside delayed amnesty applications, media sources become more critical of their ineffectiveness and cruelty.<sup>12</sup> The US reports less frequently on complex causal factors of migration which translates to the country's less holistic understanding of the

issue and its resultant policy approach.<sup>13</sup> Mexico and the Northern Triangle narratives criticize what they perceive as the US's creation of harmful policies and misdirected attention on the domestic aftermath of migration instead of the causal factors and conditions immigrants experience.<sup>14</sup>

*US Partisan Politics Block Meaningful Policy Developments*

Each time period sees increasing divisions between the policies desired by Republicans and those desired by Democrats. As political discourse grew more complex with new understandings of humanitarian challenges and former policy impacts, the ability to garner support for new migration legislation drastically decreased. Over time, Republicans have advocated more adamantly for heightened border security to keep migrants out of the country, while Democrats have supported policies that help integrate migrants into the country.<sup>15</sup>

As rhetoric grew more passionate over each period the issue becomes entangled with fundamental fears and moral questionings, making policy compromise more challenging.<sup>16</sup> The political polarity has drawn attention away from migration itself and focused it instead on partisan divides, limiting the ability to pass legislation that addresses conditions in each period.<sup>17</sup> American, Mexican, and Northern Triangle media sources grow increasingly

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<sup>8</sup> See RQ3.2 Trained Algorithm Results: *Reasons for Migration, Mention of Journey and Immigration Policies*

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix D: Cluster Theme Description: US1-2; US2-3, 4; US3-0, 3, 5; US4-0, 3, 4, 5; Narrative Elements: US1-4

<sup>10</sup> See Appendix D: Cluster Theme Description: US2-0; Narrative Elements: US1-4; Cluster Frequency Summary US1-4; Cluster Theme Description: US1-2; US2-0, 1, 3, 4; US3-1, 3; US4-3, 4

<sup>11</sup> See Appendix D: Cluster Theme US1-3; US2-0; US3-2; US4-1

<sup>12</sup> See Appendix D: Cluster Frequency Summary US3, 4; Cluster Theme Description: US1-2; US2-5; US3-1, 2; US4-0, 3, 4

<sup>13</sup> See RQ3.2: Trained Algorithm Results: *Reasons for Migration*

<sup>14</sup> See Appendix B: Cluster Frequency Summary M2, 3, 4; Narrative Elements: M4; Cluster Theme Description: M4-2; M2-

<sup>15</sup> See Appendix D: Narrative Elements US1, 2, 3; Cluster Theme Description: US1-3; US2-0, 1, 2; US3-3

<sup>16</sup> See Appendix D: Cluster Theme Description: US1-3, 4; US2-0, 1, 5; US3-1, 3; US4-1

<sup>17</sup> See Appendix D: Narrative Elements US3; Cluster Theme Description: US2-5; US3-1

frustrated and intolerant of this policy paralysis as the immigration crisis endures.<sup>18</sup>

### *US Rhetoric Toward Migrants Becomes Increasingly Antagonistic*

Anti-immigrant opinions and political rhetoric in the US increases alongside the growth of previously described national security policies and partisan politics. Time period one sees immigrants described primarily as guest workers or day laborers, though anti-migration sentiment became evident in American fears of job security.<sup>19</sup> In time period two, however, attention moves away from migrant working positions toward categorization as criminals, as Congress debates whether to criminalize illegal migration. These debates strengthen national framing of immigrants as criminals and a threat to American security and economic well-being and causes other nations to perceive the US as immoral and xenophobic.<sup>20</sup>

As these ideas normalize over time, media sources more frequently portray migrants as “bad” even as they report more cases of poor and inhumane treatment from US immigration policies, reinforcing the link between language, public perception, and the evolution of acceptable practices.<sup>21</sup>

## **Mexico**

### *Mexico Immigration Policy Becomes Increasingly Multilateral and Less Subordinate to US*

Mexican officials initially sought increased cooperation with the US to resolve immigration

challenges, but as Mexican migration has decreased and Central American migration increased, it has become more inclusive of Central American migration struggles and less tolerant of harmful US policies. Mexican migrants come to the United States in period one primarily for economic purposes, incentivizing Mexico to work with the United States to ensure the appropriate treatment of migrants and diminish migration rates.<sup>22</sup>

Political, social, and economic difficulties in Central America increase migration through Mexico, encouraging the country to cooperate with the US.<sup>23</sup> As the crisis worsens, Mexico grows more sensitive to the plight of Central Americans, aware of Mexico’s inability to resolve the problems unilaterally and critical of America’s focus on security above respect, dignity, and human rights.<sup>24</sup> Despite these reservations, Mexican media continues to discuss US-Mexico solutions above all others.<sup>25</sup>

## **Northern Triangle**

### *Northern Triangle Media Most Frequently Illuminates Immigrant Human Experiences*

Northern Triangle media consistently offers insight into the conditions that cause migration, the dangers migrants face on their journeys to a new land, and failures in the treatment they receive upon arriving.<sup>26</sup> Addressing all three components of the migrant experience, before, during, and after, Northern Triangle sources identify the range of humanitarian crises migrants may experience during each: poor living conditions, human trafficking, gang

<sup>18</sup> See Appendices B and D: Narrative Elements US3; Cluster Theme Description: US2-1, 2; US4-5; M3-0

<sup>19</sup> See Appendix D: Narrative Elements US1; Cluster Theme Description: US1-3

<sup>20</sup> See Appendix D: Cluster Theme Description: US2-0, 3, 5

<sup>21</sup> See Appendices B and D: Cluster Theme Description: US4-0, 3, 5; M2-2; See RQ3.2: Trained Algorithm Results: *Perception of Migrants*

<sup>22</sup> See Appendix B: Cluster Theme Description: M1-5, 6

<sup>23</sup> See Appendix B: Cluster Theme Description: M3-1, 2, 3; M4-2, 5

<sup>24</sup> See Appendix B: Cluster Theme Description: M1-5; M2-4; M3-1, 3; M4-2, 4

<sup>25</sup> See Appendix B: Narrative Elements: M1-4 Summary and *Key Agents*; Cluster Theme Description: M1-5, 6; M3-0, 3; M4-2, 4

<sup>26</sup> See Appendix C: Narrative Elements: NT2-4; Cluster Frequency Summary: NT3, NT4; Cluster Theme Description: NT2-0, 2; NT3-0, 2, 5; NT4-1

crime, discrimination, deportation, criminalization, and more.<sup>27</sup>

Throughout all three time periods Northern Triangle sources describe the xenophobia, racism, and discrimination migrants experience.<sup>28</sup> With a greater understanding of the intricacies of the problem, the Northern Triangle more readily criticizes human rights violations resulting from systemic domestic challenges and US immigration policies, calling out the inhumane treatment they cause, their inability to reduce migration, and the need for reform instead of harsher enforcement.<sup>29</sup>

#### *Northern Triangle Exhibits Greatest Capacity for Multilateral Cooperation*

Throughout all three time periods examining NT media, the Northern Triangle exhibits deep understanding of the transnational nature of immigration, other nations' immigration policies and their repercussions, and the role multilateral organizations play in addressing the issue.<sup>30</sup> Northern Triangle sources frequently describe the economic and political conditions that drive immigration and the trans-Mexican movement migrants must complete to reach the US border, making migration in the Northern Triangle inseparable from those two states.<sup>31</sup>

The media in this region also discuss US policies and the desperate need for reform, exhibiting a level of involvement and knowledge

of transnational factors that surpasses the US and Mexico.<sup>32</sup> Northern Triangle migrants experience this interconnectivity first-hand, causing their nations to hold all three regions responsible for resolving migration challenges.<sup>33</sup>

#### **Similarities**

##### *All Three Regions are Frustrated by US Partisan Politics in the Midst of a Humanitarian Crisis*

All three regions recognize the policy paralysis that increasingly occurs in the US, even as calls for legislative immigration reform grow louder.<sup>34</sup> Although Mexico and the Northern Triangle speak more adamantly about the human rights violations and dangerous conditions migrants experience, the United States recognizes many of these perils. The US takes disproportionate responsibility for migration policy development, yet its Congress cannot address many of the inhumane conditions these policies create because of the stark divide between domestic Republican and Democratic politicians.<sup>35</sup>

The rhetoric surrounding these policy debates also brings criticism as racially charged language and negative perceptions of migrants grow in the US, discouraging or frustrating Northern Triangle and Mexican officials whose citizens are on the receiving end of this language.<sup>36</sup> External nations see the flaws of US

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<sup>27</sup> See Appendix C: Narrative Elements: NT2-4; Cluster Frequency Summary: NTP4; Cluster Theme Description: NT2-0, 2, 4; NT3-0, 1, 2, 5; NT4-0, 1

<sup>28</sup> See Appendix C: Narrative Elements: NT2; Cluster Frequency Summary: NT2, NT4; Cluster Theme Description: NT2-4

<sup>29</sup> See Appendix C: Narrative Elements: NT3; Cluster Frequency Summary: NT2-4; Cluster Theme Description: NT2-3, 4; NT4-2, 3

<sup>30</sup> See Appendix C: Narrative Elements: NT2-4; Cluster Frequency Summary: NT2-4; Cluster Theme Description: NT2-5; NT3-1; NT4-1, 2, 3, 4

<sup>31</sup> See Appendix C: Narrative Elements NT2-4; NT2-0, 5; NT4-2

<sup>32</sup> See Appendix C: Narrative Elements NT2-4; Cluster Theme Description: NT2-0, 1, 4; NT2-1; NT3-3, 5

<sup>33</sup> See RQ3.2: Trained Algorithm Prediction Results: *Responsibility for Managing Migration*

<sup>34</sup> See Appendices B, C and D: Narrative Elements NT2-4; Cluster Frequency Summary: US1-4; Cluster Theme Description: US2-2; US3-2, 4; US4-0; M2-2; NT2-1, 3; NT3-2; NT4-2, 3, 5

<sup>35</sup> See RQ3.2: Trained Algorithm Prediction Results: *Responsibility for Managing Migration*; See Appendices B and D: Cluster Frequency Summary: Cluster Theme Description: M2-2; M4-4; US2-1, 2; US3-3; US4-5

<sup>36</sup> See Appendices B, C and D: Narrative Elements: M3, 4; Cluster Frequency Summary: M4, NT2-4; Cluster Theme Description: US1-4; US2-1, 5; US3-2; US4-5;

domestic policies but remain incapable of altering them, forcing them to settle for public criticisms or creation of their own policies to counteract the negative effects.

#### *Presidents Play the Largest Role in Immigration Rhetoric and Policy Solutions*

Due to the nature of their state interactions and domestic governing structures, Mexican and US presidents frequently work together to develop, implement, and critique immigration policies.<sup>37</sup> In recent years, Northern Triangle executives have also entered the scene, though their media sources refer more frequently to US presidents than specific domestic leadership.<sup>38</sup> Amongst these states, the executives determine the level of multilateral cooperation, domestic policy development, and the rhetoric surrounding the topic; influencing causal mechanisms and public perception. Media sources name presidents above all other individuals and frequently attribute specific policies of an administration. This makes them the primary face of policy, especially in time period four and when discussing US presidents.<sup>39</sup>

#### *Non-State Actors Contribute to Aid, Policy Reform, and Data Collection*

As domestic conditions worsened in the Northern Triangle and policy implementation led to human rights violations, advocacy groups, non-government organizations, and aid groups began to develop and publicly vocalize

concerns to address the issue throughout all three regions.<sup>40</sup> Religious, legal, and international organizations become increasingly referenced in media sources, working directly with migrants to provide aid or working within the political realm to reform policies.<sup>41</sup>

Although most frequently mentioned in Northern Triangle and Mexican sources during time periods three and four, the United States also saw higher rates of immigration advocacy over time as the effectiveness and legality of immigration policies came into question. Research entities and universities remain involved in the issue as well, especially in the US and Mexico. Media sources reference these entities when reporting increasing immigration rates, worsening conditions, detainment times, and flaws in policy.<sup>42</sup>

#### *Racial Tensions Increase Over Time as US Deterrence Policies and Rhetoric Change*

All three regions see a shift in the perception of migrants. The US moves away from initial associations of migrants as day laborers and workers toward increasingly aggressive, criminal connotations as it frames migrants as a threat.<sup>43</sup> Simultaneously, Mexico and the Northern Triangle also see diminished associations of migrants with economic factors. However, the personal experiences of their citizenry prevents them from regarding migrants through the same criminal lens that the US acquired, instead recognizing the inhuman conditions

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M1-6; NT4-4; NT3-5; See RQ3.2: Trained Algorithm Prediction Results: *Perception of Migrants*

<sup>37</sup> See Appendix B and D: Narrative Elements: M1&4; US1&4; Cluster Frequency Summary: US4, M4; Cluster Theme Description: M2-2; M3-0, M4-2, 4; US1-1, 4, 5; US2-0, 1, 2; US3-1, 2; US4-3, 4, 5

<sup>38</sup> See Appendix C: Narrative Elements: NT3&4 *Key Agents*; Cluster Theme Description: NT2-1; NT3-1; NT4-2, 3, 5

<sup>39</sup> See Appendices B and D: Cluster Frequency Summary: US4, M4; US3-1, 2; US4-3, 4, 5

<sup>40</sup> See RQ3.2: Trained Algorithm Results: *Voices Reported*; See Appendices B, C and D: Narrative Elements: NT2-4;

M4; US4; Cluster Theme Description: NT2-2; NT3-1; NT4-3; M3-1, 2; US3-2

<sup>41</sup> See Appendices B and C: Cluster Theme Description: NT2-2; NT3-1; NT4-1, 3, 5; M3-1, 2, 5; M4-1

<sup>42</sup> See Appendix D: Narrative Elements: US2&3

<sup>43</sup> See RQ3.2: Trained Algorithm Results: *Perception of Migrants*; See Appendices B, C and D: Narrative Elements: US1-4; M2, 3; Cluster Frequency Summary: US1, 2, 4; M1; NT2; Cluster Theme Description: US2-0, 5; US3-2; US4-1, 3, 5; M2-3; M3-1; M4-4; NT2-3, 4; NT4-2

migrants experience.<sup>44</sup> Mexico and the Northern Triangle criticize US tactics like child separation policies, arrests, detainment, and amnesty processes as well as the rhetoric it uses to frame immigration in the minds of its people. This is seen as creating tension and fueling frustrations.<sup>45</sup>

### *All Nations Increasingly Recognize Interconnectivity of Migration*

Although the extent of each region's understanding varies, Mexico, the US, and the Northern Triangle grow increasingly aware of the complexities of migration and the regional cooperation necessary to approach the transnational challenge. The United States exhibits the least acknowledgement of this interrelation, evidenced by its prioritization of national security and by media sources that use information about migrants to inform domestic legislation. US coverage focuses on domestic impacts and conditions without offering insight into the social, economic, and political environments or policies of other nations.<sup>46</sup>

Media from Mexico and the Northern Triangle, on the other hand, present extensive information on US immigration policies, policy impacts, and US perceptions of migrants; displaying an understanding of the impact each state has on one another.<sup>47</sup> Despite these differences, the increasing intensity of migration related crises forces all regions to better understand the root of a problem that impacts

them all. Over time, media sources offer more discussions of the migrant journey, the intricacies of push/pull factors, and acknowledge a wider spread of regional state actors. Such discussions add to the complexity and nuance of the situation, while broadening the base for regional cooperation.<sup>48</sup>

### **Differences**

#### *Mexico and the US Only Recently Recognize Northern Triangle in the Immigration Crisis*

Through time periods one and two, Mexico and US discussions on immigration center around their own unilateral and bilateral involvement, although Mexican sources acknowledge the presence of Central American migrants more prominently than the US.<sup>49</sup> The two countries only began to incorporate the Northern Triangle in their understanding of immigration after its citizens began immigrating at higher rates through periods three and four.<sup>50</sup>

With immigrant caravans and an influx of Northern Triangle migrants into Mexican and US territory, the three regions became more closely interwoven, resulting in greater mention of the Northern Triangle as a region of concern and fellow stakeholder by US and Mexican media sources. To this day, the primary perception of immigration remains focused on US-Mexico relations and policy solutions. Recognition of the Northern Triangle as both contributor and resolving partner continues to

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<sup>44</sup> See Appendices B and C: Narrative Elements: M2, 3; Cluster Frequency Summary: M1; NT2; Cluster Theme Description: M2-3; M3-1; M4-4; NT2-3, 4; NT4-2

<sup>45</sup> See Appendices B and C: Narrative Elements: M4; NT2; Cluster Frequency Summary: NT2-4; Cluster Theme Description: M4-4, 5; NT3-1; NT4-3

<sup>46</sup> See Appendix D: Narrative Elements: US1-4; Cluster Frequency Summary: US1-4; Cluster Theme Description: US2-4; US4-4

<sup>47</sup> See Appendices B and C: Narrative Elements: NT2-4, M3; Cluster Frequency Summary: NT2-4; M2-4; Cluster Theme Description: NT2-0, 1, 3, 4; NT3-0, 2; NT4-2, 3; M1-5; M2-2, 3, 5; M3-1; M4-2, 4

<sup>48</sup> See Appendices B, C and D: Narrative Elements: US1-4; NT2-4; M1-4; Cluster Frequency Summary: US4; NT2-4; M1, 3, 4; Cluster Theme Description: US3-5; US4-2, 4; NT2-2, 5; NT3-0, 2, 3&4,5; NT4-1, 2; M1-2, 6, 7; M3-1, 2, 3; M4-2, 5

<sup>49</sup> See Appendices B and D: Narrative Elements: M1&2; US1&2; Cluster Frequency Summary: M1&2; US1&2; Cluster Theme Description: M1-5, 6; M2-5; US1-5

<sup>50</sup> See Appendices B and D: Narrative Elements: M3&4; US3&4; Cluster Frequency Summary: M3&4; Cluster Theme Description: M3-0, 1, 2, 3; M4-2, 4, 5; US3-5; US4-2, 3; See RQ3.2: Trained Algorithm Results: *Region of Migrant Origin*

increase; expanding the range of possible multilateral action.

*Mexico and the Northern Triangle Prioritize Humane Treatment and Describe Victimization*

As nations with migrant populations and citizens who migrate elsewhere, Mexico and the Northern Triangle have first-hand experience with the ebbs, flows and aftereffects of immigration and related policies. Their media sources provide more intimate accounts of each stage of the migrant journey as they speak to those who can relate to the story.<sup>51</sup> Because of this, discussion of immigration focuses on the humanity of the migrant experience: human rights violations, human trafficking, gang violence, poverty, dangers, fears, police brutality, child detention, arrest.<sup>52</sup> As legislation and rhetoric grow more hostile, Mexico and Northern Triangle nations state the need for: dignified, human treatment of migrants, remaining sensitive to human rights violations at home and abroad; advocating for policy reforms to address infractions, education, and job investment as legislation and rhetoric grow more hostile.<sup>53</sup>

The United States acknowledges the necessity of humane conditions for migrants but frequently weighs them against domestic security and prioritizes the latter.<sup>54</sup>

*Mexico and US Primary Concerns Evolve from Economic Considerations to Quality of Life*

Both Mexico and the US perceive migration as an economic situation throughout periods one and two, describing guest worker programs, sending of remittances, seeking jobs, employment visas, and general economic opportunities acquired through migration.<sup>55</sup> The US sees migrants as an economic threat to US jobs and employment through all four time periods.<sup>56</sup> Over time, evolving conditions in Mexico and the Northern Triangle cause migration flow rates to change, trends are attributed to an improving Mexican economy which caused migration to decrease. A worsening Northern Triangle economy is attributed as causing migration from the region to increase.<sup>57</sup>

Although connected to economics, several shifting circumstances are seen as triggers to migration; seeking improved life conditions like education, decreased violence, and political stability.<sup>58</sup> Economic opportunity remains inherently intertwined with each of these additional factors, but discussions became more holistic as sources began to acknowledge their many facets.

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<sup>51</sup> See RQ3.2: Trained Algorithm Results: *Migrant Emotions; Mention of Journey and Immigration Policies*

<sup>52</sup> See Appendices B and C: Narrative Elements: M1, 3, 4; NT2-4; Cluster Frequency Summary: M1, 3, 4; NT3&4; Cluster Theme Description: M1-2, 3, 5; M2-3, 5; M3-2, 5; M4-2

<sup>53</sup> See Appendices B and D: Narrative Elements: NT3&4; M2; Cluster Frequency Summary: NT3; M1, 3, 4; Cluster Theme Description: M1-5; M2-5; M3-3, 5; M4-2; NT3-5

<sup>54</sup> See Appendices B, C and D: Narrative Elements: M3; Cluster Frequency Summary: US1, US2, M2, NT2; Cluster Theme Description: US1-2; US2-4; US3-3; US4-3, 5; M2-3; M3-3

<sup>55</sup> See RQ3.2: Trained Algorithm Results: *Reasons for Migration*; See Appendices B and D: Narrative Elements: M1-4; US1-4; Cluster Frequency Summary: M3; US2&3; Cluster Theme Description: M1-5; M2-2, 4; M3-2, 3; US1-2, 3; US2-0, 3, 5; US3-2, 5

<sup>56</sup> See Appendix D: Cluster Frequency Summary: US1, 2, 4; Cluster Theme Description: US1-2, 3

<sup>57</sup> See Appendices B and C: Narrative Elements: M4; NT2-4; Cluster Frequency Summary: M3; NT2, 3; Cluster Theme Description: NT2-2; NT4-1, 2

<sup>58</sup> See Appendices B, C and D: Narrative Elements: NT2-4; M3&4; US4; Cluster Frequency Summary: NT4, M4; Cluster Theme Description: NT4-1, 2; M3-3

RQ3.2: What are the thematic shifts in media reporting on migration?

Trained AI algorithms identified shifts in media content related to issues of: region of migrant origin, responsibility for managing migration, voices reported, argument type, migrant emotions, perceptions of migrants, reasons for migration, discussion of migrant journey, and immigration policies.

**Trained Algorithm Prediction Results**

Over time, the region of origin of migration shifts from that of Mexico to the Northern Triangle. This shift occurs while migration is

increasingly recognized as a transnational issue. While NT and Mexican media most clearly capture the shift in NT migrants and the rise of transnational migration, US media appear less focused on NT and transnational migration until period 4. Mexican media most dramatically reflects the changing nature of migrant composition moving away from Mexican migrants to that of NT and transnational migrants. Although, US media similarly show a clear decline in migrants from Mexico across each time period.

Chart 5.1  
*Region of Migrant Origin*

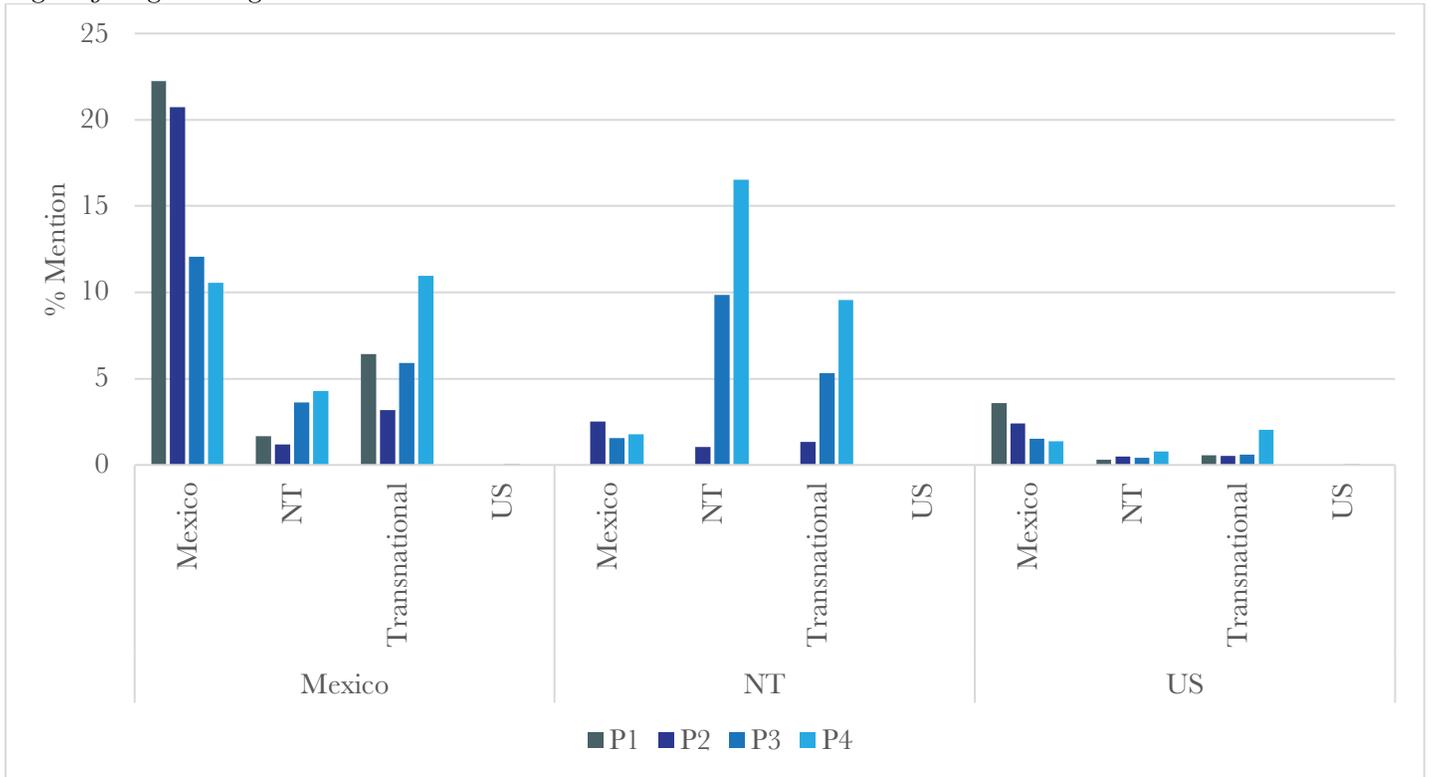
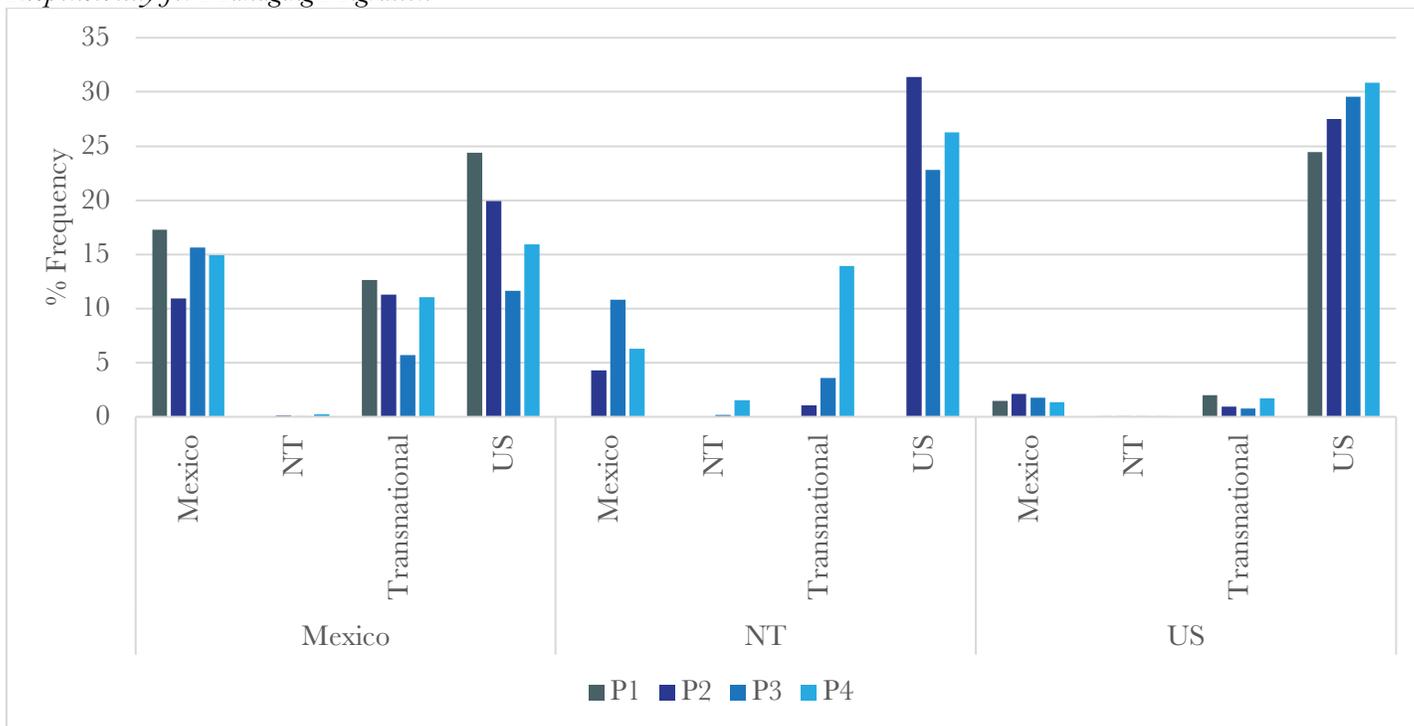


Chart 5.2  
*Responsibility for Managing Migration*

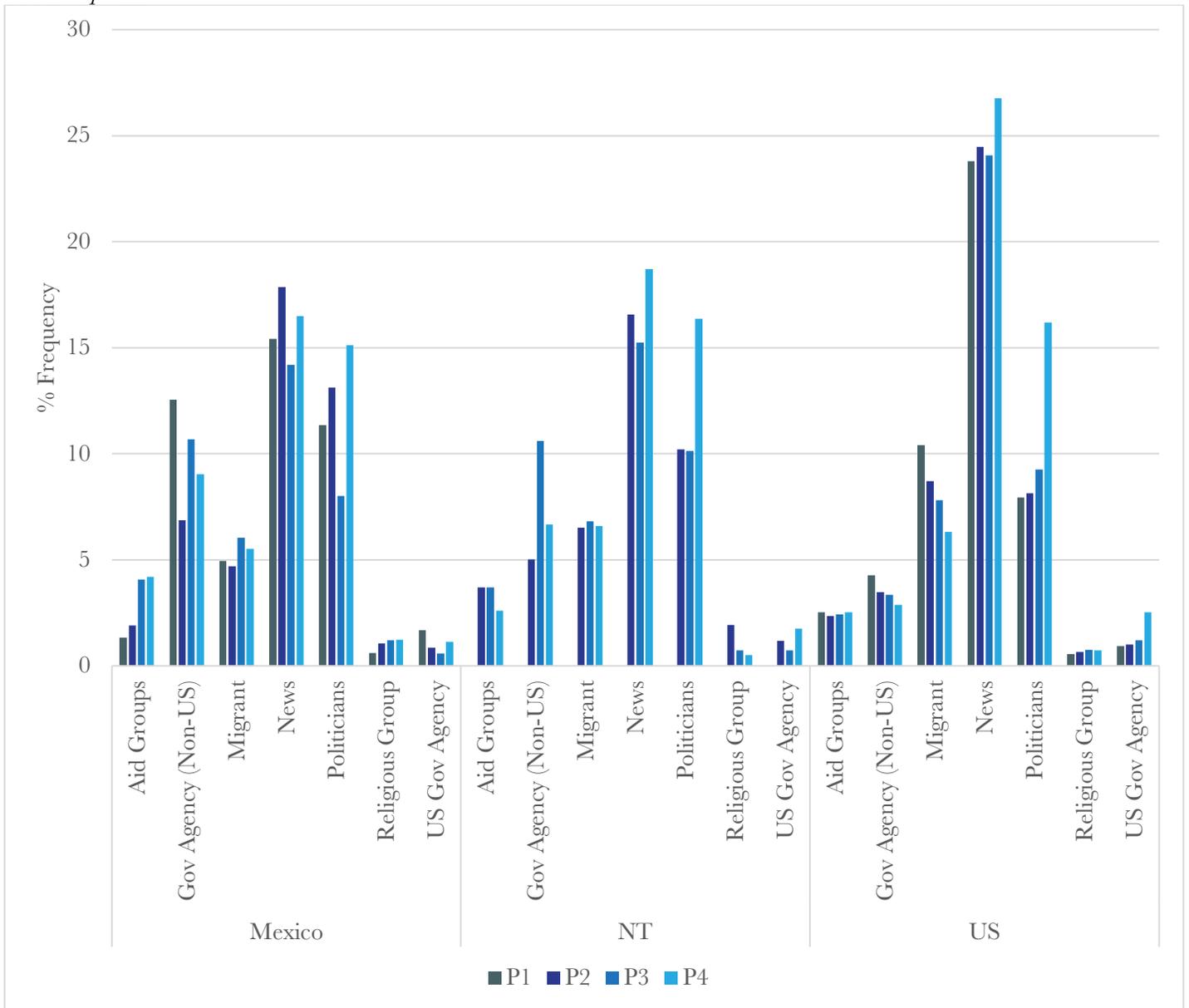


Responsibility for managing migration includes references attributing which government or societal group is charged with addressing causes for migration. In all three regions and time periods, the US is viewed as the primary actor needing to take action. Nonetheless, Mexican and NT media recognize Mexico’s role in taking action to resolve migration related issues as well. US media appear at odds with Mexican and NT reporting on the need to address migration in a transnational manner, with Mexico consistently reporting on doing so across time periods and NT increasingly calling to do so as well.

The Voices Reported chart presents what groups are most likely included in news articles. Determining sources for news content allows for understanding of what type of actor drives the

news content and agenda. All three regions rely on and cite various news organizations, thereby suggesting reporters are drivers of migration related issues. Statements from politicians are the second largest drivers of news content, with Mexican and NT media also referencing non-US government agencies far more frequently than US government agencies. US media also reference non-US government agencies more often than US agencies, but less frequently than NT and Mexican media. Foreign governments’ actions to stem migration are more often ignored in US media. Interviews with migrants are also prevalent across all three regions; notably, however, US news declines in references to migrants—possibly because migrants want to remain hidden from more stringent US migration enforcement or from US media shifting focus to US politicians.

Chart 5.3  
Voices Reported



Argument type reflects news articles' focus on policy or logical consequences of cause and effect related to migration issues versus emotional characterizations, such as migrant plight, humanitarian issues, etc. Across all three regions, logic/policy issues are more than twice as likely to be discussed over emotional dimensions of migration.

Breaking down reports on migrants' emotional expressions in articles, the predominant emotion across regions is hopelessness, fear and/or despair. This presentation remains steady in Mexican reports, but slightly increases in NT while decreasing over time in the US. Disappointment is the second most cited emotion, albeit primarily in Mexican and NT reporting.

Chart 5.4  
Argument Type

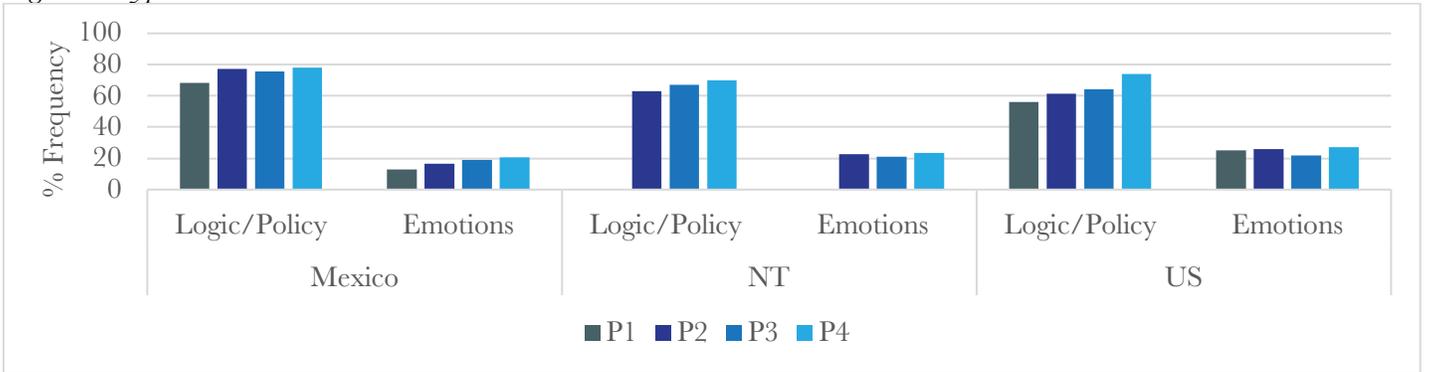


Chart 5.5  
Migrant Emotions

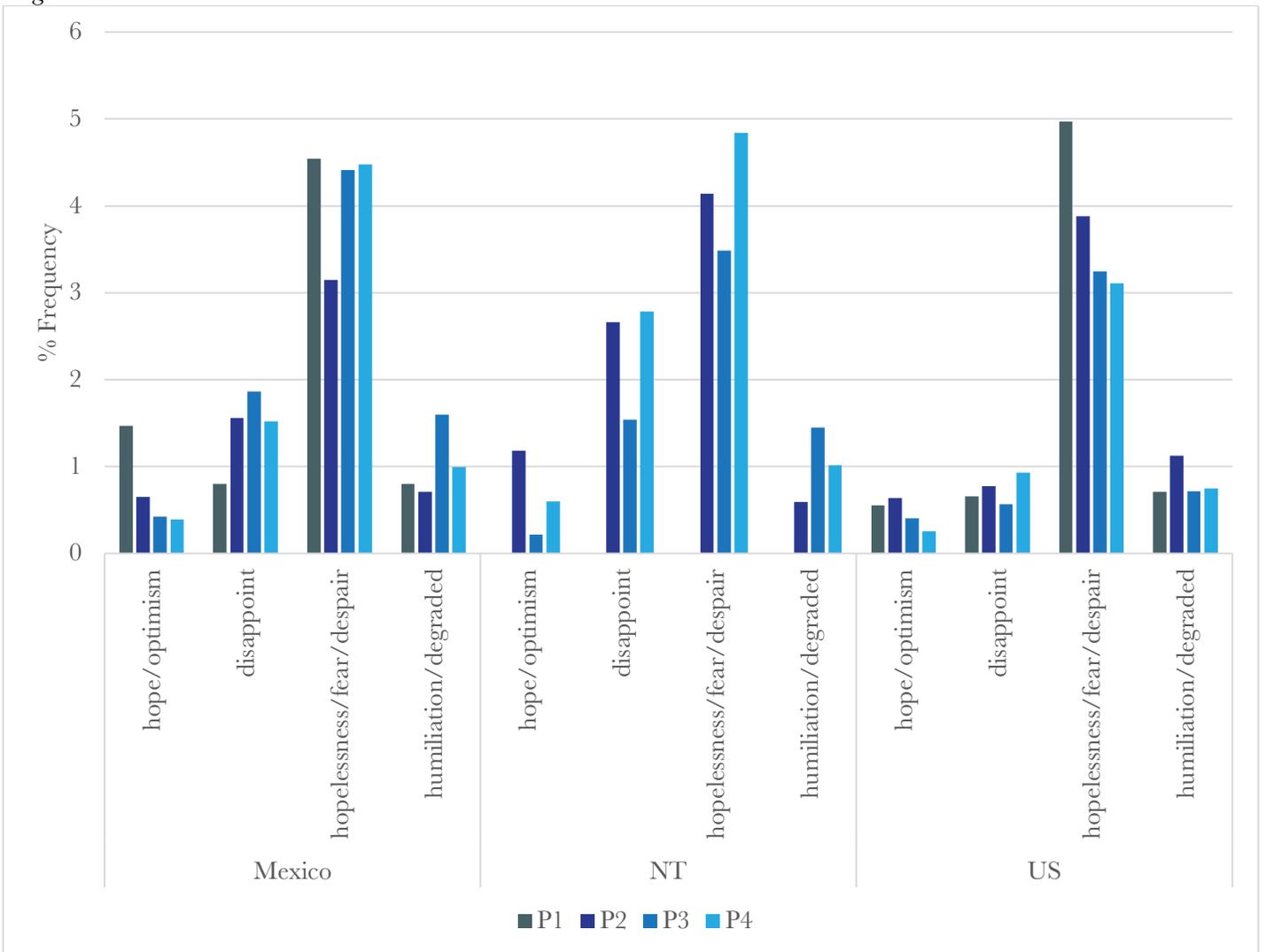
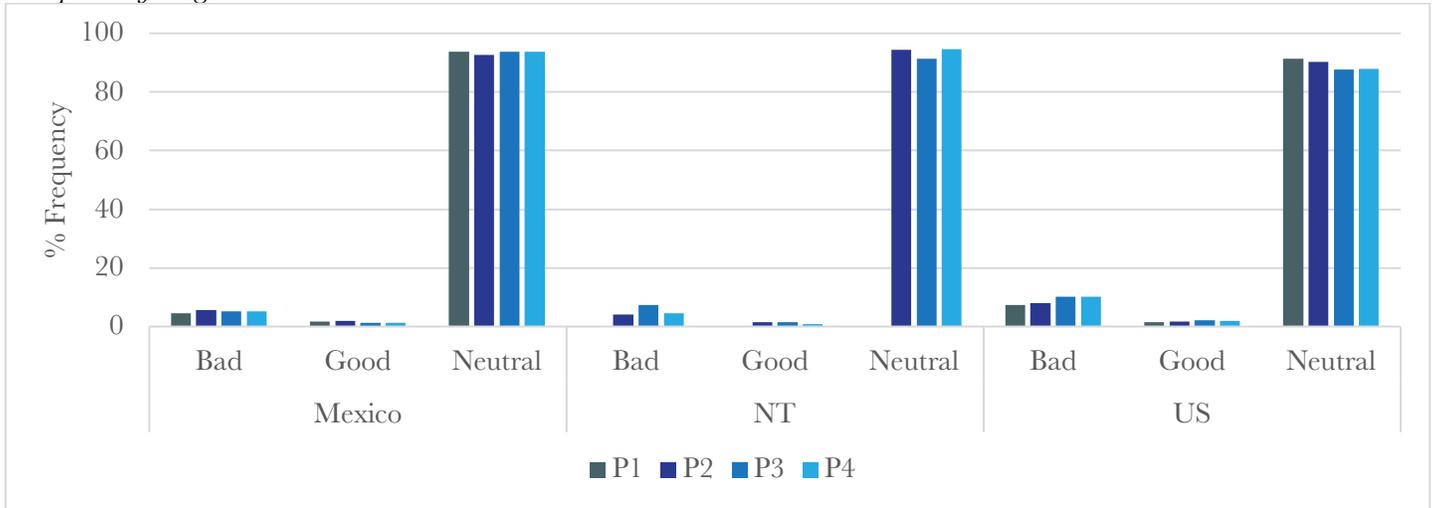


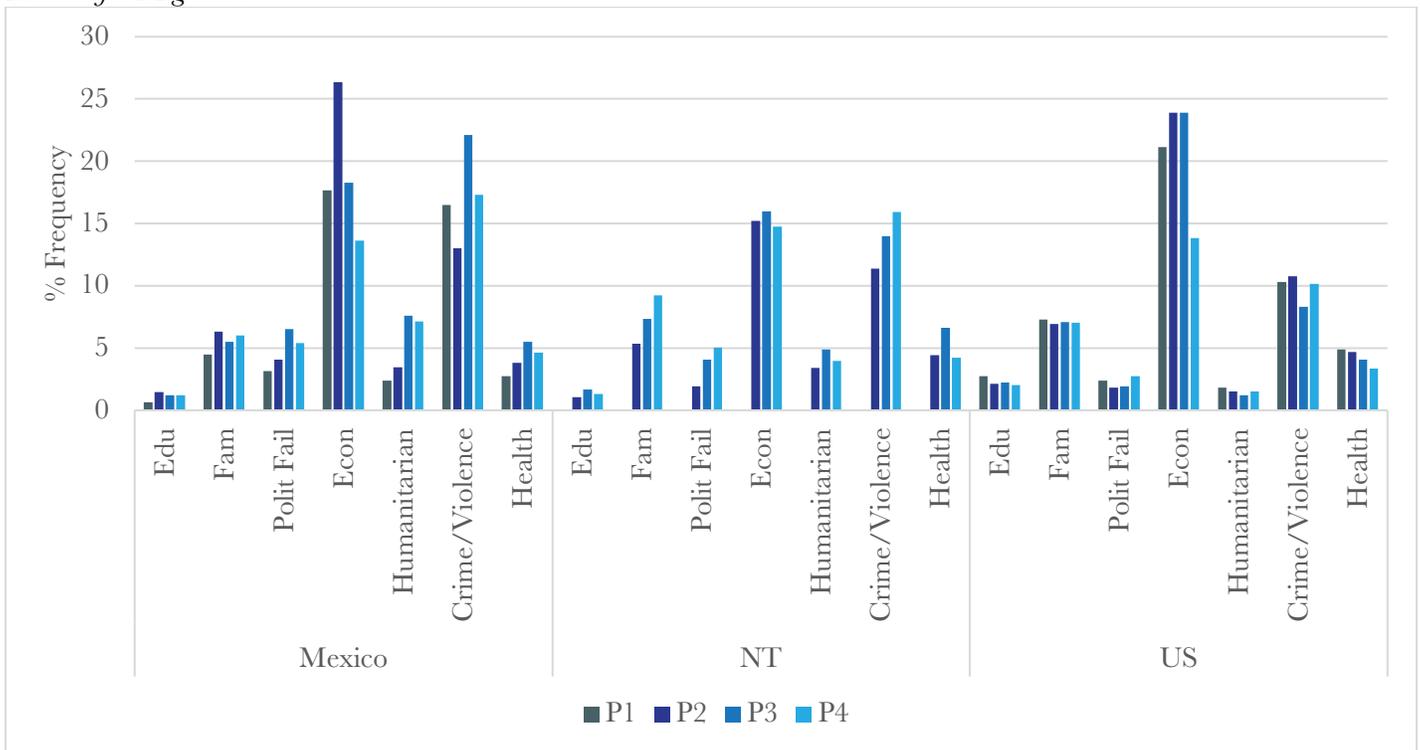
Chart 5.6  
Perceptions of Migrants



Across all three regions, migrants are viewed overwhelmingly in a neutral characterization, which is neither good nor bad, or having a mix of positive and negative elements. Perhaps most surprisingly, migrants are more often viewed negatively than positively. This may be because

of their leaving their family or their society. Taken together with the more neutral presentation of migrants, migrants are likely viewed as more of a product of their environment, with little choice to leave their country of origin.

Chart 5.7  
Reasons for Migration

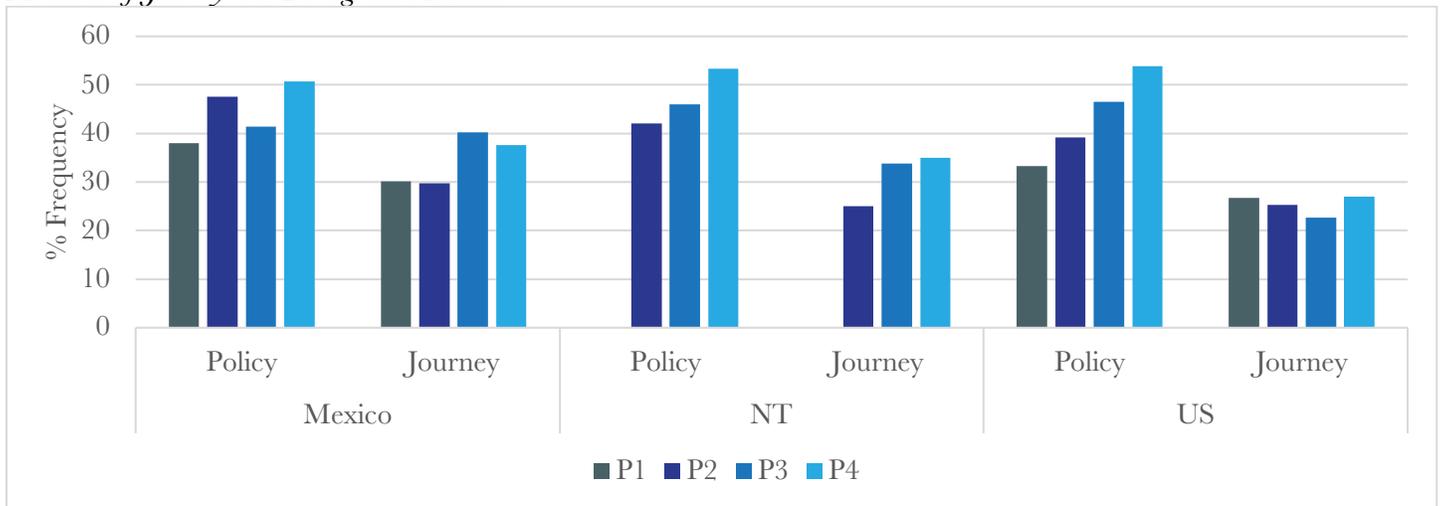


The primary reason for migration reported in all three regions is economic, although crime/violence is a close second in Mexican and NT media. However, US media is twice as likely to focus on economic reasons over crime/violence. Mexican media shows a decline in economic reasons for migration over time, likely due to Mexico's economy relative to the US improving. Similar to Mexican media, NT

reports crime/violence in similar frequency to economic reasons for migration.

Coverage of migration often includes discussion of policies related to migration and the journey migrants take. More than a quarter of the articles do so across all regions and time periods, with policy issues increasingly reported upon over time.

Chart 5.8  
*Mentions of Journey and Immigration Policies*





## CHAPTER 6 | POLICY BRIEFS FINDINGS

Following the Immigration Policies in Comparison (IMPIC) typology, we explored how the nonprofit community discusses labor migration policies, refugees/asylum-seeker policies, and return/reintegration policies, as these policy fields are the most widely discussed within the policy briefs. The following research questions guide this review:

RQ4: What are the best examples of migration policy practices from around the world, as provided by the nonprofit community? What lessons can we learn from various migration policy reviews?

### Labor Migration Policies

Labor migration policies are often divided into two broad groups: policies that address low-skilled labor migration and skilled labor migration. Many of the policies and partnerships between countries focus on the first type (low-skilled migrants), while the second type (skilled labor migrants) has only recently been emphasized (largely due to the 2015-16 refugees and migration crisis in European Union). The difference between skilled and low-skilled labor tends to be training. While low-skill vocations require little to no training (i.e. farm workers, cashiers, cleaners, etc.), skilled vocations would normally entail formal training/ specialized knowledge (i.e. plumbers, mechanics, electricians, etc.). We will first review the type of policies, targeted to address low-skilled labor migrants. The concept of

circular migration is central to our understanding of these policies.

### Low-skilled labor migration policies

Low-skilled labor migrants (also sometimes called “low-waged”) often fall through the cracks in policies and frameworks created to protect their ability to immigrate and work in other countries (Newland & Riester, 2018). The populations of North America and Europe tend to be more affluent, educated and are increasingly aging. There is a shortage and demand for low-skilled workers to fulfill roles which tend to be less desirable among the North American and European populations (Newland & Riester, 2018). Proactive policies should be enacted towards the low-skilled labor migrant population because the majority of them tend to move through illegal channels (Newland &

Riester, 2018). Endorsing a migration management framework for low-skilled migrants benefits destination countries in three ways. First, improving legal channels could divert large, chaotic mass migrations to more regulated points of entry. Second, more regulation could help curb the death and injury that migrants face when attempting to reach their destination. Finally, an influx of legal workers helps promote economic growth in the nations they migrate to (Newland & Riester, 2018).

Several suggestions are offered by policy analysts regarding low-skilled labor migration policies. It is important to closely regulate the recruitment and treatment of low-skilled workers, because they are subject to abuse by employers seeking to take advantage of their situation (for example, lower than mandated minimum wages) (Newland & Riester, 2018). Ensuring that policies, frameworks and treaties are clear and flexible is of critical importance. Ambiguity of status, wages and rights for low-skilled workers puts a strain on livelihoods of migrants and their employers (Newland & Riester, 2018). An emphasis should be placed on thorough evaluation of migration programs since it will allow countries to adapt their approaches to legal migration channels. This will also ensure that the programs remain as efficient as possible (Newland & Riester, 2018).

### **Skilled labor migration policies**

The second type of migration policies in our review focuses on skilled labor migrants from origin countries to destination countries. Some destination countries (such as Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, and Singapore) are among major immigrant-receiving countries that have modernized their policies to reposition their systems to identify the workers their economies need to compete in this globalized world; all while benefiting from skilled labor migration. By contrast, other countries (such as the US), have more “rigid,

outdated system for tapping valuable human capital” (Meissner, 2019, p. 2).

Policy analysts argue that origin countries are often reluctant to facilitate skilled migration because of investments in the human capital of their citizens and fears of depleting these stocks (Hooper, 2019). However, origin countries often do benefit from skilled emigration because of remittances and opportunities to develop and transfer new knowledge and skills as well as opportunities to establish new networks for trade and investment (Hooper, 2019). Some skilled migration partnerships have enjoyed great successes (such as the Germany’s Triple Win project that recruits nurses from the Philippines, Serbia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina), while other pilot programs have failed. We will further review the factors that contribute to successes of skilled labor migration policies and the areas of improvements.

The Triple Win program is a partnership between Germany’s Federal Employment Agency, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and governments of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Philippines and Serbia. At the heart of the program are well-qualified nurses from origin countries that are unable to find employment in their home countries, but whose skills are highly valued and needed in Germany (Pressestelle, 2017). Thus, the program helps to meet the demand for skilled care workers in Germany, eases the pressure on labor markets in the partner countries, and provides benefits to participants through new career opportunities (Pressestelle, 2017). The success of the program is ensured through language and preparation courses in origin countries “to ensure that those who come to Germany feel at ease in their new linguistic, cultural and working environment” (Pressestelle, 2017).

The UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration proposed a “global skills partnership” approach that entails early

investments in migration cycle and focus on training prospective migrants rather than recruiting professionals who are already qualified in their field (Clemens, 2014, 2017; Hooper, 2019; Hooper & Newland, 2018). The reasoning is such: the cost of training one person in a destination country is the same as the cost of training several people to the same standard in an origin country. A 2014 study showed that a three-year professional nursing program in schools in Casablanca, Morocco, and Sousse, Tunisia would cost 1/7 of the similar program in Germany or England (Clemens, 2014). After completing training programs, the trainees in origin countries will have a choice of either moving and working in a destination country (“the away track”) or staying and choosing to work in their home country (“the home track”) (Hooper, 2019). The Australia-Pacific Technical College (APTC) is an example of such partnership between Australia and Pacific Island countries. While APTC’s training is highly rated by both employers and participants, some questions emerge from this model: how to align training standards among countries; how to deliver training that is beneficial for both destination and origin country employers; and how to distribute the costs of training so they are shared by governments, employers, prospective migrants, and trainees who choose to stay in their home countries (Hooper, 2019).

Another example of the global skill partnership is a program between Belgium and Morocco, where there are investments in training information and communication technology (ICT) workers. Within this program, Belgium has agreed to finance ICT workers in Morocco: some will stay within the Moroccan labor market, while others will migrate to work contracts for Belgian companies (Clemens, Dempster, & Gough, 2019). The positive impact that global skill partnerships make are: managing future migration pressure, directly involving employers, promoting public-private partnerships, creating skills before migration,

promoting development by bundling training for migrants with training for non-migrants in the country of origin, and providing flexibility (adapting to the specific country needs in both destination and origin countries) (Clemens et al., 2019).

There are certain recommendations that policy analysts offer in order to ensure the success of these global skill partnership programs. Some recommendations relate to benefits for origin countries for development purposes. Hooper (2019) suggests careful consideration in providing investments in countries of origin before people move; facilitating skills transfers while people are overseas; and assisting returning migrants, including help putting their skills to good use. Other recommendations include: sharing costs with employers, supporting migrants in destination countries, and sustaining demand for migrant workers in the target sector(s) (Hooper, 2019).

One of the most important recommendations is bringing together a wide array of actors (government and NGOs) in terms of destination-origin cooperation and working across various policy areas (not just migration) (Hooper & Newland, 2018). A successful example of the cooperation is Porsche’s Training and Recruitment Centre in Manila which trains young Filipinos to work as service or bodywork technicians for Porsche, Volkswagen, or Audi in the Middle East (Hooper & Newland, 2018). Another center is located in Cape Town, South Africa. According to this program, socially underprivileged young adults pursue three years of vocational education as automotive service mechatronics technicians with specialization in high-voltage and digitalization and then are offered employment (Wheels24, 2019). This cooperation is a partnership between Don Bosco Mondo, the local Salesian Institute Youth Projects (SIYP), and the local Porsche importer LSM Distributors (Pty.) Ltd (Wheels24, 2019).

## Circular migration policies

We will further discuss *circular migration* as it is a relatively new paradigm that is not grounded in more traditional understandings of binary concepts of “permanent” and “temporary” migration (O’Neil, 2003). Circular migration is defined as “repeated migration experiences between an origin and destination involving more than one migration and return” (Hugo, 2013). The paradigm understands migration as a circular process (migrants return to their origin country, once or many times over a period of time) and as a transitional state (migrants move to migrant communities in the destination country and maintain strong social, business, and political ties to the sending country) (O’Neil, 2003). Circular migration, when properly managed, has potential to be a win-win situation for both an origin and destination countries. For destination countries, circular migration can give flexibility to overcome skill shortages while adapting to long-term market shifts, likewise origin countries can benefit by giving migrants the opportunity to gain experience and earn higher wages while maintaining valued connections with their homes (Hugo, 2013). One example of circular migration formally established by governments worldwide are seasonal worker programs.

*Seasonal worker programs* are designed to provide opportunities for low-skilled workers to temporarily migrate from one country to another in order to meet seasonal labor needs in sectors such as agriculture, hospitality or tourism. The US Temporary Foreign Worker Program has been operating since WWI, but it struggled to balance the shifting needs of various sectors and address the concerns of the domestic labor force (Felter, 2019). Additionally, the situation has been complicated by high levels of undocumented immigration and deficiencies in the US government’s tracking of visas (Felter, 2019).

Designing and operating seasonal worker programs requires legal frameworks, cooperation between governments and coordination with a variety of actors such as employers and trade unions. In Europe, seasonal worker programs are seen as one of the solutions to European migration issues, with well-established programs in Germany and the UK. In 2014, the European Union established the Seasonal Workers Directive which provides common standards for seasonal work and working conditions. It also establishes rules that govern admission and residence of third-country nationals (Hooper & Le Coz, 2020). This directive has three goals: (1) to help meet demand for seasonal labor while curbing illegal employment; (2) to protect the rights of workers; and (3) to provide development benefits for participating countries of origin (Commission of the European Communities, 2005). The established common-rules pertained to admission, residence, and rights of non-EU seasonal workers. Some restrictions are posed to migrants, such as the duration of stay in the European Union (five to nine months per year) and limitations for family reunification. Seasonal worker rights are a large part of the directive, which allows migrants to switch employers. Individual countries retain the discretion to decide who and how many migrants to admit, the exact length of their admission (within the five-to-nine-month range), as well as whether and how to facilitate repeat hires (Commission of the European Communities, 2005).

Various European NGOs (such as the Migration Policy Institute and the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration) have studied the issue and identified four challenges that are most often associated with seasonal worker programs. By reviewing these challenges, we can emphasize the factors that contribute to successes of seasonal worker programs. First, hiring the right foreign workers at the right time is critical (Hooper & Le Coz, 2020). Swift recruitment

procedures are especially important in the agricultural sector because it is difficult to predict the size and timing of harvests. Delays in the recruitment or visa approval process can significantly impact success of seasonal worker programs, as was the case with the US in 2015 when hardware failure left legal farm workers stranded in Mexico; threatening the harvest of fruit and vegetable farms in the US (Jordan, 2015). Streamlining the process for employers and workers who abide by the rules is the top priority for the success of seasonal worker programs (Hooper & Le Coz, 2020).

The second factor that is a challenge to seasonal worker programs is ensuring that workers play by the rules (Hooper & Le Coz, 2020). The biggest concern from the perspective of destination countries is to ensure that workers return to their countries of origin at the end of their contract. Several solutions have been proposed (and tested) to address this challenge. For example, the Seasonal Workers Directive gives an option to individual countries to require employers to cover their seasonal workers' travel expenses. This practice can help workers avoid incurring debt that can cause them to overstay their visas until they can pay it off (Hooper & Le Coz, 2020). Another example is in New Zealand, where employers are held accountable to cover the cost of removing any of their workers who overstay (Gibson & McKenzie, 2014). Another example is the bilateral labor agreements between France and two African countries (Morocco and Tunisia), where the African countries demonstrated that they are willing to take back their nationals if issued return orders (Hooper & Le Coz, 2020; Natter, 2015).

The third challenge is safeguarding the rights of seasonal workers (Hooper & Le Coz, 2020). Exploitation of workers is of particular concern with multiple documented reports of abuse, underpayment, and substantial work and living conditions (Corrado, 2017). Researchers provide some promising strategies for reducing

exploitation, such as pre-departure orientations (organized by either government, trade unions or employers themselves) with an emphasis on providing workers with detailed information (such as the terms of their employment, the working conditions they should expect, and their rights and options to seek legal remedies in instances of abuse) and access to certain services for foreign workers (such as legal assistance) (Hooper & Le Coz, 2020).

The last challenge, that is also an opportunity, is capitalizing on the close ties between migration and development to maximize the benefits for seasonal workers and sending countries (Hooper & Le Coz, 2020). Seasonal worker programs are viewed as a win-win solution because they benefit destination countries by meeting their labor needs and origin countries by providing migrants with opportunities to earn higher wages, develop new skills, and gain professional experience (Doyle & Sharma, 2017; Hedberg, Axelsson, & Abella, 2019). Some recommendations emerge to maximize the potential development impacts of seasonal worker programs. Practitioners recommend enhancing opportunities for countries with lower rates of participation, lowering barriers to participation in more remote areas, focusing recruitment efforts on unemployed labor, and providing financial advice and resources for savings options to seasonal workers upon their return (Doyle & Sharma, 2017). Most importantly, researchers stress that the success of these programs hinges upon careful policy design that integrates both labor market and development aims (Hugo, 2013; UN General Assembly, 2006).

## **Asylum/Refugee Migration Policies**

Forcibly displaced people (including internally displaced people, refugees and asylum-seekers) constitute more than 70 million people worldwide (UNHCR, 2020). Multiple actors and multiple frameworks govern displacement

globally and at a regional level, yet the solutions to displacements are often lacking and are not tailored to the needs of the individual (Noack, Wagner, & Jacobs, 2020). Migration policies addressing the forcibly displaced people vary greatly between developing and developed countries and thus should be reviewed separately. While refugees in North America and Europe are reserved basic human rights, those in lower-income countries struggle to survive. The reason for this gap is attributed to three main factors. First, there is an unequal global distribution of responsibility. Next, governments are not willing to extend full rights and benefits to these refugees. Finally, even when these countries would be willing to offer these protections, they do not have the capacity to do so (Fratzke & Le Coz, 2019).

### **Developing countries**

According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, it is estimated that the majority of the world's refugees (more than 85%) reside in low- and middle-income countries (UNHCR, 2018). Many of these countries have asylum laws and processes, but they lack the resources to provide refugees with access to already-strained national services (Newland, 2019a). Policy analysts argue that these countries require investments in their capacity for service delivery and good governance, similar to the kinds of investments that development organizations often include in their normal programming (Fratzke & Le Coz, 2019).

Steps to change the current situation requires more than extensive planning, but also financial and technical support from developmental actors (such as the UN, national development agencies and development banks) (Fratzke & Le Coz, 2019). These supporters need to work together to assess the current refugee situations and create accurate shared goals. Once needs are assessed, these development actors can focus on generating buy-in from agencies, companies and ministries that can aid in refugee-related

concerns. Investing in the host nations as well as the refugees will help develop their communities (Fratzke & Le Coz, 2019). Development actors recognize that providing immediate aid to refugees is not a sustainable plan and can lead to tension with citizens who feel refugees are prioritized over them. A long-term plan needs to be created by actors specializing in cross-government restructuring (Fratzke & Le Coz, 2019).

As policymakers around the world are looking for more sustainable solutions to refugee crises, one promising approach is to expand economic opportunities for refugees in developing countries (Huang & Graham, 2018). Recently, some innovative ways have been proposed to include governments, donors, and private sector actors with refugees in labor markets; enabling them to become more self-reliant, reducing the cost of hosting refugees and creating economic benefits for hosts (Huang, Charles, Post, & Gough, 2018; Huang & Graham, 2018). Some lessons have been learned from these approaches, and recommendations have been provided.

First, it is important to define shared outcomes and targets at the global and country levels. These collective outcomes and shared targets will ensure that approaches are complementary and have impact (Huang et al., 2018). Second, it is critical to engage a wide range of stakeholders through improved partnership and coordination models. Avoiding duplication of effort, encouraging broader support for projects, promoting learning between stakeholders with different expertise and perspectives could be achieved through this coordination (Huang et al., 2018). Third, conducting joint analysis and planning to align approaches that further streamline the process (Huang et al., 2018). Finally, policy analysts recommend creating clear accountability mechanisms, increasing transparency on financial flows and their impact (Huang et al., 2018).

## Developed countries

Migration policies addressing forcibly displaced people coming to developed countries are reviewed here. The Migration Policy Institute examined the US asylum system and offered recommendations, such as an affirmative system policy “based on principles of timeliness and fairness in providing protection, which will, in turn, discourage unfounded claims and deter opportunistic flows” (Meissner, Hipsman, & Aleinikoff, 2018, p. 23). Policy analysts argue that the affirmative system is so responsive to changes because significant adjustments can be achieved through administrative measures already available to decision makers (Meissner et al., 2018, p. 23). The first recommendation is to restore timeliness—the most effective way to deter misuse while advancing fair treatment of those applying for protection (Bipartisan Policy Center, 2019; Meissner et al., 2018). This could be achieved through building out the “last-in, first-out” processing model<sup>59</sup> for new cases, referring positive credible-fear cases to the asylum division rather than immigration courts, streamlining credible-fear screening, and referring likely cancellation-of-removal cases to an alternate decision process (Bipartisan Policy Center, 2019; Meissner et al., 2018). The second recommendation is to mobilize regional cooperation to address regional challenges, which can be achieved by deepening engagement and leadership; reducing forced migration from and among neighboring countries (Meissner et al., 2018). These collaborations should “promote migration-management regimes that include reception, alternatives to detention, effective asylum adjudication systems within the region; potential processing and resettlement ... and durable citizen-security and economic-development solutions” (Meissner et al., 2018, p. 29).

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<sup>59</sup> The “last in, first out” protocol allows USCIS to process new and recently filed cases within three months.

Other policy analysts recommend addressing the causes of forced displacement through diplomacy to counter corruption, human rights abuses and other contributing factors (Hinojosa & Meyer, 2019). Some manageable steps are: (a) Press for strengthening the rule of law, judicial systems, protection of children, women, and indigenous populations; (b) Support reformers and anti-corruption figures, within and outside government, and international anti-corruption mechanisms; (c) Stand up for human, environmental, indigenous, and other rights defenders who are pressing their countries to better protect people; and (d) Insist that governments address security force excesses and continue efforts to strengthen civilian police forces (Hinojosa & Meyer, 2019).

Germany employed several policy levers to try to manage migration and integration challenges associated with asylum seekers and refugees. The cluster asylum processing system was developed to speed up processing times. It promotes efficiency within the system and enables asylum seekers from countries with high protection rates to access integration services while they wait for their claims to be adjudicated (Brücker, Jaschke, & Kosyakova, 2019). The distribution policy was designed to bind asylum seekers to an obligation to stay in an assigned area for three years and therefore reduce segregation and concentration in certain areas (Brücker et al., 2019). Additionally, a set of integration policies has focused on tailoring integration support to the needs of different groups and increasing service providers’ ability to deliver programs at scale. The integration policies focused on access to language training programs, vocational language training, assessments of professional competencies and instruction on topics such as the legal system, culture, and values (Brücker et al., 2019). These asylum seekers and refugees policies “marked improvements ... in refugees’

This protocol is supposed to free up asylum officers to process critical cases that are backlogged.

language skills, personal networks, participation in education and training, and rates of employment” (Brücker et al., 2019, p. 26).

Germany has proven successful in directing asylum and refugee migration into labor migration. The German Western Balkan Labour Migration program is a great example. In 2015, Germany received many applications for asylum from the Western Balkan area; a majority of these asylum seekers did not meet the conditions for protection (Dumont, Chaloff, & Liebig, 2020). After introducing the program, the majority of candidates withdrew their applications, left Germany and re-entered under the new labor migration pathway. The program was the centerpiece of a set of successful interventions to shift flows from the Western Balkans away from the asylum channel, and it showed that a well-designed policy can provide an alternative to use of the asylum system (Dumont et al., 2020).

Other attempts to integrate refugees into labor markets resulted in the Intra-Corporate Transferees (ICTs) program within the EU (Hudson, 2020). This distinct category of workers provide services and skills which cannot be found locally, work for a limited amount of time on relatively high salaries, and positively contribute to the destination country from the economic perspective (Hudson, 2020). Experts believe that ICTs will help the EU reach its development goals in areas such as technology, artificial intelligence and medical advancements (Hudson, 2020).

The two-generation framework is another approach to refugee integration. It was developed by the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) in 2017 and suggests the need to provide for the children of refugees, strengthening the entire family instead of just the individuals (Greenberg, Gelatt, Bolter, Workie, & Charo, 2018). Many US states are implementing programs aligned with the two-generation approach. For example, Michigan and

California have multiple programs providing refugee kids with child care and schooling, including English lessons. Washington and Colorado have taken steps to provide refugee families with mental and physical health examinations. Funding for these programs typically come from local governments and business foundations, but there is still a reliance on government support (Greenberg et al., 2018). A series of recommendations for federal and state governments have been developed by the MPI. First, the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration within the U.S. Department of State should, in consultation with voluntary agencies (such as NGOs and IGOs), review and update the requirements and performance outcome measures for the Reception and Placement Program to establish a two-generation/ whole-family approach to services delivered (Greenberg et al., 2018).

Second, statewide refugee resettlement programs should identify existing two-generation initiatives ongoing within each state’s department responsible for human services to ensure that the refugee resettlement network becomes an active partner in such initiatives (Greenberg et al., 2018). Finally, the resettlement agencies should identify existing best practices among offices and programs reflecting principles of two-generation strategies, and ensure that they are shared across the organization and elevated to the attention of state refugee resettlement programs, both in the state in which they operate and in other states (Greenberg et al., 2018).

It is evident from migration research that some refugees become successfully integrated while others struggle to reach living-wage situations. In one policy brief, Dr. Nibbs’ work described this phenomenon. Her bottom-up, refugee-centric study offered several strategies for successful integration: tuition-supported living-

wage skill training, industry-specific ESL<sup>60</sup>-to-vocation classes, career trajectory guidance, strategic initial job placement, and on-the-job training (Nibbs, 2016). These strategies can facilitate upward mobility, increase refugee capacities, speed up economic integration, improve organizational response, eliminate state aid dependency, fill the long-term needs of today's workforce, and create a more welcoming and empowering environment for newcomers (Nibbs, 2016).s

### *Refugee sponsorship programs*

One exemplar program established within asylum/refugee migration policy is refugee sponsorship program. The refugee sponsorship programs take a variety of forms, while the common element transfers some degree of responsibility (such as identifying and preparing refugees to travel, helping them settle and/or integrating them into a new society) from the government to non-government groups (such as private citizens or nonprofit organizations) (Fratzke, Kainz, Beirens, Dorst, & Bolter, 2019). These programs differ from country to country, but there are certain commonalities among the most successful sponsorship programs, including: (a) interest and support, (b) knowledge, (c) infrastructure and (d) resources (Fratzke et al., 2019).

The need for interest and support of the refugee sponsorship initiatives is critical towards maintaining effective programs that are consistent in delivering proper assistance. However, policy analysts maintain that conclusively handing over responsibility to private institutions creates concerns related to the quality and consistency of the program (Fratzke et al., 2019). Private engagements may be especially advantageous in inciting changes and creating new programs. For instance, the head of the Irish Refugee Protection Programme, in collaboration with the Minister

of Justice and Equality, drove the creation of the Community Sponsorship Ireland pilot program in 2019. Both parties were highly committed to implementing sponsorship in Ireland (Fratzke et al., 2019).

The second key element for a successful refugee sponsorship program is knowledge. A sponsor requires the necessary knowledge in order to function within the environment it wishes to operate in (Fratzke et al., 2019). The concerned parties should consider the necessary policy and legal frameworks to create a sponsorship program.

Additionally, sponsorship programs require infrastructure: "training and ongoing support for sponsors, public services that refugees can access when needed, and clear channels of communication between all parties involved in the resettlement and integration process" (Fratzke et al., 2019, p. 6). In the UK, for instance, the Reset charity was funded by the government to provide training for sponsors. Other examples of infrastructure needs are access to a country's public services for refugees (such as free language classes and employment services) (Fratzke et al., 2019).

A successful refugee sponsorship model also requires the necessary legal and financial means of providing effective and sustainable support. These investments and private funding would be best allocated to support sponsorship of developing information materials and training, the setup and operation of hotlines and central contact points, and creating sponsor networks for emotional support and peer learning (Fratzke et al., 2019).

The role of volunteers and sponsors who offer unique resources to complement the services of professional agencies and case workers should not be underestimated. While sponsors take on responsibility for ensuring that newcomers

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<sup>60</sup> English as a Second Language

achieve certain integration outcomes (such as acquiring stable housing or becoming self-sufficient), volunteers typically carry out discrete tasks or functions (such as teaching English) (Fratzke & Dorst, 2019). Policies with amplified investments in community engagement can lead to increases in refugees' access to individualized, ongoing support, which can further contribute to improved integration outcomes (Fratzke & Dorst, 2019). Several concrete policy recommendations that can contribute to more successful volunteer and sponsorship programs are: (a) creating policy frameworks that allow agencies to engage volunteers or sponsors where they would add the most value; (b) designating funding for community engagement as part of the broader integration or resettlement strategy; and (c) providing a set of learning resources for agencies seeking to engage community members in service provision (Fratzke & Dorst, 2019).

## **Return/Reintegration Policies**

A special place within migration policies is dedicated to return/reintegration policies as they are considered to be some of the most contentious types of migration policy (Newland & Salant, 2018). The manner in which individuals are returned could bear critical financial, humanitarian and development implications for the concerning parties depending on the methods chosen to execute these returns. The broad-ranging spectrum of return voluntariness includes solicited, voluntary, reluctant, pressured, obliged and forced (Newland & Salant, 2018). When considering these returns, policymakers need to realize the complexities that each return migration strategy will bear. Return strategies introduce framework complexities such as: maintaining sovereignty over who enters or stays within territory, a humanitarian obligation to tend to countries facing civil unrest or natural disasters, developmental impacts on the host country as well as migrant country, reintegration assistance for migrants to benefit

returning home countries and a need to maintain a framework of stability and security (Newland & Salant, 2018).

While comprehensive data is limited as far as scale of return practices, some countries maintain records that may be useful in understanding implications of various return/reintegration policies. Large scale returns originating from top ten countries of combined refugee returnees tended to use forcible coercion to get enormous populations of migrants to return, and these programs often maintained few if any frameworks or safeguards (Newland & Salant, 2018). The most promising types of migrant return/ reintegration programs consist of financial incentives and supportive measures (BMZ, 2018). For instance, the European Reintegration Network (ERIN) program provided individualized assistance for job placement, vocational training and referrals to educational, legal and psychological services. The intention of assistance-based programs is that migrants returning back to their home country will stimulate their home economy and add stability through their attained skills, education and business ideas (European Reintegration Network, 2018). While these programs theoretically help reintegrate and improve the economies of the migrant nation, the scale is small and fails to address the underlying structural issues that remain such as lack of economic opportunity, corrupt governments and violent conflicts (Newland & Salant, 2018).

## **Lessons from Migration Policy Briefs**

The broad set of recommendations and lessons from various policy analysts and reports cannot be fully captured within this report. However, reviewing the recent migration policy works revealed several underlying (and thus not always directly highlighted) lessons that emerged.

## **Lesson 1: Cooperation and enhanced partnerships.**

Cooperation and enhanced partnerships between origin and destination countries are of utmost importance (Bipartisan Policy Center, 2019; Blanchard, 2019; Doyle & Sharma, 2017; Hooper & Le Coz, 2020; Hugo, 2013; Khadria, 2017; Newland & Salant, 2018; O’Neil, 2003; Salvo & Barslund, 2020; Selee, Giorguli-Saucedo, Soto, & Masferrer, 2019; Tamas, 2019, 2020). Majority of current migration policies can be considered a “one-sided game, that of the immigration country calling the shots”, where “unilateral top-down policy decisions (are) devoid of willful, empathic or active involvement of the counterpart country or countries” (Khadria, 2017, p. 1). The dichotomy between the two complementary streams involved in migration (emigration and immigration) are often leading to inconsistent, contradictory and paradoxical positions between countries (Khadria, 2017). Even when migration partnerships between origin and destination countries do happen, they often focus on border enforcement and on incentives for countries of origin to prevent irregular migration. Much less is done to “address common concerns of origin countries, such as opening wider access for their nationals to legal migration pathways” (Newland, 2019b, p. 6).

One example of a dialogue between states to curb irregular and illegal migration is the EU’s Mobility Partnerships. They are flexible, non-binding instruments that have a status of political declarations and a purpose of offering possible legal migration opportunities in exchange for fighting irregular migration (Tamas, 2019). Although these partnerships have made a step towards more dialogue and cooperation (by substantially increasing destination countries’ willingness to fund cooperation and make overall investments in origin countries’ development), more needs to be done (Tamas, 2019). Simply discussing things that benefit the destination countries will

not create that bond of mutual trust (Tamas, 2019). Analysts recommend adapting dialogue and cooperation alternatives to specific interests of diverse origin countries, upgrading these cooperation ideas on economic and social development to practice (not just at the rhetorical level), incorporating evidence-based research on drivers of migration and progressing beyond smaller-scale pilot projects (Tamas, 2019).

Another recommendation is to take a regional approach to migration, as broader regional cooperation is vital to comprehensively addressing the various forces driving irregular migration. That means engaging in ways that are mutually beneficial for all countries involved rather than seeking to impose unilateral measures that undermine cooperation (Selee et al., 2019). Additionally, policy analysts recognize that there is a heavy reliance on local governments during migration processes, and an emphasis on cooperation among federal, state, and local governments is needed. For example, local governments are critical in the implementation of changes, recording of data and relaying of information to migrants. Investment in regulations, staff and infrastructure across multiple sectors will benefit migrants and local governments alike (Fratzke & Le Coz, 2019). This will increase the likelihood of local ownership if both parties benefit. Clearly defined coordination structures will make it easier for agencies to enact change and for governments to properly implement protections for migrants.

## **Lesson 2: A need for comprehensive policy that integrates development, migration and foreign policy goals.**

Policy analysts maintain that the solution to current migration crises exists in global negotiations for policies to create sustainable development goals for migrant countries (Clemens & Postel, 2018; Hooper & Le Coz, 2020; Hooper & Newland, 2018; Hugo, 2013;

Newland & Salant, 2018; Salvo & Barslund, 2020; Tamas, 2019, 2020). Thus, it is recommended for destination countries to be focusing less on their own migration policies and looking at opportunities to promote development within origin countries (Tamas, 2019). Negotiations are ongoing to create a sustainable compromise in frameworks to uphold humanitarian needs while allowing security, stability and developmental solutions to counteract the loss of income through the large-scale exit of migrants. Through careful coordination, countries can create policies that ensure greater stability to fix underlying issues and host countries can equip migrants with the resources they need to become productive members of society (Newland & Salant, 2018). One such attempt is the concept of policy coherence for development (PCD) (Tamas, 2020), which incorporates three major goals: advancing shared objectives through synergies, minimizing negative side effects, and preventing policies from working at cross purposes (Hong & Knoll, 2016).

Policies that reduce costs of investments by migrants in their countries are often fruitless if there are not sufficient development opportunities for investments in the origin communities and countries (Hugo, 2013). Examples of policies that tie developmental and migration goals are in Australia and New Zealand, where national development agencies have invested in offering additional skills development opportunities for seasonal workers, with add-on training modules focused on helping migrants develop skills that can be put to use when they return home (Hooper & Le Coz, 2020). Successful integration of development and migration policies lies in “setting mutually agreed goals for cooperation that balance development and migration priorities and in establishing realistic expectations about the likely outcomes and the timeline for results” (Hooper & Newland, 2018, p. 9). The shared common priorities between two policy areas are within interventions in

origin countries that relate to: addressing barriers to economic growth; building resilience; promoting better reintegration outcomes; and facilitating skilled migration (Hooper & Newland, 2018).

It is important to note that by simply increasing aid to developing countries, we will not see less irregular and illegal migration. Quite opposite, economic development in low-income countries typically raises migration (Clemens & Postel, 2018). According to policy analysts that study “root causes” of migration, development aid can “only deter migration if it causes specific large changes in the countries migrants come from and those changes must cause fewer people to move” (Clemens & Postel, 2018, p. 1). There are key lessons for policy makers to consider when integrating development and migration policy goals. First, youth employment programs in poor countries can modestly reduce migration spikes in the short-term (Clemens & Postel, 2018). Second, more information is needed to understand “root causes” of migration. An example of such a step is improved transparency and reporting on relevant aid programming, such as the precedent set by the OECD Creditor Monitoring System reporting of aid projects targeting environmental and gender inequality (Clemens & Postel, 2018). Additionally, rigorous experimentation and evaluation is much needed. An example of such an experiment is the research facilities created under the EU Africa Trust Fund (Clemens & Postel, 2018). Finally, the aid efforts aimed at shaping migration must look beyond deterrence; and agencies should therefore focus on cooperation with migrant-origin countries to shape how migration occurs (Clemens & Postel, 2018).

Some analysts recommend treating foreign policy as a form of migration policy (Clemens & Postel, 2017). As public resources are finite, making decisions where to provide foreign aid are of importance. Scholars argue that

geographical and sectoral targeting of foreign assistance can greatly enhance complementarity with immigration policy (Clemens & Postel, 2017). As an example, they estimated that additional cost-effective investment in regional violence prevention in Central America during the 2011-2016 period could have substantially reduced the suffering and costs associated with unaccompanied child migration (Clemens & Postel, 2017).

### **Lesson 3: Development and execution of information campaigns.**

Prevention and information campaigns in origin countries are successful in reducing irregular and illegal migration (Dumont et al., 2020). Illegal and irregular migrants are often ill-informed and are too easily influenced by rumors that are perpetuated by smuggling networks (Dumont et al., 2020). Debunking these rumors and misinformation can help to reduce the risk that potential migrants are misled by unrealistic representations of life in destination countries. The use of credible sources (such as nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations) can add to the credibility, as migrants often distrust official information (Dumont et al., 2020). Examples of such public information campaigns are the Migrar Informados (Informed Migration) campaign in Mexico, the Échale ganas (Go for it!) campaign in Guatemala, the Conectá con tu futuro (Connect with Your Future) campaign in El Salvador, and the Ponele plan a tu vida (Plan Your Life!) campaign in Honduras. They are focused on “encouraging young people to develop a life plan, be informed about the alternatives to irregular migration and understand the risks it entails” (IOM, 2020).

Some recommendations from policy analysts include highlighting the efforts and positive results occurring within origin countries and promoting confidence in local governance and civic action to support the ongoing efforts towards stability and economic opportunities

(Blanchard, 2019). Additionally, news of security improvements and anti-corruption efforts could be publicized. Some examples of incremental successes within the Northern Triangle Countries are the high level of arrests by the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) and El Salvador’s 30 percent reduction in homicide rates in ten target municipalities since 2015 (Blanchard, 2019). Another example of success is a coordinated effort between the Honduran government and the U.S. Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI), which includes enforcement training, youth employment, and investment in community leadership, which resulted in a cut in homicides by half in some of the most dangerous neighborhoods in San Pedro Sula (Runde, Perkins, & Nealer, 2016).

Information campaigns might also be useful in changing public opinion regarding migration. Currently, the public sees permanent legal relocation as “good” and temporary migration as “bad.” Changing this public opinion will enable policymakers in implementing programs furthering circular migration (Hugo, 2013), which will contribute to safe, orderly and regular migration (the aim of the Global Compact for Migration) and reduce irregular and illegal migration. Efforts to reduce the narrative of migrants as threats are also recommended. Analysts argue that the dehumanizing public rhetoric surrounding those that are fleeing violence in their home countries is prevalent (Blanchard, 2019). Concerted efforts to change perceptions of refugees so that they are seen as rights-holders, contributors, and partners in the development of communities are of importance (Runde, Yayboke, & Milner, 2018).

### **Lesson 4: Replacing illegal and irregular migration with regular migration.**

Policy analysts strongly argue for policies that promote regular and legal migration in an effort

to replace illegal and irregular migration patterns (Khadria, 2017; Newland, 2017; Selee et al., 2019; United Nations, 2018). A mix of strategies can accomplish this goal: expanding existing legal pathways or creating new ones, reforming asylum systems, enhancing border control, and addressing the root causes of migration (Selee et al., 2019). It is impossible to overestimate that the enforcement alone, even if strengthened in both destination and origin countries, will not dissuade irregular migration in a sustainable way (Selee et al., 2019). Enabling mobility is one solution for replacing illegal and irregular migration with regular migration. The ease of travel in and out of the destination country is associated with more circular migration over permanent settlement (Hugo, 2013). Destination countries should focus on encouraging and facilitating circular migration by keeping transaction costs to a minimum (Hugo, 2013).

#### **Lesson 5: Increasing administrative capacity.**

Proper management and governance are key in the migration process. For example, in cases of asylum and refugee migration, it is important for court systems to operate smoothly in order to provide timely and fair decisions (Hinojosa & Meyer, 2019). Reforming the asylum systems will enable timely decision-making that would ensure that those who qualify receive protection quickly and discourage the filing of less robust claims (Selee et al., 2019). Notably, policies that limit access to asylum (such as forcing those seeking asylum to wait in neighboring countries, as the case of the US and Mexico) are likely to backfire by strengthening smuggling networks and encouraging irregular crossings (Selee et al., 2019). Additionally, UNHCR efforts are not enough in addressing asylum and refugee migration issues, and countries (both origin and destination) need to commit their own resources to build up their own refugee agencies (Meyer & Isacson, 2019). Strong oversight and

accountability measures are also of major importance (Meyer & Isacson, 2019).

#### **Lesson 6: Keeping migration policy current and fact-based.**

Governments should pay close attention to migration issues within their countries and update migration policies frequently. Legal and policy frameworks need to focus on the real-life issues that migrants are facing (Noack et al., 2020). For example, current US migration policies are outdated (Bipartisan Policy Center, 2019), as they were designed to reflect a different migration era – the one where most unauthorized immigrants were single, adult men from Mexico (Selee et al., 2019). A current assessment of policy needs will instantly reveal that the US needs to revisit the physical infrastructure for detention centers, career paths within border agencies, and the structure of ports of entry (Selee et al., 2019). These changes would help improve legal transit and commerce while responding more effectively to mixed flows of humanitarian and other migrants, and especially the needs of families and unaccompanied minors (Selee et al., 2019).

Additionally, policy-makers should encourage fact-based migration policy (Blanchard, 2019). As an example, scholars have done extensive research and found that immigration and criminality are not linked in the first generation migrating to the US, but this information is often disregarded (Blanchard, 2019). Instead, the public discourse is centered around the threat of arrival of migrants and connections to violent crime (Blanchard, 2019).

The lack of up-to-date and comparable data on migration has been documented by policy analysts (Salvo & Barslund, 2020). It hinders the ability to make detailed analysis of policy issues, weakens the decision-making process, and, as a result, deteriorates the quality of policy response (Salvo & Barslund, 2020). The goal of collecting and utilizing accurate and disaggregated data to

inform policy is also listed among the objectives of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. A “migration policy scoreboard” has been suggested as a monitoring

framework, which will match the complexity of migration while also accounting for the variations and differences amongst the countries (Salvo & Barslund, 2020, p. 4).

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## CHAPTER 7 | CONCLUSIONS

### Key Elements of the Northern Triangle Migration Narrative

This study sought to provide a more comprehensive perspective on the issue of irregular Northern Triangle migration and its implications towards US policy framing. Using a narrative framework to understand how the US, Mexico, and Northern Triangle nations understand the problems, causes, and perceptions of each other's actions in respect to migration can allow for substantive shifts in behavior toward more cooperative efforts to combat illegal migration and its humanitarian consequences.

Drawing from interview data, policy proposals, and media coverage related to migration, the findings show that the US migration system and its asylum-claim policies are ill-equipped and overwhelmed by the flow of NT migrants. US societal recognition of the complexities surrounding migration have developed slowly and the issue of migration has been detrimentally-politicized.

The analysis of data collected in this report evidences a narrative portrait of Northern Triangle migration as incentivized by gang and

political violence, economic inequality, corruption facilitated in transit by dangerous criminal smuggling networks profiting from stringent enforcement of policies aimed to deter migration carried out by government officials. Taking a narrative view, comprised of scenes, acts, agents, instruments, and purpose, of how migration is understood from the data sources of the study, the following insights are evident:

The scene in which migration occurs appears largely undisputed: over the past two decades, increasing numbers of migrants are embarking on a journey to the US. In doing so, migrants suffer from significant humanitarian abuse, violence, family separation, and loss of life. Upon reaching the US border, US immigration officials are overwhelmed, understaffed, and ill-equipped—lacking the time and resources to handle the volume of people and their needs; driving perceptions, and exacerbating the reality, of migrants being treated in an undignified, inhumane manner.

A key scenic element missing from US considerations are the root causes of the

migration journey, i.e. escaping poverty and violence experienced within their country of origin.

The actions most frequently referenced in respect to migration reveal numerous commonalities across stakeholders and national media systems. The most commonly mentioned “acts” include migrants leaving their homes to travel to the US, the experiences of detentions, deportations, family separations, and violence committed against migrants while on the migratory journey. Unfortunately, these reported acts seemingly dominate narratives on migration, with discussions in the US in particular focused on deterrent actions and enforcement. This action-oriented focus draws attention to the immediate present, while obscuring the longer-term consequences and deeper causes of irregular migration.

While key agents include government agencies, such as US and Mexican immigration officials charged with implementing deportation related policies, only recently has the US begun to realize that NT migrants are the primary agents embarking on the migratory journey. Other emerging agents include criminal organizations, specifically drug cartels, who financially profit and monopolize the routes through Mexico to the US, as well as illegal entry into US territory. There has also been a shift in migrant demographics from single, largely male, Mexican laborers to Central American families; specifically, women and children that blurs clear-cut categorizations. US mentality regarding the changing nature of those migrating has been slow to shift, with larger societal views of immigration holding onto views of migrants as simply Mexicans seeking labor.

Taken together, the largest divergence in US, Mexican, and NT societies’ understanding of migration are underlying push/pull factors leading migrants to come to the US—and the instruments or means by which they do so—leading to a lack of understanding of US migration policies blocking migrant entry. Thus, whereas US discourse on migration has increasingly solidified into a discussion on “border security,” NT and Mexican discourses emphasize the humanitarian need to seek a better life; including economic opportunity, as well as a life free from overt violence.

While the right to protect one’s border has some resonance with Mexican and NT perspectives on migration, the US’s preoccupation with border security is seen as inappropriately criminalizing migration; ignoring the plight of migrants in ways empowering of criminal organizations. A common plotline is that US border enforcement policies work only to push migrants into increasingly dangerous illegal pathways to reach the US. While the migrants are not seen as criminals themselves, the process of migration now inherently involves close contact with criminal organizations, human smugglers, and life-threatening circumstances. The relational linkage of migration, and migrants, to harrowing criminal enterprise helps fuel demonizing rhetoric and negatively impacts support for US policies aimed at humanitarian relief. Consequently, US officials, and their actions, are described as treating migrants in an undignified manner; robbing migrants of their humanity. As noted previously, many potential interviewees contacted for this study refused participation; citing distrust and disgust with the US Department of Homeland Security as their reasoning.

## Opportunities for US-led Policy Narratives on Migration

Despite grim presentations of migration and its processes, there are tangible actions US officials can take to reframe the broader narratives concerning Northern Triangle migration around longer-term solutions and visions. The data shows the US has significant capacity for moral leadership and the resources to enact change in more efficacious manners, if so chosen.

In sum, US policy narratives should focus on the common motivations of migrants, as well as those of transit and destination countries. A commonality across the data is the desire to stem the destabilizing effects of migration. Societies, at their core, strive to provide conditions for individuals to live prosperous lives and to avoid inhumane treatment of those seeking prosperity. Stories framing migratory acts as illegal or focused on US deterrence policies spiral into conflict-laden binaries and should be avoided. Such presentations conflate criminality and migration in ways that neglect NT and Mexican perspectives on US policies and push antagonistic frames of migrants as illegal, unwanted, and burdensome to societies.

Furthermore, offering narratives that educate audiences on the motivations for, and processes deleterious to, migration—crippling violence, corruption, failing institutions, lack of land access, climate change, rampant criminal enterprises of human smuggling, economic disparities, lack of opportunities, overwhelmed border resources, dated asylum-seeking processes, inadequate assimilation infrastructure—can provide a common starting point undergirding the overarching purpose of migration policy. With a common outlined purpose, policy narratives can shift from insular concerns to cooperative goals of burden-sharing across nations.

More specifically, the findings from our study suggest the following approaches to US

narrative presentation of migration from the Northern Triangle to include:

### **Employing messages that explain how US policies address the root causes of migration.**

- ① Outline push/pull factors such as violence and instability, corruption, degraded government capacities, economic issues. Vocal stances against corruption from US leaders are important.
- ② Describe how policies can create pockets of stability across NT and Mexico; particularly meaningful focuses are indigenous empowerment (land access, direct involvement in planning of relief and assistance efforts, skill & trade development) and cooperative partnering with NGOs already offering services and assistance to targeted areas.
- ③ Recognize that current US policies and restrictions incentivize criminal cartel control of human smuggling to the US which have weakened anti-corruption efforts in the NT and eroded confidence in cooperative solutions.

### **Reclaim moral high ground through transcendent narratives of multilateral cooperation.**

- ① US rhetoric on migration should adjust toward describing humanitarian efforts, both at the border and in transit-origin countries, rather than focusing on criminality and the desperate acts of migrants.
- ② Recognize that US security-based rhetoric emphasizing restrictions and deterrence efforts allows human smugglers and cartels to spread disinformation that creates surges in crossing attempts.

- 🌐 Present migration as an international issue of combating corruption and criminal organizations.
- 🌐 Use rhetoric that ingratiates active regional and international NGOs, as well as other states capable of burden-sharing (i.e. Canada, Costa Rica, Panama).

### **Re-characterize migrants and avoid language criminalizing migration.**

- 🌐 Humanize migrants by describing their plight as one in search of basic human dignity and safety.
- 🌐 Capitalize on terminology already meaningful within migrant communities, such as “New American.”
- 🌐 Re-contextualize migration by describing its historical roots and recognize it as a naturally-occurring, cyclical human phenomenon unalterable by defensive solutions alone to reduce fear of migration.
- 🌐 Highlight the contributions and entrepreneurial initiatives of migrants and migrant communities in the US and transit countries.

### **Provide narrative messaging clarifying the US migration processes.**

- 🌐 Reframe US migration process as a transparent, rule of law approach emphasizing fairness. Migrants are misinformed and unprepared when seeking asylum; resulting in further case backlogs, overrun detention facilities, and incentivizing the use of human smugglers. Explaining asylum rules and investing in partnerships with civil society actors and multilateral institutions already aiding asylum seekers can help mitigate problems.
- 🌐 Explain the adjudication processes in ways that individuals can prepare and facilitate proof of identity. Clear

adjudication guidelines give migrants who are turned away a sense of fairness and dignity.

- 🌐 Open pathways for asylum-seekers to receive an explanation of the process and to present their case for asylum in their native language.
- 🌐 Recognize that a lack of trained social workers along with underfunded, overcrowded US detention facilities undermines faith in legal immigration processes and asylum seeking; perpetuating narratives promoting illegal migration through human smugglers and criminal organizations.
- 🌐 Recognize that US information campaigns must continuously evolve to reflect the dynamic nature of immigration. Migrants focus largely on positive exemplars; inconsistent and unclear US policies foster false hopes. Instead, informational campaigns explaining qualifications for asylum can provide transparency to set realistic expectations, specifically by linking such efforts with transnational institutions and civil society actors to leverage existing networks and boost messaging credibility.

### **Avoid politicizing the issue of migration.**

- 🌐 Avoid emotionally charged terms demonizing or criminalizing migration; such rhetoric polarizes US society and draws attention to actions deterring migration, rather than those addressing root causes and associated humanitarian issues.
- 🌐 Narrative themes like “fortress America” or “migrants as criminals” or “stealing of US jobs” present wedge issues undermining US ability to enact policies and make investments addressing the root causes of migration.

## **Demonstrate help to those already here.**

- 🌐 Foster greater appreciation for migrants within the US and provide visible backing of reform measures needed to address US system vocational and documentation-oriented barriers (e.g. driver's license, bank account) that marginalize migrants or force them into the shadows of society. Reducing the negative stigmas surrounding migration can foster novel solutions to problems, as more parties are willing to engage in the discussion.
- 🌐 Create discussions that weave community partners together with migrants to offer localized vocational training and opportunities.
- 🌐 Interview data and media reports both suggest migrants face difficulties when assimilating in the US.

How a problem is understood, or a situation defined, implicates the conceivable solutions open for pursuit. In this sense, how we talk about migration can, over time, reorient actions and outcomes. By considering the perspective of others in relation to one's own, we open up the possibility for change. Outlining a narrative perspective of how US, NT, and Mexican audiences make sense of transnational migration from the NT emphasizes the communicative dynamics of migration policies, offering a broad picture from which to begin comprehending scope. Having such a perspective is a first step toward shifting how US agencies talk about migration, both in external messages as well as in formulating policies that enable meaningful cooperative solutions.



## APPENDIX A | INTERVIEW QUESTION LISTS

These are the sample semi-structured interview question lists used within this study.

### INTERVIEW SCRIPT – Policy Specialists

1. Can you please describe, from your perspective, the overall nature and scope of the challenges presented by migration coming from the Northern Triangle (NT) to the US?
  - a. This question is intended to allow the respondent to discuss the perceived severity of migration in terms of the number of people in transit, the challenges presented to Mexico, the US, and NT governments (collectively and/or independently) in their responses, as well as the challenges presented to citizens of Mexico, the US, and NT (collectively and/or independently).
    - i. Are the challenges presented existential crises; if so, for whom?
    - ii. How daunting in scope are the challenges faced?
2. If asked to tell an origin story of the current migration phenomenon seen from the Northern Triangle, how would you explain the conditions that have led us to the current state of affairs?
  - a. This question is intended to allow the respondent to cover what he/she sees as critical watershed moments related to specific policies, international relations, political histories, etc... that help to contextualize the nature and scope outlined from the previous question.
3. If you had the power to fix any problem associated with your entire experience of migration instantly, what would it be and why? What would be the most practical real-world means/tool for solving that problem in your estimation?
  - a. Particular attention to perspectives explaining how consequences are rippled across systems and related to other experiences through the migration process can be drilled down on here. Drawing out particularly economical solutions if possible. This should also give insight into the policy specialist's personal hopes for particular solutions and why those particular solutions are seen as workable.
4. Please describe, from your vantage point, what you believe to be relevant political solutions to better managing migration between states?
  - a. Detailing experiences with various migration protocols and bottlenecks; detail visions/practicality of regional political unity.
5. Please describe the role you believe the US has to play in relation to migration and the larger region. Please explain why.

- a. Draw impacts of US policies in mitigating/amplifying challenges, as well as insights on what cooperative, regionally-managed migration might look like from their perspective.
6. Can you tell us of useful examples of cooperation and partnerships between countries as it relates to migration practices?
  - a. This is intended to allow the respondent to detail best practices from areas around the world and specific region they have familiarity with?
7. What are your thoughts on integrating development and migration policies?
  - a. What are the pros and cons of aligning policy objectives? Are there successful examples you can share?
8. What are the best practices for cooperation between destination countries and migrants themselves?
9. Have you seen successes in prevention and information campaigns in origin countries that have proven to be successful in reducing irregular and illegal migration? If so, what are the keys to success of such campaigns?
10. From your experience are there any words, technical terms or phrases used to describe migration that leads to conflict or misunderstanding among US policy makers and officials, migrants, or foreign governments/officials?
11. Are there any terms, phrasing, or cultural indicators you see as important to expressing values that you think are conducive to building cooperation and understanding among migrants, US officials, and foreign officials?
  - a. The goal with the last two questions is to try and understand if there is any approach to language, cultural exchange/appreciation, or exact terminology that might make dialogue and exchange of ideas/information more easily transferred between migrants, policy makers, and/or government officials.

### **INTERVIEW SCRIPT - Migrants**

1. Can you please describe the place that you call home and what your life was like there?
  - a. This question is intended as a reflection on lifestyle & the various social roles/functions performed; it is meant to draw out comparisons and contrasts on various pros and cons seen in the society; it is meant to give insight into how attached/integrated the person feels to that society.
2. Looking back now, at what moment did it first strike you that in your life you might decide to undertake migration & how did you go about planning between then and now?
  - a. This question is intended to draw out catalysts behind migration, the urgencies & prompts of those catalysts, as well as cultivate a sense from where information on how to best undertake migration comes from. It should also provide a sense of preparedness for the migrant to navigate challenges and changes to migration routes/policies/enforcement tactics. Elaboration on why migration was taken this moment, and/or previous attempts undertaken, should be drawn out in the questioning.
3. Please discuss what you feel you have been the most prepared for as part of the migration journey, and what you feel you have been the least prepared for.
  - a. This question should draw out how the person stays connected to information on the migration process and how well expectations from that information match the experience. Significant detail should be given to the least prepared items. Consequences of the lack of preparation, both at individual and system levels should be explored.

4. Are there any particular aspects of the migration journey that government, local leaders, and/or communities manage well? Are there others managed particularly poorly? What distinguishes the two?
  - a. This is meant to give their specific perspective on macro system management in relation to things like education opportunity, language learning, resources/provision access, protection, aid in reaching destination. A further aspect would extend in to whether or not the person felt particularly welcomed along the route.
5. If you had the power to fix any problem associated with your entire experience of migration instantly, what would it be and why? What would be the most practical real-world means/tool for solving that problem in your estimation?
  - a. Particular attention to perspectives explaining how consequences are rippled across systems and related to other experiences through the migration process can be drilled down on here. Drawing out particularly economical solutions if possible. This should also give insight into the migrant's personal motivations for the journey.
6. Do you have skills that could have been put to good use in the communities you have traveled through? What are those skills and why do you believe they could have been valuable.
  - a. This question should draw out the disconnect between possessing a talent and not putting it to use in a community that might have offered stability. Did the reasons relate to legal restrictions, lack of skill/venue, specificity of desired destination, fear, etc...
7. Please describe how you feel migrants are impacted by the politics surrounding migration; are there obvious political solutions to better manage migration between states in your opinion?
  - a. Detailing experiences with various migration protocols and bottlenecks. The other aspect of this question should detail visions of regional political unity.
8. Please describe the role you believe the US has to play in relation to migration and the larger region. Please explain why.
  - a. Draw out sentiment toward the US, as well as insights on what cooperative, regionally-managed migration might look like from their perspective.
9. If you could voice one thing to the US government and its leadership, what would that be?

### **INTERVIEW SCRIPT – Agents/Volunteers**

1. Can you please describe the various aspects and roles of your current job? What do you believe to be your primary function?
  - a. This question is intended as a reflection on lifestyle & the various social roles/functions performed; it is meant to draw out comparisons and contrasts on various pros and cons seen in the job; it is meant to give insight into how well utilized the person feels.
2. What made you decide to become a law enforcement agent/volunteer?
  - a. This question is intended to draw out the virtues associated with role performance as an exploration of the notion of service. How does the person idealize the outcomes of their actions?
3. Please discuss what you feel you have been the most prepared for as an agent/volunteer, and what you feel you have been the least prepared for.
  - a. This question should draw out how training and training expectations match the experience. Significant detail should be given to the least prepared items. Consequences of the lack of preparation, both at individual and system levels should be explored.

4. Are there any particular aspects of the migration journey that government, local leaders, and/or communities manage well? Are there others managed particularly poorly? What distinguishes the two?
  - a. This is meant to give their specific perspective on macro system management in relation to things like education opportunity, language learning, resources/provision access, protection, aid in reaching destination. A further aspect would extend in to whether or not the person felt any animosity or empathy towards migrants.
5. If you had the power to fix any problem associated with your entire experience of migration instantly, what would it be and why? What would be the most practical real-world means/tool for solving that problem in your estimation?
  - a. Particular attention to perspectives explaining how consequences are rippled across systems and related to other experiences through the migration process can be drilled down on here. Drawing out particularly economical solutions if possible. This should also give insight into the agent's personal motivations for particular solutions.
6. Do you believe there are particular skills or training that would be valuable to you in doing your job? What are those skills and why do you believe they could be valuable.
  - a. This question should draw out examples of problems in which this recommended training would prove valuable in respect to migration; attention on ripple effects across systems.
7. Please describe how you are impacted by the politics surrounding migration; are there obvious political solutions to better manage migration between states in your opinion?
  - a. Detailing experiences with various migration protocols and bottlenecks. The other aspect of this question should detail visions of regional political unity.
8. Please describe the role you believe the US has to play in relation to migration and the larger region. Please explain why.
  - a. Draw out sentiment toward the US, as well as insights on what cooperative, regionally-managed migration might look like from their perspective.
9. If you could voice one thing to the US government and its leadership, what would that be?



## APPENDIX B | MEXICAN MEDIA PROFILE

Mexican media narratives shift significantly between the first two time periods and the last two. At first, Mexican narratives narrowly discuss migration in terms of Mexicans seeking low-paying jobs in the US, with significant discussion on the policy dimension of immigration within the context of the US-Mexican bilateral relationship, albeit with some transnational dimensions, highlighting the structural drivers of migration as primarily economic. However, as the Mexican economy improves, the narrative shifts to CA traveling through Mexico to the US in search for economic opportunity while fleeing poor conditions in their country of origin. Mexican authorities are consistently reported as enacting immigration policy, and over time, able to do so more humanely. However, as US politicians debate immigration reform by focusing on

### **Mexico Narrative Elements: Top 75 POS (KWIC)**

#### *Summary*

Analysis of the Top 75 POS in Mexican media demonstrates a clear shift in content over time regarding narratives covering migration. Originally, the narrative on migration is narrowly focused on Mexican migrants seeking work in the US to earn wages to send back to their families and US-Mexican political

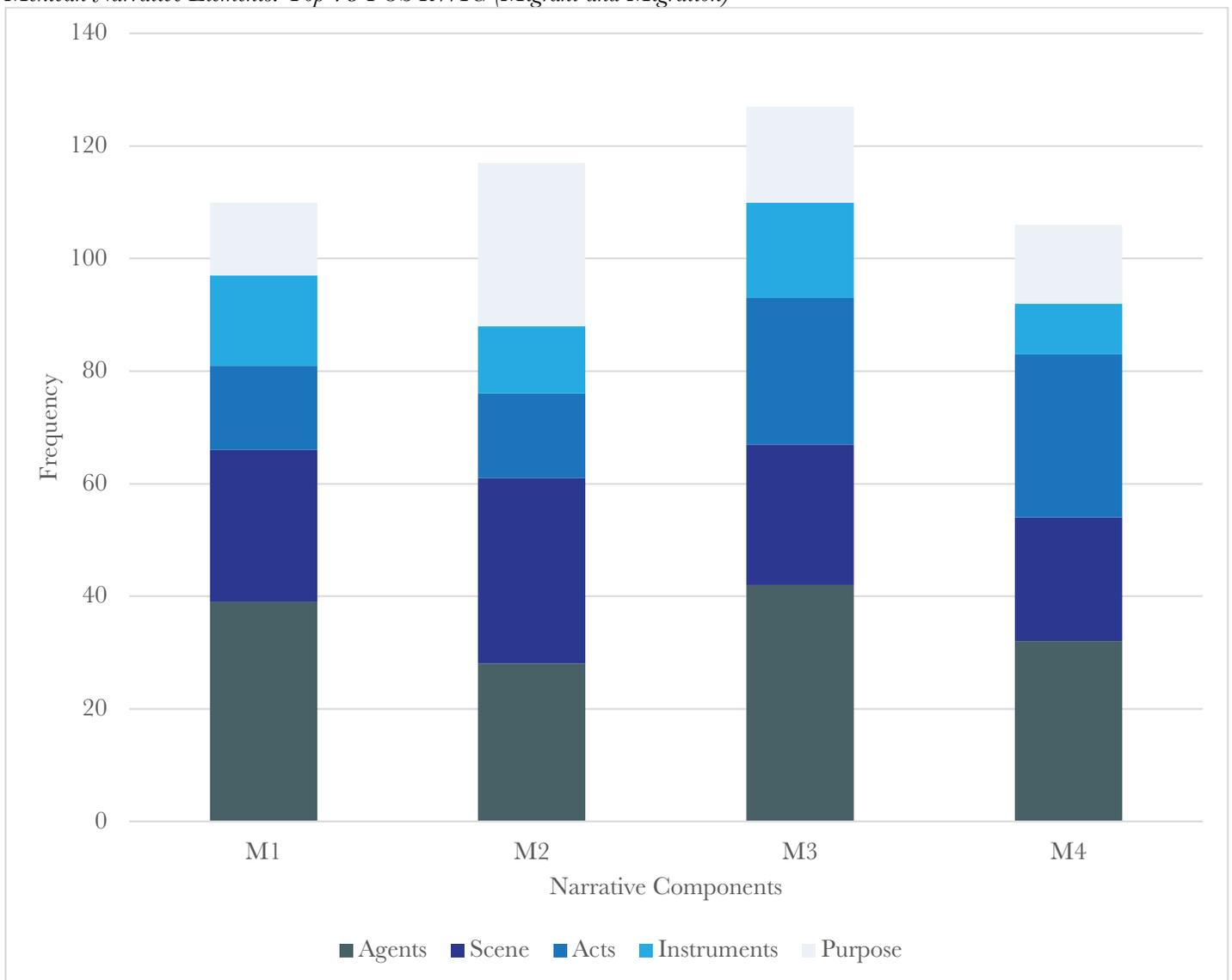
strengthening the border and making it harder for migrants to enter the US, CA migration continues to rise and leads to a substantial increase in organized crime and human trafficking. This results in a growing humanitarian crisis as well as destabilizing Mexican society with migrants vulnerable to acts of violence and inhumane treatment, thereby feeding into value claims regarding US policy as xenophobic and racist; with calls for treating migrants with dignity and respect. Thus, emphasis is increasingly placed on acts committed against migrants, while the scene or context of immigration, including the rising number of CA migrants, failed political negotiations on immigration reform and an increasingly dangerous journey whereby migrants are vulnerable to organized crime and human rights violations.

relations related to immigration reform to guest-worker programs. However, after time periods 1 and 2, Mexican migrants are decreasingly discussed, replaced by CA migrants traveling to the US. With the rise of CA migrants, more focus is placed on migrants' journey, specifically its perils, with migrant children and families suffering widespread abuse; including death. Mexican government authorities are frequently discussed as enforcing immigration policies, as well as greater

discussions on various attempts by the US to strengthen its border. Increased border security measures lead to migrants seeking more dangerous paths, including the rise of human traffickers and organized crime in Mexico. This results in more reporting of acts in the form of human rights abuses committed against migrants. Migrants' motivation to enter the US, then, broadens from economic reasons to include seeking a better life. Finally, the substantial rise in migration leads to reports of

overcrowded detention facilities and migrants living in poor conditions as they travel to the US; with US policies viewed as anti-humanitarian. The evolving nature of narratives on migration is seen by the ebb and flow of different narrative elements covered, with only one clear pattern across time periods being increased reporting on acts; including enforcement mechanisms carried out on migrants and abuses suffered from migrants during their journey.

Chart B.1  
*Mexican Narrative Elements: Top 75 POS KWIC (Migrant and Migration)*



## *Mexico Time Period 1 (M1)*

The primary agents within Mexican media narratives originally focus on undocumented and illegal immigrants from Mexico, but also include some mentioning of CA migrants; as well as US and Mexican government authorities. Mexican media narratives focus

singularly on the economic reasons for migration, with migrants crossing the US border in increasing numbers to find work in the US and send remittances to support their families in Mexico.

## *Mexico Time Period 1 (M1)*

**Key agents:** Undocumented and illegal Mexican migrants/immigrants (also referred to as people or groups); United States and Mexico, government authorities (INM, Felipe de Jesus Preciado Coronado, regional delegates, police), President Fox; Central Americans, civil organizations, polleros)

**Scene:** Migrants crossing border, states, area; increases in numbers; Journey (desert, dangerous, face poor conditions and heat)

**Acts:** Crossing, sending/receiving (remittances), work

**Instrument:** worker programs, remittances; bilateral meetings, cooperation, agreements; police involvement

**Purpose:** Work (economic opportunities to support family in Mexico); provide protection or opportunities for migrants

## *Mexico Time Period 2 (M2)*

Mexican media narratives in time period 2 continue to revolve around the economic motives of migration, but widen their discussion to include larger numbers of US and Mexican governmental institutions and agencies enforcing migration laws as well as increased discussion of CA migrants and undocumented children. The scene now includes vivid depictions of migrants' journey, now seen as risky and dangerous leading to migrant deaths

with more migrants having already established themselves and living in the US. While key acts, instruments, and goals remain finding jobs or work in the US to send remittances back to families in Mexico, migrants now also experience significant abuse, especially at the hands of employers in the US. Migrants' motivations to enter the US now also include seeking a better life and human rights.

## *Mexico Time Period 2 (M2)*

**Key agents:** Undocumented (immigrant, migrant, workers, people, children, Central Americans, illegal); Government (US and Mexican authorities, federal, municipal, US Senate, National Guard, Mexican National Institute of Migration); Presidents Fox and Bush; state, federal, and municipal authorities

**Scene:** Description of journey (area, desert, rural, cities, through Mexico); locations (California, Texas, Milwaukee); journey as risky, dangerous, deaths; migrants already established, existing, living, working in US/abroad; US/Mexico borders

**Acts:** sending remittances, working, abuse, death; human trafficking, violations, labor rights; Migratory flow/cross borders; ongoing studies/reports

**Instrument:** remittances, work, programs: temporary work, visas; construction of border wall; policies to stop illegal migratory flows; investment

**Purpose:** economic and social development, better life, financial support for families, jobs/work, opportunity, human rights; American Dream; protect human rights; national security

### *Mexico Time Period 3 (M3)*

Time period 3 narratives continue to mention undocumented migrants from Mexico and the CA as well as a variety of Mexican and US government authorities enforcing migration laws, but now prominently include human traffickers and organized crime; as well as civil society and human rights organizations. The scene in which migration occurs continues to include descriptions of the journey and its difficulties, but now focuses on increasing flows of CAs coming through Mexico as conditions decline in CA countries. Acts now focus on human rights violations and crimes committed against migrants, including kidnappings,

extortion, and rape as well as enforcement mechanisms such as detentions, deportations, and family separations. Migrants' purpose for migration no longer revolves singularly on economic or employment related reasons, but still includes more broad searching for a better life, supporting families at home, and pursuit of the American Dream; as well as securing human rights, dignity, and respect while US authorities view migration as a national security issue.

### *Mexico Time Period 3 (M3)*

**Key agents:** Undocumented (immigrant, migrant, people, young/children, Central Americans, foreigner) Government (US and Mexican authorities, El Salvador federal, state, municipal, police, agents, Mexican National Institute of Migration, ministries); human traffickers, organized crime, gangs; Civil society organizations, NGOs, Human Rights Commission, IACHR

**Scene:** US/Mexico border; Description of journey: through Mexico (Central Americans), difficulty of journey, increase flows, declining conditions in Central America, migratory stations

**Acts:** Crimes committed against migrants (kidnapping, extortion, rape); Human rights violations (trafficking, gang violence, sexual violence, organized crime); Detain, deport of migrants; Sheltering and support of migrants

**Instrument:** Deterrence instruments and government policies (detaining, enforcement of laws, family separation, wall); Shelters/stations for migrants; Trains; Remittances

**Purpose:** American dream; new life; protect/defend human rights, dignity, respect; supporting family and children; national security

### *Mexico Time Period 4 (M4)*

Time period 4 narratives continue to include US and Mexican government authorities and institutions as key agents, albeit with President Trump specifically mentioned; with criminal groups and civil society actors remaining. The scene in which migration occurs, however, turns more negative with emphasis on overcrowded shelters and migrants facing poor living conditions. The journey remains characterized as risky and difficult, with a shift towards CA migrants' traversing rivers and crossing borders. Acts narrow to migrants crossing and their arrival at borders along with deterrence policies

including child separation and arrests. There is also a greater focus on the need to protect migrants requiring humanitarian care, medical treatment, food, and shelter. The goal for migrants still includes seeking work to support their families, but focuses on migrants seeking asylum and protection stemming from the political situation in the home countries. Thus, CA migrants increasingly use caravans, busses, and shelters on their journey through Mexico to the US with US policies seen as racist, xenophobic, and anti-humanitarian; especially as the US steps-up child separation policies and places migrants in cages.

## *Mexico Time Period 4 (M4)*

**Key agents:** Government (Mexican, US, President Trump, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Federal, National Guard, state and local and municipal authorities, National Migration Institute); Central/Latin American (migrants, families, countries); Criminal groups; Civil society

**Scene:** Overcrowded shelters; poor living conditions (violence, economic, vulnerable, trafficking); journey (risk, difficult); Central American and US borders; Journey (leaving CA, arriving in Mexico; borders, rivers)

**Acts:** Migration (crossing, arrival, entering, come); deterrence policies (child separation, arrests); protection of migrants (support, humanitarian care, medical, food, shelter, refuge)

**Instrument:** Caravans, busses; Policies (US) to stem flow (child separation, caging, arrests); shelters; Central American development; economic (remittance, visas)

**Purpose:** Asylum, seeking (refuge, protection, political situation, life, family, work, health provisions); reaching the US; Human rights; US policies (racist, xenophobic, anti-humanitarian); shelters providing protection and aid; supporting families (remittance, support)

## Topic Modeling of Mexican News Reports on Migration

### *Summary of shifts in Mexican topic modeling*

Similarities within the topic modeling clusters in Mexican media include consistent discussion of the causes of migration being primarily economic, but also social factors such as education, health care, and security; with migrants traveling to the US in search for a better life. US-Mexican cooperation is consistently described as needed to solve migration issues—including recurring calls for immigration policy reform—with articles frequently reporting upon Mexican authorities’ enforcement of migration laws and policies. Finally, migrants are consistently reported as victims of abuse, whether on their migration journey or when living in the US. Shifts in the topic modeling clusters include Mexican authorities’ ability to treat migrants humanly, declines in Mexican migration to the US replaced by CA migration as Mexico’s economy improves relative to the US while NT nations continue to struggle politically and economically. Finally, US strengthening of its

border in conjunction with new anti-immigration enforcement mechanisms results in continued migration albeit more dangerous means to do so, with migrants suffering additional humanitarian abuses with further calls for treating migrants with dignity and respect.

### *Summary (Mexico Time Period 1)*

Migration narratives revolve around efforts by the Mexican government to enforce migration laws and reform policies combating migration. US-Mexico cooperation viewed as necessary for effectively combating migration from Mexico and CA into the US. American society remains prejudiced against Mexican migrants. Migration caused by economic and social factors with migrants traveling in search for a better life. Migration policy needs to recognize migrants’ human dignity and provide fair treatment.

Table B.1

### *Mexico Time Period 1 Clusters*

#### # Description of Cluster Themes

- 1 Coordination of Mexican government agencies taking steps to prevent undocumented migrant flows: Large number of Central Americans travelling through Mexico necessitating mitigation strategies that include keeping the “human side in mind” aiming to limit migrant discomfort and deportations to place of origin. Notes of North American migrants treated differently than CA. Mexican citizens are sometimes victims of CA migration. Challenges to Mexican mitigation strategies include conflict among bureaucracies and some corruption issues.
- 2 Mexico considering reforms to policies aimed at combating migration: Reports of larger numbers of CA migrants coming passing through Mexico to US, with reporting of numerous arrests made. Calls for more resources to strengthen Mexico’s borders and more preventive actions and campaigns to prevent migration to the US. New policies described as needed to include a focus on guaranteeing respect and human rights of migrants.

- 3 Mexican government's inability to prevent migration and safeguard human dignity of migrants: Mexican government suffers from corruption which impedes its ability to manage migration in a humane manner. Migrants described as drowning in rivers, burned in deserts, freezing in mountain ranges, and suffocating or mutilated on railroads. Migrants deceived by Border Patrol and coyotes. Migrants looking for a better life, but are returned to Mexico isolated, wounded, hungry, humiliated, and abused all without any recourse; while Americans discriminate against them.
- 4 Difficulties of US-Mexican agency collaboration on migration policy: US failed to request Mexico to participate in operation "International Crossroads" which aimed to detain illegal immigrants and "polleros" or coyotes. Mexican government downplayed its lack of involvement, suggesting some domestic backlash in the US not including Mexico.
- 5 Evidence of US-Mexican cooperation and understanding in addressing migration: Visit by US ambassador and discussions of US and Mexican government officials reporting upon common concerns and reflection of US-Mexico relationship. US is described as concerned for fighting migration at its border while understanding that Mexicans have the right to leave their country, but not the right to enter another country. CA migration hurts Mexican society, threatening its sovereignty and corrupting government officials through bribery. Concerns that the US believes all migrants are Mexican. Recognition that amnesty is a sensitive issue to US public while also affirming that US public opinion towards Mexican immigrants in the US is becoming more positive. Drivers of migration explained as resulting from political oppression, instability, and violence, but also demands for cheap labor from the US. Solutions to migration requires policies recognizing human dignity and fair treatment of migrants and their unbearable social conditions and valid aspirations for a better life. Solutions must come from the collective responsibility of US and Mexico in addressing causes. Policies should not approach migration from cold, rigid tactics of prosecutions.
- 6 Hope for US-Mexico close relations: US and Mexico described as having the potential to be "allies" in fight against drug trafficking, advancement of human rights and democracy, stemming flow of migrants. Mutual cooperation can enable both countries to prosper, although American prejudices characterizing all Mexicans as corrupt, drug dealers, or threats to US security undermine cooperation. US needs to approach the issue from principles of self-determination and national sovereignty.
- 7 Global migration concerns: Mexican agencies coordinating and planning ways to handle migration issues broadly, including the need to support Mexican communities abroad, need for transparency, and anti-globalization protests (negative characterizations of World Economic Forum, IMF etc).
- 8 Elian Gonzales controversy—balanced reporting of US and Cuban interests: Informational reports on the legal status of this case. President Clinton reported as taking personal action. US is recognized for rescuing and able to take care for Elian, with reports suggesting the US is genuinely concerned for him. Nonetheless, Elian's return to Cuba symbolizes a moral and legal issue.

Summary (Mexico Time Period 2)

Migration narratives revolve primarily around US-Mexican relations with Mexico unable to defend migrant rights, coordinate with the US on policies mitigating migration, reduce the wage gap between the US and Mexico which leads to Mexican migration to the US. US immigration policies are flawed with US politicians focusing on border security which fails to stop migration, simply pushing migrants

to take more dangerous routes to cross the border. Mexican authorities actively enforce migration laws, including the arrest of migrants, coyotes, and gangs; but new legislation is needed to incentivize non-Mexican migrants to return to their countries of origin while providing protection of migrant workers, and families.

Chart B.2  
Mexico Time Period 2 Cluster Frequencies

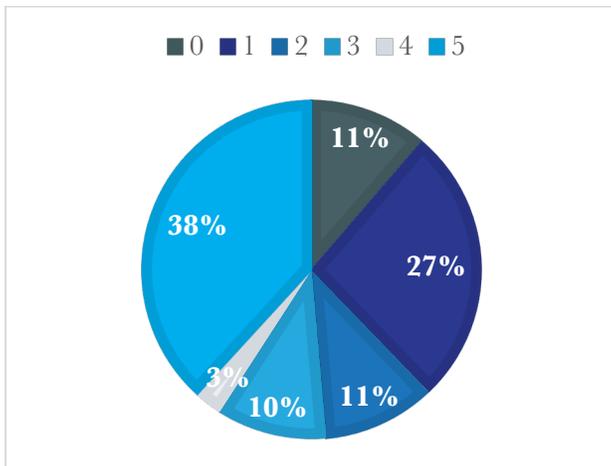


Chart B.3  
Mexico Time Period 2

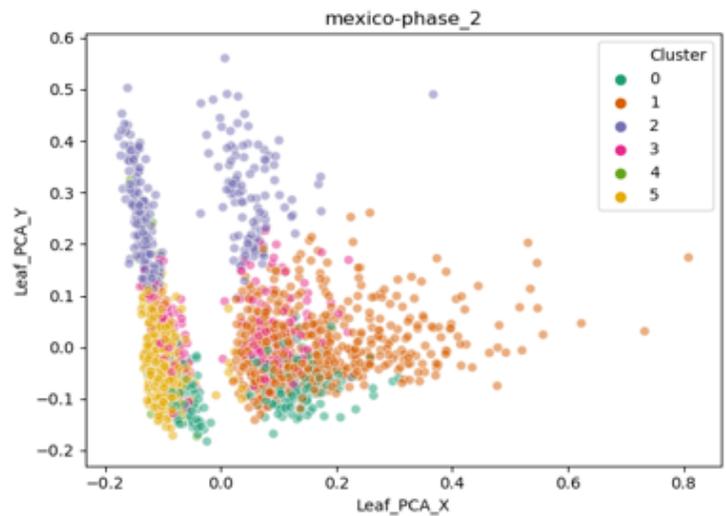


Table B.2  
Mexico Time Period 2 Clusters

| # | %  | Description of Cluster Themes   |
|---|----|---|
| 0 | 11 | INM arresting and charging migrants, including “polleros,” gangs, Chinese and South Korean. Emphasis placed on the legal justifications and trial of migrants. INM working in concert with multiple Mexican state and local authorities and courts.   |
| 1 | 27 | Changing demographic characteristics of Mexican migration into the US. Enhanced economic and educational affordances in Mexico have shifted Mexican migrants into the US as they become increasingly educated. Now, young Mexican people and women are migrating to the US. Mexican migrants moving to new areas in the US, such as New York and Raleigh. |

|   |    |  |
|---|----|--|
| 2 | 11 | Failure of the US government to pass immigration reform. President Bush promised immigration reform, but Congressional Republicans blocked the bill. Republicans called the bill amnesty, want to criminalize undocumented workers, and strengthen border security. Key elements of the bill include providing temporary employment visas for migrants filling jobs Americans don't want and legalization of undocumented immigrants currently in the US.  |
| 3 | 10 | US investment in surveillance technology, additional fencing, and more border agents along the Arizona border resulting in Mexican migrants traversing increasingly inhospitable areas still left unguarded, resulting in record deaths and dehydration. US volunteers—The Minute Men—monitoring the border and “hunting” migrants. Migrants will continue to come according to the labor needs of the US economy.   |
| 4 | 3  | Migration groups in Mexico and the US criticizing Mexican government for its inability to protect undocumented immigrants traveling to the US, as well as Latin American governments. Migrants will continue to cross the border, whether risking crossing over the desert or using polleros regardless of US immigration reform, which only benefits skilled labor. Migration is related to human development, specifically poverty.  |
| 5 | 38 | Criticism of Mexican authorities for being servile to US immigration interests and unable to defend Mexican interests. Mexico failed to reduce the wage gap between the two countries, which is attributed as the primary cause for migration. Mexican government must support legislation providing incentives for migrants to return to country of origin, as well as mitigating undocumented immigrants from third countries and OTMs (other than Mexican), including cooperation with the US on extradition. Mexico needs to take a “frontal attack” on human trafficking gangs. Mexico must protect migrant workers and families and eliminate child labor within Mexico. |

*Summary (Mexico Time Period 3)*

Migration narratives revolve around decreases in Mexican migrants and large increases in CA migrants. Mexican immigrants hitting all-time lows as increased employment, health, and education opportunities in Mexico in combination with enforcement efforts decrease the relative benefit of migrating to the US. Nonetheless, CA migration through Mexico to the US is rising substantially due to CA countries' severely poor economic conditions.

Despite significant arrests and enforcement of migration policies by Mexico and the US, as well as the dangers of journeying to the US, CA migrants are committed to migrating to the US as they would rather die on the journey than starve at home. CA migrants are vulnerable populations and face significant violence in route and in Mexico. US-Mexican cooperation needed in comprehensively developing responses that guarantee security and respect for the dignity of migrants.

Chart B.4  
*Mexico Time Period 3 Cluster Frequencies*

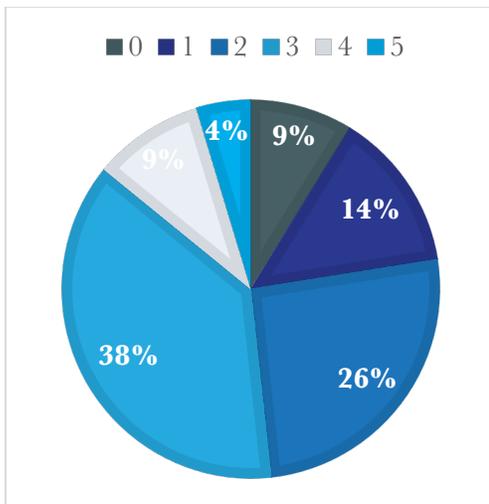


Chart B.5  
*Mexico Time Period 3*

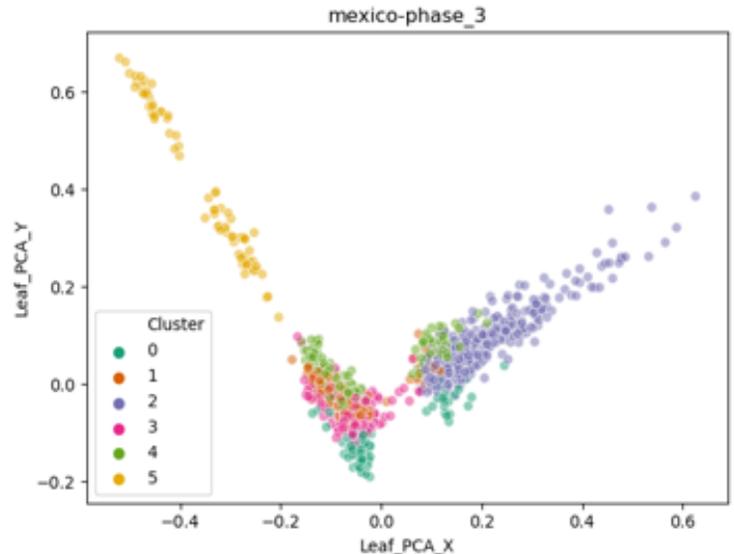


Table B.3  
*Mexico Time Period 3 Clusters*

| # | % | Description of Cluster Themes   |
|---|---|---|
| 0 | 9 | Obama administration leading bipartisan effort at comprehensive immigration reform, although “classic” differences between Republicans and Democrats remain. The reform would include measures for a path to citizenship, border security, and labor controls designed to verify status of migrant workers. House Republicans blocking the measure, dominated by a small, narrow minded group not interested in governing, but sabotaging the measure. Immigration reform will benefit the US economy and reduce federal debt. Latinos viewed as a key voting constituency for democrats and republicans. |

|   |    |  |
|---|----|--|
| 1 | 14 | CA migrants traveling through Mexico via train and stopping at shelters in Mexico. Conflict and violence emerging between Mexican citizens and CA migrants at migrant shelters leading to shutdown of shelters. Mexican residents remain hostile towards undocumented people, viewing shelters as causing safety concerns. Catholic Diocese running migrant shelters call for government support to protect and defend migrants' human rights. Civil society and activists claim Mexican authorities have criminalized and delegitimize defending of migrant rights. Migrants viewed as a vulnerable population, facing violence. Migrants committed to remaining in shelter locations, despite Mexican authorities relocation efforts, because of the dangerous journey. Families and children have no other place to sleep and lack basic goods. |
| 2 | 26 | Increasing flow of migration to Mexico, including from CA and Mexican return migration. Return migration up 200 percent caused by increasing deportations and forced return, loss of jobs, and deterioration of living conditions due to the US economic recession. CA migration caused by bad economic conditions, with CA migrants preferring to die on the journey to the US rather than starve at home. Activists calling for new laws preventing criminalization of migration.  |
| 3 | 38 | Increased employment, health, and education, in addition to improvements in law enforcement leading to less Mexican migration to the US with Mexican immigrants even considering returning to Mexico. US-Mexico relations need to focus on economy, investment, and job creation while Mexican government needs to demonstrate commitment to fighting crime and structural issues leading to violence generated by crime. US-Mexican cooperation must move beyond simple security concerns and include comprehensive political responses guaranteeing security and respect for dignity of migrants. US and Mexico cooperation on migration via repatriation points. Thousands of CA migrants requesting transit through Mexico to the US.  |
| 4 | 9  | Multiple Mexican authorities cooperating on arresting numerous instances of undocumented CA migrants and human traffickers in Mexico. Mexican authorities successfully placed migrants in custody, including repatriation. However, Mexico's INM reports it is impossible for the US to deport 300,000 foreigners to Mexico each year, especially as more and more CA migrants attempt to transit through Mexico to the US.  |
| 5 | 5  | INM returning CA migrants to their place of origin. Migrants face perils at home, lacking opportunities to have a decent life. Mexican civil society organizations pressuring Mexican government to protect and respect the life and integrity of migrants. Need for policies in favor of migrants, including broader dialogue beyond just security to include education.  |

Summary (Mexico Time Period 4)

Migration narratives revolve around US-Mexico relations, specifically Trump and Obrador’s meeting with Trump’s policies having negative repercussions on migration and ignoring the root causes of migration. Trump strong-arming Obrador to take additional steps preventing CA migration into the US. Mexico

actively enforcing migration policies, but maintains that migrants need to be treated with respect, have their human rights protected, and support asylum. Harsher policies failing to address the social and economic conditions prompting CA migration. CA migrants face humanitarian and human rights violations with child separation policies viewed as inhumane.

Chart B.6  
Mexico Time Period 4 Cluster Frequencies

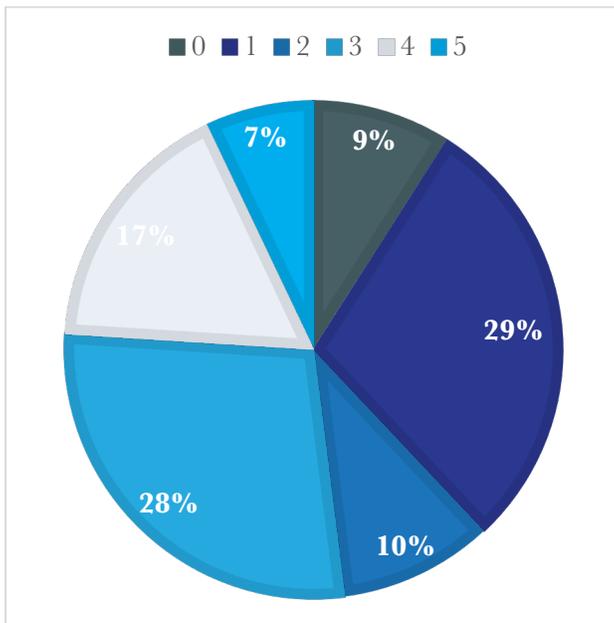


Chart B.7  
Mexico Time Period 4

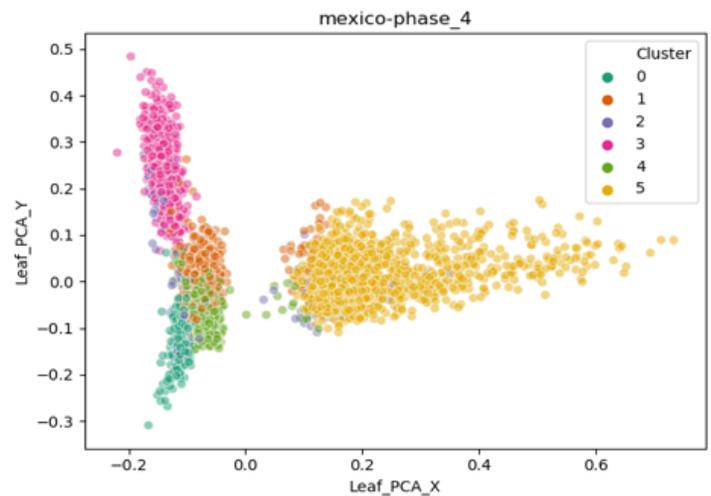


Table B.4  
Mexico Time Period 4 Clusters

| # | %  | Description of Cluster Themes  |
|---|----|--|
| 0 | 7  | Migration is a recurring problem despite deportations from the US and Mexico (INM). Migrants are peaceful, but receive little support.   |
| 1 | 19 | CA migrants travel via caravan across Mexico because legal requests for travel are too slow or are rejected, prompting arrest and deportation by INM. INM enforces immigration law, coordinated among multiple levels of government, including the US. |

|   |    |  |
|---|----|--|
| 2 | 5  | Mexican President Manuel Obrador discussing with US President Trump on US-Mexican relations, including managing migration. Mexico does not have a migration crisis, but CA does. General agreement regarding cooperative relations with the US to enforce stricter immigration policies; however, Mexico emphasizes addressing root causes in addition to reinforcing border security. Mexico maintains the need to treat migrants with respect, protect them, apply law without violating human rights, and supporting asylum.  |
| 3 | 11 | Migrants increasingly travel through Mexico via caravans, including families and unaccompanied minors. INM provides humanitarian support, including increased deployment of Child Protection Officers, albeit participating in child separation policies.  |
| 4 | 32 | Trump's migration policies receive mixed reviews: Obrador's support of Trump policies comes from Mexico's weaker bargaining position related to economic relations with the US. However, while no one questions Trump's right to protect US security, Trump's policies have negative repercussions on migrants (no longer reporting crimes, attending medical appointments, or registering for social programs). Some in Mexico claim Obrador should support migrants. Trump calls undocumented immigrants criminals, uses fear tactics, and leads to humanitarian issues. Religious leaders call for greater support for migrants and policy addressing the root causes of CA migration given that Mexican migration has decreased. |
| 5 | 25 | CA social issues prompting migration. Migrants from CA disappear on journey. Sympathy for migrants while criticizing Trump's use of migrant children as shields. Need for migration policy reform.   |



## APPENDIX C | NORTHERN TRIANGLE MEDIA PROFILE

NT media reporting focuses on the structural drivers of migration, takes a transnational lens in describing the problem and actors associated with it, and views migration as a right in contrast to later depictions of the Trump administration's policies perceived as criminalizing migration. Thus, NT media presents a balanced mix of value and policy claims related to migration. Structural drivers remain consistent throughout the reporting, emphasizing CA migrants fleeing their country of origin due to poverty and concerns over their safety, albeit with growing emphasis on the latter over time prompting more asylum related claims in period 4. Despite the manifold and severe abuses migrants face on their journey, migrants nonetheless view the travel as worth the risk to pursue a better life in the US. These structural drivers, in addition to Mexico constituting the route to travel to the US, marks migration as a transnational issue. This includes international human rights organizations and civil society actors helping aid migrants, albeit with further calls for support to help defend and protect migrants who are seen as a vulnerable population. Because of the poor conditions migrants seek to escape in their host nations, migration is viewed as a right. US policies seen as not addressing the causes of migration and

instead critiqued as criminalizing migration and punishing migrants. Anticipation of further cracking down on migration only serves to motivate migrants to take the journey, with migrants repeatedly attempting the journey despite its risks.

### **NT Narrative Elements: Top 75 POS (KWIC)**

#### *Summary*

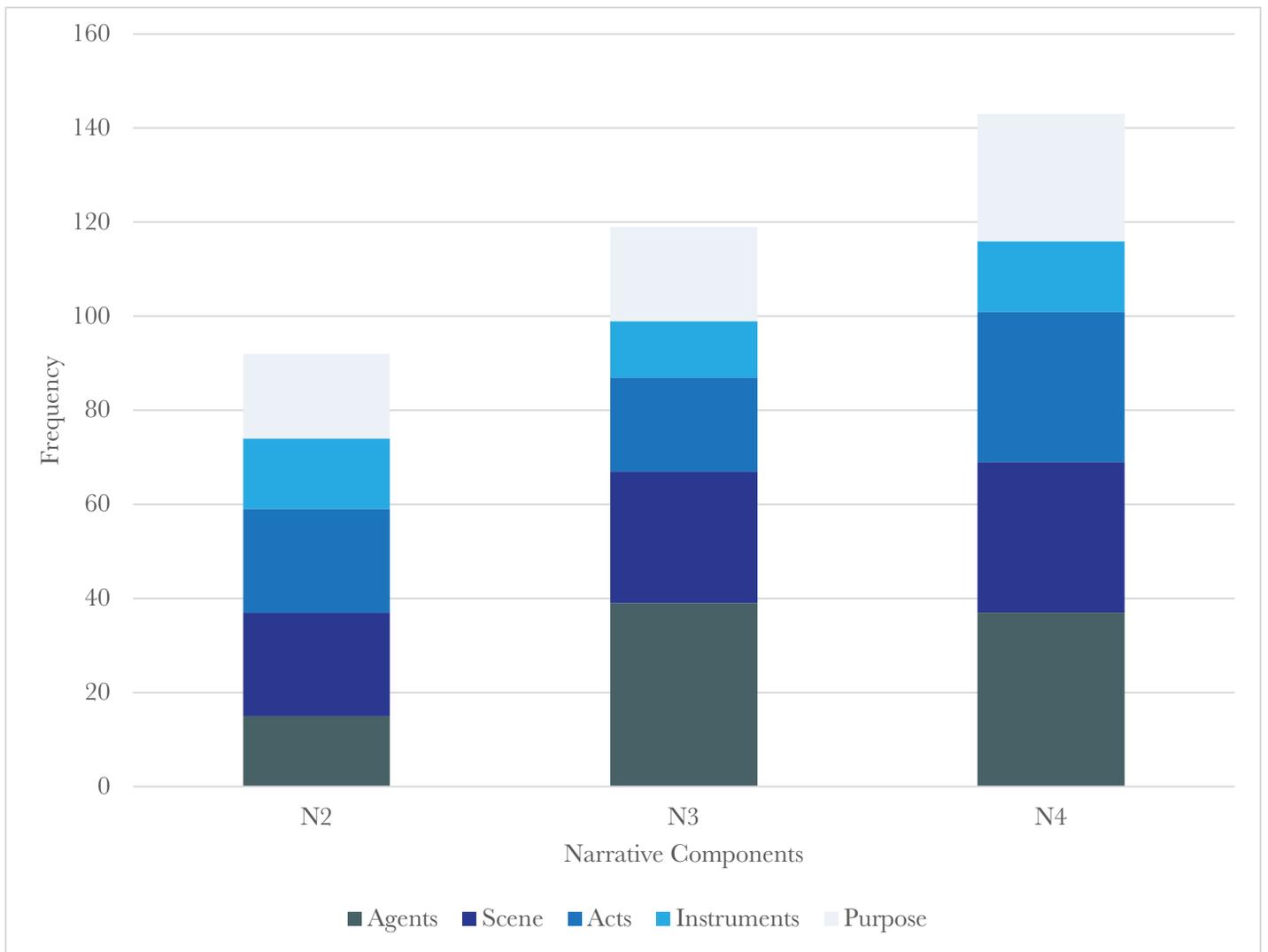
Analysis of the Top 75 POS in NT media demonstrates continuity in the overarching narrative plotline, albeit applied to increasingly specific contexts and events. The focus is primarily on NT migrants travelling to the US to escape violence and poverty in their home nation; in search for a better life. The journey is always dangerous, with CA migrants falling victim to various types of abuse; while also subject to deportations, raids, and family separations. Migration is consistently discussed in a transnational frame, including discussion of civil society groups, government leaders in the US, CA, and Mexico; with calls for aid and support for CA people in their country of origin and on their journey to the US. However, as the figure below demonstrates, these narrative

themes encompass more specific types of abuse, events, and agents over time. Themes include the growing role of Mexican criminal organizations, record levels of migration (specifically through Mexican territory and by migrant children and families), greater variety of human rights abuses experienced during their journey, and more specific focus on the Trump administration’s migration policies.

With a rise in more specific concerns faced by migrants, more calls are made for treating

migrants with human dignity, defending and protecting migrants’ human rights, and migrant claims for asylum in the US. Thus, NT media coverage increasingly focuses on purposes for migration over time (like that of asylum) and acts reporting on the abuses migrants face, as well as policy actions taken against them. Depiction of the scene or context of migration, such as where it is occurring and the rise in migration more broadly, is consistently and frequently reported over time; while discussion of the instruments by which migration can be mitigated is less frequently discussed.

Chart C.1  
*NT Narrative Elements: Top 75 POS KWIC (Migrant and Migration)*



## *NT Time Period 2 (NT2)*

NT media narratives originally center around transnational organizations, government authorities, and civil society as the primary agents; as well as congressional leaders in the US and CA. Thus, the scene, or context, in which migration occurs is placed within a transnational frame as well as focusing on the poor living conditions migrants find themselves in; with calls for aid and development programs for CA countries, as well as social support for migrants. The migration journey is described as dangerous with migrants traveling through CA

into Mexico to enter the US. Key acts include a variety of government authorities enforcing migration policies such as separating families, conducting raids on illegal migrants, and building fences or walls. These policies are characterized as controversial, even xenophobic, with the goal of stoking fear. Additional themes include CA migrants leaving their family and countries to go learn English and immigrate to the US in pursuit of economic opportunities and a better life. The US is viewed as a land of opportunity whereby migrants may be able to escape the cycle of violence in their home nations.

## *NT Time Period 2 (NT2)*

**Key agents:** Whole (world, organization, country); Authorities (federal, US, local); US (House, Congress, Senate, government); Guatemalans (community, migrant, foreign ministry); Latin/Central American (citizens, civil society, congress, pan/union); people (young, live, leave)

**Scene:** Poor living conditions (subhuman, lacking legal rights, few resources, little attention, poor economy, conflict); Settlement locations; US politics (democrats/republicans don't know/understand; sympathize); Transnational perspectives, flows; locations (Latin American, Central America, Mexico border, Caribbean, Arizona, United States, south, Florida, New York, New Jersey, metropolitan, country); Journey (dangerous, unfortunate, destination, American, attempt, continue, illegally); private (school, residence, sector, space)

**Acts:** Enforcement (raids, wall, return home, family separation, laws, convict); Racist (public debate, political statements, controversial, xenophobic policies, places); Leave (people, country, immigrant, family, society, move abroad); Go (learn English, immigrant); conflict, family; Receive (family, society, send, approval; country); New (create, security, status, citizen, legislation, life); Ask (needs, wants, stop, migration); Exercise (right, caution).

**Instrument:** Legal (authorization, resident, status, service, health); Policies (migrant and trade, create, registration process, public, health); work (visa, temporary, agricultural, permit); Aid (development, program, legal, provide, social, immigration, offer); Remittance; asylum  
Enforcement: Gigantic (fence, wall), raids (fear);

**Purpose:** Basic freedoms, necessities, social justice; Seek better opportunities, health, America viewed as land of opportunity, different culture; Family reunification; Better life (normalize, risk, cycle); US citizenship; health (good, public, insurance, mental, problem); economic development

### *NT Time Period 3 (NT3)*

Time period 3 narratives continue to include government agencies and legislatures in CA and US as key agents as well as transnational organizations and civil society actors, but now also include Mexican cartels and criminal organizations, activists, and a greater emphasis on migrants as young, including women and children. The location in which migration occurs becomes more specific, with emphasis on NT nations and Mexican territory, albeit still including the US southern border; with record numbers of migrants and deportations

occurring. Migrants' purpose for migration still includes economic and family related reasons, including working in the US and sending back remittances as well as more broadly seeking a better life. More emphasis, however, is placed on migrants' desire for human rights, dignity, security, and respect; especially as news media report migrants experiencing human rights violations and falling victim to human trafficking. Enforcement actions are still prevalently mentioned, such as deportations, but more discussion turns to supporting reform of immigration laws and policies.

### *NT Time Period 3 (NT3)*

**Key agents:** Government (Guatemalan, Mexican, federal, authority, police, executive, legislative, president, Central America, Latin America, Puerto Rico, official, country); US (Obama, Congress, federal); People (young, undocumented); Population (Puerto Rican, immigrant/migrant); Mexican cartels; Organization (migrant, criminal, civil rights, Hispanic, international, community, non-governmental, UN, INM); Family (women, young, immigrant, pregnant, child); Community (immigrant, migrant, Hispanic, Latino); National (council, institute, coalition, registry, civil, center, association, directorate, institute, commission, advisory, secretary, legislative); activists; Ministry (Foreign, Public)

**Scene:** Locations (Central America, Latin, SA, Mexican territory, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, US, country, metropolitan/rural/urban); borders (south, Mexico, north, Arizona, Texas, New York); record increases of (immigrant, undocumented, deport, year, case, economic situation; numbers, deportation, deportee); living conditions

**Acts:** Human right violations; human trafficking; Family (remittance, separate); Work; travel, reach, try, enter, deport, cross (United States, illegally, Mexico); leave (country, people); border crossing, increase; country (leave, enter, illegally, return, receive, live); Deport (immigrant, Guatemalans, people, more, migrant, immigration); reside, reform; know better; crime (organized, commit)

**Instrument:** Civil rights; Remittance; Enforcement (state, law, police, authorities, law, policy); Commissions (migrant, rights, legislative, human, president, national); Travel (alone, illegally, minor, train, trafficking); temporary work permits, visas; deportation; policy (immigration, new, law, measure)

**Purpose:** Human rights, dignity, security, respect, stop crime and rights violations; Support family; Secure, control, strengthen border; Work together; Support (immigration, reform, migrant, comprehensive, Obama); Find way (different, better); opportunity (better, job, employment); economic development

## *NT Time Period 4 (NT4)*

Time period 4 narratives list similar agents as Time period 3 (government agencies, migrant children, families, minors; civil society actors, US congressional leaders), but also focus on US President Donald Trump and the National Guard. The context of migration remains largely the same with record increases in migration cases from NT nations and migration occurring primarily along the US southern border. However, description of migrants' journey is less prevalent with migration

characterized as irregular. Migrants' motivations remain economic and to seek out a better life. Migrants are repeatedly attempting to enter the US, but now include considerable discussion of asylum and further calls for protecting migrants' human rights, dignity, and security. Actions still include human trafficking, deportation, detention, and family separation. Further calls for civil society actors and government agencies to advocate, defend, and protect migrants as well as securing their right to due process.

## *NT Time Period 4 (NT4)*

**Key agents:** Government (Guatemalan, Mexican, Honduran, El Salvadoran, American, federal, local, authority, Central American); Group (criminal, migrant, people, family); Migrants (Guatemalan, women, Mexican, child, Honduran, Salvadoran, caravan, Central American); Young people (child, parent, family, adolescent, women, immigrant, minor); President (American, Trump, Obama, Sanchez, Guatemalan, Lopez, Biden, Salvadoran, Obrador, Honduran); US/America (president, government, authority, official, Trump, Secretary, Congress, Caribbean); Organizations associated with Migration (national, directorate, international, Guatemalan, IOM, director, ACLU, civil society, INM); National (guard, police, council, registry, agent); Northern Triangle

**Scene:** Record increases in migration, cases, child, people, undocumented, family; Territory/border (Guatemalan, Mexican; Southern border—US, Mexico, Chiapas, California, Central America, triangle); Situation (irregular, economic, immigration, difficult, political, social, structural, vulnerable, legal, experience); Migratory flow (leave, enter, return, come, cross, seek, reach arrive, origin country); crisis (humanitarian, migration, order, economic, political, refugee)

**Acts:** Human trafficking; migrants rights (violated, abuse, dignity, respect); Family (reunification, separation, remittance, child, migrant); Minor/child (travel, arrive, separate, deport, detain); Enter, cross, reach, try, stop, travel, return (migrant, child, family, asylum, voluntarily, forcibly), arrive, come, leave (southern border, Mexico, US, illegally, alone, minor, irregular, caravan); Leave (Honduras, Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, country, people, young); Deport (Guatemalans); detain (migrant, immigrant, child, undocumented); Ask (Trump, US, congress, government).

**Instrument:** Caravans; US (policy, law, citizenship); Receive (asylum, remittance); Unaccompanied; civil society (advocate, defend, protect—migrants); Due process; Policy (immigration, tolerance, anti-immigration/immigrant, separation, family, border, President Donald Trump, America/US); national cooperation/agreements/meetings (sign, Guatemala, trade, US, Mexico, Guatemala, bilateral); deportation

**Purpose:** American dream; asylum; human (dignity, security, respect); rights (human, migrant, defender, respect, guarantee, protect, advocate); Life (better, improve, save, quality, risk, dignified, lose, decent); migrants take (advantage, action, refuge, child); national security; generate/promote economic and social development/opportunity; stop (illegal/irregular migration, poverty); escape/flee violence and gangs

## Topic Modeling of NT News Reports on Migration

### Summary of shifts in NT topic modeling

Consistent within the topic modeling clusters are NT media discussions emphasizing the structural causes of migration whereby poor living conditions in NT nations, including economic and quality of life, lead migrants to travel to the US in pursuit of a better life. Migration is thus viewed transnationally and as a right, incorporating NT, US, and Mexican governments and agents, as well as civil society actors and international organizations. Migrants are consistently described as victims of abuse, both at home and on their journey to the US. However, shifts in topics include discussion moving away from migration for solely economic benefits, such as sending remittances home, to migrants deciding to settle in the US and Mexico, most significantly due to long wait times for the US court system to adjudicate their cases. Despite harsher immigration

policies from the Trump administration, which NT media denounces as criminalizing migration, migrants remain committed to leaving their country of origin with larger numbers of migrants further overwhelming immigration authorities in the US.

### Summary (NT Time Period 2)

Migration narratives primarily revolve around poor conditions in migrants' country of origin coupled with economic opportunities in the US; marking migration as a transnational issue. Migrants are thus motivated to endure harassment, discrimination, and threats to life in pursuit of a better life in the US. The primary driver of migration is economic, with migrants working in the US to send back remittances to support families and purchase basic necessities. The US is criticized for demonizing immigrants, criminalizing migration, and hurting migrant families; with US immigration reform emphasizing border security and temporary worker agreements.

Chart C.2  
NT Time Period 2 Cluster Frequencies

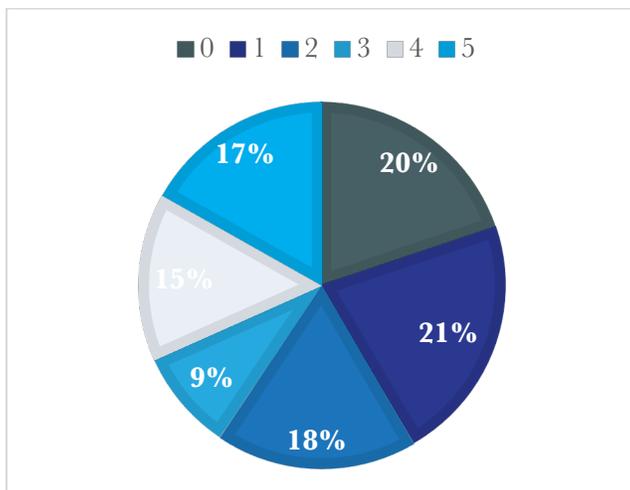


Chart C.3  
NT Time Period 2

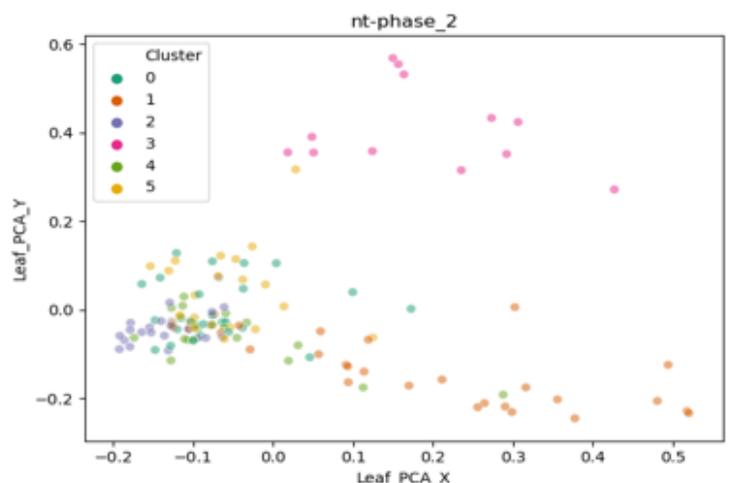


Table C.1

*NT Time Period 2 Clusters*

| # | %  | Description of Cluster Themes   |
|---|----|---|
| 0 | 20 | Migration is not a choice, but forced upon migrants convinced their country's economic situation is unable to fulfill their legitimate aspirations to live in better conditions. Thus, migrants come to the US because of its need for low price labor with families venturing across deserts and experiencing harassment to seek a better future. The US only discusses immigration during elections and carries out mass deportations and raids on workplaces placing people in precarious legal situations.  |
| 1 | 22 | Discussion of back and forth political negotiations among Democrats and Republicans in Congress and President Bush's White House regarding immigration reform, resulting in the bill failing to move forward. Key issues include making English the national language, temporary worker program for undocumented immigrants, and concerns over amnesty granted. Democrats and Republicans reached some agreement on establishing a merit system for obtaining residence based primarily on labor market demands followed by education, command of English, and family ties. Hispanic groups main concern includes family reunification of immigrants inside and outside of the US.  |
| 2 | 18 | Over 100,000 migrants returned to their country of origin amidst record setting migration expected to continue rising. Migrants travel to the US in order to send badly needed remittances to families back home with remittances used to pay for food, clothing, shelter, transportation, and other basic necessities. Migrants are victims of thieves, coyotes, and police officers. Catholic Church provides migrants with food, shelter, and medicine, while other organizations monitor and protect migrants' human rights. Increased funding for immigration agents reduces organized crime and contributes to the successful apprehension and return of migrants to their country of origin. New policies state migrants travelling without permission lose right to enter the US again.       |
| 3 | 9  | Discussions on US immigration reform legislation—emphasizing border security, including more walls, agents, and security perimeters, needing to come before temporary worker agreement. Other immigration reform issues include temporary worker program allows guests to work in US for six years with workers returning to country of origin every two years; increased sanctions against companies hiring undocumented immigrants; and questions over efficacy of establishing English as national language. Immigrants viewed as important contributors to the US economy while US politicians exhibit resentment towards workers doing jobs in the US that no one else wants or can do with the US failing to recognize the positive elements of immigration, only highlighted negative aspects. |
| 4 | 15 | Criticisms of the US demonizing immigrants, discriminating against them, destroying families through deportation and raids, and criminalizing them unfairly for simply leaving their family and land in search of a better standard of living while significantly contributing to the US economy. Description of proposed US immigration reform and pathway to permanent residence permit with head of family required to return home to the country of origin within eight years, pay a fine of \$5,000, demonstrate command of English, and pass a criminal background check.   |

- 5 17 Discussion of the transnational nature of migration resulting from capital and labor flows centering on the implications towards Puerto Rico and the Caribbean with migrants coming from Latin America. Human trafficking poses problems requiring public policy and intervention tools to protect children as well as migrants causing brain drain. Immigration system should be restructured to include a merit system considering educational level, skills, and command of English.

Summary (NT Time Period 3)

Migration narratives revolve around CA migrants caught in the US legal system where they suffer from inhumane treatment and are left vulnerable and scared. CA migrants leave their country of origin and travel to the US out of desire for dignity and a better life. CA migrants remain committed to traveling to the

US despite harsh treatment and victimization during the journey and at the hand of US migration authorities. US migration authorities and its legal system are overwhelmed by the flow of migration, lacking the resources to humanely manage migrants and migrant families and adjudicate their cases in a timely manner. Civil society groups challenge US migration policies.

Chart C.4  
NT Time Period 3 Cluster Frequencies

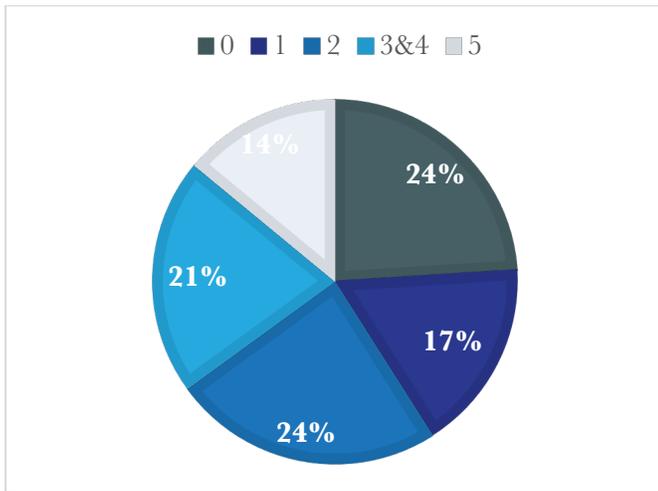


Chart C.5  
NT Time Period 3

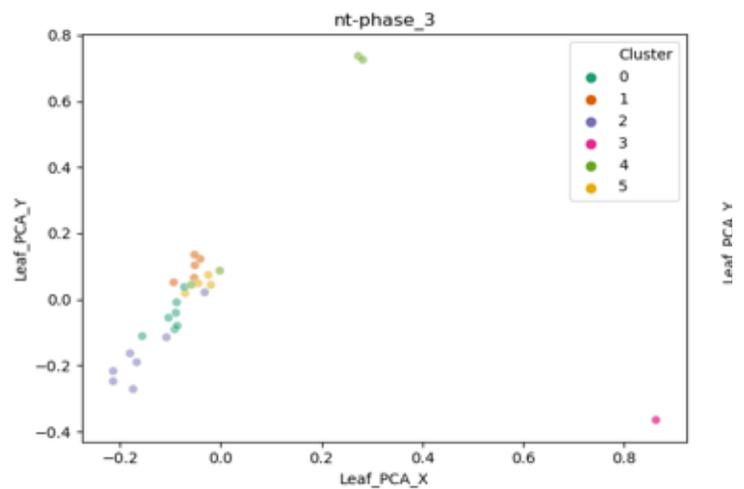


Table C.2  
NT Time Period 3 Clusters

| # | %  | Description of Cluster Themes   |
|---|----|---|
| 0 | 24 | Mexican and CA migrants caught in the US legal system with courts litigating parts of US immigration law. While awaiting deportation and legal process, migrants are left vulnerable, scared, with little food, clothes, diapers, and supplies. Focus on female migrants with heartbreaking scenes of migrants anxiously waiting processing at overcrowded Greyhound bus stops. |
| 1 | 17 | Civil society and religious groups calling into question legal issues associated with Obama administration’s immigration laws as well as and treatment of migrants from Guatemalan officials. Civil society groups are suing the US government for illegally detaining people by their immigration status. Treatment of young migrant men by Guatemalan officials resulted      |

|       |    |  |
|-------|----|--|
|       |    | in his death, with calls for investigation. Pope Francis calls for countries to facilitate movement of immigrants and avoid trafficking.   |
| 2     | 24 | Hundreds of undocumented CA immigrants being arrested in Arizona and Texas with ICE and US Border Patrol overwhelmed and without the resources to detain and deport the large number of migrants, especially families with children. Lack of resources and preparation, including limited number of Border Patrol agents, causing US officials to doubt the efficacy of US immigration strategy. Migrants have 15 days to handle their cases with ICE putting migrants on return flights. Migrants treated inhumanely, causing them to get sick and die.   |
| 3 & 4 | 21 | A movie depicting teenage immigrant travelers on a train to the US won nine awards at the 56 <sup>th</sup> Ariel Awards for Mexican cinema. The movie highlights the sadness and suffering of many migrants while celebrating Mexican pride. The movie tells the story of people who are looking for a dream and along the way encounter the cruelty of those who want to extort, violate, or even kill them. The characters in the movie start from the lowest positions in society, make indescribable sacrifices, and eventually reach positions of respect and productivity unobtainable if they stayed home. The movie calls for reflection and understanding for what it means to migrate and change places where one lives and works. The production team dedicated the film to immigrants and asked authorities to improve migrants. |
| 5     | 14 | CA migrates out of desire for dignity and value for life. Despite dangers and little success rate, nonetheless, young people are determined to migrate. CA faces the problem of young unemployment which demoralizes and alienates them from society. Migrants are victims of globalization and indifference, with their situation exposing them to dangers such as human trafficking, forced labor, and slavery. However, CA should reflect on what they lose from migration, specifically their relations with friends and family and not only search for material benefit provided by migration.  |

Summary (NT Time Period 4)

Migration narratives revolve around discussion of its structural causes in contrast to the Trump administration’s hardened migration policies leading only to more migration and more dangerous paths. Migration is a transnational issue requiring multinational cooperation in partnership with civil society partners, both in combating inhumane treatment of migrants during their journey and in promoting economic and social policies mitigating the desire for migration. Migration is caused by

economic issues, including poverty, unemployment, and misery in the home nation with migrants leaving in search for a better life. The Trump administration’s hardened anti-migration policies viewed as criminalizing migration, results in inhumane treatment of migrants, and is judged illegal both by US courts and the ACLU. Mexico prepares for CA migrants by setting up refuge stations with migrants stopping in Mexico to begin their process of applying for humanitarian visas in the US.

Chart C.6  
NT Time Period 4 Cluster Frequencies

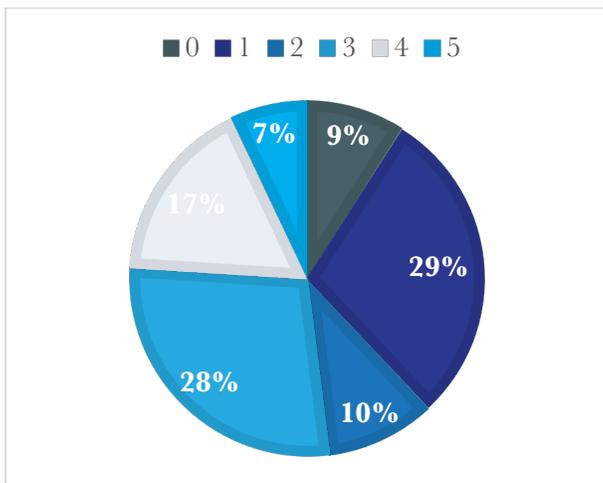


Chart C.7  
NT Time Period 4

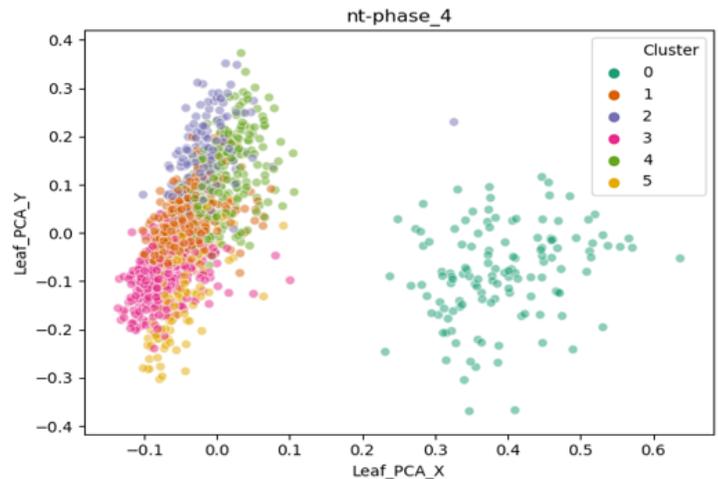


Table C.3  
NT Time Period 4 Clusters

| # | % | Description of Cluster Themes  |
|---|---|--|
| 0 | 9 | Reports of Mexican authorities intercepting migrants and criminals traveling to the US. Migrants from CA are attacked by gunmen, others are kidnapped by traffickers or disappeared. Migrants include young men, women, and children. Associated with the arrests are dangerous criminals. |

|   |    |   |
|---|----|---|
| 1 | 29 | Multinational cooperative elements with civil society partners to address migration and dangers associated with it. Government cooperation combatting crime related to human trafficking, smuggling, and protection of safety of migrants; and ensuring humanitarian assistance for migrants. Migration caused by structural elements, including poverty, unemployment, fear and misery in home country—in sum search for a better life. On migration routes, migrants are victims of kidnapping, extortion, organized crime, and human trafficking. Problem requires a shared responsibility by the countries involved.  |
| 2 | 10 | CA governments working on policies to mitigate migration by addressing its structural causes aimed to reduce poverty as well as seeking funds to strengthen police and military institutions. El Salvador actively promotes economic and social policies as part of the multinational Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity to reduce migration and generate opportunities and well-being for the regional population. Criticisms of Trump and Pence’s rhetoric, specifically Trump’s tough immigration policies sparking migrant communities to migrate, including use of coyotes. Trump criticizes CA governments for failing to control migration and threatens to withdraw aid. |
| 3 | 28 | Trump’s pursuing zero tolerance policies against migrants criminalizing migration and separating thousands of migrant children from their families. ACLU and US judges rule against Trump’s child separation policy with Trump’s policies illegal, inhumane, and part of his reelection strategy  |
| 4 | 17 | CA migrant caravans entering Mexico hoping to enter the US by requesting asylum. Mexican authorities are preparing for the large influx of CA migrants by setting up refugee stations and creating special humanitarian visas allowing CA migrants to enter and work in Mexico. Most CA migrants seek to regularize their stay in Mexico with a humanitarian visa as a first step to migrating to the US.   |
| 5 | 7  | President Trump ordered massive raids against migration in the US carried out by ICE. Multiple raids and arrests made by ICE, with Trump portending more to come. Multiple instances of migrants with criminal backgrounds arrested and deported by US authorities. US authorities also separated thousands of minors.  |



## APPENDIX D | UNITED STATES MEDIA PROFILE

US media reporting on migration emphasizes the actors and acts associated with migration. Actors are primarily Mexican migrants, though they later shift to CA, and US politicians debating immigration reform. Discussion of immigration policy originally is more policy driven, with discussions of guest worker programs, but shifts more toward value concerns such as amnesty and border security. While the scene of migration is also covered, its focus is on the increasing rise of migration and perils migrants face during their journeys to the US as well as the locations of migrant entry. Thus, discussion on how various instruments or intervention mechanisms resolve the causes of migration are generally overlooked and actualized for purposes based on value judgements, such as amnesty and security. Admittedly, US coverage notes that immigration enforcement leads merely to pushing migrants to take greater risks when travelling to the US, failing to reduce the number of migrants coming. In sum, the narratives present in US media remain relatively stable in their overarching plotline: migrants illegally entering the US for economic opportunities, requiring the US to protect its borders before addressing residency or guest worker policies, leading additional migrants to illegally and dangerously travel to the US to

circumvent border security policies; leading to an overwhelmed and stressed US immigration system.

### **US Narrative Elements: Top 75 POS (KWIC)**

#### *Summary*

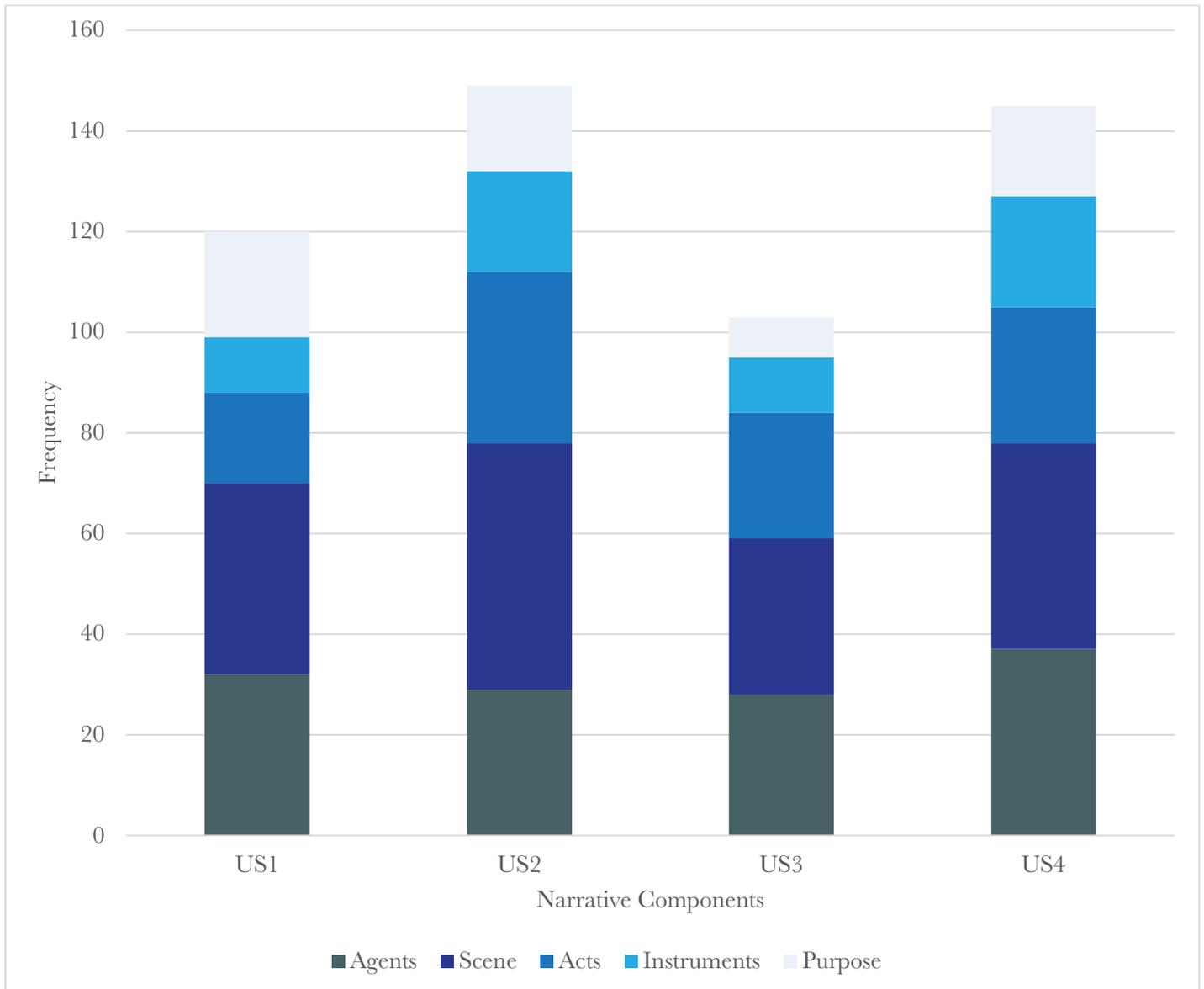
Analysis of the Top 75 POS in US media covering migration demonstrates a shift in coverage whereby original reporting focuses on Mexican migrants as day laborers seeking US residency and work in pursuit of a better life. Over time, Mexican migrants are discussed less frequently, with CA migrants, including children and families, traveling to the US in pursuit of a better life to escape poverty and violence, as well as economic opportunities. US reports include increasing coverage of US immigration enforcement mechanisms, including deportations and border security measures, while migrants are undeterred; resulting in their taking greater risks and more dangerous paths to come to the US, including use of smugglers. Thus, migrants repeatedly attempt to enter the US while suffering from abuses on their journey, including kidnapping and human trafficking; leading to more migrant

deaths. With increases in migration, the US court system and border officials are increasingly overwhelmed.

US media coverage of migration most often emphasizes the scene in which migration is

occurring, both its locations, but more so, the context of rising migration; key actors involved, including migrants and immigration authorities, and the acts these agents take. Less frequently discussed are the means by which migrants come to the US and their purpose for doing so.

Chart D.1  
*US Narrative Elements: Top 75 POS KWIC (Migrant and Migration)*



## *US Time Period 1 (US1)*

US media narratives originally centered on the economic dimensions of Mexican migration. Mexican migrants are the primary actors described as day laborers and guest workers as well as undocumented and illegal immigrants. Mexican migrants' purpose for coming to the

US is for work to support their families at home while also seeking US residency to obtain a better life. The predominant scene includes increases in migration to the US and depictions of the migration journey as perilous as Mexican migrants traverse harsh landscapes, often dying along the way.

## *US Time Period 1 (US1)*

**Key agents:** Mexicans (broadly- immigrant, worker, official, government, state) and immigrants, guest workers, undocumented, illegal, migrant, day laborers, men, population (immigrant, Hispanic); Governments (US, Mexico, country, state, federal, official, State Department, Secretary of State Colin); US and Mexican Presidents (Bush and Clinton administration); residents (permanent, legal, long-time; Border patrol agents); UN

**Scene:** Journey (desert, towns, dying, border crossing); increases in migration (residents, workers, people, immigrants); places (Mexico, Arizona, California, Central/South/Latin/North America); economic use of migrants (day laborers); migrants living in the shadows; uneducated/unskilled migrant workers; birth rate

**Acts:** granting (legalization, amnesty); work (getting money, jobs, visas, immigrant); illegal immigration (flow, crossing, increasing); dying

**Instrument:** guest worker program/permits; punishment; create jobs; migration reform policies; water stations.

**Purpose:** better life, work, residency, economic (growth, development, opportunity); stop drug trafficking

## *US Time Period 2 (US2)*

Time period 2 contains similar narratives focusing on Mexican migrants coming to the US for economic purposes—seeking out low skilled jobs such as construction to earn money to send home to support their families; however, migrant families and their children are also now mentioned. Additional agents include US and Mexican government authorities taking steps to

enforce immigration laws, including arrests, detention, and deportation of illegal migrants. Migrants circumvent these prevention efforts by finding new routes, often more dangerous, and use smuggling rings to help them cross the border. Coverage also includes concerns of Mexican migrants as taking US jobs and taking advantage of the US system, as well as seeking out the American Dream.

## *US Time Period 2 (US2)*

**Key agents:** Mexican workers (undocumented, illegal, migrant); day laborers; smugglers; Government (US, Mexico, federal, local, agents-border patrol, customs, authorities, state); population (immigrant, Hispanic, growth, illegal, undocumented); University (California State, professor); Latin/Central/South America; National Guard (troops)

**Scene:** Increases (migrants, workers, smuggling); US (coming, north, working in, border, enter, live, year); US-Mexico Border; Landscape of crossing (deserts, rivers, rural, Mexico, into US); places (California, North Carolina, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico); home (country, send, return, money, state, immigrant)

**Acts:** New (immigrant, create, law, program, system; rule; arrival); Jobs (hiring of undocumented, worker, immigrant, lose, create, work permit); Crossing border, entering US, dying; Smuggling (immigrants, drugs, coyote, gangs); Home (send, return, go back, send money); Enforcement (arrest, detain, failure, program, deportation, catch, Border patrol, illegal, fence); leave child; come (forward, home, illegal, migrant, family, country, immigrant, worker); live (immigrant, US, Salvadoran, illegally, family); bring

**Instrument:** Circumventing (smuggling rings, boats, new routes, chain migration); Prevention (border patrol, enforcement, fence); Programs (guest worker, new, immigrant, create); Family support (money, send home, transfer, raise); policy (INM); work (visa, permit, temporary); fence (border, build, wall)

**Purpose:** Support family (remittances/money); Work (low skilled, wages, construction, seek, obtain); American dream; US citizenship, legal residence; US jobs, take advantage, create, lose; slow/stop illegal immigrant flow; economic development

### *US Time Period 3 (US3)*

Time period 3 narratives shift considerably from past narratives, now including discussion of not only Mexican migrants but also CA migrants, as well as young people more generally. The motivation for migration still includes finding work, including remittances to send home to support migrant families with discussion on migrants having to leave their families and children. However, additional goals of securing human rights and basic human dignity arises while US goals of border security prominently emerge. The scene of migration

still focuses on the perils of the journey with migrants dying on the way with focus turning to Arizona and Texas as the key entry points with illegal immigrants consistently trying and re-trying to illegally enter the US. US and Mexican authorities are still mentioned as engaging in a variety of enforcement actions and searching out additional instruments to prevent migration, such as border fencing and increased deportation. However, illegal immigrants increasingly turn to smugglers, drug cartels, and human trafficking resulting in additional abuses during the journey, including kidnapping and death.

## *US Time Period 3 (US3)*

**Key agents:** Mexican (immigrant, authority, government, migrant, workers); Central American (migrants, leaders, immigrants); Authorities (US and Mexican immigration, federal, agents, officials); Young people; Drug cartel; research/experts (Pew); University of California; State Department; Latin America

**Scene:** Mexican borders (north and south); Increasing (population, people, illegal, immigrant, border security Central and Latin American); US southern border, Arizona, Texas; Difficult journey (desert, border towns Drug war, smuggle); US economy; home (country, return, send)

**Acts:** Human trafficking, abuses; Crossing (entering US, border, try and again, journey north, illegal); Enforcement (agents apprehend, catch few, arrest, border agency); Home (return, back, send, money, call); Deaths, kidnapping (migrants); Work (hard, legally); Family (leaving, bringing, children); explore (daily); come (US, people, immigrant, forward); live (immigrant, people, illegally, US)

**Instrument:** Smuggling (human trafficking, hire); Enforcement (border fence, deportation, agency, law); Guest worker program; Shelters (homeless, migrant, temporary); Remittances; Farm Work; Taking jobs; new immigration law; political asylum

**Purpose:** Human rights, dignity; border security, enforcement, control; US citizenship; Find (study, work, take jobs); political asylum

## *US Time Period 4 (USA)*

Time period 4 narratives continue to shift away from Mexican migrants simply coming to the US for low-wage jobs to description of a crisis on the border whereby CA migrants attempt to escape violence and poverty at home while facing significant abuse on their journey through Mexico to the US. US and Mexican government authorities continue to be frequently mentioned as engaging in a variety of

enforcement efforts with additional description of family separation policies and detention facilities. US goals remain securing the border while increasing influxes of CA migrants travelling in caravans to the US and applying for asylum overwhelm US immigration courts; forcing migrants to wait long periods of time before their cases are heard. Advocacy groups become new prominently mentioned agents standing up for migrant rights.

## *US Time Period 4 (USA)*

**Key agents:** Central American (migrants, family, children, caravan); Presidents (Trump, Obama, Bush, Pence, new administration); People (young, many, more, American, undocumented), parents; Group (advocacy, large, rights, immigrant, nonprofit); US and Mexican government authorities/agents (border patrol, ICE, immigration, federal, enforcement, customs); Homeland (security, department, official, secretary); Courts (immigration, federal); Guatemala; refugee; political (issue, party, Trump)

**Scene:** Border crisis (more migrant, immigrant, child, families; thousands of people, record numbers, surge, increase border enforcement and arrest); Journey (more difficult, illegal entry); Central/Latin America (violence, poverty, children, fleeing, asylum, leave—Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Mexico); US/Mexican border; north (head, travel, migrant)

**Acts:** Caravans (arrival, large, head, travel, chain migration); Illegally cross, enter, here, come, live, begin, leave, reach US; try (cross, enter); Travel (leaving country, migrants, family, child, home; alone, group, border, country, Mexico, north); Asylum (claim, seek, apply, request, deny; wait (asylum seeker, month, period, outside, US); Parent/child/family (separate, detain, deport, undocumented, immigrant, reunite, unaccompanied, flee); Home (return, back, leave, stay, come, violence, child, go, flee, send money); Enforcement (arrests, detention—family, child, federal, ICE, hold, expand, camps), separation, apprehend, catch, custody; Courts (hearing, ruling, decision, block, await); violence and poverty (flee)

**Instrument:** Enforcement (border wall, new policy, rule; child separation, detain, take, detention centers/facilities, deportation courts/asylum cases, arrest, shooting); Asylum law, claims; Caravans; Shelters (child, temporary, run, government, provide); Sanctuary Cities; work (permit, visa, temporary); tariff (impose, threat, Mexico, Trump, escalate, new, percent); threat (tariff, Trump, security, pose, national, death, safety); new (administration, policy, rule, border, wall, arrival, facility, program); trade deal/agreement; visa program

**Purpose:** Border/national security, protection; Asylum, refuge, protection, family; Escaping violence, poverty, humanitarian crisis; Take jobs/advantage (immigrants); economic growth (development, opportunity); address illegal border crossings; human rights; help (immigrant, migrant, people, Trump, Mexico, family)

## Topic Modeling of US News Reports on Migration Mentioning Mexico or NT

### Summary of shifts in US topic modeling

Topic modeling algorithm reveals similar narrative themes during time periods 1-3 with new concerns arising between time periods 3 and 4. Early themes focus on Mexican migration coming to the US for work, with concerns of Mexican migrants taking US jobs. US officials are concerned with border security and guest worker programs with political infighting among Democrats and Republicans occurring, with increasing concerns over granting migrants' amnesty. US authorities take greater steps towards enhancing US border security resulting in pushing migrants to take more dangerous measures to arrive in the US. These themes shift between time period 3 and 4, with greater discussion of CA migrants as well as migrant families and children coming to the US leading to a crisis at the border, including humanitarian concerns regarding the treatment of migrants. The large influx of CA migrants and the inability of US authorities to

handle them leads to greater discussion of the US immigration system as broken, specifically the court system, leading to migrants putting down roots in the US. Legal battles ensue over Obama and Trump administration's immigration policies.

### Summary (US Time Period 1)

Migration narratives revolve around US-Mexican bilateral relationship. Economic conditions are the drivers of migration, with Mexican immigrants performing low-skilled jobs in the US in inhumane conditions. Congressional Republicans and Democrats are unable to come to agreement on immigration reform with guest worker programs taking center stage; the path to legalization is decried as amnesty. Increasing anti-immigrant rhetoric comes from US workers and Republicans worried over Mexican immigrants taking US jobs. Border security initiatives only push migrants to take more dangerous routes to the US, resulting in more migrant deaths.

Chart D.2  
US Time Period 1 Cluster Frequencies

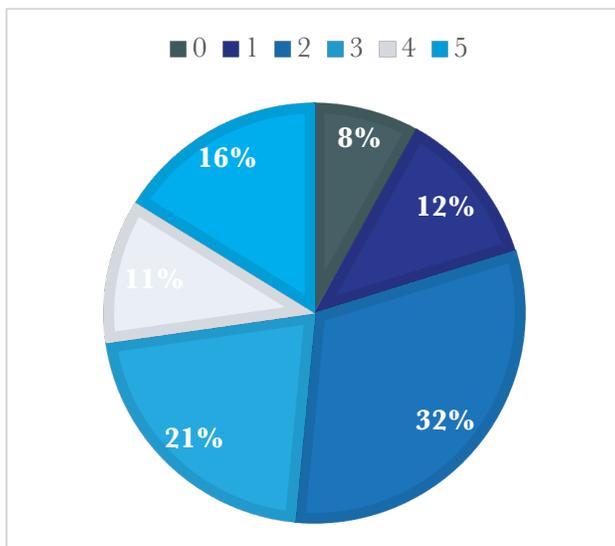


Chart D.3  
US Time Period 1

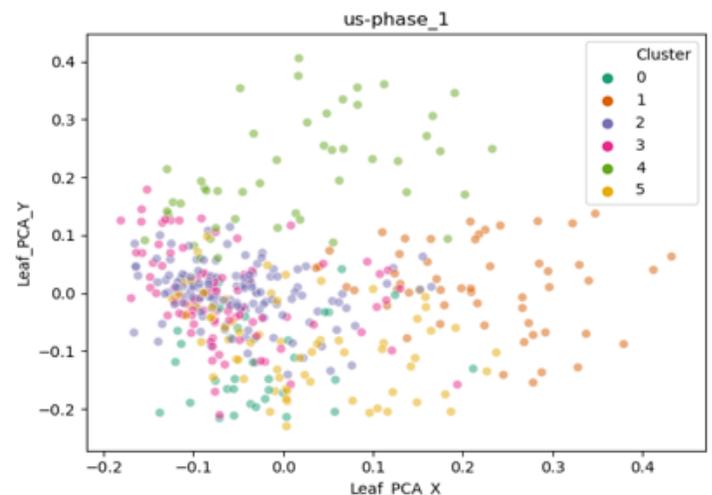


Table D.1  
*US Time Period 1 Clusters*

| # | %  | Description of Cluster Themes   |
|---|----|---|
| 0 | 8  | The Californian border has transformed from an easy access point under siege from illegal immigration to virtually no immigration due to the installation of lights and ground sensors, fencing, and doubling the number of Border Patrol agents. However, this has only pushed illegal immigrants to more dangerous terrain such as remote mountains and deserts with many dying from exposure to extreme heat or cold, sparking criticism from human rights groups.   |
| 1 | 12 | Political infighting and hypocrisy surrounding President Bush's incipient immigration reform bill that would focus on creating a guest worker program and a path to citizenship for 3-4 million immigrants. Criticism centers around amnesty, although this amnesty shootout is increasingly disconnected from the substance of the issue. Both Democrats and Republicans are viewed as opposing amnesty, noting that amnesty doesn't sell; nonetheless, Democrats once supported a similar plan proposed by Bush during the Clinton administration, but now oppose Bush's plan. Republicans also remain skeptical of Bush's plan while Bush is viewed as courting Latinos, a crucial voting bloc for Bush. |
| 2 | 31 | Immigration reform efforts focusing on penalizing businesses that hire undocumented workers. Typical immigration policies such as securing the border have proved ineffectual, prompting a new strategy to make life in the US unattractive for immigrants to live by closing down the job market and penalizing employers. Immigrants come to the US for economic reasons although are exploited in the US, forced to work in inhumane conditions.   |
| 3 | 21 | Despite a weakening US economy, Mexico's even poorer economic circumstances prompting Mexican immigration to the US. US workers and unions are opposed to Mexican immigration, fearing new proposed guest-worker programs will bring more Mexicans to take US jobs from US workers. Anti-immigrant rhetoric is increasing over concerns regarding jobs. Mexican immigrants living in California face poor school conditions. Mexican immigrants forced to come to the US for the promise of US jobs.  |
| 4 | 11 | Anti-immigrant sentiment threatening political cooperation on immigration reform. President Bush is characterized as differing from Republicans through his support for immigration. Republicans' chastised for their rhetoric of compassion being at odds with their harsh anti-immigrant agenda. Discussion centers around political jockeying for Hispanic votes with historical discussions of Reagan's policies, Hispanics' culturally conservative nature, and Democrats' generally pro-immigration sentiment and support of the White House on immigration reform.   |
| 5 | 16 | President Bush and Fox meet to discuss US-Mexico relations, specifically immigration. The two leaders are described as cooperative in negotiating key issues such as immigration, drug trafficking, and energy; with President Fox taking the initiative to place immigration at the center of the bilateral relationship.  |

Summary (US Time Period 2)

Migration narratives revolve around US policies aiming to strengthen border security and tighten guest worker programs. Causes of migration are economic with Mexican immigrants pursuing creative, alternative means to circumvent increases to US border security

such as smugglers and underground tunnels. Congressional Republicans focus on border security whereas President Bush and Democrats focus on guest worker programs. Domestically, US workers are concerned with Mexican immigrants taking US jobs and squeezing wages.

Chart D.4  
US Time Period 2 Cluster Frequencies

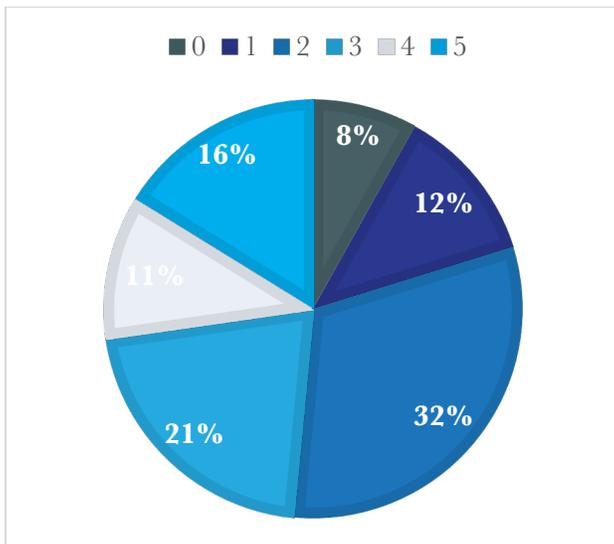


Chart D.5  
US Time Period 2

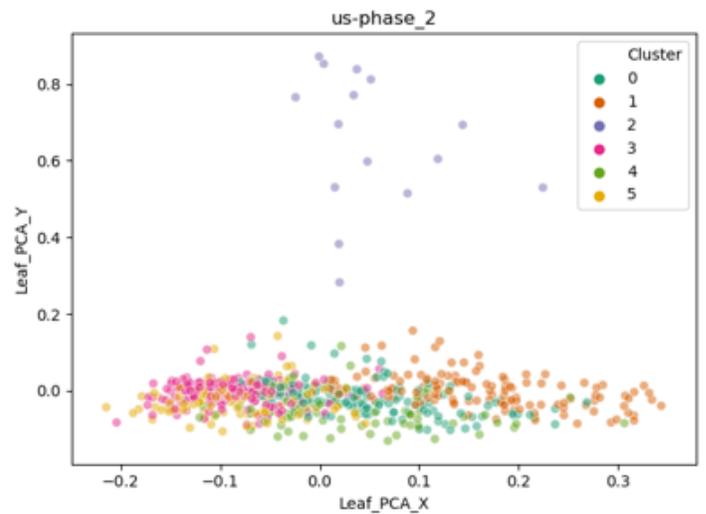


Table D.2  
US Time Period 2 Clusters

| # | %  | Description of Cluster Themes   |
|---|----|---|
| 0 | 24 | Debate over a US immigration bill that would criminalize immigration rather than its current status as a civil violation. Primary concerns are with economic issues, including providing immigrants with a guest worker program and identification cards. Mexico's stagnant economy is cited as a reason for immigration. Republican representatives criticizing President Bush's immigration reform bill wanting to focus on controlling US borders. |

|   |    |   |
|---|----|---|
| 1 | 17 | President Bush's push for immigration reform faces fierce opposition from conservative leaders. Republicans increasingly campaign on anti-immigrant positions, focusing on border security. President Bush and Senate Democrats on the same page regarding guest worker programs. President Bush emphasized investments in border security to win over Republicans. Republicans lack action on immigration contributing to their loss of the House and Senate majorities while Democrats face pressure from their political base to take action on immigration reform.  |
| 2 | 2  | US politics polarized over immigration reform with headlines from letters to the editor in favor and against immigration reform. Washington was viewed as in a state of paralysis. Congressional Republicans criticized for irrationally dealing with migration, suggesting they follow President Bush's lead; especially as Hispanics appear largely in favor of Bush's policies.  |
| 3 | 28 | Coverage reporting upon the effects of immigrants onto the labor market. Illegal immigration drives down wages with guest worker programs furthering wage squeeze. Labor intensive, low skill jobs attract foreign workers from Mexico and Latin America, specifically in farming, cleaning, and construction. Immigrants are less likely to be unionized.  |
| 4 | 11 | US is significantly stiffening security on the US-Mexico border making migration more difficult, but not stopping it from increasing. Smugglers are forced to adapt and become more creative with their smuggling attempts, even going underground through tunnels. Smugglers charging a higher price for their services due to increased security. Continued strengthening of the border unlikely to reduce the surge of illegal immigration although some reports claim additional fencing and manpower provides powerful deterrents.   |
| 5 | 19 | Illegal Mexican immigrants in the US are able to send money back home through new remittance programs put in place by the US financial system. Economic development fuels Mexican migration with a poor Mexican economy likely to increase immigration. Mexicans prefer immigrating to the US to seek better job opportunities. US immigration system criticized for being xenophobic, immoral, and stupid while also noting concerns regarding illegal Mexican immigrants being able to draw upon Social Security through fraudulent Social Security identification numbers when working in the US and Mexican immigrants preferring to stay in the US to work rather than returning home. |

Summary (US Time Period 3)

Migration narratives revolve around US politicians negotiating immigration reform within the context of a larger, broken immigration system that treats immigrants unfairly, especially once they are in the US. Criticism of US immigration policies include long wait periods for processing immigration claims, use of detention facilities, and unfair

treatment of children and unaccompanied minors. Immigrants come to work honorably and assimilate to US culture, but more progress needs to be made. DACA program provides some work opportunities and reprieves from deportation with the Obama administration focusing on deporting immigrants with criminal backgrounds. Republican support for further legislation is lacking, stressing the need for secure borders first.

Chart D.6  
US Time Period 3 Cluster Frequencies

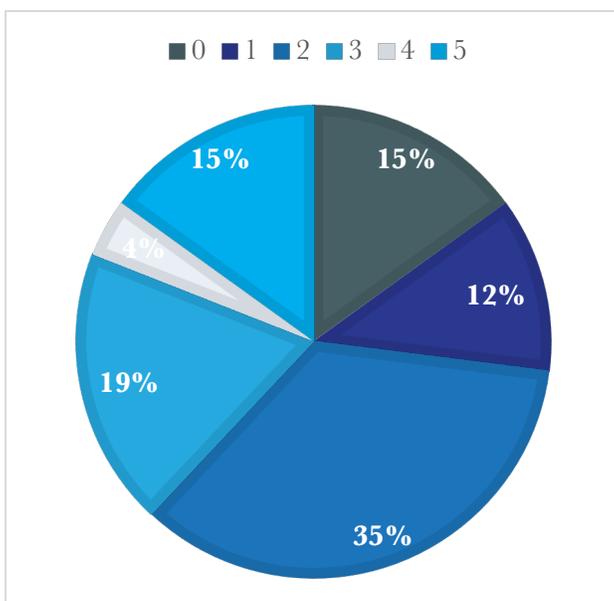


Chart D.7  
US Time Period 3

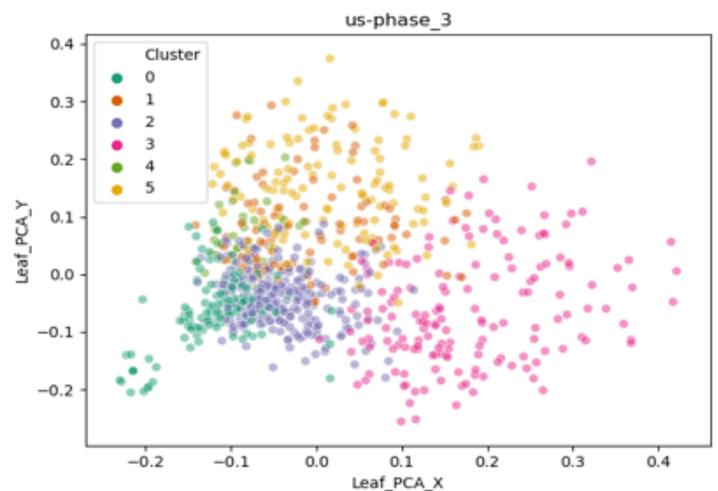


Table D.3  
US Time Period 3 Clusters

| # | %  | Description of Cluster Themes  |
|---|----|--|
| 0 | 15 | Discussions on the historical population implications of Mexican migration to the US. Mexican migration from the 1970s onwards has contributed to significant population growth in California. However, recently Mexican migration has declined due to beefed-up border security coupled with fewer job prospects in the US. |

|   |    |  |
|---|----|--|
| 1 | 12 | Discussion of the Supreme Court battle over the Obama Administration's challenging of Arizona laws related to immigration. The Obama Administration alleges that Arizona's law violates the federal government's right to enforce immigration law. President Obama's policy focuses on deporting immigrants convicted of serious crimes. US immigration policy more broadly is described as unfair, specifically towards immigrant children and unaccompanied minors.  |
| 2 | 35 | US immigration policy described as broken with immigrants waiting over ten years before their applications are processed. Nonetheless, positive descriptions of the Obama Administration's DACA program, allowing some immigrants to obtain work permits and reprieves from deportation, although not conferring lawful immigration status. Immigrants claim that some in the US view immigrants as a plague, despite immigrants coming here to work honorably. Immigrant groups are assimilating to US society, with younger immigrants learning English, obtaining higher levels of education, and climbing the socio-economic ladder; but more progress is argued to be needed. Evangelical groups advocate for immigration overhaul on the basis of family unity, human dignity, border security, and fairness to taxpayers. |
| 3 | 19 | Largely optimistic portrayals of Congressional Democrats and Republicans negotiating a new immigration reform bill. Emphasis is placed on new measures to secure the border including funds for more border agents, fencing, and aerial surveillance. Democrat's primary priorities include a pathway for citizenship while Republican support is more difficult to obtain, stressing the need for secure border first.  |
| 4 | 4  | Criticism over immigrant detention facilities, specifically privately ran facilities. Despite record low immigration from Mexico, the number of detained immigrants remains high in private facilities due to a requirement by Congress that ICE fills a daily quota of more than 30,000 beds. Detaining immigrants, especially in private detention facilities, criticized as costing taxpayers. Immigrant labor is exploited in the detention centers where immigrants are paid 13 cents an hour. Immigrants held in detention facilities conducting hunger strikes to demand better conditions and an end to deportations.  |
| 5 | 15 | Mexican migration is down to its lowest levels since the 1980s-1990s, with some evidence of Mexican immigrants returning to Mexico. The primary cause is economic, with fewer job opportunities in the US. Nonetheless, CA migration represents a larger than ever share of illegal border crossings. Despite funding for more fencing and border agents and lower levels of illegal immigration, apprehensions of illegal migrants are on the rise.   |

Summary (US Time Period 4)

Migration narratives center on President Trump’s policies to deter migration while economic conditions are described as the predominant driver of increasing migration flows from CA through Mexico with immigrants now living in the US with little hope of achieving legal status. Although migrants benefit the US economy, concerns are raised

over their drain on US resources. Trump’s cracking down on illegal immigration with raids, arrests, detention, and deportation of migrants sparks legal and humanitarian criticism in the US. Slow court hearings and broken immigration system results in migrants putting down roots in the US. Migrants receive little protection while in US detention facilities and when living in the US.

Chart D.8.  
US Time Period 4 Cluster Frequencies

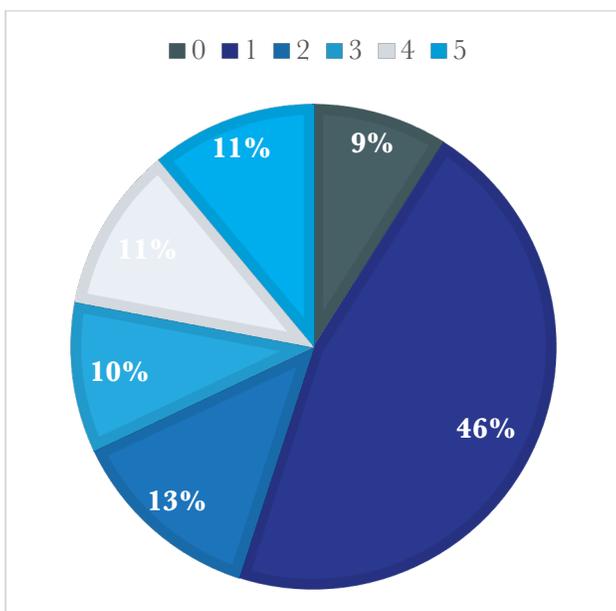


Chart D.9  
US Time Period 4

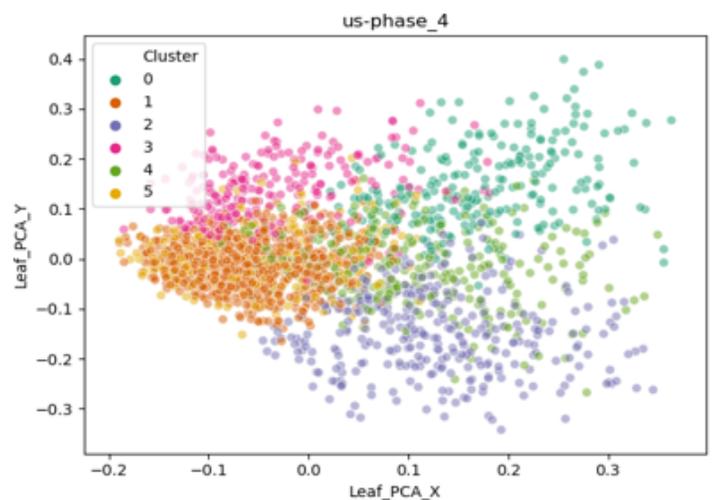


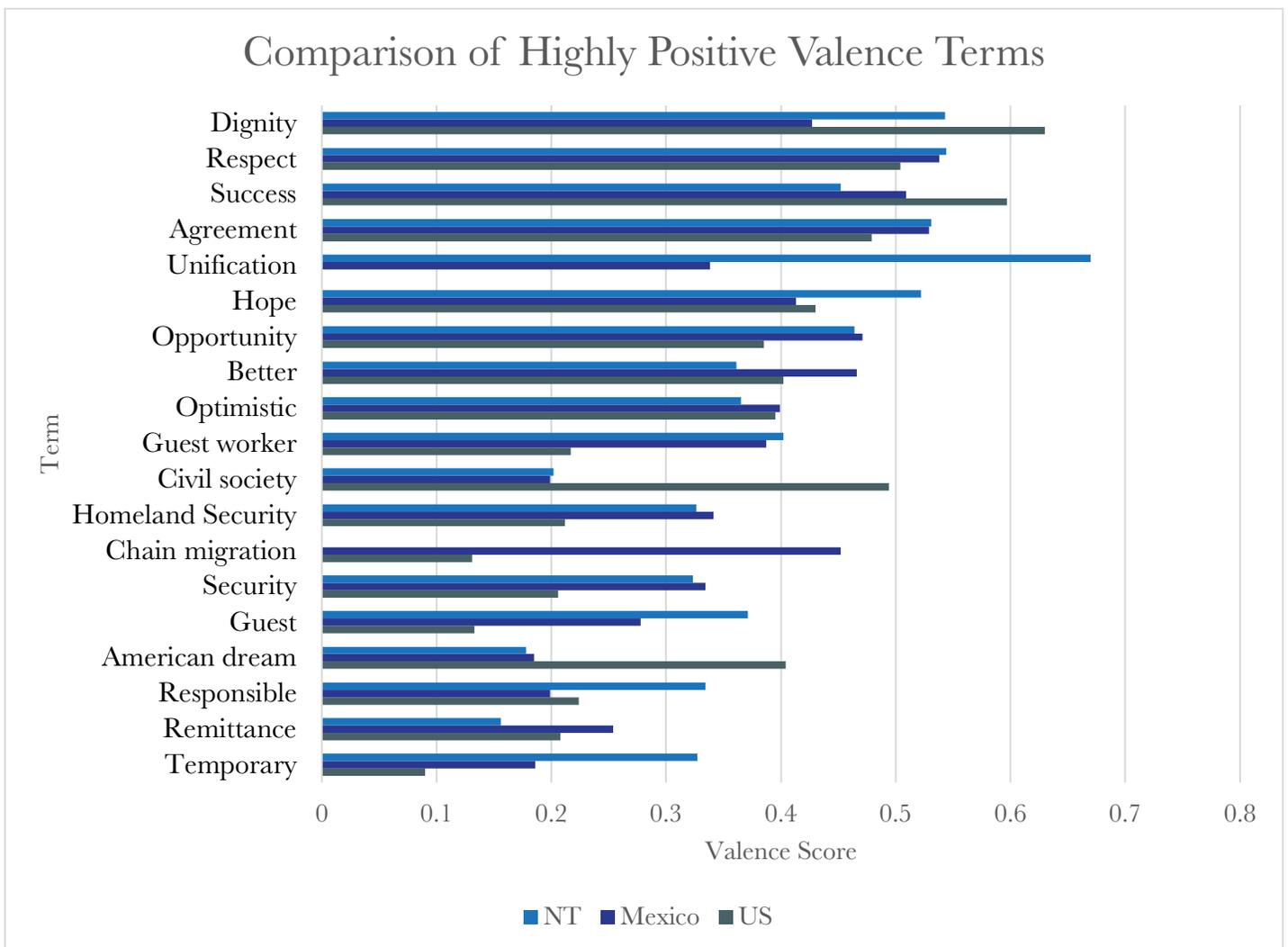
Table D.4  
US Time Period 4 Clusters

| # | % | Description of Cluster Themes  |
|---|---|--|
| 0 | 9 | Large influx of migrants in the Rio Grande Valley overwhelming Customs and Border Protection agencies. The Border Patrol lacks facilities to detain everyone, leading to overcrowding and migrants held in poor conditions, outraging immigrant advocates and Democratic lawmakers. Treatment of migrant children and infants criticized, leading to a humanitarian crisis straining the agency’s resources and leading to a crisis on the border. |

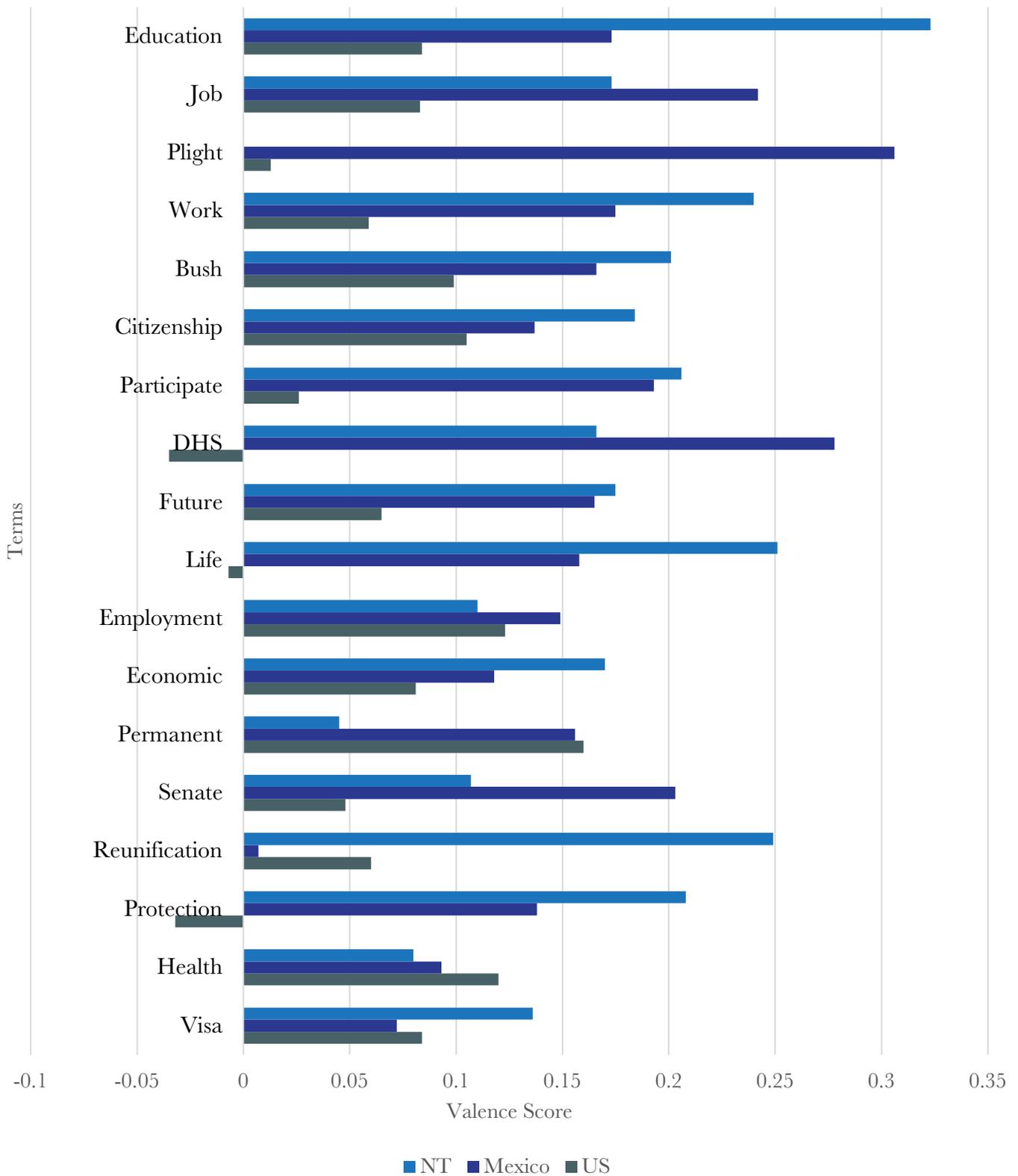
|   |    |   |
|---|----|---|
| 1 | 46 | Immigrants provide economic benefits to the US economy, but new crackdowns on immigration leaves them to stay in the US. Farmers rely on undocumented immigrants and supply side demands cause immigration. However, immigrants are now living, working, and having families in the US with little hope of achieving legal status while also denied education, health care, and public services. Concerns raised over immigrants as drain on US resources.  |
| 2 | 13 | Mexico is taking considerable steps to prevent CA migration to the US as a result of President Trump's threat to place economic tariffs on Mexico. Large numbers of migrants, including caravans, are stopped and detained by Mexican troops.   |
| 3 | 10 | President Trump ordering ramped up immigration enforcement in multiple US cities described as a center piece of his promise to crack down on illegal immigration. ICE engaged in coordinated raids, arrests, detaining, and sending back large numbers of CA migrants, including families. Trump's policies characterized as ambitious, hardened measures that US attorneys and advocacy groups view as constitutional violations lacking due process. Migrants are worried about the raids, contemplating moving to more immigrant-friendly states.  |
| 4 | 11 | The Trump administration is attempting to deter immigration by CA by limiting who can apply for asylum while US judges and immigration advocates challenge the policies legality claiming it violates migrants due process rights. CA migrants, specifically families and children, are forced to wait in Mexico while awaiting for their asylum cases to be heard. While many migrants show up for their court hearings, the White House claims they do not, with migrants disappearing before their court date and becoming permanently undocumented immigrants in the US. Court hearings are slow due to the large number of claims with migrants often putting down roots with children, jobs, and mortgages as they wait. Mixed discussion of the effectiveness of Trump's policies with some saying it has deterred migration while others say it does not. |
| 5 | 11 | Reports of political infighting and negotiations between Congressional Democrats, Republicans, and the White House on possible immigration reform and government spending bills. Some optimism reported with Republicans and Democrats passing an immigration bill, especially as President Trump issues statements in support for DACA, more discussion is placed on the breakdown of negotiations. President Trump promises to delay raids if a deal is made, believing the humanitarian crisis at the border will compel democrats to negotiate. Trump's political base maintains support for anti-immigration policy with stricter funding for border security viewed as a requirement for any deal. Trump's bargaining is viewed as fueling chaos at the border while democrats try to limit how any funding may be spent.                                   |



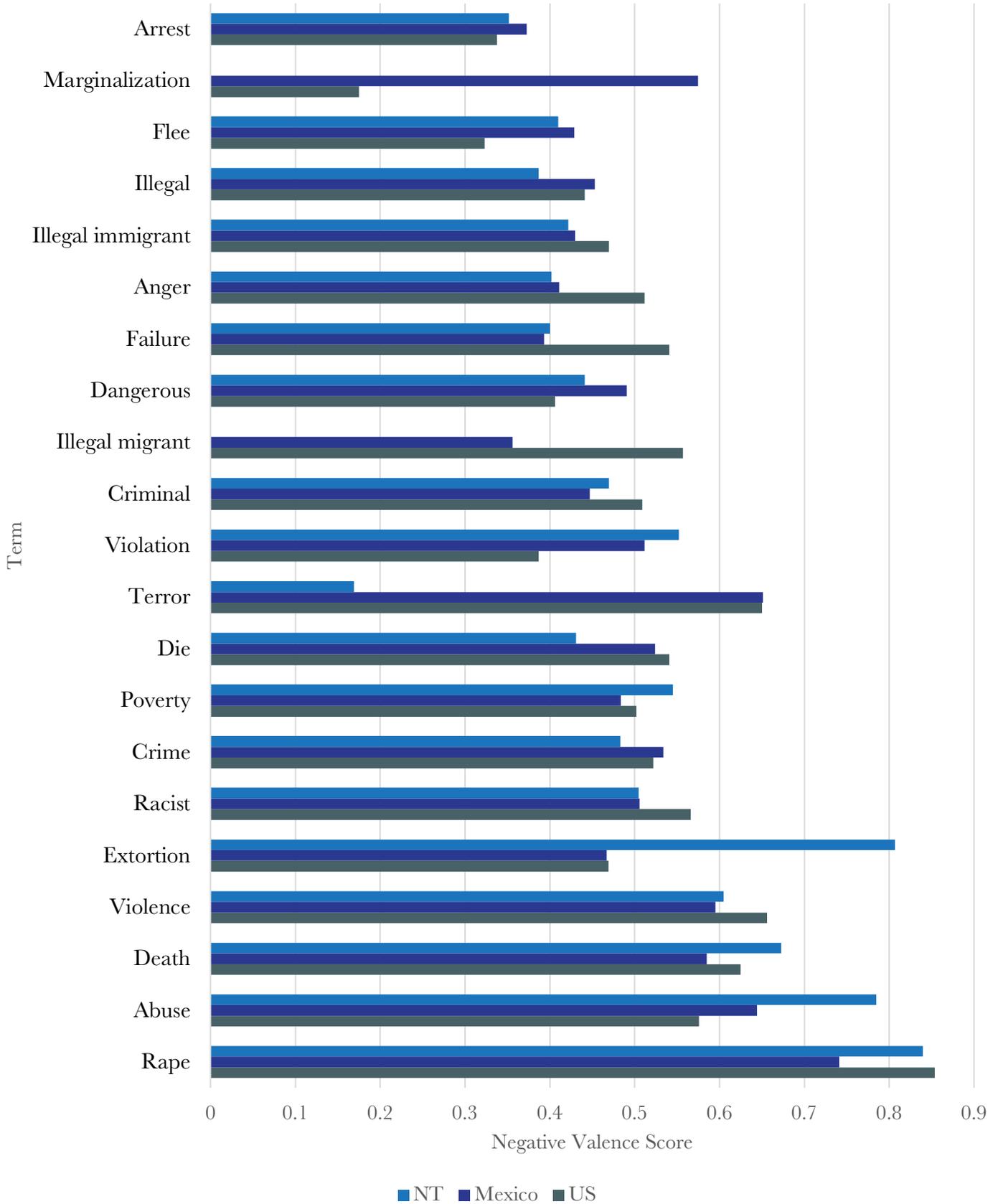
## APPENDIX E | VALENCE OF TERMS AND RHETORICAL PHRASING



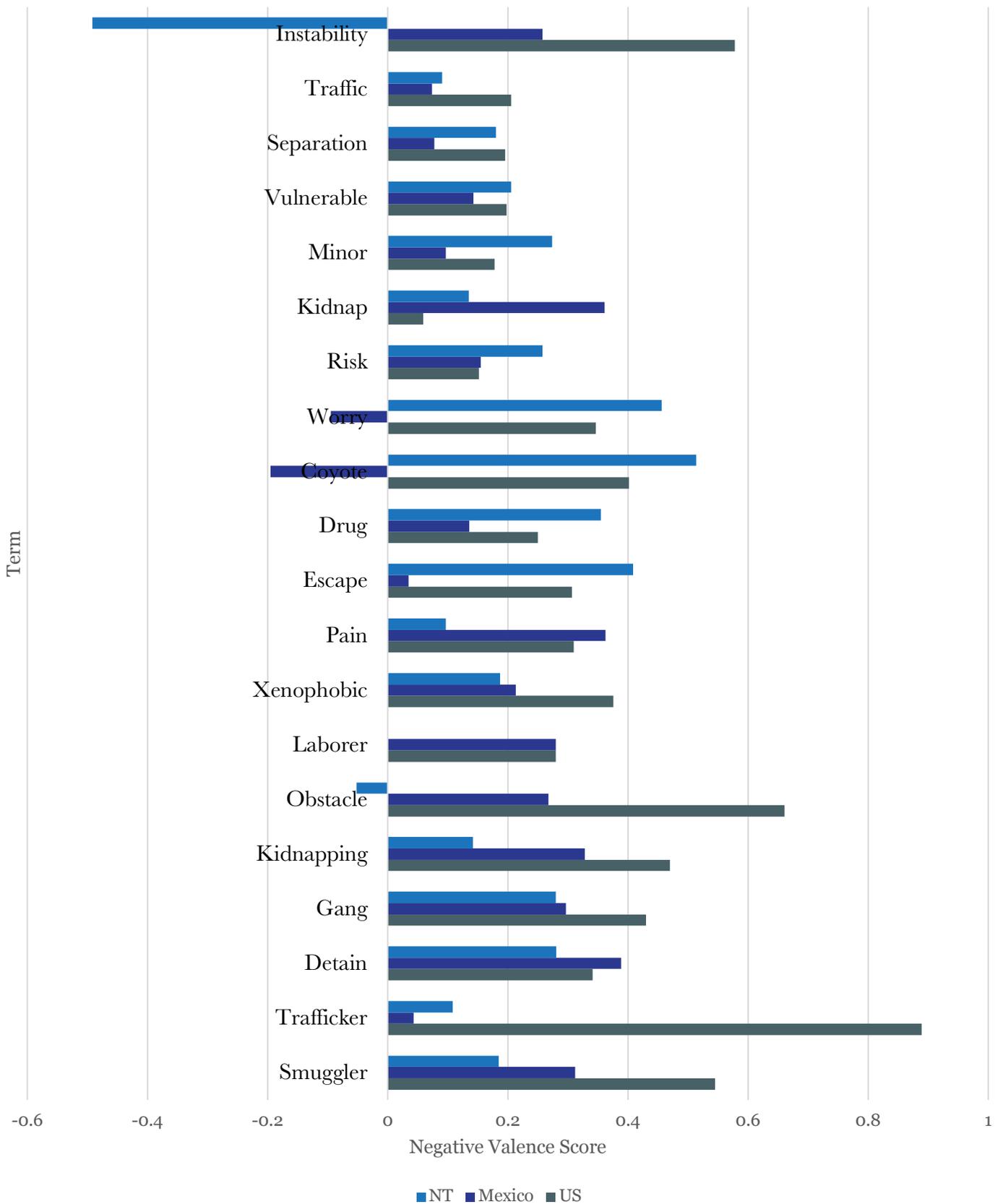
## Comparison of High Positive Valence Terms



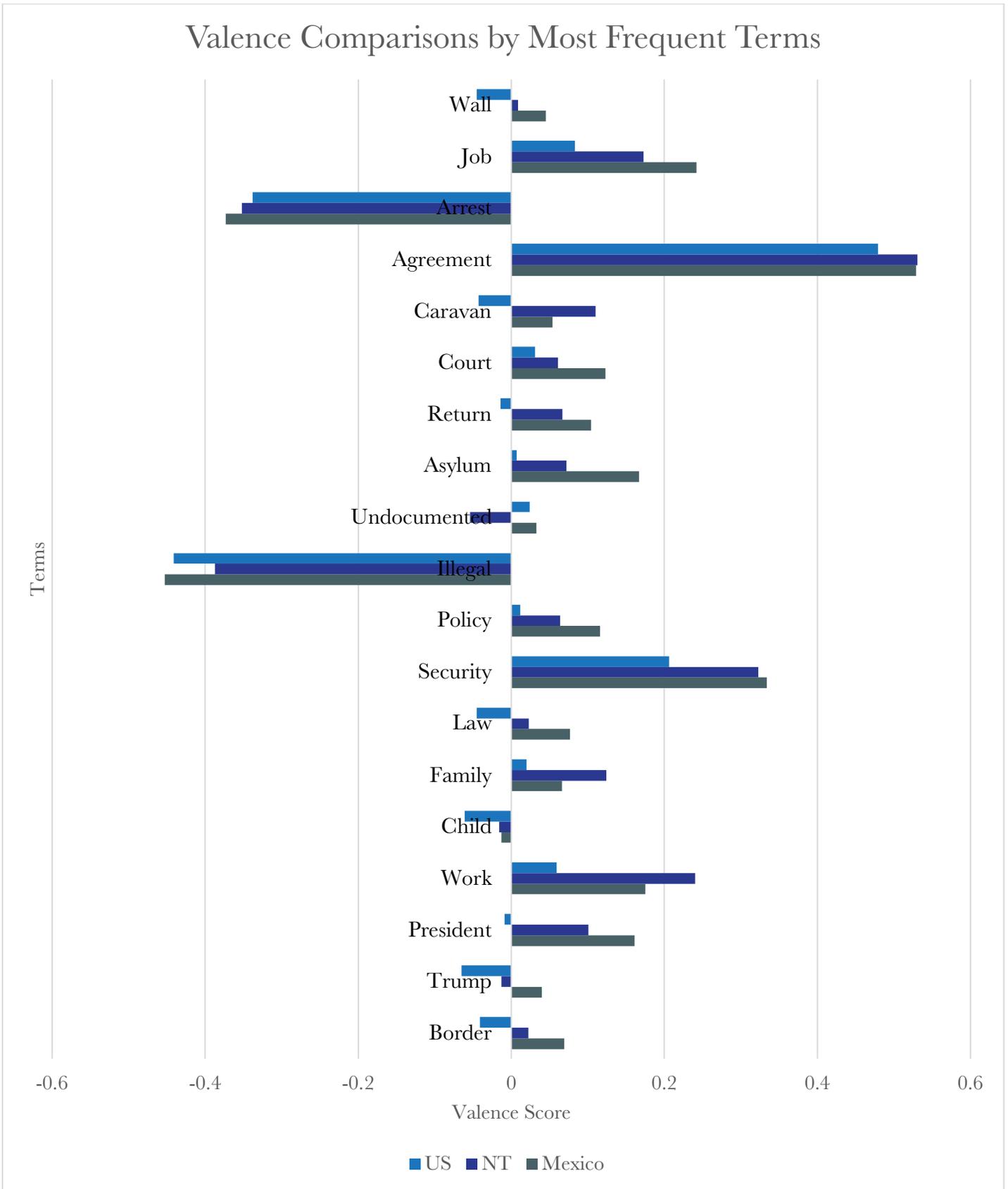
## Comparison of Highly Negative Valence Terms



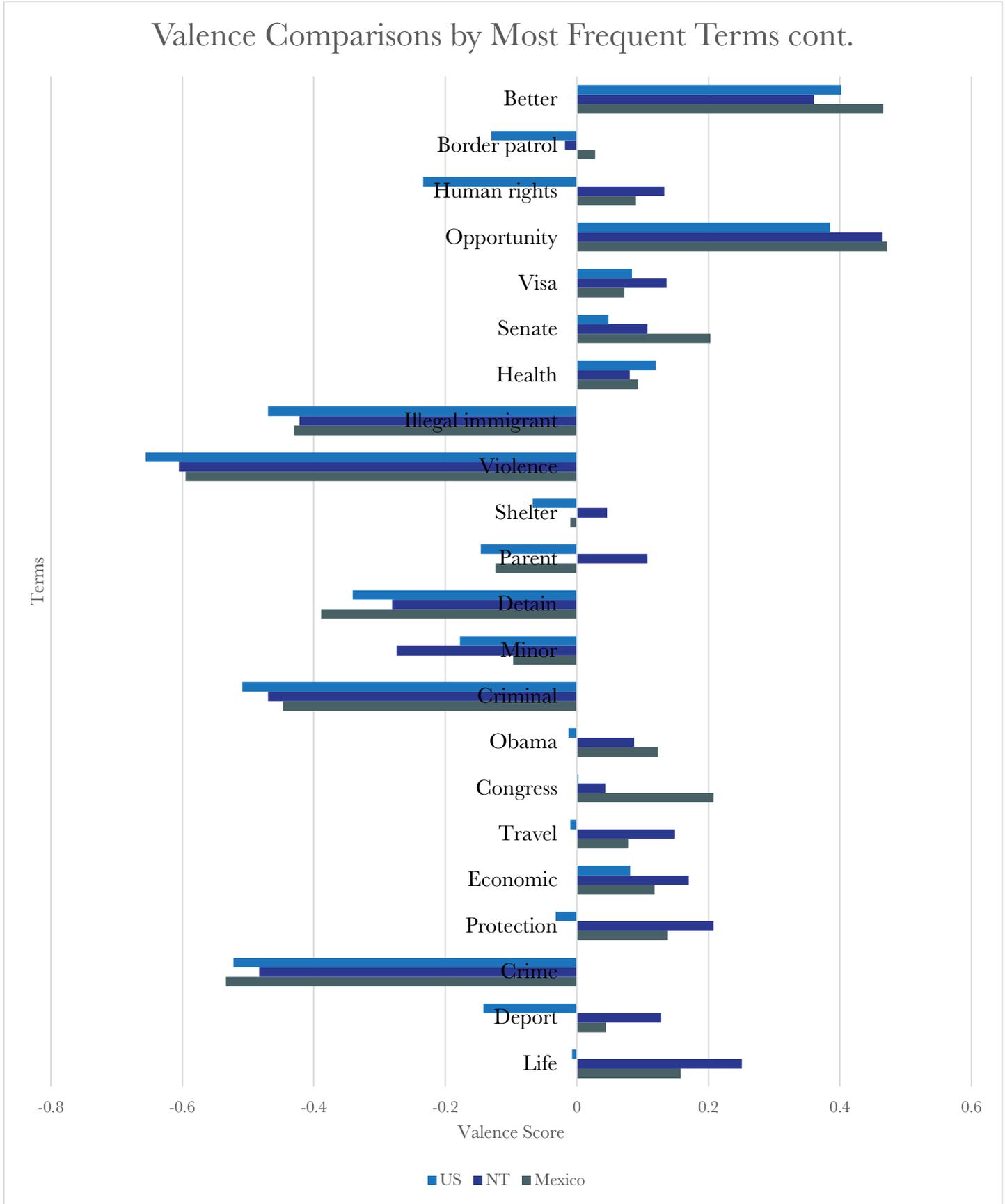
## Comparison of Highly Negative Valence Terms cont.



## Valence Comparisons by Most Frequent Terms



## Valence Comparisons by Most Frequent Terms cont.





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