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## **Bordering work in contemporary political discourse: The case of the US/Mexico border wall proposal**

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Article

# Bordering work in contemporary political discourse: The case of the US/Mexico border wall proposal

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## Abstract

In this article, I use a critical discourse analytic approach to investigate how President Trump's campaign goal to build a wall along the US/Mexico border has been discussed in United States political discourse. The data analyzed are 30 videotaped speeches and other public events which occurred between October 2016 and March 2018. These data are publicly available from the cable news channel C-SPAN's online video archive. The analysis focuses on the communicative techniques and strategies used to persuade others and justify one's position in the interactions and events studied. In this article, I show how the border wall proposal is reformulated into a debate about border security, and how diverse ways of referring to persons without approved documentation are used to support arguments on both sides of the debate.

## Keywords

Border security, border walls, conversation analysis, discourse analysis, immigration policy, United States politics, US/Mexico border

## Introduction

The proposal to build a wall on the US/Mexico border was a prominent issue in President Trump's election campaign and continued to be an issue after the election and into the first year of his presidency. In this article, I use a critical discourse analytic approach to investigate how President Trump's goal of building the wall is

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discussed in a variety of political and media events in order to understand recent US political discourse about this issue. The period covered by the analysis is from October 2016 through March 2018 (from shortly before the election through the beginning of the second year of the presidency). The data sources for this article are a collection of video recorded speeches, events and interactions involving such figures as President Trump, members of the Congress and Senate, immigration experts, journalists and members of the public who call in to televised talk shows. These data are all available on the website of the public cable television station C-SPAN. The purpose of the analysis is to explore how issues related to the proposed border wall are discussed, formulated and referenced in interactions about the border in contemporary American political events. The analysis will focus on the communicative techniques and strategies used to persuade others and justify one's position. In this article, I first show how the border wall goal is reformulated into a debate about border security and then show how diverse ways of referring to persons without approved documentation are used to support arguments on both sides of the debate. This analysis will contribute to our understanding of how boundaries between people, political parties and positions are created and maintained.

## Literature review

Previous research on 'illegal immigration' in a variety of historical contexts has identified a number of common rhetorical techniques and strategies that are used to construct and justify arguments on this topic.<sup>1</sup> Strategies such as creating an 'us versus them' dynamic, using formulations that treat citizens as the norm and immigrants as the 'other' or as outsiders, or using referents that delegitimize the immigrant (such as negative membership categories and associated descriptors), are some of the common techniques that have been identified.

### *'Us' versus 'them' formulations*

Researchers in a variety of fields have noted the use of dichotomous categories to create an 'us' versus 'them' model (Reyes, 2011). These rhetorical strategies are also used in discussions of migration across national boundaries. Jones et al. (2017) use a geographical approach to studying national border crossings and find that there is a tendency to exercise power over non-citizens, while protecting the rights of citizens. Dorner et al.'s (2017) study of attitudes toward immigrants in St. Louis, Missouri, shows how policies can be justified or argued against by choosing to use inclusive language or rhetoric that creates boundaries between groups of people based on immigration status. They refer to this 'us versus them' approach as 'boundary work'. This 'us versus them' boundary work can be done through the use of pronouns. Kranert (2017) argues that pronouns can be used strategically in political discourse. Cap's (2018) article on attitudes toward immigration in Poland addresses the rhetorical work done to create a positive depiction of citizens ('us') which is then contrasted with a depiction of immigrants ('them') which is tied to negative connotations.

### *'Othering' the 'illegal immigrant'*

Formulations which create rhetorical distance between categories of people can be used to 'other' groups of people and construct and maintain boundaries between them and the general population (see Reyes, 2011; Román, 2013). For example, Burroughs (2015) describes how newspaper accounts about 'illegal immigration' can work to construct boundaries between legal and illegal citizens by 'othering' the illegal immigrant:

[N]ews-print media texts contain a large level of national rhetoric, which functions to reinforce the 'legitimate' identity of the citizen. Through this ongoing process, the 'subject' (the 'illegal immigrant') is placed into the role of the 'other' in order to justify practices of State control and exclusion. (Hall, 2001; Jager and Maier, 2009; Van Dijk, 2009; Wodak and Krzyzanowski, 2008; Wodak and Meyer, 2009: 167). (Burroughs, 2015: 167)

These strategies do not simply create boundaries between groups and categories of persons, and they can be used to justify unequal power or status relationships between them. For example, in her study of 'illegal immigration' in newspaper accounts in Ireland, Burroughs (2015) describes how discourse is related to power. These strategies can be used to justify laws, policies or actions against members of those groups that are seen as causing or being a social problem (see also Reyes, 2011; Van Dijk, 2000, 2008; Wodak and Meyer, 2009):

Examples of this include descriptions of 'illegal immigrants' as criminals, as a threat to society, and as an entity that requires regulation and control . . . These constructed identities allow for migrants to be placed within an unequal position in relation to those seen to be legitimate (citizens) within the Nation State rationale of governance. Therefore, discourses and the 'knowledges' that they (re)produce are employed to (re)establish and maintain unequal power relations within society (Van Dijk, 2009: 62–82), which can lead to 'justified' practices of control and exclusion. (Burroughs, 2015: 168)

Hochschild et al. (2012) describe how policies work to position 'undocumented immigrants' as outsiders. Heyer (2018) also describes the power of framing immigrants as 'outsiders' as a rallying cry for exclusionist policies:

Representations of the outsider as a social menace have been reinvented in moments of national crisis, with the general pattern evidencing xenophobia's productive function in the national imaginary. Portrayals of immigrants as public charges or of a dangerously porous border have long shaped US society's collective imagination. (Heyer, 2018: 153)

### *Membership categories and negative descriptors*

Some choices of how to categorize or describe groups of people in discussions of immigration are more neutral than others. Bean and Lowell (2007: 70) found that terms such as 'illegals', 'illegal aliens', and 'illegal immigrants' have been used to describe people who cross national boundaries without appropriate documents.<sup>2</sup> Massey and Pren (2012: 6) describe the use of terms such as 'tidal wave' and 'alien invaders' to describe undocumented immigrants from Latin America. Some other less

negative alternatives include ‘unauthorized entries’ or ‘unauthorized immigrants’ (Haynes et al., 2016; Hochschild et al., 2012) or ‘unauthorized migration’ (Bean and Lowell, 2007: 70). McNevin (2017: 255) uses the term ‘irregular migration’ to refer to ‘the movement of people across borders without the explicit sanction of the receiving state’. Resnik (2017: 118) argues that categories such as ‘illegal immigrant’ or ‘unlawful aliens’ have very different connotations than do terms like ‘irregular migrants’, ‘unauthorized migrants’ and ‘settled immigrants’.

In their historical study of newspaper articles about immigrants to the United States, Cabaniss and Cameron (2017) found that immigrants were categorized by using relatively neutral descriptors such as ‘newcomers’, ‘immigrants’ or ‘foreigners’; however, negative descriptors were used along with these categories, especially when discussing immigration policy. Examples of these descriptors included ‘undesirable’, . . . ‘dangerous’, ‘impoverished’ and ‘crazy’ (Cabaniss and Cameron, 2017: 623).

### *US/Mexico border issues*

Some recent research on political discourse around immigration focuses directly on the debate over the US/Mexico border and now President Trump’s campaign proposals to build a wall across that border. Leary’s (2017) essay on President Trump’s proposed border wall notes that the main purpose of the wall proposal was a campaign strategy to attract the support of a subset of the American public. Heyer (2018) articulates this point:

Trump campaigned on promises to deport undocumented immigrants and secure the border with Mexico, a country he charged with sending its criminals, drug dealers, and rapists. Anti-immigrant sentiment helped elect Trump: the most consistent chant at his rallies was ‘Build the wall!’ (Heyer, 2018: 146–147)

Flores (2017) argues that building a wall across the US/Mexico border would not only be prohibitively expensive, it would fail to achieve the goals set for it. In addition, large increases in resources and personnel would be required to maintain and police it.

In short, previous studies of immigration issues on the US/Mexico border have not yet examined the public interactions in which this issue was discussed. This article will fill that gap by examining how arguments for and against the proposed wall are constructed and how people who cross the border without adequate documentation are referred to, categorized and described. In particular, I will analyze how the participants use reformulations, membership categories, footing shifts and other interactional strategies in the context of debate about the proposed wall.

### **Data and methods**

The data analyzed in this article are public events which occurred during the 2016 US Presidential election campaign and in the months following the election (October 2016 through March 2018). All of the videos were obtained from C-SPAN’s online video archive. A total of 30 events were included in the data set. These events included participants with a variety of different ranks, positions and institutional roles, including

President Trump, members of Congress and the Senate, government officials, journalists, immigration experts and members of the public. A wide range of types of events were included in the collection, such as Presidential campaign rallies, Congressional committee hearings, Senate debates, Presidential, Congressional, and Federal Administration press conferences, White House Press briefings, and research institute panels. C-SPAN TV news interviews and call in talk shows were also included (see Appendix 1 for a complete list of the events analyzed).

The video recordings of these events range from 5 minutes to more than 2 hours in length and involve a total of over 200 participants. For most of the events, transcripts are provided on the C-SPAN website. Many of these transcripts are well done, while some of the machine-generated transcripts required substantial editing or even re-transcribing in order to be useful for analysis.

In their study of immigration, Haynes et al. (2016) argue that media frames can influence public opinion and policy. The concept of framing was first developed by Goffman (1974) in his analysis of how participant's actions are shaped by the frame through which they view the social world they are acting within. Previous research on how events are framed in the media finds differences in the types of frames used and the institutional position of the writer (e.g. Haynes, et al., 2016; Wahutu, 2018). Fairhurst (2011) shows how organizational leaders can frame events, problems and potential approaches to solutions through how they interact with others. In this analysis, I will look at the types of frames used to describe undocumented immigrants (e.g. legality vs illegality) and examine how they are tied to the institutional role of the speaker, their political party affiliation and their position on the border wall.

Previous research on immigration and politics often uses a critical discourse approach. For example, Sahlane's (2015) analysis of newspaper coverage of Iraq War protests uses a critical discourse approach to analyze how word choice and formulations are used to construct arguments justifying positions and create boundaries between 'us' and 'them'. Conversation analysts have also studied how references to persons are done (e.g. Sacks and Schegloff, 1979) and how membership categories can be used to describe persons or groups of people (Hester and Eglin, 1997; Sacks, 1972). Persons can be referred to by identifying them with a category to which they belong (e.g. family member, Senator, immigrant). Since each individual is a member of many categories, the speaker chooses which categories to use to refer to or describe the person. Different impressions are conveyed depending on which categories are used. These methods of referring to people can be used strategically by claiming or excluding those referred to from group membership, characteristics or qualities (e.g. Winiecki, 2008). Speakers can also use formulations and reformulations to emphasize specific aspects of statements or to reframe arguments (Atkinson and Drew, 1979; Hutchby, 2005).

Reformulating other's constructions of facts can change their meaning or the implications drawn from them. Another interactional technique used in persuasive arguments is footing shifts (Goffman, 1981, see also Clayman, 1988). Through this technique speakers can make a point while deflecting responsibility for it or creating more credence for it. For example, a speaker could preface an argument with 'others say . . .', or could attribute the remark to an expert or other figure whose statements may hold more weight.

I analyzed the transcripts in the data set and located all utterances referring to the border wall and border security issue, as well as all references to persons who crossed the border without approved documents. I analyzed these utterances and ways of representing persons in the context of the interaction they occurred within, and took note, when possible, of the institutional role, party affiliation or expressed position relative to the border wall proposal.

In this article, I first analyze President Trump's campaign rhetoric and show how participants on both sides of the political debate over the border wall/border security issue articulated their positions. I will begin with a discussion of the process of formulating and reformulating the issue from 'the border wall' to 'border security' to 'partial wall plus'. The second part of the article will show how borders between individuals and groups can be created and maintained through how people who cross the US/Mexico border without documentation are identified, referred to, categorized and described.<sup>3</sup>

## **Campaign rhetoric and political debate on the border wall/ border security issue**

Participants in these data display, create and maintain borders between political groups, as well as between segments of the population, through their formulations of references to the border wall/border security issue. In this section, I analyze how participants use interactional techniques such as formulations and reformulations, membership categorization, footing shifts and other devices to convey their positions on the border wall issue. I will show that while President Trump's campaign statements typically framed the border wall issue in terms of oppositional dichotomous categories ('build the wall' vs 'don't build the wall'), when discussed in most of the political and journalistic contexts studied here, speakers usually reformulated it from 'the border wall' to 'border security'. This reformulated version transforms the political problem from whether to build the wall to how border security should be achieved. Once transformed from 'the wall' to 'border security', participants differed in how this goal should be accomplished. For many it is a 'partial wall plus' approach, which is a combination of infrastructure, personnel, technology and/or changes in immigration law.

### ***Build the wall/don't build the wall***

During President Trump's election campaign, he presented the border issue as a binary choice. He was for building a wall across the US/Mexico border, while his opponents were against building it. He thus presented building the wall as a clear-cut issue involving two opposing choices, rather than as a more complex issue requiring a variety of approaches to meet a wide range of needs. President Trump's typical formulation of the border wall issue during his presidential campaign is illustrated by Excerpt 1 from a campaign rally held in Ohio:

*Excerpt 1: Event 29, Trump Campaign Rally Ohio (27 October 2016)*

- 1 DT: Hillary also said she wants totally open borders.  
 2 Aud: (BOOING)  
 3 DT: No one who supports open borders can ever serve as president of  
 4 the United States. Totally open borders. A Trump administration  
 5 will also secure and defend the borders of the United States. And  
 6 yes, we will build a wall.  
 7 Aud: (APPLAUSE)  
 8 DT: Have to. We have to.  
 9 Aud: Build that wall. Build that wall. Build that wall.

At this presidential campaign event, then candidate Mr Trump stated that his opponent, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton ('Hillary'), 'wants totally open borders' (line 1). He then contrasts that claim with his position, which will 'secure and defend the borders of the United States' (line 5). He goes on to say that 'we will build a wall' (line 6), thus presenting 'a wall' as the solution to the problem of defenseless, open borders.

As campaign tactics, simple yes/no and for/against formulations may be more effective persuasive tools than more complex arguments (Holloway, 2009; Smith, 2009). However, in terms of the evolving debate over how to manage the US/Mexico border and undocumented immigration more generally, this formulation is neither accurate nor effective. This formulation may also contribute to the construction and maintenance of 'borders' or divisions between critical segments of the US government, political parties, the media and the general public. Presenting the issue in terms of being for or against building 'the wall' creates borders between supporters of President Trump and those who oppose him, between Republican and Democratic lawmakers, between citizens of different political parties, and between citizens and immigrants.

These choices about how the border issue is formulated can also be used to paint others in a negative way. For example, in a post-election event, President Trump refers to building the wall (Excerpt 2, line 1). He then justifies the need for the wall ('we will keep out the gang members, criminals, drug and human traffickers that threaten our citizens and that threaten security'; lines 1–3). He thus presents the wall as a simple cure-all for a wide range of social problems. This construction indirectly creates an 'us versus them' border between U.S. citizens and undocumented immigrants, who President Trump refers to as gang members, criminals and so on. He goes on to construct political barriers, drawing lines between those in Congress who agree with him as opposed to those who are against him (lines 5–7).

*Excerpt 2: Event 22, Trump Trophy Presentation (2 May 2017)*

- 1 DT: And make no mistake, we are beginning to build the wall, and we  
 2 will keep out the gang members, criminals, drug and human  
 3 traffickers that threaten our citizens and that threaten security.  
 4 Aud: (Applause.)  
 5 DT: Any member of Congress who opposes our plans on border  
 6 security – and I know these folks didn't – is only empowering



7                    these deadly and dangerous threats. And we will not put up with it,  
8                    and the public won't put up with it.

Even after the 2016 election campaign, those who opposed building ‘the wall’ still often referenced ‘the wall’ in their public statements on this issue rather than arguing for specific policy positions regarding border security. For example, in a post-election speech during a Senate debate, Democratic Senator Dick Durbin uses the ‘border wall’ formulation in a challenge of President Trump’s formulation of the wall as an issue that ‘we’ (the American people) support (Excerpt 3):

*Excerpt 3: Event 21, Sen D Durbin D-Illinois (12 February 2018)*

109    DD:        It's hard to find any issue in our politically divided country that  
110                   brings so many people together but this one does.  
111                   Overwhelmingly both political parties and independents. The other  
112                   side, the President, is proposing a border wall. Oh we remember  
113                   that during the campaign for sure. A big, beautiful wall from sea  
114                   to shining sea and the Mexicans will pay for it. How many times  
115                   have we heard that speech? Many times. What will the American  
116                   people. . . with the Quinnipiac poll tells us is by approximately  
117                   a two-one margin the American public opposes a border  
118                   wall. And when you attach the price tag to it, how much  
119                   will it cost, \$25 billion, the numbers change. When first asked if  
120                   they support or opposed the border wall with Mexico the public  
121                   opposes it 59 to 37%.

Senator Durbin characterizes those in favor of building the wall as the ‘other side’ (lines 111–112) and links the President’s proposal to build a wall across the southern US border with the ‘other side’ (lines 112–115). He goes on to present polling data supporting his claim that the American people oppose the border wall by a large margin (lines 115–118). This formulation works to separate President Trump and the ‘other side’ from membership in the category ‘the American people’, thereby marginalizing their position.

### *Reformulating the border wall to border security*

While candidate Trump initially proposed building a wall across the United State’s entire southern border, in these data both Republicans and Democrats, as well as experts involved in immigration and border security issues, routinely reframe the issue in terms of ‘border security’. This alternative formulation of the problem subtly but consequentially changes the nature of the debate from a binary choice (‘build the wall’ vs ‘don’t build the wall’), to a multifaceted debate over what border security is and how it can best be accomplished. While both Republicans and Democrats tend to acknowledge the need for border security, there is disagreement on what exactly border security means and how to best achieve it. These different perspectives, party affiliations and goals are both reflected in and constructed through how these issues are formulated, framed and justified during debate and discussion of the border and related issues.

While Mr Trump's presidential campaign rhetoric formulated the border issue as 'build the wall', most others argue for a partial wall extending across selected parts of the border rather than for a complete wall across the entire US/Mexico border. The 'partial wall' formulation implies a very different approach to the best ways to solve problems than does the 'build the wall' rhetoric of the Trump presidential campaign. However, a proposal to build a partial wall over some parts of the border may not be as effective a campaign slogan or rallying cry than is 'build the wall'.

There is some evidence that the framing of the issue as being about 'the wall' has shaped the political debate and the political strategies used by both sides. For example, in Excerpt 4 from a Senate Debate, Republican Senator Lankford protests against a Democratic proposal to provide some funding for 'the wall' in exchange for legislation protecting the DACA Dreamers (people brought to the United States as children without documentation). He argues that the wall is not the issue, border security is. Reframing the issue as border security implies a very different set of problems and proposed solutions to those problems. Note that at the beginning of this excerpt Senator Lankford attributes the points made to 'some of my democratic colleagues' (line 94), expressing their position as 'there is no benefit in the wall' (line 95), and their offer as a trade of DACA citizenship for money to build a wall (lines 97–99). He then marks a shift to his position with 'That has never been the request, and everyone knows it. The request has been border security' (lines 99–100). Reframing the issue from citizenship for DACA recipients to 'border security' doesn't just reject the Democrats' proposed solution, it also changes the subject matter of the debate from the needs of specific groups of people to a general concern for 'border security'.

*Excerpt 4: Event 26, Senator Lankford, Senate Debate (14 February 2018)*

94 L: Months ago some of my democratic colleagues over and over  
 95 again said the wall will do nothing there is no benefit in the wall.  
 96 If you do a 20-foot wall, there'll be a 21-foot ladder. It'll do  
 97 absolutely nothing. Now the conversation is well, we will give  
 98 citizenship to DACA and we'll give you some money to build a  
 99 wall, and we'll call it even. That has never been the request, and  
 100 everyone knows it. The request has been border security. Not just  
 101 a wall. And I'm very aware the President has talked about a big  
 102 beautiful wall a lot. I get that. But it has always been about border  
 103 security, not just putting up a wall in certain places. There has  
 104 never been an emphasis to build two thousand miles of wall.  
 105 There is the need for a wall in certain urban areas, but what's really  
 106 needed is border security and everyone knows it. I don't  
 107 understand why border security has suddenly become a  
 108 controversial issue.

Senator Lankford, in essence, also rejects President Trump's proposal to build 'the wall' and instead works to reformulate the issue as a need for 'border security'. He acknowledges President Trump's 'build the wall' campaign rhetoric (lines 101–102), but rejects the importance of that rhetoric in favor of a different formulation of the issue: 'But

it has always been about border security, not just putting up a wall in certain places. There has never been an emphasis to build two thousand miles of wall' (lines 101–105).

Senator Lankford thus acknowledges the campaign rhetoric of 'build the wall', but denies that that has ever been the goal or the intent of his party, and instead argues for 'a wall in certain urban areas' (lines 105–106). He states that 'what's really needed is border security' (line 106). The 'wall' versus 'no wall' dichotomy is thus rejected by this Republican Senator and is replaced by a goal of 'border security'. His vision of how to improve border security includes a partial wall.

In the data analyzed in this article, Republican supporters of the wall almost uniformly argued for a 'partial wall plus' approach, a combination of a partial wall (often referred to as 'infrastructure'), personnel and technology. For instance, in Excerpt 5, Mr Brandon Judd (President, National Border Patrol Council), is testifying at a Congressional Subcommittee hearing on behalf of the Border Patrol.

*Excerpt 5: Event 10, House Subcom Brandon Judd (27 April 2017)*

318 BJ: First off, I will not advocate for two thousand miles worth of  
319 border. That's just not necessary. But what I will advocate for is a  
320 border wall in strategic locations which helps us secure the  
321 border.

From the very beginning of his testimony, Mr Judd makes it clear that he is rejecting the 'build the wall' formulation, which involves building a solid wall across the entire US/Mexico border (lines 318–319). He instead argues for a wall in 'strategic locations' (line 320); in short, a partial wall. He also reframes the issue in terms of the goal of securing the border (lines 320–321), a subtle but important difference from candidate Trump's use of the wall as a device to keep what he characterizes as criminals and other dangerous people out.

In a press conference about the border wall held by the US Customs and Border Control, former administrator Ronald Vitiello conveys his support for the effectiveness of border walls while promoting other border security measures and resources (Excerpt 6):

*Excerpt 6: Event 13, Ronald Vitiello, US Customs (28 August 2017)*

52 RV: The U.S. border patrol sector chiefs have been vocal about their  
53 need for effective barriers to deny the entry of illegal aliens and  
54 contraband. The truth is walls work and agents know it. DHS is  
55 committed to a balanced investment in physical infrastructure and  
56 technology, roads, technology and personnel to support missions.

Mr Vitiello refers to 'walls' (line 54), not 'the wall', thus subtly refraining from aligning himself with Trump's demand for a wall across the whole southern border. He immediately formulates his position as advocacy for a combination of walls ('physical infrastructure'; line 55) along with other measures to enhance security ('roads, technology and personnel to support missions'; lines 55–56).

Republican Senator Cornyn, speaking at a press briefing, also frames the issue as border security and includes walls within that category along with other resources to enhance security. He defines the needs for border security as infrastructure, technology and personnel. He specifies that walls are one part of border security (Excerpt 7):

*Excerpt 7: Event 11, Senators press conference Senator John Cornyn (28 October 2017)*

146 JC: Border security is really about three things it's about  
 147 infrastructure—walls, fences and the like, it's about technology—  
 148 and I think we have a picture of an aero statt and drones and the  
 149 type of technology which are literally force multipliers, and then  
 150 it's about personnel.

Senator Jeff Flake, a Republican who has often publicly disagreed with President Trump, speaks about the wall proposal in a town hall with his constituents (Excerpt 8):

*Excerpt 8: Event 16, Sen Flake Town Hall (21 August 2017)*

18 JF: There are areas in some of the towns where we need better walls or  
 19 fences as we go out of the cities. There are some areas I can tell  
 20 you along the border that do not lend themselves to a wall or a  
 21 fence or just about any barrier but are best dealt with with  
 22 surveillance and so when people talk about one solution on the  
 23 border they haven't traveled the border.

Senator Flake argues that 'better walls or fences' (lines 18–19) may be needed in some places. However, he does not say *new* walls or fences. He thus allows for the interpretation that he rejects Trump's call to build new wall across parts of the border not previously walled, implying that those who advocate that are uniformed. Note also his use of the false generic 'people' (line 22) to refer to Trump and others who insist on 'building the wall'. Senator Flake argues that geographical features make walls impractical at some points along the border and recommends alternative techniques (e.g. 'surveillance'). He is creating an opposition between people who have 'traveled' the border, and understand its issues, as opposed to people who have not, and hence do not understand border issues. He thus draws the boundaries between groups, policies, positions and issues in a way that subtly challenges the Trump position, while at least partially arguing within his framework. Another difference from President Trump's position is that Senator Flake speaks about 'walls or fences', thus taking the wind out of the 'build the wall' rhetoric.

A highly publicized meeting was held on 9 January 2018, in which President Trump met with both Republican and Democratic members of Congress to start a bipartisan negotiation on the DACA issue. The discussion in this meeting touched on the border wall issue several times. In Excerpt 9 President Trump's Secretary of Homeland Security, Kristin Nielsen, argues for including the border security issue in the agreement on DACA.

*Excerpt 9: Event 29, Trump meets with Congress (9 January 2018)*

916 KN: The reason that border security is so important to have as part of  
 917 this discussion, is that it doesn't solve the problem if we can  
 918 apprehend people but we can't remove them. So we need the wall  
 919 system, which is some physical infrastructure as the President  
 920 described, personnel and technology, but we have to close those  
 921 legal loopholes, because the effect is that is this incredible pull up  
 922 from Central America that just continues to exacerbate the  
 923 problem. So border security has to be part of this or we will be  
 924 here again in three, four, five years again maybe, unfortunately,  
 925 sooner.

Instead of referring to 'the wall', Secretary Nielsen refers to 'the wall system' (lines 918–919). She then goes on to define the wall system as ('some physical infrastructure as the President described, personnel and technology', lines 919–920). She thus pays homage to the president's campaign promise to 'build the wall', but reformulates 'the wall' into 'some physical infrastructure'; thus siding with the 'partial wall' position. Furthermore, she immediately adds 'personnel and technology' (line 920), thus positioning herself with the 'partial wall plus' side of the debate.

In contrast, consider Excerpt 10 from a brief statement by Mexican President Nieto during a press briefing held with President Trump. President Nieto, speaking through a translator, avoids mentioning the wall at all, and instead talks about border security and NAFTA, thus redirecting the focus to issues of concern to Mexico rather than just to President Trump's concern with the wall.

*Excerpt 10: Event 1, Press Briefing, Pres. Trump and Mexican Pres. Nieto (through translator)*

6 Nieto: . . . and I'm sure this is going to help us say continue a very flowing  
 7 dialogue sir, that will allow us of course for the negotiation of  
 8 NAFTA. If we continue working in terms of cooperation  
 9 especially for security for the security of both nations. Especially  
 10 in our borders, and of course also working in migration issues  
 11 which is a task that both of our nations are occupied and our  
 12 administrations are occupied with this issue as well.

President Nieto avoids creating an 'us versus them' relationship between himself and President Trump and instead uses the pronouns 'we' and 'us' to create an affiliation or an alignment between Mexico and the United States. He also talks about 'dialogue', 'cooperation' and 'negotiation' instead of creating opposition, and about how 'both nations' can be affected or benefited by their actions on the border security issue. He thus side-steps the issue of the wall and any attempts to divide the two countries via the wall (both literally and figuratively; in other words, the rhetoric of the wall can be just as 'divisive' as the actual wall could be).

In sum, while the Trump campaign's rhetoric about 'the wall' was prominent in news coverage and in the public's view of the issue, the analysis of these data suggest that its

uses by those on both ‘sides’ of the political debate reject the proposal to ‘build a wall’ in favor of broader and more diverse views on how border security can be achieved. When Republicans use the term, they often pay lip service to the idea of building ‘the wall’ and then go on to advocate a ‘partial wall plus’ policy. When Democrats use the term, it may be used strategically to argue against the validity of President Trump’s or the Republican’s approach, but it is essentially a straw man argument because even the Republicans (and apparently now President Trump himself) do not advocate building a wall over the entire southern United States border. Instead, they may also argue that the partial wall and other security measures are needed.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, participants both for and against Trump’s campaign proposal to build the wall work to reformulate the dichotomous wall/no wall issue to the border security issue. Building a partial wall (sometimes referred to obliquely as ‘infrastructure’) is almost always specifically included in border security. The interactional techniques used to accomplish these shifts include reformulations, reframings and footing shifts. Speakers arguing for a Trump/Republican approach to the issue may begin with homage to the ‘build the wall’ rhetoric to display their political alignment, but then quickly or even immediately work to reframe the issue as border security and/or a partial wall. Even President Trump’s own rhetoric shifts to the ‘partial wall plus’ formulation by the early 2018 events included in this data set. Across the data, a complete wall across the southern US/Mexico border is implicitly or explicitly rejected, except in the context of Trump campaign events. Most opponents of President Trump’s proposal acknowledge at least some openness to partial walls as part of a larger border security package, but they typically choose to emphasize other aspects of the issue and may down play or belittle the border wall idea altogether. However, the idea of building the wall is still a powerful rhetorical construction in some contexts at the end of the period studied.

Another important component of the interactional techniques and strategies used to produce arguments on both sides of the debate is how these participants refer to people who cross borders without approved documentation. In the next section of this article, I explore how persons who cross borders without approved documents are referred to and how these formulations help create and maintain borders between people and political groups.

## **The politics of identification and description in references to persons**

In this section, I analyze how people who cross the US/Mexico border without approved documentation are referred to and described in the context of discussions about the border wall/border security issue. The avowed goal of the proposed border wall is to prevent people from entering the southern border of the United States without approved documentation. Discourse about the border wall therefore often includes references to such people.

In these data a range of different formulations and membership categories is used to describe this group of people. Simply talking about ‘building the wall’ without mentioning the people whose movement it is intended to prevent is one way of referencing these people – by eliding them from the discussion. I found that references to them and their

qualities and attributes are formulated strategically to support the speaker's positions. For example, they may be referred to as 'people', 'undocumented immigrants', 'border crossers', 'illegal aliens', 'criminal aliens' and so on. Some references to those who cross the border without documentation are formulated with neutral or positive connotations. However, the majority of references are formulated in negative ways which convey the impression of otherness or otherwise dehumanize people in this group.

Supporters of the wall or the 'wall plus enhancement of the US/Mexico border' perspective at times use membership categories and formulations which have the effect of accentuating the 'us versus them' nature of the relationship between American citizens and the undocumented people who cross the border. These formulations use membership categorizations emphasizing illegality rather than personhood, thus facilitating the use of negative descriptors and characterizations of the people referenced. For example, Maria Espinosa, the leader of an advocacy group that works on behalf of families of people killed by undocumented immigrants, testified at a Congressional subcommittee hearing on the border security issue.<sup>5</sup> Excerpt 11 shows part of Ms Espinosa's testimony in which she used extreme case formulations (Pomerantz, 1978) and other techniques to emphasize the danger and 'otherness' of those committing the crimes (as well as the nature of the crimes themselves). She argues that these negative consequences will continue if 'the wall' is not built:

*Excerpt 11: Event 10, House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee Hearing, Maria Espinosa (27 April 2017)*

432 ME: If not built, when another open borders president is elected, the  
 433 technological deterrents, and all important army of border agents  
 434 will be reduced or entirely removed, allowing this holocaust of  
 435 American killings to resume. . . the government at every level has  
 436 previously failed to identify correctly these illegal alien killers. . .  
 437 we believe that all Americans, if they knew the true human costs of  
 438 this invasion, would demand the wall be built immediately. . . I  
 439 ask you to do all you can to stop these preventable killings and  
 440 murders that permanently separate families from their loved  
 441 ones. Please not one more stolen lives.

Ms Espinosa's use of the phrase 'American holocaust' is extremely provocative; she argues that the homicides committed by immigrants in the United States is equivalent to the Holocaust – clearly an invalid comparison. In terms of formulations of the agent, she uses the term 'illegal alien killers' to refer to the undocumented people who have killed American citizens. Note that the way she has defined the problem implies that killing American citizens is worse than killing someone who is not an American citizen. She is not arguing that 'illegal aliens' kill people more often than American citizens do (which, as we have seen – footnote 5 – they do not), and she is not saying that they kill Americans more often than they kill other noncitizens or undocumented people. She also does not discuss the undocumented people in the United States who themselves are sometimes the victims of violent crime (see, for example, Eschbach et al. (1999) for information on migrants to the United States from Mexico who were victims of homicide).

Ms Espinosa then describes the ‘invasion’ (line 438) of these ‘illegal alien killers’ (line 435). Frequency of violent crime is not the problem in her representation of the issue. Rather, she presents the problem as the particular group of people responsible for the crimes. She goes on to describe these crimes as ‘preventable killings’ (line 439). Her goal is to remove this one category of perpetrator, the undocumented person who kills an American citizen, rather than to prevent crime in general or reduce homicide in general. In addition, when she says ‘permanently separate families from their loved ones’ (lines 440–441) her formulation obliquely mirrors pro-immigrant arguments that critique US immigration policies that separate families (e.g. when some family members are legal immigrants/citizens, and another family member, who is undocumented, is deported).

At the same hearing, Representative DeSantis argues that the solution to this problem is to not allow any ‘criminal aliens’ into this country (Excerpt 12):

*Excerpt 12: Event 10, House Subcom Rep DeSantis (8 February 2017)*

55 DS: Of course securing the border is about more than dollars and cents.  
 56 It’s also about the government’s duty to secure its borders, defend  
 57 our sovereignty, and most importantly, protect our citizens. Illegal  
 58 immigration has had significant human costs. Too many  
 59 Americans have been robbed of loved ones through crimes  
 60 committed by criminal aliens who should not have been allowed  
 61 in this country to begin with.

Representative DeSantis frames this point by moving from concern over cost (‘securing the border is about more than dollars and cents’; line 55) and into the realm of government’s role and responsibility (‘the government’s duty to secure its borders, defend our sovereignty, and most importantly, protect our citizens’; lines 56–57). He argues that the border security issue is an essential duty of the federal government, thus taking it out of the realm of partisan politics or debates over the budget, to both of which it has been tied. However, by referring to ‘criminal aliens’ who have killed Americans, he ends up with the same argument that Ms Espinosa made (Excerpt 12, lines 58–60).

Neither Ms Maria Espinosa nor Representative DeSantis directly claim that undocumented people in the United States are more likely to commit crimes or that all or most undocumented people are ‘criminals’. However, the terms they use to refer to individuals and actions work to create this (false) impression. They use these provocative labels and terms and speak only about those who have committed violent crimes, while completely omitting references to the vast majority of undocumented people who are law abiding.

After his election, President Trump made similar claims to those he made during the campaign. For example, in Excerpt 13, President Trump mentions the building of the wall (line 1), followed immediately by the statement that ‘we will keep out the gang members, criminals, drug and human traffickers . . .’ (lines 1–3). He thus ignores the vast majority of law-abiding people without documents who cross the border and focuses only on the small minority who engage in criminal activity. Notice that ‘we’ (line 7) refers to his administration, while the members of Congress who oppose ‘our plans’ are portrayed as the enemy.



*Excerpt 13: Event 22, Trump Trophy Presentation (2 May 2017)*

- 1 DT: And make no mistake, we are beginning to build the wall, and we  
 2 will keep out the gang members, criminals, drug and human  
 3 traffickers that threaten our citizens and that threaten security.  
 4 Aud: (Applause.)  
 5 DT: Any member of Congress who opposes our plans on border  
 6 security – and I know these folks didn't – is only empowering  
 7 these deadly and dangerous threats. And we will not put up with it,  
 8 and the public won't put up with it.

Support for the wall does not always coincide with political party. For example, a member of the public who self-identifies as a Democrat called in to a C-SPAN political interview show and argued in favor of the wall (Excerpt 14):

*Excerpt 14: Event 15, C-SPAN Open phones, Democratic Caller (8 January 2017)*

- 45 C: I think that's one thing that I find that Donald elect Trump is doing  
 46 is going to be good for this country. I think the wall is needed. I  
 47 think that we have a problem allowing illegal aliens and just  
 48 immigrants in general just come over and pile up in our country  
 49 and take our entitlements from people who have, who's citizens of  
 50 this country that don't have. And it is a problem.

Although speaking in support of the wall, this caller does not use the same rhetorical techniques as the speakers in Excerpts 11, 12 and 13 above. The caller makes a distinction between 'illegal aliens' and 'just immigrants in general'. The caller's argument is focused on financial losses to citizens, rather on negative qualities of immigrants.

In sum, how President Trump and others formulate references to people who cross the border without documentation often rely on negative membership categories to refer to these people (as criminals, drug dealers and so on), and erase from their arguments (by not mentioning) the vast majority who are law-abiding people. In the next subsection, I show how those who oppose President Trump's approach to border security are more likely to mention positive attributes of people who cross the border without documentation or to describe them in terms of membership categories with positive connotations.

### *References to positive aspects of immigrants and immigration*

The techniques used to refer to and describe people who cross the border without documentation are sometimes positive formulations. These positive formulations are typically used by those who oppose President Trump's approach to border security or his 'build the wall' proposal. In these data I found that positive or at least more neutral forms of references to persons are generally produced by (1) Democrats or others arguing for border security measures which differ from President Trump's

expressed vision and (2) other persons arguing for various aspects of the ‘border security’ perspective. Speakers in both these categories often used more neutral categories such as ‘undocumented workers’ or ‘undocumented immigrants’ and rarely used categories such as ‘illegal aliens’.

*Excerpt 16: Event 4, Brookings Institute Panel, Vanda Felbab-Brown, speaking against the proposed wall (11 January 2018)*

132 VFB: to a large extent, undocumented workers work the unpleasant back  
133 breaking jobs that native American workers, that native born  
134 workers do are not willing to perform.

*Excerpt 17: Event 10, House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee Hearing, Congresswoman Val Demings (Democratic—speaking against wall); (27 April 2017)*

1028 VD: What I can also tell you, without hesitation, is that the  
1029 overwhelming majority of the people we arrested in those cases  
1030 were not undocumented immigrants, and so the ranking member is  
1031 absolutely correct that we do, as we keep America safe, it is my  
1032 number one priority, we have to be careful that we are not  
1033 generalizing a certain group of people from a certain place.

*Excerpt 18: Event 21, Democratic Senator Durbin (12 February 2018)*

171 DD: The majority of Americans do not believe that undocumented  
172 immigrants commit more crimes than American citizens.

In Excerpt 19 from a Senate Debate, Democratic Senator Dick Durbin first references the view of ‘immigrants’ as committing ‘too many crimes’ (lines 145–146). He performs a footing shift from the ‘we’ that conducted the survey (line 143) to ‘they say’ (starting in lines 145) to present these ideas as belonging to others. He goes on to problematize these claims and challenge their facticity. For example, he provides survey data which suggests that ‘the public’ is opposed to President Trump’s positions on these issues (lines 150–163).

*Excerpt 19: Event 21 Sen. Durbin (12 February 2018)*

143 DD: Then we asked hot button issues on immigration and throughout  
144 our history these issues were raised about immigrants. Immigrants  
145 they say take American jobs. Immigrants, they say, commit too  
146 many crimes and if you listen the President's state of the union  
147 address a week or two this reprehensible gang engaged in criminal  
148 activities, overseas and in the United States. I don't know of  
149 anyone in either political party that endorses that. The President  
150 used some graphic examples about their conduct. But when the  
151 public was asked about those two positions are these immigrants  
152 taking away American jobs and are they committing more crimes,

153 interesting result. The American public overwhelming rejects the  
 154 idea that undocumented immigrants take jobs from Americans and  
 155 are prone to commit more crime. Despite the relentless  
 156 scapegoating efforts from some, Americans do not believe  
 157 undocumented immigrants take jobs away from Americans. 63%  
 158 to 33% reject it. . . ((11 lines omitted)) How about issue of crime?  
 159 The majority of Americans do not believe that undocumented  
 160 immigrants commit more crimes than American citizens. 72% to  
 161 17% rejected this idea and that just reflects the reality. The  
 162 incidence of crimes committed by those who are immigrants is  
 163 lower than those who are native born. It's a fact. It's a fact that  
 164 some like to ignore.

Later on in the debate, Senator Durbin gives another example to document his argument that immigrants are a positive factor for America. He recounts his mother's immigration story:

*Excerpt 20: Event 21 Sen. Durbin (12 February 2018)*

184 DD: If you have had a good life, gone to school, not a criminal, and  
 185 offer some promise for a job and a future in America, you deserve  
 186 a chance to earn your way into legal status, into citizenship. I  
 187 come to this with some prejudice. My mother was an immigrant to  
 188 this country. She was brought here at the age of two. She was the  
 189 first dreamer in my family, and she was brought here from  
 190 Lithuania, where she was born. Her mother brought her to this  
 191 country, didn't speak English. But brought her three kids here in  
 192 the hopes that they could find an opportunity they couldn't find  
 193 back in Lithuania. For them the land of opportunity was a city  
 194 called East St. Louis, Illinois, which is where I was born and I  
 195 grew up. It offered immigrants tough jobs and opportunity, maybe  
 196 create a better life for the kids and when it came to this kid, my  
 197 mom and her family gave me a chance to serving the United States  
 198 Senate. That's my story, that my family story but that's America's  
 199 story. I came here with a strong back and a determination to work  
 200 and feed his family, and he did it. My grandmother was the same.  
 201 That is the story of this country.

The gist of Senator Durbin's story is that immigrants are hard working, family-oriented people who deserve legal status. This excerpt differs from those advocating at least partial support of President Trump's position in that he presents a positive image of immigrants. Using an example from his own life, Senator Durbin tells the story of his family's immigration to the United States, emphasizing their goals and hopes and why coming to the United States was a good thing for them. He conveys a positive image of immigrants by showing their good intentions and what they have to contribute to the country. He then claims such immigration as an essential part of being American ('That is the story of this country'; line 201).

Another way of emphasizing the positive contribution of people without documents who cross the border is to recognize their role in increasing the diversity of American society:

*Excerpt 21: Event 21, Sen. Durbin (12 February 2018)*

199 DD: Now we are going to debate this week, in the United States Senate,  
 200 whether it will continue to be the story of this country. Some will  
 201 argue we've had enough of these immigrants, we don't need more  
 202 of them. And others, I hope, will realize that we have an  
 203 opportunity here. An opportunity to contribute to this country's  
 204 future, to create the diversity that makes us unique in the world.  
 205 The diversity of immigration. I think we can come up with a  
 206 reasonable answer to this.

Again, Senator Durbin frames immigrants as making a positive contribution to this country, rather than referring to them as criminal aliens or listing examples of the crimes committed by a few. He elaborates his point from the excerpt above, by characterizing immigration as a source of 'the diversity that makes us unique in the world' (line 204).

In a televised news interview on C-SPAN's *Washington Journal* (Excerpt 22), David Bier (an immigration policy analyst from the Cato Institute) advocates that the United States reinstate a previous guest worker program (which he argues was successful), instead of building a wall to keep people without documents out of the United States. Mr Bier's solution is essentially that we prevent border crossings of people without documents by providing a way for them to obtain documents, thus making their border crossings legal (lines 248; 255–258). The continuation of his statement shows that he rejects the characterization of this category of people as criminals. He specifically separates out criminals as a group of people that must be dealt with because of their criminality (lines 258–262).

*Excerpt 22: Event 24, WashJournal, David Bier (1 April 2017)*

247 JM: What would you argue for?  
 248 DB: I would argue for a temporary work visa program. The last time we  
 249 had a large temporary work visa program with Mexico was in the  
 250 1950's, and the 1960's it ramped up under the Eisenhower  
 251 administration. It was called the Bracero guest worker program and  
 252 what happened with that program, they allowed about .5 million  
 253 people to come in each year legally, work in the United States.  
 254 They would return home each year and really, the number of  
 255 people crossing the border was never lower than during this period  
 256 of time when we had that guest worker program. And if we  
 257 duplicated the success of that program today, would really see the  
 258 illegal immigration problem go away. And border agents could  
 259 start focusing entirely on the criminal activity along the border, the  
 260 cartel activity, and not worry about people who are just coming to

261 the United States to work temporarily and focus on the actual  
 262 threats to the United States.

David Bier is arguing as a representative of a libertarian research institute, and his perspective differs from those discussed above in that he, for the most part, avoids the ‘build the wall/border security’ formulations. In this excerpt he argues that neither a wall nor increased border security measures are what is needed to solve the problem of undocumented immigrants. He advocates for a ‘temporary work visa program’ (line 248) to give people documents to come to the United States to work for finite periods of time.<sup>6</sup>

In sum, while there are some exceptions, the positive characterizations and formulations of people who cross the border without documents are typically produced by speakers who are in opposition to President Trump’s formulation of the border issue during the period the analysis in this article covers. Those who either favor or are in some way sympathetic to his goals typically use negative characterizations and referents. These varying characterizations are used to justify or strengthen arguments in favor of specific positions.

## Conclusion

In this article, I have investigated interactional techniques that can be used to create and maintain boundaries between people, political parties and positions. As campaign tactics, simple yes/no and for/against formulations may be more effective as persuasive tools than more complex arguments (Holloway, 2009; Smith, 2009). Reducing complex issues and potential solutions into dichotomous categories (as in for the wall or against the wall) may be persuasive politically but is likely to be less effective for developing solutions to problems. However, in terms of the evolving debate over how to manage the US/Mexico border and undocumented immigration more generally, these types of formulations are neither accurate nor effective. These formulations may also contribute to the construction and maintenance of ‘borders’ or divisions between critical segments of the US government, political parties, the media and the general public. Presenting the issue in terms of being for or against building ‘the wall’ creates borders between supporters of President Trump and those who oppose him, between Republican and Democratic lawmakers, between citizens of different political parties, and between citizens and immigrants.

In the political events studied in this article (which occurred in October, 2016; through March, 2018), the definition and meaning of the wall differed depending on who is describing it. A variety of opinions are displayed about what should be done about border crossings, border security and border issues in general. However, there is comparatively little disagreement on whether a wall should be built across the entire US/Mexico border in order to reduce border crossings by people without documentation: At most a partial wall is advocated by almost all speakers on both sides of the issue in this data set. Differences exist, however, in terms of the reasons why changes to the border, border laws and procedures should be made. There are also differences in the interactional techniques used to argue positions from different sides of this debate and to refer to people

who cross the border without documents. In these data I found that those supporting President Trump's positions and those opposing them differ in several ways in terms of how their positions are formulated, framed and supported.

In her article on the history of law around migration, Resnik (2017: 118) writes, 'Neither the vocabulary of illegality nor hostility to migrants was inevitable; aliens did not have to come to be seen as "outlaws"'. Similarly, the use of the 'othering' techniques found in this article, which create and reinforce boundaries between groups of people through techniques which disparage or dehumanize others, or which link groups of people to negative characteristics such as criminality, are not inevitable strategies for arguing for specific types of solutions to border issues. It is to be hoped that this analysis of how the border wall is discussed can help reframe this debate. Rhetorical techniques that demonize (or, portray in an idealized way) may be successful persuasive strategies in specific political contexts, but discussion and debate based on facts is more likely to lead to effective solutions.

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### **Notes**

1. Some studies of within-country migration (e.g. McHugh, 1984) reference the 'push-pull' explanation of migration (Lee, 1966), in which factors pushing a person away from their current place of residence and factors attracting them toward a new place (such as family and friends or a prospective job) play a major role in the decision to migrate or not. While McHugh's (1984) study illuminates the social psychological factors affecting decisions people make about migration, the social context of within-country migration is not necessarily comparable to between-country emigration. When immigration is due to a man-made or natural disaster, emergency, or long-term crisis, the push factors are of a different type and level of severity.
2. See Chavez (2013) and De Genova (2004) for a discussion of the history of the category 'illegal aliens' in the United States/Mexico context.
3. For an analysis of the historical context of immigration on this border, see De and Genova (2002) and Chomsky (2014).
4. For example, consider this excerpt from the 9 January 2018 meeting between President Trump and members of Congress:

*Event 29, Trump meets with Congress (9 January 2018)*

DT: I had the big meeting with ICE last week; I had a big meeting with the Border Patrol agents last week. Nobody knows it better than them. As an example, on the wall, they say, 'sir, we desperately need the wall'.

And we don't need a 2,000-mile wall. We don't need a wall where you have rivers and mountains and everything else protecting it. But we do need a wall for a fairly good portion. We also – as you know, it was passed in 2006, a essentially similar thing, which, a fence, a very substantial fence was passed. But, unfortunately, I don't know, they never got it done. But they need it.

5. Research shows that in general, immigrants to the United States are less likely to commit violent crimes than citizens (Light and Miller, 2018; Nowrasteh, 2018).
6. Massey and Pren (2012) discuss the history of the Bracero program and how its demise affected the rates of undocumented persons from Mexico in the United States.

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### Author biography

Angela Cora Garcia is a Professor of Sociology at Bentley University in Waltham, Massachusetts, with a secondary appointment in the Department of Global Studies. Her main areas of research are conversation analytic studies of mediation, emergency phone calls, and aviation communication. She also does qualitative studies in the sociology of leisure. She is the author of *How Mediation Works: Resolving Conflict through Talk* (Cambridge University Press, 2019) and a textbook on conversation analysis, *An Introduction to Interaction: Understanding Talk in Formal and Informal Settings* (Bloomsbury Press, 2013).

### Appendix I

*List of events and participants analyzed (all available on C-SPAN website)*

1. Press Conference (7 July 2017)  
Presidents Donald Trump and Nieto (Mexico)
2. White House Press Briefing (24 August 2017)  
Sarah Huckabee Sanders (White House Press Secretary)  
7 Reporters asking questions

3. White House Press Briefing (2 August 2017)  
Sarah Huckabee Sanders (White House Press Secretary)  
Stephen Miller (Presidential Advisor)  
15 reporters asking questions
4. Brookings Institute Panel (11 January 2018)  
Vanda Felbab-Brown  
Maria Pena  
Representative Henry Cuellar (D-Texas)  
Audience members asking questions: 2
5. C-SPAN 'Washington Journal' (8 February 2017)  
Host: John McArdle  
Guest: Representative Michelle L. Grisham (D-New Mexico)  
Audience members calling in: 9
6. Excerpts from Press Conference (28 August 2017)  
President Trump  
President of Finland  
Reporters asking questions: 2
7. C-SPAN 'Washington Journal' (28 October 2017)  
Host: Kimberly Atkins  
Guest: Rafael Carranza (Reporter, Arizona Republic)  
Callers: 5
8. Donald Trump Election Victory Rally in Wisconsin (13 December 2016)  
(brief excerpt relevant to the border wall)  
President-Elect Trump  
Audience (cheering and chanting)
9. White House Press Briefing  
Sean Spicer (White House Press Secretary)  
(6 excerpts relevant to border wall; 6 reporters asking questions)
10. House Subcommittee hearing on Border Wall Security (27 April 2017)  
Steven A. Camarota, Director, Center for Immigration Studies, Research and Programs  
James R. Comer, U.S. Representative, [R] Kentucky  
Val Demings, U.S. Representative, [D] Florida  
Ron DeSantis, U.S. Representative, [R] Florida  
Mark DeSaulnier, U.S. Representative, [D] California  
John James Duncan Jr., U.S. Representative, [R] Tennessee  
Maria Espinoza, Co-Founder and National Director, Remembrance Project  
Agnes Gibboney, Mother of son killed by illegal immigrant  
Glenn Grothman, U.S. Representative, [R] Wisconsin

Jody B. Hice, U.S. Representative, [R] Georgia  
 Brandon Judd, President, National Border Patrol Council  
 Seth M. Stodder, Assistant Secretary (Former), Department of Homeland Security, Border, Immigration and Trade Policy

11. Press Conference on Border Security and Immigration Enforcement (3 August 2017)

Senator John Cornyn (R-Texas)  
 Senator John Barrasso (R-Wyoming)  
 Senator Ron Johnson (R-Wisconsin)  
 Senator Thom Tillis (R-North Carolina)  
 8 reporters asked questions

12. C-SPAN 'Washington Journal' (8 February 2017)

Host: John McArdle  
 Guest: Rep Blake Farenthold (R-Texas)  
 Callers: 6

13. U.S. Customs and Border Protection Briefing (30 March 2018)

Ronald Vitiello, Acting Chief of U.S. Border Patrol  
 Reporters asking questions: 12

14. C-SPAN 'Washington Journal' (24 April 2017)

Host: Pedro Echevarria  
 Callers: 26

15. C-SPAN Open Phones (8 January 2017)

Host: Steven Scully  
 Callers: 17

16. Senator Jeff Flake (R-AZ) Town Hall, Gilbert Arizona, (21 August 2017)  
 (Excerpt from)

Participants: 2 (JF and one audience question in the excerpt)

17. White House Daily Briefing, Sarah Sanders (27 March 2018)

Participants: SHS and 6 different reporters in these excerpts from the Daily Briefing.

18. President Trump post-election rally in Melbourne, FL (16 February 2017)

Participants: DT and Audience applause

19. C-SPAN Washington Journal – Open Phones (2 May 2017)

Participants: Host: JM and 5 callers.

20. House Speaker Weekly Briefing (30 March 2017)

Participants: Paul Ryan (R-WI) and five reporters in these excerpts

21. Senator Minority Whip Durbin (D-Illinois) on Immigration Policy (12 February 2018)  
Participant: Senator Dick Durbin
22. Commander-in-Chief's Trophy Presentation (2 May 2017) (excerpts)  
Participants: DT
23. C-SPAN Congressional Week Ahead (24 April 2017)  
Participants: Host: SS, Bob Cusack, editor
24. C-SPAN Washington Journal (1 April 2017)  
Participants: Host: JM, guest: David Bier, 7 callers
25. C-SPAN Newsmakers (4 May 2017)  
Participants: Host: SSwain, 3 guests
26. Senate Floor Debate (14 February 2018)  
Participants: Senator Lankford, R-OK, Senator Coons, D-DW
27. C-SPAN Washington Journal, Week ahead in Congress.  
Participants: Host: PE, Guests: 2, Callers: 9
28. President Trump News Conference (16 February 2017)  
Participants: DT and one reporter in these excerpts
29. President meets with congressional leaders on immigration (9 January 2018)  
Participants in excerpts:  
DT, 8 senators, 7 congress people, department homeland security, 3 reporters
30. Presidential Candidate Trump Rally in Springfield, OH (27 October 2016)  
Participants: BE, DT, Audience responses in these excerpts