

THESIS

REPRESENTATIONS OF IMMIGRATION AND THE BORDER FENCE:  
AN EVALUATION OF MEDIA FRAMES IN TWO U.S. NEWSPAPERS

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WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY MANUEL ARTURO RODRÍGUEZ-ESCOBAR ENTITLED REPRESENTATIONS OF IMMIGRATION AND THE BORDER FENCE: AN EVALUATION OF MEDIA FRAMES IN TWO U.S. NEWSPAPERS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS.

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## ABSTRACT OF THESIS

### REPRESENTATIONS OF IMMIGRATION AND THE BORDER FENCE: AN EVALUATION OF MEDIA FRAMES IN TWO U.S. NEWSPAPERS

On October 26, 2006, President George W. Bush enacted the Secure Fence Act in response to what many congressional members and U.S. citizens deemed a growing immigration problem. In the months immediately preceding and following the authorization of the bill, various discourses arose across the nation to engage in a growing debate on ways to solve the perceived dilemmas caused by immigration. This study evaluated and compared the dialogues engaged within two U.S. newspapers to determine how the news outlets described and discussed immigration. More specifically, this study first explored news reports found in the *Washington Post*, since this newspaper serves as the leading periodical in the Washington D.C. area, where the Secure Fence Act was debated amongst journalists, politicians, and lobbyists. Next, this project investigated newspaper articles found in the *Brownsville Herald*, which serves a targeted audience living along the U.S.-Mexico border.

The goal of this investigation was to compare the two divergent discourses in order to identify the common themes and frames employed by media outlets to describe immigrants and immigration. This study incorporated theories of frame and metaphorical

analysis to determine the common themes utilized by journalists, politicians, and lobbyists in their descriptions of immigrants and immigration. Additionally, this project surveyed articles that included the key terms “immigration” and “border fence” in order to narrow the sample on dialogues centered around the passage of the Secure Fence Act. Lastly, this examination explored articles published in the three months prior to and three months following the enactment of the Secure Fence Act to best gauge suggestions, responses, and reactions to the U.S. governments’ response to the perceived immigration problem.

The findings indicated that the two periodicals discussed immigration and offered representations of immigrants utilizing very different themes and metaphors, which raised concerns about whether the 109th Congress appropriately and effectively responded to the perceived immigration problem. The author suggests that frame and metaphorical analysis can be incorporated into future studies focused on understanding how a particular issue is represented within a variety of media outlets. The author’s hope is that understanding the various sides and concerns of any particular issue can lead to a more productive dialogue on how to most effectively resolve the problems identified by various communities.

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I am forever grateful to *all* of you.

With love and appreciation,

*Manuel Arturo*

## Reflecting on Frame Analysis:

### Examining Immigration and the Border Fence

On the ninth day of September 2009, congressman Joe Wilson of South Carolina yelled, “You lie!” to President Barack Obama as he proclaimed to Americans that his proposed package for health care reform would not insure “illegal immigrants” (“Joe Wilson Says” n.p.). Almost nine months after a health care reform bill passed in the House of Representatives, the issue of whether immigrants will receive health benefits under this bill is still being contested, despite the legislation’s non-existent mention of coverage for immigrants. Kevin Sack of the *New York Times* writes, “Neither the House bill nor the bill that has passed the Senate Finance Committee would allow illegal immigrants to benefit directly from government-subsidized health coverage” (“Illegal Immigration May” n.p.). Yet, despite the fact that neither the House of Representatives’ nor the Senate’s bill for health care reform includes coverage for immigrants, many Republicans utilize this *ad hominem* fallacy to gain support in opposition of any substantive health care reform. The above example is one instance in which immigration is coupled with an unrelated political issue in an attempt to draw support from a political base that is adverse to immigrants.

The State of California utilized similar fallacies during the mid 1990s when Pete Wilson, then governor of the state, proposed legislation identified as anti-immigrant policies (Propositions 187, 209, and 227). Otto Santa Ana explains, “Each [proposition]

was designed to impose fundamental restrictions on 31 percent of the state's population, its Latino community" (Santa Ana 8). California's proposed legislation attempted to deny immigrants, and their children, access to schools, hospitals, and other social services. As the above examples suggest, immigration is a complex and malleable subject. Although immigration is not always at the center of the U.S. political discourse, it never quite submerges out of the American psyche or particular political agendas. For example, the most recent attempt to pass "comprehensive immigration reform" came in 2007 and failed in the Senate. I assert that because of issues like upcoming elections, the war in Iraq, and the economic recession, immigration reform has not received serious consideration since the 2007 failure to reform immigration. Other times, immigration is co-opted by politicians and affixed to hot topics involving broad political debates such as education, crime, and most recently health care to draw oppositional support, often along political lines, through fear tactics that suggest immigrants and immigration will tarnish the fiber of American culture. Although these examples are only but a few, the issue of immigration intrigues me for these reasons, in addition to identifying the perceptions found in discourses about immigration.

Immigration was informally introduced to me in my childhood experiences living in Texas. I vividly remember driving with my family as a child through south Texas towards the Mexican cities that bordered my home state. I admit that during those early years of my youth I did not know much about immigration or the debate surrounding it, however to claim that I did not recognize my privilege as an American would be a lie. I recall interrogating my parents with inquires like, "why is that little boy selling gum in the streets," "why doesn't that mother have any shoes," or "what are those people doing

in the river?" I remember too, the time my family spent our spring break in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, and as my father and I walked towards the sublime beauty of the Pacific Ocean through the area of the hotel pool, two English speaking teenagers stopped us and asked if we could get them some towels. I suppose you can say I became aware of my marked identity through those formative experiences in my life.

Later, my interest developed into a scholarly goal when the Bush Administration signed the Secure Fence Act of 2006 in our country's most recent legislative move towards immigration reform. The main goal of this bill was to strengthen the border and protect against the future influx of immigrants into the United States. President George W. Bush, however, opposed many of his party's constituents and supported the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2007, which would have provided a path to legal citizenship for many immigrants already residing in the United States. In the midst of resistance from local communities, local governments, and environmental advocates along the border, the Bush Administration decided to proceed with their plan to construct a fence spanning the near 2,000 mile terrain bordering with Mexico. In addition, the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2007 failed to gain support in the United States Senate and quickly fizzled out of the American agenda. Conversely, after initial construction began and the debate on immigration intensified, this project came to a standstill when bankers, politicians, and financial advisors suggested that the American economic system was imploding. Immigration reform did not rank high on the government's priority list and was shelved for future politicians to debate and discuss. Eventually hope, in the form of change, swept the country into a frenzy of possibilities that seemed impossible with previous administrations. Many people invested their hopes

in the Obama administration, which promised to usher in changes in border policy, LGBT rights, and health care reform, just to name a few. The social stakeholders of our country took to the voting booths, believing a change in administration would bring an end to the border fence.

However, a July 3rd PBS (2009) documentary reports otherwise. The documentary interviews Dr. Eloisa Tamez, a professor of nursing at the University of Texas at Brownsville, a Texas land owner along the U.S.-Mexico border, and voting supporter of President Barack Obama, who states, “He [President Obama] has failed, he has failed us. . . . He has not only failed us, but he has abandoned us. . . . Abandoned us, I mean the same policies continue. . . . None stopped, none stopped” (Hinojosa n.p.). The narrator of the documentary adds, “The Obama Administration is putting the finishing touches on a border fence with Mexico that Congress approved back in 2006 in a victory for immigration hardliners” (Hinojosa n.p.). Voices from landowners and local communities condemned the border wall when it first was proposed and they continue to denounce it during construction. In other cases, property owners found themselves at odds with government officials as they received unacceptable offers for their land. Many property owners refused these offers, which immediately enabled the government to extend their power of eminent domain and cease the lands through condemnation in order to build their fence. Property owners now coexist with iron fences that stand in their backyards. In some cases, the edges of their legal land plots, which were once their backyards, now lie in a buffer zone that separates the Rio Grande River and the newly constructed fence. These actions ignore the fact that communities living along the U.S.-Mexico border are accustomed to a culture that includes a combination of American and

Mexican traditions, which originated in the regions where the government continues their construction of a fence. However, opposition to the border wall was not limited to landowners and local communities. As I have described above, the immigration debate offers motley reactions to the hotly contested issue.

Throughout my thesis, I identify a number of responses to the construction of the border wall and the issue of immigration, which are varied and fluid as you will see. For example, the messages of landowners and local communities soon seeped across the country, drawing attention from immigrants and their allies across the nation. On March 3rd of 2009, a “March for Mobilization,” which was described as a demonstration for comprehensive immigration reform in Congress, was hosted on my university’s campus. Families and friends gathered as they marched to Colorado Congresswoman Betsy Markey’s office chanting, “Hear our voice/You have no choice” (Silveira n.p.). A Colorado State University student and participant, Michael Brydge, carried his son on his shoulders and a sign in his hands, which read, “Build communities, not walls. . . . Pass laws, not judgment” (Silveira n.p.). In another example of opposition to the border wall, environmentalists express concerns and contend that a physical structure, like a fence, would deteriorate the habitat unique to the American southwest and Mexican north.

The arguments from environmentalists established a place and space from which to argue against the border wall. One of the main flaws of the agenda set forth by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was their failure to adhere to protocol laid out in previous legislative policy. For example, Michael Chertoff, then Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, through his power under the Real ID Act of 2005 waived over thirty legislative acts in his agency’s quest to construct the border fence. The

policies overlooked include some of the oldest environmental and civil policies in the nation's history. Chertoff waived a checks and balances system that was enacted to protect these very laws. Some of the waived laws included: the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, the Clean Air Act, the Archeological and Historic Preservation Act, the Antiquities Act, the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956, the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899, Native American Graves Act, and the list continues to the sum of thirty-six laws waived (Ewing, *The Border Wall*, n.p.). The border fence is very real in places like the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge in Arizona or the Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge in Texas, which form a natural habitat for rare animals that are now being displaced by the construction of these walls.

One particular group opposed to the border fence is the environmental group, Defenders of Wildlife, which challenged the DHS's plan to build the fence by suing the government (Ewing n.p.). However, the Supreme Court later denied hearing the lawsuit, which set the precedence that authorized DHS to continue their project despite the environmental concerns that arose from this proposal. When asked what types of wildlife would be affected by this undertaking, Matt Clark, a representative of the Defenders of Wildlife's Southwest region, argues, "Bobcats, deer, mountain lions, they're all out of luck with this fence . . . they are not going to be able to cross to access habitats back and forth . . . what we are seeing is a classic example of habitat fragmentation" (Ewing n.p.). It quickly became evident that the government wanted to proceed with this plan despite expert testimony which argued against the fence. It is safe to say that the wildlife in this region was effectively disempowered and silenced through the actions of the government.



For example, according to the website *No Texas Border Wall*, “Ocelots, numbering less than 100 and listed under the Endangered Species Act live in the area’s remaining habitat” (“Environmental Impacts” n.p.). The construction of the fence continued despite many attempts to save this endangered animal. Additionally, concerns and arguments about the effectiveness of this structure were presented by mayors, city officials, property owners, and everyday citizens. Many critics believe that if a demand for immigrant labor continues, then individuals will continue risking their lives to enter the United States and fulfill this need. Another concern with the effectiveness of this wall arose when details about the construction were released and people realized that the plans for this wall only included 700 miles of “border wall,” despite the fact that the U.S.-Mexico border is nearly 2,000 miles long from the Pacific Coast to the Gulf Coast, but I will address this most extensively later in my thesis. These critics suggest that their government might be approaching this issue in an illogical and ineffective manner.

However, responses can also be negative towards immigrants and the issue of immigration in general. In one Texas community, an article in the *Dallas Morning News* reports that Mr. Bob Masling, a local resident, expressed his opinions on immigration through his statements. He claims, “We’re being invaded by wetbacks, and it’s up to us to stop the invasion. We can’t wait for Congress, much less our president, to take action” (Corchado n.p.). Masling adds, “This is West Texas; it isn’t France and here we don’t own any white flags,” which establishes this issue as a battle between Americans and “wetbacks” (Corchado n.p.). Mr. Masling interprets this issue as a battle that will be won by Americans who will not surrender. However, other voices offer differing opinions. For example, the same article cites Dr. Howard Campbell, an anthropologist at the University

of Texas at El Paso, as he explains, “More than the other border states, perhaps the Texas border has been the scene of a greater degree of Anglo-Mexican symbiosis, certainly asymmetrical, but still a permanent part of life along the Texas-Mexico border,” adding that “I think only in Texas we talk of Tex-Mex and Tejano as a kind of fusion of two cultures” (Corchado n.p.). In addition, the same article explains the opinion of Bill Bishop, a Texas rancher, as he proclaims, “This part of the world, everybody is related to everybody else, and everybody is related to everyone on the other side of the border and share a common language” (Corchado n.p.). These examples are only but a few cases of the variations in opinion that exist between the people who inhabit these borderlands and the lawmakers writing policy from a distance.

My study evaluates this debate from the varied frames and dialogues used to describe immigration and the border fence by examining two U.S. newspapers during the specific time period that preceded and followed the passage of the Secure Fence Act of 2006. I suggest the time sample from which I observe the immigration debate is a productive and dynamic moment in history to examine the frames and metaphors that shape the discourse surrounding immigration in the United States, and in the American southwest. For example, the post-9/11 time period is a significant moment in our nation’s history because of the increased desire for national security that immediately followed the attacks on the World Trade Center. National security, which I prove is incorporated synonymously with homeland security, creates a space for issues like immigration to be integrated into a debate on the security of our nation. I would argue that the events on the 11th day of September in 2001 instilled fear in the minds of some Americans, which created a space for those fearful of people with marked identities different from their own

to legislate against individuals such as immigrants. Similar reactions occurred in the United States during the 1940s when the U.S. entered World War II. For instance, according to historian Paul Spickard, in response to Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbor, “President Franklin Roosevelt issues Executive Order 9066 authorizing the U.S. Army to imprison 112,000 Japanese Americans, two-thirds of them U.S. citizens and the rest ineligible to citizenship on racial grounds” (472). As a result of this order, Japanese and Japanese Americans were subjected to imprisonment for the duration of World War II regardless of their status as citizens. I believe the attacks in New York City similarly implanted fear in the minds of many Americans about individuals that are thought to be different, like immigrants, and also authorized the government to fix the problem.

An investigation of specific newspapers during a specific time period on the issue of immigration through a frame and metaphorical analysis can uncover the discourses utilized to describe immigrants and immigration in the texts under analysis. As I contend in my thesis, the news articles from these newspapers unmasked the myriad dialogues within immigration discourses, and suggested how this topic was applied to the broader issue of national security along the United States’ borders. The time sample in this study is important because it examines the discourses involved in the immigration debate immediately before and after the passage of the Secure Fence Act, which consequently created a variety of spaces within the media, along and near the border, and in Washington D.C. to discuss immigration. By examining the Secure Fence Act and the discourses surrounding it, this examination exposes the frames and metaphors employed when describing immigration and the spatial implications established through immigration policy.

In my pursuit of articles, I combined the terms “immigration” and “border fence” to my search through the archives of the two newspapers under review. This search yielded a significant and sufficient number of results to conduct a frame and metaphorical analysis of the publications mentioned above. More specifically, my search of the *Washington Post* produced twenty articles, while my exploration of the *Brownsville Herald* generated thirty-two articles. Next, I conducted a frame and metaphorical analysis of the articles identified in my sample. My investigation of the sample concluded that three frames dominate the *Washington Post*, while two main themes function within the *Brownsville Herald*. In order to more thoroughly describe and support the method of my study, a section dedicated to a literature review of frame and metaphorical analysis is presented to provide the rationale for conducting this analysis. I employ a total of four research questions to guide my study. These research questions exposed the frames and metaphors applied to descriptions of immigrants and immigration in this debate. These questions included:

- (1) How are immigrants framed and represented in the *Washington Post* and the *Brownsville Herald*?
- (2) What are the similarities and differences in the frames found in the two newspapers?
- (3) How do frames and metaphors influence and shape debates over the Secure Fence Act?
- and (4) How are American citizens living in these communities affected by the construction of the border fence?

I believe that by asking and seeking responses to these essential questions, the greater American public can begin to understand what topics and issues are most important to the various sides of this debate. An examination of the responses and reactions to the Secure Fence Act can lead to engaging dialogues between those affected by this political decision.

Through my analysis of immigration and the border fence, I found that immigrants are generally described in demeaning and hurtful ways that strip them of their agency and humanity. In other instances, immigrants are humanized and offered an opportunity to respond to U.S. representations of immigrants and reactions towards immigration reform. Additionally, the concluding chapter of my analysis discusses the similarities and differences between the frames and metaphors incorporated into articles about immigration and the border fence. The frames and metaphors in my sample posit that the *Washington Post* and the *Brownsville Herald* concur in their belief that an immigration problem exists in the United States. However, the two newspapers differ in their impressions and responses to immigration, which resulted in a surplus of suggestions on how to respond to the community. The border fence, which represents the U.S. response to immigration, imposed material and spatial consequences on the city of Brownsville and its citizens since a portion of the wall would intersect with lands owned by individuals and institutions opposed to any sort of physical barrier other than the Rio Grande River, which officially served as the dividing line for nearly 160 years between the U.S. and Mexico.

My hope is that this analysis, and future analyses like it, will allow the American public to expose the frames and perceptions employed in the immigration debate that describe and present immigrants in a negative light that dehumanizes their very existence and strips away their human agency. This study can lead to a more substantial and ethical debate about comprehensive immigration reform, including more thorough incorporation of the concerns and opinion of communities living along the border. Before I examine these issues, a discussion about my choice of the *Washington Post* and the *Brownsville*

*Herald* must follow. In addition, a review of the foundational literature defending and promoting frame and metaphoric analysis as a credible and effective form of criticism is necessary. The section that follows describes the decisions I made when choosing a sample.

### ***Sample***

This study analyzes two U.S. periodicals: the *Washington Post* and the *Brownsville Herald*. My analysis of these newspapers produced a number of common themes and elements in the media's framing and discussion of immigration. In order to narrow my sample, I drew from articles that related specifically to immigration and the border fence being constructed as a result of the Secure Fence Act of 2006. My study examines these articles to pinpoint the frames and metaphors fused within this debate. My sample includes all news articles found in my search for key terms "immigration" and "border fence" and consist of articles written during a snapshot of U.S. history. The time period that I will examine consists of three months prior and three months after the implementation of the Secure Fence Act (specifically, between August 27, 2006 and January 27, 2007).

As I suggested earlier, this analysis will display a snapshot of the immigration debate as it relates to the United States legislation and the two periodicals under examination. In an attempt to trace the diversity of this debate across geographic and socio-cultural conditions, I chose two newspapers with different goals and audiences to consider. The *Washington Post* reaches a national audience and is situated over one thousand miles from the border, but closest to the debates in Washington. The *Brownsville Herald* serves as the smaller of the two newspapers examined, however it is

a city located directly on the border and caters to an audience accustomed to the daily, lived reality that is unique to border towns. The exposed frames and metaphors offer an abundance of frames and metaphors found within the texts that portray immigrants and immigration in very different manners. Next, I will briefly discuss the audience demographics of the newspapers analyzed in this study since I suggest the two periodicals reach different communities.

First, I investigated the *Washington Post* because of its close proximity to the Federal government, the Department of Homeland Security, and the White House, where our country's legislation is created, discussed, and enacted into law. According to the *Encyclopedia of Media and Politics*, "The *Washington Post* is considered one of the most authoritative news sources on the activities of the U.S. government, particularly within Congress and the White House" (Schaefer 300). For many people in and around the Washington D.C. area, the *Post* serves as their regional voice and reports on the day-to-day activities of the United States government. My analysis of this newspaper provides a snapshot of the issues and perspectives expressed at and immediately after the passage of the Secure Fence Act of 2006. The encyclopedia adds, "the *Post*, currently enjoys the fifth largest circulation nationally among U.S. daily newspapers" (Schaefer 300). The *Washington Post* can thus be considered a major national newspaper and critiqued as such. An examination of the *Post* engages unique perspectives because of its proximity to the policy makers and lobbyists that were involved in passing the Secure Fence Act. The assessment of this newspaper was vital to my project because of the similarities and differences it exposed between the two periodicals and their respective understanding of immigration.

My original impression was that including a media outlet with close proximity to the border would be most representative of local communities and their voices in this debate. In Texas, it is common to hear the city of Brownsville referred to as “The Tip of Texas,” but never as the tip of the United States. However, Brownsville is the southernmost city in the United States affected by the construction of the border fence. Brownsville borders with Matamoros, Mexico, and a short walk across the bridge and a small fee for your entrance illustrates for the walking tourist that they are no longer in the United States. It is no longer expected that a person speak English, although many people can and do. The national currency becomes the *peso*, although many business people accept currencies from both Mexico and the United States, which can also be achieved at some places in Brownsville. These two cities, Brownsville and Matamoros, share in their vigor for economic expansion along the U.S.-Mexico border, however the actions on one side are much different than the actions on the other side. I chose the *Brownsville Herald* mainly for its proximity to the U.S.-Mexico border, but also because of its proximity to the Gulf of Mexico, where the Rio Grande River, which served as the previous borderline, distributes its powerful waters into the ocean. I observed this periodical for its unique proximity to the U.S.-Mexico border and determined that its close relation to the border played a role in the ways in which the immigration issue was framed in this region of the country.

### ***Methods***

My analysis is guided by the procedures of frame analysis. Frame analysis was first introduced by sociologist Erving Goffman. In his book, *Frame Analysis*, Goffman explains that frames can be understood as “principles of organization which govern



events – and our subjective involvement” (10). Goffman theorized that frames are ways information often is organized to describe whatever event is being investigated. Goffman claims, “Whatever the degree of organization . . . each primary framework allows its user to locate, perceive, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its terms” (21). In this early text, Goffman attempted to develop a method to better understand the ways individuals make meaning out of the event being framed and the manner in which this frame is created.

Frames are multifarious and exist in various contexts. For example, the stories on the evening news are often framed through the lens of the media outlets presenting the reports. Another instance might involve a member of congress explaining her or his arguments for the types of policies our government should adopt. Frames exist in conversations as mundane as those that ask a friend if she enjoyed a film that she mentioned viewing. Frame analysis established the foundation for future researchers to utilize framing as a method of analysis. Goffman also found that no two people are obligated, even though they might, to interpret the framed messages with identical readings. Therefore, multiple interpretations typically arise and exist when dealing with such a range of newsworthy issues. Goffman states, “the view that one person has of what is going on is likely to be quite different from that of another,” but of course this depends on the framing of the situation or event (8). In this project, I explore the type(s) of frames employed in the immigration debate and manner(s) in which they are utilized, to describe how immigration is presented in the media texts included in my sample. A review of situations where frame analysis is appropriately employed is required before I proceed with my analysis.

### *Studies in Frame Analysis*

The theory of framing was more thoroughly examined by Robert Entman in his essay “Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm”. In this essay, Entman offers a more contemporary understanding of framing. He writes, “Analysis of frames illuminates the precise way in which influence over a human consciousness is exerted by the transfer (or communication) of information from one location --- such as a speech, utterance, news report, or novel --- to that consciousness” (Entman 51-52). Entman felt that by evaluating a communicative text, researchers could examine the power laden in the process of framing, specifically who gets to frame and how these frames are produced. Entman theorized that framing operates in a number of ways, which must be addressed in my project.

Entman explains, “Framing essentially involves selection and salience” (52). Entman adds that the act of framing “is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, casual interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (52). This definition supplies at least four ways in which frames function. Essentially, Entman argues that “Frames . . . define problems . . . diagnose causes . . . make moral judgments . . . and suggest remedies” (52). Based on these four potential outcomes, Entman argues that frames wield a power when the critic examines who is capable of determining what frames are presented and how they are discussed. For example, because of an immigrant’s status as “illegal” or “undocumented,” immigrant voices are typically not mentioned or considered in the process of developing these frames. In addition, many of the media outlets entrust their

editors, journalists, and news reports with the power and privilege to identify the types of stories and news frames that are discussed and considered newsworthy. Entman exposes these privileges when he states, “This is why exclusion of interpretations by frames is as significant to outcomes as inclusion” (54). Thus, excluding voices can be equally as damaging as the four functions of frames that Entman associates with the process of framing.

Additionally, Entman explains that frames are created from four specific locations within the act of communication. These four locations are identified as “the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture” (52). First, Entman explains that in the first location, “*Communicators* (author emphasis) make conscious or unconscious framing judgments in deciding what to say, guided by frames . . . that organize their belief systems” (52). This first location relates to the example described in the above section when discussing the power and privilege inherent in the process of framing. Communicators, such as media outlets, their journalists, and politicians, provide a specific location from which frames are created. Next, Entman argues that a text itself operates as a location from which frames are developed. He claims, “The *text* (author emphasis) contains frames, which are manifested by the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments” (52). Therefore, Entman suggests that texts themselves can illuminate the ways that frames are presented, understood, and brought to operate. This location is of specific importance to my analysis since I will utilize a number of media texts, in the form of newspaper reports, to illustrate the ways immigrants are defined and described in these particular frames. Other texts,

such as laws enacted as government policy or walls built to divide two nations, also function to frame immigration. My analysis will explore how government legislation works to frame immigration.

The third location from which frames operate is through the receiver. Entman contends that the individual receiving the frame will interpret their own meaning of the message(s) being presented. He writes, “the *receiver’s* (author emphasis) thinking and conclusion may or may not reflect the frames in the text and the framing intention of the communicator” (Entman 52). Entman’s third theory helps explain why a variety of interpretations, opinions, and perceptions arise from the immigration discourse. Conversely, this location also could explain why repetition and salience of certain frames. The final location of frames or framing is found within culture. Entman claims, “The *culture* (author emphasis) is the stock of commonly invoked frames. . . . in fact, culture might be defined as the empirically demonstrable sets of common frames exhibited in the discourse and thinking of most people in a social grouping” (53). The foundation laid by Goffman and the clarification added by Entman provided my project with a theoretical base from which to operate. In addition, these concepts are proven theoretical foundations for case studies conducted by scholars within our discipline. The sections that follow present three studies that engage the process of framing. The three studies introduced fulfill two major roles: first, they provide examples of similar projects; and second, they supply effective methods to consider in future frame analyses.

For example, in a study of news articles reporting the brutal murder of Matthew Shepard in October of 1998, Brian Ott and Eric Aoki examine the ways mainstream media framed the crime and subsequent death of Shepard. Ott and Aoki explain, “When

there is a traumatic event such as the Matthew Shepard murder, then, discourse, and especially the public discourse of the news media, aids people in ‘coming to terms’ with the event” (485). The manner in which media outlets framed Shepard’s death allowed the authors to examine how society understood and discussed his death in the media. I would argue that this type of analysis permits the critic to examine how society perceives and discusses issues like hate crimes, sexuality, and murder in particular instances. According to the authors, they conduct this study in order “to identify the underlying symbolic process and to analyze how it functions to construct and position citizens relative to the political process, and how it assists them in confronting and resolving public trauma” (Ott and Aoki 484). This study illustrates the importance of frame analysis in identifying the types of frames that describe public tragedies in U.S. American culture and its media outlets.

Ott and Aoki’s study offers a helpful technique to follow when conducting a frame analysis. The authors explain that their sample consists of media accounts found in three major U.S. newspapers and two prominent U.S. magazines, which reported the Matthew Shepard story between October 10, 1998 and December 2001. These dates are significant because the former represents the first time the story was reported nationally and the latter signifies a time period that was nearly two years after the conviction of one of the perpetrators. The three newspapers analyzed were the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, and the *Los Angeles Times*. The authors chose these periodicals because they are the most prominent in the United States. Additionally, the authors pull samples from *Time* magazine and *The Advocate*, incorporating articles from the same dates listed above. According to Ott and Aoki, “These magazines allowed us to compare and contrast

the coverage of the event in a mainstream weekly with the coverage in an alternative news source specifically committed to issues affecting the GLBT community” (486). With a total of seventy-one samples from the abovementioned sources, the researchers conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the media’s framing of the Matthew Shepard tragedy. While my analysis does not evaluate a specific tragic event, like the Matthew Shepard murder, it works to define how the media frames events that may not necessarily be traumatic, but nonetheless significant for different reasons.

Although Ott and Aoki provide a productive examination of framing, the analyses of other authors directly examine immigration and how it is framed. Ono and Sloop study immigration in the United States, specifically the discourse surrounding California’s 1994 legislation Proposition 187, also known as the Save Our State initiative. According to Ono and Sloop, their book “examines the rhetoric of migration by focusing on contemporary media representations of migration in the United States and, more specifically, on the rhetoric surrounding Proposition 187” (1). Ono and Sloop argue that the rhetoric surrounding Proposition 187 “*shifts* borders, changing what they mean publicly, influencing public policy, altering the ways borders affect people, and circumscribing political responses to such legislation” (5). This study illustrates how Proposition 187 was specifically designed to cease the use of public and social services by people that could not prove their citizenship. In addition, Proposition 187 was intent on creating a police-state, requiring teachers and physicians to report people they suspected of being “illegal” immigrants.

Kent Ono and John Sloop claimed that immigration was generally themed into three main categories: immigrants as economic units; immigrants as criminals; and,

immigrants as health risks. Before explaining their findings, Ono and Sloop identify their method and sample and declare “Specifically, we examined all evening newscasts on Proposition 187 by the three major networks . . . and all discourse found on Proposition 187 in the Newsbank database ” (27). The economic theme considers immigrants as human capital, either draining and taking American jobs or successfully contributing to our economy. In the next theme, immigrants are framed as criminals because of their “illegal” status and potential of becoming criminals if Proposition 187 were to pass and remove undocumented schoolchildren from the education system. Lastly, Ono and Sloop discover a disease theme, which they argue labels immigrants as disease carriers or at risk to greater disease if Proposition 187 is implemented and forces health care providers to refuse medical services to individuals without proper documentation. These themes undoubtedly are troubling, but according to the authors, they exist in discourses for both proponents and opponents. Ono and Sloop’s study concluded that both proponents and opponents of Proposition 187 frame immigration by incorporating similar themes into their arguments, despite the variation in their opinions about immigration. I suggest that this finding is significant since it concludes that proponents and opponents often incorporate similar themes and frames when discussing their perspectives on immigration.

Otto Santa Ana conducts a similar study in his book *Brown Tide Rising*, but rather than investigate frames, he examines public discourse in newspapers around three immigration laws enacted by the State of California. These laws were Proposition 187, Proposition 209, and Proposition 227. The first, Proposition 187, was examined by Ono and Sloop in their case study. However, rather than describe the frames used to discuss

the potential policy, Santa Ana claims that during the debate leading up to the elections, metaphors were utilized by politicians and journalists that negatively represented Latinos in newspaper articles. Santa Ana writes, “The change in the political discourse about Latinos in the 1990s, based on the metaphoric characterizations of the population, occurred at a time when a significant social reorientation was taking place, and momentous political decisions concerning Latinos were being debated” (7). Santa Ana argues that because of an economic recession in California, Republican politicians decided that someone must be held accountable for these economic troubles, and in this case immigrants were attacked through political discourse. In addition, Santa Ana finds that these laws created the space for future anti-immigration legislation to follow, which will move my study into a discussion of the Secure Fence Act and the material and spatial implications of this legislation.

### ***Secure Fence Act***

The Secure Fence Act of 2006 was introduced by congressman Peter T. King of New York’s third district and touted as policy seeking “to establish operational control over the international land and maritime borders of the United States” (1). My thesis argues that the actions of Congress directly influenced the lives of people and communities along the border despite its distance from the U.S.-Mexico border. However, I posit that the relationship between this piece of legislation and the dialogue(s) that I examined overlap in many ways. I further suggest that the legislation passed by Congress was a catalyst for the various dialogues that ensued and remain present in current debates about immigration. This action sparked the debate and led to many of the discussions that arose in the articles that I studied. However, any examination of the



immigration issue and its relationship to the Secure Fence Act must offer a brief historical overview of this legislation in order to validate my study.

In a 2006 news conference on October 26th, President George W. Bush stated, “The bill I’m about to sign is an important step in our nation’s efforts to secure our border and reform our immigration system” (White House n.p.). Almost three years later, U.S. American taxpayers are left with at least two things: a growing bill for costs associated with this legislation and the question of whether the United States or its citizens are any safer or more secure than they were before this bill was enacted. These questions loom in the back of my mind as the United States fights two wars and struggles to provide equality to all U.S. citizens. Being that this debate involves U.S. citizens, immigrant populations, whose status has been defined as “illegal,” “undocumented,” or “unauthorized,” are forced to hide in the shadows, in the guest rooms of suburban homes, behind the walls and doors of extravagant restaurants, and in northern Mexico’s unforgiving desert as they risk their lives, attempting to enter our country. The Secure Fence Act attempts to define the boundaries that can be navigated by immigrant communities.

One of the goals of this essay is to further the overall examination of the immigration debate, which also often hides in the shadows, but in this case the shadows of congressional and newspaper offices. Children of immigrants are forced to wait while Congress votes down immigration reform that would allow immigrant children to access higher education and pay in-state tuition at local universities, regardless of the decision made by their parents to migrate to the United States. “Undocumented” workers are forced to earn the wages mandated by bosses who know that no government service

exists which protects the rights of “undocumented” workers in the workplace, highlighting one of the privileges associated with citizenship in the United States. However, immigrants are also forced to live in fear that one day the United States’ Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE) agency will barge into their places of employment, like the raids that occurred in Greeley, Colorado’s Swift and Company factories. Elizabeth Aguilera, a writer with the *Denver Post*, reports, “The raids resulted in 12,000 workers being detained, and 1,300 of those were arrested,” adding that “Of those arrested, 274 were charged with crimes and the rest were found in civil violation of immigration statutes” (“Report skewers” n.p.). These are just two examples of modern day methods used to disempower any individual considered non-citizen. In this essay, I examine the “Secure Fence Act” as the United States’ most recent declaration of power and privilege along the U.S.-Mexico border and critique this piece of legislation with theories of space and power. However, I must first provide a brief foundation of scholarship that broaches these and similar issues.

My initial thoughts for this section of my thesis resonated as I read Karma Chavez’s essay on space and power in the Victoria Arellano murder. In this essay, Chavez describes the case of “a 23-year old, HIV positive, transgender undocumented migrant from Mexico,” who was forced into a detention center where she died because of clear neglect to her health and special situation as an individual infected with the HIV virus (12). Additionally, Arellano was placed in the male detention center because she was born a man. Chavez explains that space, in this case the space within the detention center, wields power over individuals through control. However, Chavez also argues that methods exist that allow people to resist such power through acts of resistance and

subversion. Chavez suggests, “Even spaces that appear to have very fixed relationships and characteristics are never completely fixed as such” (9). Such was the case in the detention center. Through Arellano’s mistreatment and eventual death, detainees at the detention center “saw their own vulnerability in Arellano and transgressed the norms of the heterosexual matrix” (Chavez 12). Regardless of sexual orientation or gender, the men and women of this detention center realized that they were all susceptible to similar or in this case lack of treatment because of their status as detainees. Although the circumstances of her death were extremely tragic, the Arellano murder illustrates ways that individuals can act to resist power. The detainees later conducted a letter writing campaign and carried on Victoria’s story partly because they realized the same could happen to them, but mostly because they saw the injustice and cruelty in such an act of power. Through murder, gender and sexual orientation were trumped by the agency gained from sharing Victoria’s experience. These actions resulted in the closure of the detention center, however, the reader is left wondering where else these places exist, and to what extent they remain adverse to detainees. More importantly, it shows how spaces, in this case the detention center, work to control others through the power they possess over the individuals within them.

I saw the strong correlation that this example shares with other stories of immigrants being controlled by a system, and now by a border wall, which attempts to restrict immigrants from entering and to a degree leaving the country. In fact, Chavez uses border studies to extend Victoria’s example to similar discussions of space and immigration. Chavez credits Raka Shome for her examination of space on the U.S.-Mexico border. Chavez writes, “In this space of the border, even those who are not

migrants or those who are immigrants with documents can be rendered out of place calling into question their identity as legal resident or citizen” (10). Chavez is referring to some of the examples used in Shome’s article, “Space Matters,” which provides examples of power extended and defined by space. Shome explains, “It [Space] functions as a technology – a means and medium – of power that is socially constituted through material relations that enable the communication of specific politics” (40). In her essay, Shome discusses the power of space and the ways space is defined along the border. Shome claims, “that space is a component of power that penetrates all other social frameworks, and although not every social relation can be reduced to space, space is nonetheless a force that helps constitute other social relations” (41). Therefore, with new legislation like the Secure Fence Act, social frameworks are being (re)defined in terms of space, social status, and citizenship, which are all determined by identity. For this reason it is beneficial to study how spaces like the fence being constructed along the border work to define and extend these social frameworks.

For example, Shome describes one individual’s experiences being marked as an “other”. Shome contends, “In a report published in 1996, a U.S.-born citizen related that he was returning home in his 1970 Chevy to the border city of Brownsville, Texas, when he suddenly found Border Patrol agents following him” (48). Shome adds, “He did not think he needed to worry because he was an American citizen. . . . [but] When he got out of his car, an agent struck him without provocation” (48). This is merely one example, but Shome provides many more voices with similar stories of subjection because of an individual’s marked identity. Shome argues, “These are all reported instances of U.S. citizens or legal residents whose bodies were erased out of the legal register of national

belonging” (48). Earlier in her essay, Shome describes that the U.S. border with Mexico is like a militarized zone that functions on a message of containment and control. Furthermore, Shome notes, “Since the 1990s, faced with growing public outrage over a ‘border out of control’, the INS subcontracted with over 900 county jails and transformed them into detention centers” (46). Writing this paper, I wondered if one of those nine hundred subcontracted detention centers housed Victoria Arrellano.

The Secure Fence Act is another example of legislation that functions to control the U.S.-Mexico border. According to the act itself, the purpose of this bill is “To establish operational control over the international land and maritime borders of the United States” (1). Control is a word repeated throughout this debate, but the reader should also take note of the object being controlled. The words of this act illustrate the government’s desire to control “the international land and maritime borders of the United States” (1). However, typically when the border is debated and discussed, these talks surround one border, despite the fact that the United States is bordered by two countries. The bill goes on to define “operational control” as “the prevention of all unlawful entries into the United States, including entries by terrorists, other unlawful aliens, instruments of terrorism, narcotics, and other contraband” (1). The bill fails to mention how the border will be controlled when only 700 of the 1,952 mile border will be enforced with fencing. My point is that although the bill claims to secure the border, it does not even cover half of the southern border, any portion of the northern border, or any number of maritime ports of entry. The idea that this fence will deter immigration is a myth, especially when much of the border remains unexposed to the risks this bill seeks to alleviate.

In addition, section 4 of this bill declares that, “The Secretary of Homeland Security shall conduct a study on the feasibility of a state-of-the-art infrastructure security system along the northern international land and maritime border of the United States” (2). The bill explains that this survey should be conducted “Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act” (2). President Bush signed this act on the 26th day of October in 2006, however the results of the survey were delivered one year and one month late on the 25th day of November 2008. In the correspondence from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) in Washington, D.C., the report explains, “The U.S.-Canadian border stands as the longest undefended border in the world, covering nearly 4,000 miles of land and water” (“Northern Border Security” 1). The only thing gathered from this report is that the U.S.-Canadian border is the most exposed border in the world. Thus, despite Congress’ attempts to control all land and maritime borders, this bill and a half completed fence along the U.S.-Mexico border hardly begin to control all the borders of the United States. And while the costs to construct our southern border wall continue to rise, the questions of safety and control of the border are answered with fragmented responses, like the unprotected northern border and the unconnected southern border. My discussion of power will be more thoroughly exposed as my examination unfolds.

### ***Thesis Overview***

The remaining sections of this project answer the research questions posed above. The goal of this introductory chapter was to lay out the groundwork that directed my study. The three chapters that follow this introduction are dedicated to exploring and unfolding the divergent discourses used to describe immigrants, immigration, and the

border fence within the two media outlets under examination. Chapter 2 examines the *Washington Post* and its articles as the political re-presentation of the daily events in Washington, D.C. This examination sets the stage for a juxtaposition of the articles found in two separate media outlets. The comparison allowed me to identify similarities and differences amongst the *Washington Post* and the *Brownsville Herald*. Chapter 3 investigates the frames found in the articles from the *Brownsville Herald*. The *Herald's* analysis is a fundamental component of this investigation because it involves the opinions of communities living along the border.

The final chapter of this project, Chapter 4, compares and contrasts the results from my examination of the two newspapers. Additionally, Chapter 4 explores the material and spatial implications of the frames and metaphors used in public and political discourse and the consequences of legislation such as the Secure Fence Act of 2006. The power laden in legislation that enables the creation of walls to block people from entering or leaving a country is undeniable, which is precisely why it becomes important to analyze the discourse utilized to facilitate actions like the construction of a fence along the U.S.-Mexico border. Because of the varied locations of the newspapers under analysis, a frame and metaphorical analysis of the respective media discourses provides a clearer understanding about how and why space matters (to borrow Raka Shome's words). As Shome suggests, space allows for certain identities to be erased and others to be affirmed. Therefore, I believe this analysis will uncover the means by which a media text through its particular discourse can function to spatialize individuals like immigrants, adding to and clarifying how topics like immigration are discussed and debated.

## Voice of the Capital:

### An Examination of the *Washington Post*

On the thirteenth day of June 1933, fifty-seven year old Eugene Meyer purchased a newspaper in bankruptcy. Mr. Meyer was a successful businessperson who earned his wealth through dealings in “railroads, copper, oil, and chemicals,” according to journalist and former *Washington Post* contributor Chalmers W. Roberts (55). In his book *In the Shadow of Power*, Roberts chronicles the storied history of the *Washington Post*, from its success as a family operated newspaper to its fame in uncovering the Watergate scandal of 1967. The *Washington Post* witnessed its most successful years under the operation of Katherine Graham, daughter of Eugene Meyer. After rumors that a group of individuals were arrested for breaking into a Watergate office of the Democratic National Committee in June of 1972, the *Washington Post* gained notoriety as a result of their investigation, which uncovered that President Richard M. Nixon was directly connected to the break-in and subsequent cover-ups of the scandal known as Watergate. Roberts explains, “As the early Watergate stories began to be confirmed, especially by the presidential tapes, the newspaper itself became a news item” (442). The *Post* earned a Pulitzer Prize for their investigation of Watergate. The newspaper has endured the economic and political struggles faced by the fleeting print media industry to establish itself as a leading newspaper in the United States, and most certainly the voice of Washington D.C. and the United States capital.



However, many people are unaware that the Watergate investigation was a story examined by local journalists within the Metro department of the *Post*. In fact, a closer look at the *Post's* most famous investigation proves that their success came as a result of their proximity to the story and connections with local law enforcement, which provided privileged access to the legal inquiries into the scandal. For example, Roberts recounts the first meeting between Alfred E. Lewis, senior police reporter for the *Washington Post*, and the law enforcement at the break-in scene. Roberts writes, "He [Lewis] arrived at the Watergate with the acting chief of police, went upstairs with him to the Democratic committee suite, and stayed during the whole day's investigation while all other reporters had to wait outside" (431). The *Post's* privilege of proximity is implicit in the stories that recall the events of the Watergate investigation, leading to a question of whether they possess a similar privilege with the issue of immigration. A quick Google map search confirms that proximity is not on the side of the *Washington Post* with regard to immigration. The lengthy distance the newspaper and the border raises concerns about the outlet's ability to effectively report on matters specific to the border.

If anything, they are most certainly the closest in proximity to the political players and voices in Washington, as they report and present the opinions of Congress, lobbyists, and think-tanks from our nation's capital. This chapter investigates the discourse(s) employed by the *Washington Post* and its journalists during the three months preceding and three months following the advance of the Secure Fence Act to President Bush in October of 2006. As Goffman, Entman, Santa Ana, and others have proved in the past, examinations of the frames that surround issues like immigration or war can be efficacious because they potentially unmask the discourse incorporated or metaphors

utilized to describe the issue being analyzed (Goffman 1974, Entman 1993, Santa Ana 2002). The following section exposes the three dominant frames employed by the 109th Congress, whose actions easily and effectively enacted anti-immigration legislation and resulted in vast changes for the communities living along the southwest border, despite the 1,774 mile distance separating Washington D.C. and Brownsville, Texas, my next region of study and the closest port of entry into Mexico for Congress. The results of these actions impose substantial consequences to those living along the border regions, which Congress cannot fully comprehend because of their detachment from the physical barrier they are creating. More specifically, I argue the *Washington Post* frames immigration and immigrants in terms of costs, political allegiances, and national security threats, each of which serve to dehumanize immigrants while focusing attention on political power defined through electoral success and arguments about border security. First, a brief description of my sample will follow before my examination of the three frames mentioned above.

### ***Sample***

To make this argument, I analyze twenty news articles originally published in the *Washington Post*, but collected using the Lexis-Nexis News database. Of the six month period, the news articles from October of 2006 compose almost half of my sample with a total of nine articles, one of which was an editorial. The second month with the most occurrences of immigration articles was September of 2006 with seven published articles. The newspaper published one article in August and November 2006 and January 2007, and published two articles in December 2006. It is no surprise that October received the most attention since the Secure Fence Act was signed during this month. However, the

actions taken by Congress were somewhat unexpected, as I will explain momentarily. The analysis that follows will provide a chronological assessment of the frames utilized to describe immigrants and immigration. Specifically, I will describe the three common themes presented in the new articles that make up my sample. <sup>1</sup>

### *Cost Frame*

The first article, published on the twenty-second day of August, immediately frames the immigration issue in terms of the potential costs and risks associated with addressing or ignoring immigration. However, the question of how to respond to immigration was up for debate and discussion. Reporting before the Senate passed legislation in its chambers, Jonathan Weisman writes, “The Senate’s embattled immigration bill would raise government spending by as much as \$126 billion over the next decade” (“Cost of Senate” n.p.). This figure was generated by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) and refers to the prospective costs of building a stretch of fencing along the southern border, estimates for future expenses if immigrants were offered social benefits and a path to citizenship, and political costs and risks at stake for many politicians based on their decisions. Frames that discussed immigration and immigrants in terms of securing the border and providing social benefits to immigrants function by associating immigrants with financial costs that can be traced by budget offices, accountants in Washington, or media outlets. However, the frames that suggested political costs were at stake and dependent on the decisions and actions taken by politicians, operate from a metaphorical assumption that these decisions and actions equate to political costs and risks, which cannot be measured by dollar signs. The metaphorical power of this frame is important to note since there is no real way to

actually judge this cost, which also highlights its power to perform apart from conventional understanding of costs. Yet, the pressure that politicians encounter when making decisions indicates that they are cognizant of the costs associated with the choices they cast in Congress.

Additionally, the costs described in the first article are estimates associated with the House and Senate's proposed plans. At this juncture, the House had already passed their immigration bill and the Senate was deciding on what measures, if any, to take. However, the cost frame holds real power in the minds of politicians. The cost of their decisions can certainly lead to material consequences that result in monetary costs or loss of votes and support. The issue of costs is the most dominant topic raised when discussing immigration in the *Washington Post*. In fact, costs were mentioned in four of the six articles discussed prior to the Senate's approval of the Secure Fence Act on the 29th day of September, which happened to be the last day that the Senate met before recessing for the 2006 midterm elections.

Financial costs receive the majority of the attention in the first article. Financial costs are described in estimates for the construction of a border fence, the price of hiring additional Border Patrol agents, the cost of detention centers, and the fee for technological development to assist United States' employers in processing applications. This framing of potential costs works under the umbrella of a security cost frame. The security cost frame functions by arguing that immigrants are a negative cost, but necessary in order to "[fix] a broken immigration system," which requires additional security in order to alleviate the immigration problem based on the suggestions of Congress ("Cost of Senate" n.p.). The coupling of these frames illustrates one way

frames, in this case a cost frame and security frame, can, and often do, perform simultaneously. The first portion of this article takes a firm political stance when Weisman reports, “Over the next decade, legalized workers and their families . . . would claim \$24.5 billion in tax refunds through the earned income credit and child credit, \$15.4 billion in Medicare and Medicaid, \$5.2 billion in Social Security benefits and \$3.7 billion in food stamps and child nutrition programs” (“Cost of Senate” n.p.). But again, these costs are only estimates according to a CBO report. These frames reinforce claims that immigrants are a negative cost to our nation because of the estimated benefits they are said to receive. However, a number of pro immigration advocates also appropriate the cost frame, but they incorporate this argument to argue that “tax revenue generated by new workers would ease the baby-boom generation’s burden on Social Security and offset virtually all the additional spending” (“Cost of Senate” n.p.). In this case, we see that regardless of political affiliation, immigrants are described as positive and negative costs.

The cost frame is used as a metaphor that describes the potential positive impact and costs that immigrants could contribute to an American capitalist economy. However, the positive cost frame fails to mention the money immigrants contribute to the American economy. For example, immigrants often pay state and federal taxes through their employers, local taxes and sales taxes in the communities where they reside, and fill vital roles important to the success of our nation. Unfortunately, I anticipate a trend will emerge that continues to cast immigrants into a negative light. I believe that both positive and negative cost frames will arise in a description of immigrants and immigration, however I posit that a negative cost frame will dominate examples of cost frames located

in my sample. The first example overwhelmingly frames the costs of immigration as negative and unwanted, but necessary steps towards fixing the “immigration problem.” Although both positive and negative cost frames arise in this article, the negative aspects of immigration are emphasized, while positive cost frames are only slightly mentioned. In the remaining examples a number of negative cost frames are presented, essentializing and stereotyping immigrants as either positive or negative costs, but very seldom as humans.

In the third article, the most confusing moment in the immigration conversation occurred when Majority Leader of the Senate, Bill Frist (R-Tenn), “acknowledged that a broad-based immigration bill, backed by President Bush and passed by the Senate, is dead for now” (“Frist Stresses” n.p.). In this article, Charles Babington of the *Washington Post* argues that according to the top Republican in the Senate, his party will no longer pursue immigration reform for the moment. However, the Republican Party still felt like they could apply the work they achieved in the Senate to help garner support in the upcoming midterm elections. The frame that arose in this example begins a trend of frames utilized to describe the political boon associated with cost frames and the funds allotted through legislative initiatives that highlight the political moves taken to garner political support based on political allegiances, a frame that I will explore further in the next section. Additionally, this frame works within a frame as Babington explains, “he [Senator Frist] and his allies hope to limit political damage to their party by telling voters they have poured millions of dollars into one component of the [immigration] controversy: tightening the border with Mexico” (“Frist Stresses” n.p.). This frame also exposes the political damage that can be borne based on the political actions taken in

Congress. Although I am jumping ahead of myself by introducing ways that frames of immigration were used in discussions about midterm elections, the previous statement clearly operates by mentioning past political spending as proof of the Republican Party's stance on immigration. The use of past spending as proof of political allegiance is yet another example of a frame which focuses on the topic of costs in its framing of immigration. But, as I mentioned earlier an oddity would later arise to contradict the concession made by Senator Frist and his party in the above example.

After discussing the potential costs and flaws of a Department of Homeland Security's suggestion to build a "virtual fence" to monitor the border in the fourth article, which I will return to momentarily, the fifth article on the 21st day of September reports that in a surprise move the Republican party decided to return to their efforts at immigration reform, eight days before the Senate would approve the Secure Fence Act, recess until after the midterm elections, and send the proposal to President Bush for approval. This shift in attitude jumped out to me as I analyzed the time between the Senate Majority Leader announcing that immigration was "dead for now" and the decision to revisit the issue eight days before recess and intensified campaigning. The only mention on costs in the fifth article explains, "The bill coming before the Senate would authorize the construction, on the southern border, of 700 miles of double-layered fencing . . . at an estimated cost of at least \$3 million a mile . . . and [for] a virtual fence" ("Congress Resumes" n.p.). However, the underlying discussion here suggests that the Republican Party saw this as an opportune moment to enact legislation as many of them anticipated that their legislative actions might serve as a political benefit for the upcoming re-election season. The reality of this move was beginning to look more and

more like a possibility and the price tag for this very real barrier was only given in estimates, expressing that the final costs could not be known. In this case, the costs were seen as a potential boon to the GOP's hardnosed stance on immigration. This response is worth highlighting considering the Republican Party's legacy of fiscal conservatism. However, big budget spending at times is described as necessary when in the interests of national security or politically charged legislation, which the next article engages.

The fourth article addresses how spending increased steadily since 1995, the year after Proposition 187 and other anti-immigrant legislations were introduced in California. According to Spencer Hsu and Griff Witte, "Since 1995, spending on border security has increased tenfold, from \$1.2 billion to \$12.7 billion, and the number of Border Patrol agents has more than doubled, from 5,000 to 12,319" ("Plenty of Holes" n.p.). The authors add that "The Department of Homeland Security and the former Immigration and Naturalization Service spent \$429 million since 1998 on video and remote surveillance on the borders" ("Plenty of Holes" n.p.). This trend suggests that since the mid-1990s, the movement to address immigration along the southern border has steadily gained steam and two ways it has been addressed are through increased spending and security along the border. In this case, costs again stand in as a metaphor for the legislative policies enacted since 1995. The Republican Party is often quick to mention these costs as evidence of their dedication to the border. Somehow pouring billions of dollars into the border was seen as a political stance. The money spent represents the ideologies of those individuals who truly fear immigrants. Timing, or more specifically the political cost or risk of waiting too long to act, certainly played a role in the weeks preceding the moment when the decision to support or oppose anti-immigration agendas was made.



The seventh and eight articles are almost identical, but were released on subsequent days. These articles were printed following the Senate's overwhelming decision to enact the Secure Fence Act. According to Jonathan Weisman, "the fence bill passed easily, 80 to 19, with 26 Democrats joining 54 Republicans in support" ("With Senate Vote" n.p.; "Border Fence" n.p.). Of the nineteen senators voting against the bill, seventeen were Democrats, one was a Republican, and the last was an Independent. As I suggested earlier, the Republican administration decided to return to this issue eight days prior to this vote, excluding mention from any of the articles that this issue was utilized to gain support in the upcoming elections. The only mention of spending in these two texts is that "Congress approved \$1.2 billion in a separate homeland security spending bill to bankroll the fence" ("With Senate Vote" n.p.; "Border Fence" n.p.). However, the political costs lie beneath the surface of this bill. Judging by the overwhelming support of this legislation and the funds allotted to the task of securing our borders, it is evident that Congress is prepared to take on such a task.

Discussions on the costs intensified once the Senate passed the bill authorizing the Department of Homeland Security to construct the 700-mile fence along the border. The Secure Fence Act essentially authorized Michael Chertoff, as Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, to build the fence in areas that he and his agency saw fit. It would not be a far stretch to suggest that the passage of the bill also authorized the Bush administration to encourage where the fence would be erected. Weisman describes the fence as "a multibillion-dollar fence [which] would do little to address the underlying economic, social and law enforcement problems, or prevent others from slipping across the border" ("With Senate Vote" n.p.). Descriptions of immigrants as wet or slippery

conjure up images of immigrants crossing into the United States across the Rio Grande River. These descriptions also describe immigrants as a “tide” or “flood” upon the United States. These descriptions become the metaphors employed by politicians, journalists, and media reporters in the emerging immigration debate that utilized the issue to their respective political means. Otto Santa Ana asserts, “[Metaphors] are sites of public conduct. In terms of language use, they are negotiated instruments of social and political action” (295). If Santa Ana’s claim that metaphors act as “instruments of social and political action” is correct, then the significance of the frames chosen to describe immigrants should be examined to identify the consequences of these stereotypes (295).

Political costs and risks further surfaced in the seventeenth article. Darryl Fears and Spencer Hsu of the *Washington Post* write that, “In the days after the election, Democratic leaders surprised pro-immigration groups by not including the [immigration] issue on their list of immediate priorities” (“Democrats May Proceed” n.p.). This statement suggests that a degree of caution was realized by Democratic leadership in their decision to exclude immigration from their immediate agenda. The fear invoked by this action represents the political risks, and potential political costs, associated with addressing immigration. And although politicians always promise that they will break this trend, a theme of politics as usual quickly takes over and initiates lackluster reactions for constituents like Dr. Eloisa Tamez whom I described in Chapter 1. According to the frames presented by Fears and Hsu, immigration was a polarizing topic that was better left untouched. Fears and Hsu expose the metaphorical version of the cost frame that replaces financial costs with feared or anticipated reactions that might cost him or her a vote in their political future. Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for

Immigration Studies, is quoted claiming, “The Democrats need to get their majority reelected in the next two years” (“Democrats May Proceed” n.p.). The reelection then becomes the overpowering dynamic that drives the new majority’s political agenda for the next two to four years. Even if the Democrats denied the fact that immigration represented a political risk for them, Republicans acknowledged that they recognize the potential costs of the Democrats’ stance.

The final discussion of costs arose when describing the “virtual fence” that Congress and the Department of Homeland Security hired the Boeing Company to develop. According to Spencer S. Hsu and Griff Witte, “Boeing proposes to construct a necklace of 1,800 towers equipped with cameras, sensors and links to sophisticated computers along the nation’s vast frontier with Mexico and Canada” (“Plenty of Holes” n.p.). This approach seems like a much more logical approach to monitoring and controlling the border when compared with plans to build a border wall. However, this assumption is quickly debunked once critics are given the opportunity to analyze the government’s plan. Hsu explains, “Lawmakers ordered DHS to submit a multi-year strategic plan for the Secure Border Initiative (SBI) and its virtual-fence system (SBI-net), citing two failed border technology programs that have cost taxpayers \$429 million since 1998” (“DHS Plan” n.p.). This example suggests that Congress is concerned about the effectiveness of these state-of-the-art technologies and the costs associated with their failed attempts to develop a successful system in the past. The example also presents yet another example of failed attempts, despite a significant financial effort, to “fix” the border. Congress apparently cannot see that throwing money at border security, as opposed to improving relations between two countries that have just as much to gain

from one another as they have to lose, is not a beneficial solution to their false perception of the immigration problem.

As displayed by these examples, costs of immigration reform are often referred to in the frames that address immigration. Costs are not simply limited to a monetary figure that many of us link to the term, but also include the metaphorical costs offered by politicians, journalists, and media personalities. However, as I hoped to have displayed above, costs can be utilized as a metaphor to argue that immigrants are a burden to our country and national security. Costs may also be understood as a political risk or benefit to the individuals that address the issue. In relation to political concerns, costs can also be seen as a political boon or a political negative as evidenced by the various ways that both Republicans and Democrats understood and explained the costs of immigration and immigrants during this time period. The power of this frame is in its overarching power to cross frames and seep into the arguments utilized in frames of political allegiance and national security. In the next section, I will explore the use of frames that employ political allegiance in the immigration debate.

### ***Political Frame***

I earlier alluded to the next frame that is often referenced when examining the immigration debate. The repeated reference to political elections arises throughout the news articles examined. This occurs because the American people voted in midterm elections in November of 2006 and the political face of our nation changed dramatically after these elections. Although President Bush would remain in office until 2008, control of the American political system shifted that November when Democrats took control of the House of Representatives. However, before this change occurred, the Republican

Party maintained control of the legislative and federal branches of government and worked to pass bills in both chambers of Congress, which resulted in the passage of the Secure Fence Act. Before the elections, Republicans saw this last push for power and support from Americans as an opportunity for their party to pass laws along their political lines. As a result of the political pressure faced by Democrats and Republicans, frames which highlight political allegiance arose in the months leading up to the 2006 midterm elections and enactment of the Secure Fence Act. The following section of this essay analyzes frames of political allegiance and suggests that since 1995, these frames grew exponentially and would ingrain themselves as a political issue that politicians could never again ignore.

For example, Congress basically decided that they could not achieve all their political goals in terms of immigration reform, despite the victory House Republicans believed they earned when staunch anti-immigration legislation passed easily through the House. In fact, the third article in my sample states, “Congress will not address major immigration revisions before the Nov. 7 elections, the Senate’s top Republican [Senator Bill Frist] said yesterday” (“Frist Stresses” n.p.). I referenced this article earlier when I suggested that Republicans would highlight the spending they invested in border security to gain support amongst their constituencies and undecided voters. Through the above declaration, the Senate’s leading Republican conceded that immigration reform was not an issue to be pursued during the 109th session of Congress. Charles Babington clarifies, “he [Sen. Frist] and his allies hope to limit political damage to their party by telling voters they have poured millions of dollars into one component of the controversy: tightening the border with Mexico” (“Frist Stresses” n.p.). Thus, Republicans planned to

use their political agenda as a means of maintaining their political base, satisfying their constituents, and gaining support amongst undecided voters that might approve of anti-immigrant legislation. As we already know from the previous section, the Republican Party spoke too soon and altered their decision to table the immigration debate.

When Congress realized that Republicans would in fact pursue immigration reform, Democrats explained that this action was simply done to gain support for the Republican Party's re-election campaigns. Political allegiances, in fact, needed to be declared before Congress recessed to host the 2006 midterm elections. Minority Leader Harry M. Reid (D-Nev) proclaims, "We have three days left, and a list of things a mile long to do . . . Why? Because Republicans are busy campaigning, not leading" ("With Senate Vote" n.p.). One Republican cited the reelections as the reason for the Senate's sudden change of heart. Representative Jim Kolbe (R-Ariz.) states, "It's [The fence's] not feasible . . . It's a statement for the election. That's all" (Weisman, "With Senate Vote" n.p.). Yet, this issue still has ramifications in the present day. For example, Senator John McCain, the presidential nominee for the Republican Party in 2008, finds himself embattled in a race for his fifth term in the Senate by Chris Simcox, "considered one of the founding fathers of the Minutemen border-watch movement," and former Rep. J.D. Hayworth (R-Ariz), "author of the 2006 book 'Whatever It Takes: Illegal Immigration, Border Security and the War on Terror,'" according to a January article in the *Arizona Republic* (Nowicki, "Migrant Issue" n.p.). This article argues that Sen. McCain's attempt at comprehensive immigration reform with the late Sen. Ted Kennedy in 2007 could cause trouble for McCain as he continues his political career (Nowicki, "Migrant Issue" n.p.).

It quickly becomes evident that a politician's stance on immigration is currently a contentious issue in American politics, and the fact that their opinions are often read in news articles or heard in evening monologues indicates that the frames used to describe their perspectives are important. As one U.S. Senator explains, perceptions of political allegiance are important, especially during the time leading up to political elections. Sen. Lindsey O. Graham (R – S.C.) cautions, “If it is perceived by the public that the Republican Party . . . which owns the House, the Senate, and the White House . . . cannot solve hard problems working with Democrats, then we will lose our majorities” (Babington, “Frist Stresses” n.p.). This concern suggests that frames about immigrants and immigration are not the only vital frames and responses that matter. In fact, frames that declare or challenge political allegiance are consequential in contemporary American politics as evidenced by Sen. John McCain's current predicament.

In another example, Michael A. Fletcher and Jonathan Weisman claim that President Bush signing the Secure Fence Act represents, “an action that conflicts with his own stated vision of immigration reform but one championed by many Republicans facing reelection in November” (“Bush Signs Bill” n.p.). Although President Bush did not feel Congress fully addressed immigration reform, especially not in the comprehensive form Bush envisioned, he was willing to sign this piece of legislation into law partly in support of his Party's reelection bids. This response, like the others described above, illustrate the ways that immigration is framed along lines of political allegiance and the consequences of these decisions demand attention. Additionally, these examples hint at the methods by which frames manipulate and guide perceptions of immigrants and immigration along political alliances. Representative Silvestre Reyes (D-

Tex.) proclaims, “The bill the president signed today represents the worst in election-year politics. . . . It is an empty gesture for the sole purpose of sending a false message about the security of our nation” (“Congress May Proceed” n.p.). Although these gestures may be “empty” as Rep. Reyes explains, the consequences of these reactions are very real for American taxpayers, but especially people living along the borders. In the following section, I will demonstrate how frames of national security operate in tandem with the cost frames and political frames described above.

### *National Security Frame*

The last frame uncovered in my analysis deals with national security. In this frame, immigration is further defined as a problem through the rhetoric used by mainly Republican politicians, which argued for increased national security by enhancing border security. This argument is used frequently and correlations are made between the need to secure our border and the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, despite the fact that immigration and terrorism in fact have nothing in common. In these instances, immigration and the terrorist attacks in New York were described as equally important battles that the nation must overcome. For instance, Weisman cites Representative David Dreier (R-Calif.), then-chairperson of the House Rules Committee, as he proclaims, “Border security is national security” (“Congress Resumes” n.p.). In this instance, border security is claimed to be synonymous with national security, allowing border security to be placed within the administration’s war on terror. Senator Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) argues, “Fortifying our borders is an integral component of national security. . . . We can’t afford to wait” (“With Senate Vote” n.p.). This statement arrives only three weeks after Senator Frist “acknowledged that a broad-based immigration bill . . . is dead



for now” (“Frist Stresses” n.p.). Representative David Dreier adds, “We’re going to try our doggonedest to enact as many of these bills as we can” (“Congress Resumes” n.p.). The argument is made time and again by Republican politicians that national security is the whole reason for building a fence. In retrospect, it appears that these frames are all linked with one another.

At first, arguments that Republicans invested so much through the monetary allocations within the legislations that were passed in favor of securing the nation’s borders were presented through the cost frame. Next, declarations were made that because Republican’s allotted so much money to legislative projects geared at border security they should be considered for office in the political frame. Finally, the national security and political frames become blurred as Congress frantically rushed to enact stricter border legislation in the week before they recessed for the November midterm elections. These frames recycle themselves throughout the three month period leading up to and following the decision to fortify and militarize the border with Mexico.

Former House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.) claims, “We’re [the American people] at war, and we need to act like it,” as he explains, “We need to close the borders” (“Immigration Rally’s” n.p.). This declaration illuminates Hastert’s belief that the United States is not only involved in two wars abroad, but also one conflict at home along our borders, which brings to mind two issues to point out. First, the word “borders” implies multiple points or ports of entry, but only one border requires reinforcement and political attention: the U.S.-Mexico border. Section four of the Secure Fence Act is entitled “Northern Border Study,” and claims “The Secretary of Homeland Security shall conduct a study on the feasibility of a state-of-the-art infrastructure security system along the

northern international land and maritime border” (United States 2). Therefore, even though the United States is bordered by the Pacific and Atlantic Ocean, the Gulf of Mexico, and the countries of Mexico and Canada, the only border that requires attention and enforcement is the southern border between the U.S. and Mexico. Additionally, the Northern Border only requires that a study be conducted. In my analysis, a report that results in a study requires and establishes fewer consequences than those imposed by a physical wall dividing two countries.

Second, and most paradoxically, evidence arose to suggest that an immigration problem may not in fact exist, as many Republicans attempted to argue. According to Babington, Rep. Rahm Emanuel (D-Ill.), “cited government findings that between 1999 and 2003, work-site enforcement operations were scaled back 95 percent by the Immigration and Naturalization Service,” adding that “the number of employers prosecuted for unlawfully hiring immigrants dropped from 182 in 1999 to four in 2003” (“Frist Stresses” n.p.). The results of this study were reported in a *Washington Post* article excluded from my sample because it did not discuss the border fence (“Illegal Hiring” n.p.). The importance of the study’s results is that they do not support claims that an immigration problem exists in our country. However, House Speaker Hastert’s comments resonate with the Texas rancher Mr. Bob Masling who argues this country is at war with “wetbacks” (“Illegal Hiring” n.p.). Hastert contends that we must address this issue by militarizing and securing the borders. An article by Spencer S. Hsu claims that DHS’s mission statement was altered to read, “The [SBI]net program will promote strategies ‘that protect against and prevent terrorist attacks and other transnational crimes’” (“DHS Plan” n.p.). In effect, SBI]net attempts to establish a worldwide patrol to

“protect against and prevent terrorist attacks and other transnational crimes,” but the extent of their jurisdiction is left unmentioned and undefined since the war on terror lacks geographical boundaries and extends into the unforeseeable territories of the future (“DHS Plan” n.p.). However, it would appear as if transnational security might be the next wave of the future’s war on terror.

Additionally, as the legislative act received confirmation from President Bush in October of 2006, arguments were made that this tough stance and border initiative is what the people want. President Bush states, upon signing the near \$35 billion budget bill that would fund this project, “That’s what the people of this country want. . . . They want to know that we’re modernizing the border so we can better secure the border” (“In Border Fence’s Path” n.p.). The reader of the newspaper article is left wondering which people the President is referring to in his claim that stricter border security is “what the people of this country want.” Do these desires come from individuals with loose ties to the border? Are these the wishes of the residents living along the U.S.-Mexico border? Or any U.S. border, since someone earlier claimed the United States needs to secure multiple borders? The answers to these questions can be revealed in a comparison of the common frames found in a variety of newspapers reporting on immigration and the border, which is forthcoming in the remainder of my investigation

### ***Conclusions***

In the end, frames that discuss immigration in terms of economic costs, political allegiance, and national security are the most prominent frames found within my sample. A number of additional frames arise (e.g., increased militarization frame, which describes increased military influence along the border, or citizenship frame, which discusses what

to do with the non-U.S. immigrants already residing in the United States), but are not incorporated as much as the three most frequent frames that I described in this section. In these representations, the border, immigrants, and immigration are defined by the voices which dominate Washington through a national impression of immigration. Through this version of immigration, local voices are excluded from the dialogue in place of the decision makers and lobbyists that control politics. Countries outside of the United States are provided with these frames and representations as the nation's political stance on immigration. Internally, American citizens are told that immigrants are enforcement problems for the local authorities, costly burdens, floods on our nation's borders, and any other metaphor used to dehumanize immigrants. For example, a little more than a week before the bill passed, Weisman argues, "Republican-controlled Congress to claim they have taken steps to deal with the *flood of illegal immigrants*" ("Congress Resumes" n.p.). In the two articles reporting on the Senate approval of the Secure Fence Act, Weisman reports, "The measure was pushed hard by House Republican leaders . . . to address the *underlying economic, social and law enforcement problems*, or to prevent others from *slipping across the border*" ("With Senate Vote" n.p.). In one of two letters to the editor published, C.E. Wray of Charlottesville claims, "Construction of a 700-mile fence along the border with Mexico is a good first step, but only a fence along the entire border will stop the *flood of illegal immigrants*" ("Build It and" n.p.).

In addition, the political consequences of the actions by Congress in some cases overstep checks and balances established in the Constitution that protect important laws like those listed in Chapter 1 of my thesis. Laws such as the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Clean Air Act,

which are designed to enforce steps and procedures to follow before the construction of the border fence could take place, were overlooked by the Department of Homeland Security in its push for a new physical barrier.

The metaphors above are important to this discussion, but do not dominate my sample. However, these frames are important to mention because of their ability to dehumanize immigrants in political quests for approval. In fact, anti-immigrant policies are considered to be an issue strongly supported by the Republican Party in an attempt to fix its perceived immigration problem. However, in the last week of the 109th session of Congress, the worst in election year politics took place and immigration became more than just a Republican agenda. Democrats realized, and confirmed this understanding after they took control of Congress, that their stance on immigration reflected the same concerns that Republicans used to please their constituencies before the midterm elections. Reducing immigrants to stereotypical frames and metaphors dehumanizes the many individuals who take real risks in their pursuit of a better life. Concurrently, most politicians in the U.S. two-party system also understand that their choices have consequences, such as the political costs describe in this chapter. The aim of this analysis is to identify and argue that common themes can be found when conducting a frame analysis of articles that describe and discuss immigration in mainstream U.S. media. Through this study, or any frame or metaphorical analysis intended to identify common themes surrounding the discourse under examination, rhetorical criticism can name and then disprove the inaccurate representations presented in media texts. Exposing these negative stereotypes can lead to a process of re-humanization of immigrants and a more inclusive discussion of ways to comprehensively reform immigration.

As a result of these negative frames, many people remain hidden in the shadows out of fear that they could be deported because of the negative stereotypes associated with immigrants. A discursive space is engaged within the media, allowing certain voices to discuss immigration, which conversely excludes many of the non-dominant voices that also have opinions on and about immigration. Upon completion of this initial undertaking, I believe the *Washington Post* lacks a diverse conversation about immigration because it mainly reports on the political conversations engaged in Washington, and fails to provide any coverage from local communities living along the border. Although this finding is disturbing, a lack of diverse news articles is not necessarily surprising when considering the audience or readership of the *Washington Post*. The *Post* supplies politicians, lobbyists, and government officials with their view on the immigration issue. I suggested earlier that this analysis is the first of many analyses that I wish to conduct on this topic. I believe that non-dominant voices might be more prominent in articles from periodicals closer to the border or at a distance from Washington. One of the limitations to this study is that I have yet to conduct an analysis of another periodical, which would allow me to compare the frames found across a range of newspapers reporting on immigration. However, I contend that this analysis is the beginning of a larger investigation into the frames utilized in the dialogues that describe and discuss immigration. With this in mind, I continue my pursuit of the frames utilized in the immigration debate through an analysis of the *Brownsville Herald*, a periodical with close ties to the border region.

How the West Was Won, and Later Secured:  
Investigating Local Reactions to Federal Legislation

In 1834, a group of individuals with mixed interests declared their independence from the nation of Mexico, only fourteen years after the Mexican people gained their sovereignty from the colonial rule of Spain. These revolutionaries included Mexican-born citizens and U.S. immigrants who moved to the Mexican state of Coahuila y Tejas with dreams of developing a land and nation blessed with the unique opportunity of reclaiming and defining their own identity. With this newly earned freedom, the Mexican people were challenged to enact their own system of government for the first time since expelling the colonial Spanish empire, which brought unforeseen obstacles to Mexico. In the years following Mexican independence from Spain, politicians struggled to hold power because the Mexican people feared a return to some form of dictatorship like the one they had been subjected to since colonization. Some government officials suggested a conservative government that provided central power to the federal government in Mexico City and others wanted a more liberal form of government installed that would allow various regions to govern according to their needs. Meanwhile, residents of northern Mexico were attempting to expand and develop the lands of Coahuila y Tejas in their quest for northern expansion.

Through their independence, Mexico claimed control of areas as far north as present-day Colorado, Wyoming, Oklahoma, California, Nevada, New Mexico, Arizona

and of course Texas. During this historical period Texas was known as Tejas. In fact, Coahuila y Tejas was considered one state within the United States of Mexico according to the Mexican constitution of 1824. The northern regions of Mexico were now heavily inhabited by U.S.-born immigrants. Chester Newell recognizes that “Americans emigrated to it to improve their condition, to get lands, and eventually to amass wealth” (14). U.S.-born immigrants now living in Mexican controlled Tejas were welcomed to this region, but required to abide by the laws of Mexico. As Mexico struggled to find its political identity, the northern region was expanding exponentially. Kearney and Knopp add, “as soon as Mexico would win its independence, the local settlers who had helped to defend the region from wild Indians would call on the new government to grant them unoccupied local land, and those who had livestock but no land would receive at least five leagues of land” (24). San Antonio, a well-established Mexican city, was one of the most northern sections of the territory and would soon become the site of war. As I stated earlier, in 1834 a group of individuals calling themselves Texians, a slight variation from today’s Texan, rebelled against the Mexican government and declared their independence. Mexican President, General Antonio López de Santa Anna, declared himself President in 1833, abandoned the Constitution of 1824 in favor of his centralist government, and marched north to end the dispute known as the Texas Revolution. Chester Newell writes, “On the 13th of May [1834] he [Santa Anna] dissolved the Mexican Congress before its term had expired, issued an order for the assembling of another, and dissolved the Council of Government, which he took into his own hands” (10). Santa Anna marched towards San Antonio and defeated Texian rebels at the Battle of the Alamo on March 6, 1836, however his military victory was short-lived.



On April 21, 1836, General Santa Anna met a force of Texas fighters led by General Samuel Houston in the Battle of San Jacinto. This battle would materialize into the victory needed to solidify Texas independence. In this battle, the Texian forces surprised General Santa Anna and his army. The battle was brief, but the impact was mighty to the nation of Mexico. In this battle, Santa Anna was captured and forced to bargain for his life. He negotiated the northern lands and territories being claimed by Texian rebels in return for his safe travel to Mexico. However, the Mexican government relinquished Santa Anna's control as President and disregarded any agreements that he made on behalf of the Mexican government, leaving the Texans in control of the territories agreed to by Santa Anna. The Republic of Texas controlled all of present-day Texas because of its military control and presence in the lands. David Montejano explains, "The political alliance between Mexicans and Anglos in Texas, the alliance that made Lorenzo de Zavala the first vice-president of the republic for a few days, began unraveling soon after the rout of Santa Anna's army at San Jacinto" (Montejano 26). Disputes about the boundaries of the Texas Republic and the Mexican state of Coahuila ensued for the next ten years, until the Mexican-American War began in 1846. For these ten years, the Texian government claimed that the Rio Grande River was the agreed upon border established between Texian rebels and General Santa Anna. However, the Mexican government, through their struggles to define their true character as a nation, recognized the Nueces River as the *de facto* boundary between Texas and Mexico.

Montejano more succinctly summarized the dispute, as he states, "In short, between 1836 and 1846 the strip between the Nueces and the Rio Grande constituted a veritable 'no-man's land,' claimed by the Republics of Texas and Mexico but actually

controlled by Indian tribes” (Montejano 30). Although this land would be disputed until the end of the Mexican-American War in 1848, the lands along the Rio Grande were in constant development because of the many economic interests present in South Texas, both before and after the Texas War for Independence. In fact, many of the families that owned property in these territories found their lands and interests seized by the newly established Republic of Texas. Mexican property owners were forced to fight for their lands in law courts, only to lose their lands as payment to lawyers for proving their clients rightfully owned the property based on land grants that just as easily could have been presented as proof of ownership. Montejano explains that during the era of the Republic of Texas, “Texas Mexicans suffered from forced marches, general dispossession, and random violence” (27). These ill actions burdened the Mexican people despite their support and allegiance to the Republic of Texas during their mutual campaign for autonomy.

The plight of the Mexican people escalated in the years leading up to the annexation of Texas by the United States of America in their campaign to move and expand westward. The Texas Republic veritably handed over their lands to the United States in 1845. With disputes over the formal boundary of Mexico and Texas still left unrequited, the United States took it upon themselves to claim the Rio Grande River as the official border of the two nations. Kearney and Knopp argue, “At the beginning of March 1846, General Zachary Taylor brought a U.S. army south from Corpus Christi along the so-called Arroyo Colorado Road . . . [where] he first built Fort Polk as his base for contact with the U.S. navy” (59). Since the Mexican government never recognized the negotiations made by General Santa Anna, Mexico did not agree to the declared

boundary, which would lead to disputes between two independent nations and eventually the Mexican-American War in 1846.

The Mexican-American War was the deciding conflict that led to the purchase and sale of much of northwest Mexico to the United States. “The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed by the United States and Mexico on February 2, 1848, ending the Mexican War and extending the boundaries of the United States by over 525,000 square miles,” according to the Library of Congress website (“Treaty of Guadalupe” n.p.). The treaty signed between the United States and Mexico would settle disputes about the physical barrier that separated the two countries. Since that time, 1848, the Rio Grande River served the purpose of dividing the two countries. The political, social, and economic changes impacted many dynamics in Texas, which was no longer an independent nation, but a part of the United States. The people of south Texas, but mostly business people, craved a location that would serve as the entry and exit ports between the two powerful countries. Through these desires, the city of Brownsville, which my friends affectionately refer to as “the Tip of Texas,” fulfilled the functions yearned for by Texan and Mexican business elites and the United States government.

### ***The City of Brownsville***

The City of Brownsville was founded around the same time the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was finalized. According to Kearney and Knopp, many Texans living in Mexico moved north of the Rio Grande River because Texas was now a U.S. state:

The new bi-national division of the delta by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo on July 4, 1846, drew most of the Anglos to the north side of the river, where as Americans they would have an advantage in trying to

dominate the new American settlement and where they felt safer from any possible anti-American reaction in Mexico. (67)

The border was not set and agreed to by the two nations. The Rio Grande would serve as the natural boundary between the United States and Mexico for nearly one-hundred and sixty years, until Congress and the Bush administration approved a border fence in 2006. However, during its inception the Valley of Texas expanded as a result of increased settlement in the new state of the United States. The residents of this area, however, did not know where exactly to establish their community. Kearney and Knopp explain, “A competition sprang up between various new sites, each hopeful of becoming the new metropolis of the left bank” (67). The founding of this new city was partly in response to increased flood risks in their current location, Santa Rita, but additional interests were also at play.

Brownsville was the location that eventually was awarded as the new site of the city. “The site which would succeed, however, was the choice and work of Charles Stillman, who had the advantages of respect, established wealth, vital information, support from the media, and a shrewd mind,” according to Kearney and Knopp (68). The authors propose that Stillman founded the site in present-day Brownsville because of its nearness to Fort Brown, which would offer protection to the residents by the U.S. Army, in addition to its advantageous location on top of a ridge that would protect the town from flooding and invasion (Kearney and Knopp 68). Stillman promoted the city since he had the most to gain due to his control of “a disputed title to the 4,676-acre site from several of the farmers” (Kearney and Knopp 68). According to Kearney and Knopp, “So many came that, despite the American influx, Brownsville was marked from the first as a town

where the Spanish language and Mexican customs strongly prevailed” (75). The authors contend, “In 1858, 1,500 of Brownsville’s 2,000 people were said to have been Mexican-Americans” (75).

In the founding of Brownsville, Charles Stillman remained exceptionally powerful during the following years that are marked with immoral practices by new settlers. For example, an early quote suggested that Stillman encouraged establishing Brownsville, but through “a disputed title” (Kearney and Knopp 68). Kearney and Knopp note, “The most common form of taking land was to question the original Spanish land grants, whose terminology was vague, resting on units of measure whose exact meaning was unclear and on cattle skulls and bushes as markers” (78). Many of the original inhabitants of the area found themselves embroiled in a battle amongst English-speaking Anglos and Spanish-speaking Mexican-Americans. As Kearney and Knopp continue, the authors claim, “Expensive lawyers were hired by new claimants, and both lack of wealth and an inadequate grasp of English slanted the odds heavily against the Mexican-Americans” (78). Another method to usurp Mexican Americans of their agency occurred within the new political system founded in Brownsville.

For instance, two dominant parties were established through the Anglo elite of the area. Kearney and Knopp write, “As small merchants found themselves shut out of the lucrative trade with northern Mexico for lack of sufficient capital to compete with the few big merchants like Stillman, King, Kenedy, and San Román, a bitterness began to divide the small merchants from the big entrepreneurs” (81). The two parties divided themselves as big merchants, calling themselves Reds, and smaller merchants and professionals, identifying themselves as Blues (Kearney and Knopp 81). Both of the parties were

dominated by Anglo business elites and professionals. Although I do not believe the authors are suggesting that all business members and professionals in the community were Anglo, just as I do not believe they imply all Mexican Americans in the region were poor and uneducated, Kearney and Knopp argue, “Giving the old paternalistic social system of the delta a new ethnic twist, the mainly Anglo leaders of each party sought to win elections by massive herding of the poor, illiterate, and generally Mexican-American proletariat by any means possible, including force and fraud” (82). Kearney and Knopp add, “These partisan hatreds rather than any more charitable sentiment set the tone for the new town” (82). Thus, in addition to dishonest land practices, political power played a role in divisions between Anglos and Mexican Americans in the original settlement in Brownsville.

Today, the city of Brownsville continues to expand. According to the City of Brownsville’s website, “Brownsville’s population is quickly approaching 200,000 and growing,” adding that, “Our sister city of Matamoros has a population is [sic] excess of 750,000” (“About Us” n.p.). Because of its unique position in the history of present-day South Texas, the city of Brownsville, unlike any other cities living along the border, understands what life on the border is like between the United States and Mexico. As my historical description of the Rio Grande region suggests, communities have established and cultivated the area along the river for centuries. Farmers enjoyed and benefited from the many rivers that flow into southwest and central Texas to the Gulf of Mexico. Ranchers profited from the endless amount of flat lands that allow wildlife to prosper and cattle to mature. Merchants made use of the early trade routes between Texas, Louisiana, and Mexico by way of the port at Brazos de Santiago, which allowed early inhabitants to

transport their goods by land or river. Today, the descendents of those early settlements along the Rio Grande find themselves embroiled in a fight for boundaries that did not exist until 1836.

With that being said, many believe the current and natural boundary, the Rio Grande River, is an adequate dividing point for the United States and Mexico. However, as we know from the previous sections of this essay, in the months leading up to the midterm elections in 2006, many politicians believed that the perceived immigration problem required a response in Washington. However, only one of the samples found in the *Washington Post* engage the voice of a local resident, but even then the insertion of U.S. Representative Silvestre Reyes (D-Tex) from El Paso is a far cry from the inclusion of reactions from people directly living on the border. The deliberations of the 109th United States Congress resulted in the Secure Fence Act, which would drastically change the face of the border regions along the nearly two thousand mile boundary. The aim of this section is to explore the frames incorporated by the *Brownsville Herald*, a newspaper that serves a community living directly on the border, and examine the manner in which immigration, the border fence, and the plans set forth by the Secure Fence Act were discussed along and around the border. The two sections that follow identify and expand on my assertion that two dominant frames can be found in the articles of the *Brownsville Herald* for the three months leading up to and three months following approval of the Secure Fence Act.

The most dominant frame, which I discuss first, includes the voices of local residents, business members, and local, state, and federal elected officials. I chose to name this set of examples local concerns since they include a plethora of opinions and

suggestions of community members living along the border in Brownsville. Next, I describe frames that identify alternative solutions to the proposed plan of Congress. These collections of suggestions found in frames of alternative solutions prove that the members of this community understood and reacted to the problem of immigration much differently than politicians in charge of legislation in Washington. Many of the people in this community viewed the immigration problem not as a flooding of the community by immigrants, but as a lack of basic human rights for the individuals risking their lives to work, reside, and contribute to the United States. The residents of the city of Brownsville, representing the first established U.S. community on the north side of the Rio Grande River, by means of the *Brownsville Herald* responded to Congress' initial discussions and eventual approval of the Secure Fence Act with frames expressing local concerns and offering alternative solutions, which generated reactions and actions that differed greatly from frames found in the *Washington Post*. First, I explore frames of local concerns.

### ***Local Concerns***

By far the *Brownsville Herald's* most dominant frames of immigration and the border fence include arguments and opinions from local voices, which were not as present in the sample drawn from the *Washington Post*, which will be discussed in the final chapter of this essay. The collection of frames involves local concerns, which draws on the opinions and perspectives of local residents, businesses, environmentalists, and local, state, and federal politicians who represent various constituencies along the border and in the state. In an analysis of these articles, it becomes evident that many of these voices are not present in any of the articles found in the *Washington Post*. In fact, the only three voices that are mentioned in both samples are Senator John Cornyn, Senator



Kay Bailey Hutchison, and United States Representative Solomon Ortiz. Of the first two, neither Cornyn nor Hutchison have spent considerable time along the border, but both supported the Secure Fence Act. Ortiz on the other hand was raised outside of Corpus Christi, Texas, and now represented his hometown all the way down to Cameron County in Brownsville. However, of the previously silenced voices located within the *Brownsville Herald* a variety of viewpoints on how to handle the situation on the border are presented, the majority of which vary vastly from the perspectives laid out in the previous chapter.

Local concerns are most plentiful in the *Brownsville Herald*. For example, the first article discusses an upcoming visit that President Bush will make to the Valley region in support of his immigration plan. Although I discussed his plan in the previous section, it is important to note that President Bush challenged his party to send him a comprehensive immigration reform bill, rather than a partisan anti-immigrant bill. Despite his pleas, he would later inherit an enormously different approach to immigration than he originally requested, which led to opposition from many Texans who agreed with Bush's push for comprehensive reform. The first article explains that for the President's visit, "The Secret Service will have blocked off the part to the public, but the press and a select group of guests will attend the speech" ("President to Visit" n.p.). Despite the magnitude of this issue and its relationship to the people of this region, the government limited access to the speech to a select group of guests and press members.

Two of the locals allowed to attend the event include Mayor Richard Cortez of McAllen and Mayor Beto Salinas of Mission, the city hosting the president. However, the article adds that "Hidalgo Party Democratic Chairman Juan Maldonado said Wednesday

afternoon he had not been invited to the event” (“President to Visit” n.p.). Maldonado explains, “You know, always, always when you’re president, you’re not just president for Republicans, for businesspeople, you’re president for everybody. If there are people out there who disagree with you, you should listen to what they have to say” (“President to Visit” n.p.). In this article we get our first look at Washington’s disconnection with the local people. The detachment between Washington and the communities that would be affected by the border fence led to demonstrations, public dialogues, and alternative solutions to the perceived problem of immigration.

As many residents, businesspeople, and environmentalists explained, the problem and solution materialized in Washington while the solutions were enacted along the border where families have resided for several decades. When asked how he would be affected by a border fence, Texas farmer Pete Leal states, “It might cut my land right in half. . . . We’ve got families across the river. . . . It’s going to separate us” (“Border Fence Proposal” n.p.). The consequences of this fence not only presented business concerns for Mr. Leal, but also raised concerns that families like his would be separated by the creation of a border barrier. Additionally, locally elected officials believed “The proposal threatens relations between the United States and Mexico,” according to a spokeswoman for U.S. Representative Solomon Ortiz, who represents a district stretching from Corpus Christi to Brownsville (“Border Fence Proposal” n.p.). A number of the local voices also provided alternative solutions to the perceived problem, but I will discuss frames of alternative solutions in the next section.

However, also present within these articles are frames from federal elected officials which incorporate the vision of the immigration problem as it appears in

Washington. A return to earlier frames immediately comes to mind when Senator John Cornyn claims, “The Senate’s consideration of the (bill) reflects the consensus of the American public that the federal government must take immediate action to address the porous border. . . . Clearly we have a crisis on our borders and we must take immediate steps to address it” (“Border Fence Proposal”). Statements by Senator Cornyn utilize frames of national security to argue that the border fence “reflects the consensus of the American public,” but as I will assert in this section, the federal concerns of the border and immigration differ in many respects from local opinions about immigration. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison of Texas also praises the reconsideration of the border fence within the Senate. Hutchison contends, “I have consistently supported and voted in favor of border security efforts such as the installation of reinforced fencing in strategic areas where high trafficking of narcotics, unlawful border crossings and other criminal activity exists” (“Border Fence Proposal” n.p.). In this example, Hutchison too returns to the frames of the *Washington Post* to describe immigrants as criminals dealing with narcotics along the border in favor of her push to “consistently” increase border security. It is becoming evident that the opinions of U.S. Senators representing the entire state of Texas vary greatly from the opinions of communities living along the border.

In fact, when the House of Representatives first approved its version of immigration reform it was met with large disapproval. According to Sara Ines Calderon of the *Brownsville Herald*, “The House bill, which would have made some undocumented immigrants felons and mandated the creation of 700 miles of double-layered border fence along the U.S.-Mexico border, sparked nationwide protests” (“House Rehashes Immigration” n.p.). Immigrants and their supporters took to the streets

with American flags in hand to inform the United States that they are here and supported by large followings of Americans, which recognize their rights as humans. Personally, it was moving to witness these demonstrations unfold in every major city in the United States. Immigrants were not alone in their struggle. Even the City of Brownsville, with less than two hundred thousand residents, hosted demonstrations and protests to the House bill. According to Calderon, “In April, an estimated 350 people marched from Dean Porter Park to the Gateway International Bridge, to the exact spot the House had proposed to build a fence a few months earlier” (“House Rehashes Immigration” n.p.). In another statement of protest, Jay J. Johnson Castro, a man from Del Rio, Texas, protests the border wall by walking nearly 200 miles from Laredo to Brownsville, representing the 200 mile stretch of fencing from the two cities that Congress approved in August of 2006.

Although Mr. Castro agrees that an immigration problem exists, he believes the federal government is going about solving this problem in the wrong way. According to Castro, “If you want to deal with immigration, you need to look at Latin Americans as refugees, not as our enemy,” adding that, “They are willing to work jobs that none of us are willing to do” (“Man Nearing Brownsville” n.p.). As we begin to see in frames of local voices, individuals along the border sympathize with the experiences and important roles played by immigrants, which is starkly different from the criminal frames and metaphors used to describe immigrants in the *Washington Post*. For the first time, we are also allowed to hear from an individual in the United States who does not possess the official permission to be in this country. Sara Ines Calderon expresses in an editor’s note, “The person called David in this story asked that his real name not be revealed,”

(“Working the System” n.p.). Calderon’s note implies an uneasy fear that the person known as David carries with him because of his dilemma.

However, David never even considered what he was doing a criminal infraction. David asserts, “It was never a conspiracy. . . . It was just the way things worked out” (“Working the System” n.p.). David is referring to the path which he travelled to the United States. In this article, Calderon describes an approach that many individuals use to legally enter this country, the same manner in which the country of Mexico allowed me to travel and study in Guadalajara when I was a student. Calderon writes, “While immigration reforms continue to dominate the nation’s political landscape, the country’s tourist visa system, which allows tourists to visit for pleasure or medical reasons, hasn’t gotten much attention” (“Working the System” n.p.). The article explains that many immigrants enter the United States through tourist visas, but remain in the country beyond the expiration date of the visas. David, an electrical engineering student in Chile, notes, “the possibility of working was good, and if I worked one month, I could pay for my whole trip and return to my country with a little money to pay for tuition and stuff. . . . If it was for pure economic reasons, I would have stayed” (“Working the System” n.p.). But, David does not stay, he returns home where he hopes to develop a business based on the knowledge he gains from the United States. David confirms, “I never thought that I committed a major crime because I did it with the intention to work, not to rob anything from the government, just to work” (“Working the System” n.p.). The response by our government, however, is to construct more prisons, purchase more cots, and profit from the economic interests that a prisoner represents in the criminal justice system.

Within the frame of local voices are claims that the federal government fails and continues to fall short of listening to the communities affected by this legislation. For instance, Nathan Selzer, co-director of Proyecto Libertad, an immigration rights group in Harlingen, Texas, explains, “The Republican Party’s claims that the fence will deter illegal immigration is untrue,” adding that, “Congress should have made an effort to listen to communities along the border. Washington should spend a lot more time listening to people who are affected by these politics” (“Locals Express Concern” n.p). In these examples, voices are silenced by the actions of Congressional representatives that spend little to no time engaging in dialogues with communities living on the border, which returns us to arguments that Congress and Washington are displaced from the border.

Texas resident and farmer Leonard Loop, unabashedly rejects Washington’s plan and argues, “You can’t have a bunch of people not from here know what to do. . . . It (a fence) sounds good to the people that live someplace else” (“The Tide Is Turning” n.p.). According to the article, which once again is written by Sara Ines Calderon, Mr. Loop and his family have cultivated the farms in Southmost, Texas, for four generations, but now the border fence threatens to divide his property (Calderon, “The Tide Is Turning” n.p.). A reality faced by farmers like Pete Leal and Leonard Loop is that their lands are being procured by the United States Department of Homeland Security for a project that endangers their careers, families, and business relationships. Additionally, Loop believes the government is in for a surprise because of their lack of familiarity with the Rio Grande River. Loop points out, “The river twists so much that two linear miles along two points on the river can equal more than three times the number of miles if you stick to the

rivers banks; one mile quickly becomes five” (“The Tide Is Turning” n.p.). Emma Perez-Treviño, in a future *Brownsville Herald* article, clarifies, “Though the total fencing was believed to be about 700 miles, congressional researchers say it is closer to 850” (“Mayors Opposed to Border” n.p.). Thus, Congress’ earlier estimates were further placed into question as new research uncovered the difficulty of building a wall along the border.

In another argument employed in frames of local voices, residents and politicians invoke images of previous walls and false ideologies they represent. In an article immediately following the approval of Congress to construct a border fence from Laredo to Brownsville, Cameron County Judge Gilberto Hinojosa explains, “It’s like when East Germany built a wall between West Berlin and East Berlin” (“Locals Express Concern” n.p.). Dr. Julieta Garcia, president of the University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College, argues, “The Great Wall of China as big as it was, as long as it was, as wide as it was, as sturdy did not work. . . . The Berlin Wall did not work either. If that is the case here, then I think history will repeat itself” (“Locals Express Concern” n.p.). Hinojosa’s and Garcia’s comments summon images of walls that the United States suggested be torn down. It was Ronald Reagan, one of the Republican Party’s most respected political figures, who at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin announced “Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate. . . . Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!” (“Remarks at the Brandenburg” n.p.). Despite the GOP’s respect and admiration for Ronald Reagan, his theory of walls fails to elicit support with respect to the U.S.-Mexico divider.

In an end of the year *Brownsville Herald* poll designed to gauge readers opinions on the “Top Stories” of 2006, the first option on the ballot refers to the border fence as

“The Great Wall of Mexico” (“Vote: Top Stories 2006” n.p.). A description of the metonym declares, “Not one brick of the border fence between the United States and Mexico has been laid but the plans to move forward have divided two nations on the issue of illegal immigration and border security” (“Vote: Top Stories 2006” n.p.). The staff of the *Brownsville Herald* obviously recognized that this topic affects their readers in a unique manner that cannot be shared by most people living away from the border. In another choice for top story of 2006, the option “A Day Without Immigrants” acknowledges an organized demonstration in Brownsville that coincided with nationwide demonstrations that drew attention to comprehensive immigration reform. The *Herald* reports, “In Brownsville, close to 1,000 demonstrators gathered in the streets, raised their hands, waved their flags and demanded an audience from this country’s lawmakers” (“Vote: Top Stories 2006” n.p.). Despite the attempts of immigrants and their allies to gain support for comprehensive immigration reform, Congress and the federal government failed to respond to the needs of local communities by adopting anti-immigrant legislation and approving the construction of a physical barrier.

Local artists also express their voices through the texts they create to combat Congress’ actions with creativity. According to Kevin Garcia, a creative and artistic response led local resident Rebecca Gomez to commission “an artist to make her [a] sign off the frontage road near Boca Chica Boulevard with the words: No Berlin Wall in Texas” (“Residents Display Opposition” n.p.). In her defense of the image created by artist Mark Clark and attack on the government’s response to immigration, Gomez insists, “It’s like a wall separating the same people,” concluding that “We’re not at war and we have friendly relations with Mexico, so there must be other solutions to the illegal



immigration problem” (“Residents Display Opposition” n.p.). It is precisely the alternative solutions Gomez suggests that I will explore in the next section of this essay. Nonetheless, Gomez and Clark illuminate the significance of walls used as barriers to divide nations. Clark claims, “Wall ideas are symbolic of falling empires” (“Residents Display Opposition” n.p.). The article adds that Clark compared the border wall, “to the Great Wall of China, the Berlin Wall, and Hadrian’s Wall,” which the Roman empire constructed throughout areas of Northern England (“Residents Display Opposition” n.p.). Clark’s arguments resonate with the arguments made by Ronald Reagan when he requested that the Berlin Wall be removed.

The final argument made by Clark is that in the previous administration’s attempt to secure and enforce U.S. borders it failed to undertake the necessary steps to secure the longest undefended border in our world, which is the northern border between the United States and Canada. Clark observes, “It’s funny to see these northern congressmen [sic] that want to keep our undefended border in Canada, but they want to keep out people that want to come and build a life for their children in los Estados Unidos” (“Residents Display Opposition” n.p.). The fact that Congress targeted the southern border with Mexico to secure U.S. borders masks their true anti-immigration intentions behind frames of national security. The final example highlights the objectives of a Republican dominated Congress, anxious to pass some form of legislation in their push for re-election on the final day the 109th Congress would meet before mid-term elections.

### ***Alternative Solutions***

During his visit to the Valley on the third day of August in 2006, President Bush reassured his Texan constituencies and reaffirmed his plan to address immigration in the

United States. Most importantly, his proposal was considered comprehensive in its approach, but as we know, what Congress approved and the president confirmed was very different from his early recommendations. Kaitlin Bell of the McAllen-based *Monitor*, which is a newspaper owned by and operated by Freedom Communications, Inc., reported the president's visit. Her article was also released in the *Brownsville Herald* and summarized President Bush's suggestions for comprehensive immigration reform as follows. His plan included five key proposals:

securing national borders; creating a temporary worker program; expanding an electronic document verification system so employers can verify their workers are legal; allowing the 12 million undocumented immigrants already in the country to start on a path toward citizenship; encouraging assimilation through learning English. ("President to Visit" n.p.)

As we know, the president's GOP colleagues took on about two of his five suggestions, while Democrats attempted to gain support with the other components Bush approved. However, the President's approach was limited in reaching out to local voices as we know from the previous discussions.

Local voices did not allow the president's lack of communication and transparency in the days that followed his visit to alter their beliefs or goals for prosperity in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. What developed was a wealth of suggestions from local residents, businesses, and politicians, but like the *Washington Post* in its coverage of the Watergate Scandal, the people of the Valley had home court advantage in a national discussion that directly and materially affected their identities, livelihoods, and futures. Although these suggestions could be grouped in a category of local voices, their

very essence was unique because they captured opinions from a community of people most familiar with the experience of living on the border. The frames identified in this section present a collection of alternative solutions from a diverse group of local respondents. Additionally, three main temporal shifts (marked by movements for immigration reform, passage of the Secure Fence Act in Congress, and approval from President Bush on October 26, 2006) occurred, and caused the dialogue and proposals to shift slightly in response to the material factors and consequences of these events.

The first time period of importance coincides with the president's visit to South Texas, however this time period, which I expected to include a wealth of alternative solutions, in reality, provided the least amount of alternative solutions. In the eight articles preceding Congress' approval of the Secure Fence Act, recommendations were made on the part of local communities that played host to this national debate. Bell's abovementioned article chronicling "the first visit to the area by a sitting president since Bill Clinton's in 1998," initiates a dialogue that local residents, businesses, and elected officials would engage in with the American people and local community in the articles before passing the vital legislation ("President to Visit" n.p.). In this article, Mayor Richard Cortez of McAllen, whom we heard from earlier, suggests, "the country should legalize undocumented immigrants who have not committed crimes and are contributing to the economy" ("President to Visit" n.p.). This approach would fulfill the hopes of many people living along the border and around the country, but at the same time it is also what opponents around the country referred to as an amnesty program to instill fear in the minds of Nativist and anti-immigrant factions. At the very same time alternative solutions began to arise, the fulfillment of certain desires were debated by anti-

immigration advocates. The articles to follow provide us with approaches that varied greatly from what was actually initiated by Congress.

In an article by Matt Whittaker of the *Brownsville Herald*, he highlights the fears and concerns of local community members in relation to the various legislative effects being proposed for the area. Whittaker writes, “Some speakers at Thursday’s meeting, which included state lawmakers, federal and Mexican government officials, and area religious health, business and immigrants rights leaders said the House version [of immigration reform] is driven by fear” (“Panel: Leaders Need” n.p.). The diversity of the group at the panel insinuates that many interests are at stake with the legislations being proposed. State Senator Juan Hinojosa, a democrat representing McAllen, adds, “There’s a tinge of racism in this whole immigration debate” (“Panel: Leaders Need” n.p.). This article exposes the material consequences of anti-immigration legislation, which include economic declines, fear-based responses to Hispanics and Mexicans, and the exploitation of Mexicans in the country. “Mexicans are often left in the dark on where U.S. immigration policies stand, and those who illegally cross into the country to work and support the U.S. economy are often exploited,” according to Whittaker’s summation of the discussions amongst the roundtable participants (“Panel: Leaders Need” n.p.). The consequences of anti-immigration legislation are essential to the viewpoints of the local community and their proposals of alternative approaches out of the fears they face if adverse legislation is approved.

But, on the final day of the 109th Congress, and without reaching out to the local community along the border, the Secure Fence Act was approved in the U.S. Senate and sent to the White House for President Bush to sign. The approval of the legislation

initiated the second significant temporal shift in the dialogue. This shift was triggered by approval of the bill since the reality of unfavorable legislation was impending, when earlier these ideas seemed far-fetched and unrealistic. Despite the bill passing the Senate, the language incorporated by communities opposed to the border fence suggests the people held onto hope that President Bush would veto the legislation because of its stark differences from his pleas for comprehensive immigration reform. The discourse of local concerns suggests President Bush would not sign the bill because of his experience living in Texas. The language implies that the President understands the burdens a border fence and anti-immigration policy would place on local communities. The first set of articles to report the Senate's endorsement of the bill begins by theorizing the amount of social reform that could be accomplished with the money invested in communities along the border. Cameron Country Judge Gilberto Hinojosa states, "The money used to build the fence should be given to border communities for better schools and highways" ("Locals Express Concern" n.p.). Jimmy Paz, director of the National Audubon Sabal Palms Wildlife Sanctuary, also believes the money being allotted to the fence could be used more wisely. Paz argues, "With the money they're spending to build a wall, they could build a bridge relations-wise. . . . They could help the economy over here" ("Locals Express Concern" n.p.). The complete disregard for the needs of the people resulted in unrelenting and frivolous spending, that continues to date, due to the obstacles and challenges the Department of Homeland Security would face building the fence.

Local elected officials, like U.S. Representative Solomon Ortiz (D-McAllen), pushed for an approach that focused on enforcement. Cathy Travis, a spokesperson for Mr. Ortiz, stated that he recommends, "The money used for the fence would be better

used to hire more Border Patrol agents or add detention beds for illegal immigrants” (“Mexican Government Says” n.p.). Mr. Ortiz’s suggestions reproduce arguments that according to government estimates, illegal immigration has decreased over the past year because of the increased presence of Border Patrol agents. However, individuals were still concerned for the safety and welfare of immigrant families forced to live in the shadows because they are afraid of having their families separated in the event of an immigration raid. U.S. Representative Ruben Hinojosa (D-Mercedes), was one such politician concerned with the well-being of families already living in the United States. According to Ciaran Clayton, a spokesperson for Mr. Hinojosa, he declares, “Whether or not it’s a guest worker program or a path to citizenship . . . he wants some way to address the 11-12 million people who are already here” (“Mexican Government Says” n.p.). Throughout discussions of immigration and the alleged costs and expenses associated with it, moments exist when journalists dehumanize immigrants by reducing them to criminals, costs on the economy, or security and political risks. Seldom do the reporters or players in this debate take the time to acknowledge immigrants as humans.

In a story by Sara Ines Calderon, she speaks with Southmost, Texas, resident Pedro, who describes witnessing people crossing or hiding on his property after enduring the journey across the Rio Grande and into the United States. For many of these individuals, crossing the river represents an uncertain goodbye to their homeland, families, and everything ever known for perhaps the last time. According to Pedro, “More Border Patrol agents arrived in the late 1990s, lights went up along the river, and the flow of people stopped,” adding, “But then they turned off the lights . . . [and] forget it, they’re still crossing” (“Where There’s a Will” n.p.). Having lived along the border for the

previous ten years, Pedro grew accustomed to movement of immigrants across the lands. Like many residents along the border, he realizes, “A fence isn’t going to do much to change. . . . You have to consider these are ordinary people come looking for work and, most importantly . . . are willing to risk their lives to do it” (“Where There’s a Will” n.p.). The reality of the fence is that it simply places immigrants at greater risk and proposes that pushing their movements into the severe conditions of the Sierra Madre Mountains is a realistic solution to the perceived problem. According to Pedro, a more practical approach might be “giving them visas would be a better idea than building a fence that will become an obstacle, more than a barrier. . . . It’s going to be harder for them to cross, but they’re still going to cross” (“Where There’s a Will” n.p.). The reality is that as long as opportunities, not available to people in their homelands, lie in the North, people will continue to risk their lives. As Pedro suggests, providing work visas is a more sensible solution.

Business members of the community were also willing to contribute their stance on the recently approved law. Business leaders included members of the United States and Mexican communities because of the close economic interests that the Valley shares with Matamoros, Mexico. In the week following approval of the act, the Brownsville City Commission requested, “a guest worker program, a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants provided they have no committed serious crimes and that they pay taxes and Social Security on their earnings” (“Company to Evaluate” n.p.). In addition, the city asked President Bush not to approve the construction of a fence, laws that require local law enforcement to enforce national immigration law, and to coordinate the amount of working visas with the demand for workers. In essence, the people’s responses and

suggestions more so reflected the calls for comprehensive immigration reform that President Bush called for in his visit to the Valley two months prior. It was the President's stance on immigration that compelled locals to embrace the hope that he would see through the faults of this proposal.

The final temporal shift within the immigration debate occurred following the approval by President Bush on the twenty-sixth day of October of the Secure Fence Act of 2006. This action achieved what many Republican politicians set out to accomplish as midterm elections approached in November. After this occurrence, the debate left little room for alternative solutions, but the midterm elections renewed hope that anti-immigrant legislation would be challenged by a new Congress. The government of the State of Texas "promised to fight proposed legislation that would deny state services to children of undocumented immigrants during a meeting of border leaders," according to Elizabeth Pierson ("Lawmakers Vow to Fight" n.p.). At this moment in time, plans for constructing the wall were still very much undecided because acting Secretary Michael Chertoff and the Department of Homeland Security, both of whom President Bush and the Secure Fence Act provided unprecedented authority to build the fence, were surveying where exactly to place the fence in relation to the border. The uncertainties of the plan propelled individuals to offer more fixes to the immigration problem, which did not necessarily bode well for immigrants and their allies.

For instance, in discussing actions taken by the federal government to address immigration, Texas Governor Rick Perry acknowledges, "strategic fencing along the border makes sense, but the idea of a complete wall or fence is preposterous" ("Lawmakers Vow to Fight" n.p.). However, Pierson reports, "he wants the federal



government to establish a guest-worker program that will allow the government to track workers” (“Lawmakers Vow to Fight” n.p.). These remarks embody the types of discussions raised early on in congressional sessions to gain support for politicians, but at the end of the day, like many political promises, these suggestions fall to the side of political importance partly because of new anti-immigrant legislation. Texas State Representative Leo Berman (R-Tyler), for example, proposed a bill that “would withhold all state services from children born in the United States of undocumented immigrant parents even though the children are U.S. citizens” (“Lawmakers Vow to Fight” n.p.). This proposal would challenge the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution, which guarantees citizenship to “all persons born or naturalized in the United States,” according to the Library of Congress website (“14th Amendment” n.p.). This form of anti-immigrant legislation mirrored the policies approved in California during the 1994 “Save Our State” campaign most recently discussed by Otto Santa Ana and Kent Ono and John Sloop.

According to Pierson’s article describing Berman’s attempts to enact anti-immigrant law in Texas, she writes, “Berman has said his intent is to draw a lawsuit that would force the U.S. Supreme Court to reconsider the Fourteenth Amendment,” proving that politicians will do whatever it takes to insure as many anti-immigrant bills are enacted as possible, especially those that challenge federal law (“Lawmakers Vow to Fight” n.p.). Again, the consequences of a bill like the one Berman is proposing places unnecessary risks on families that include parents from a foreign country with American-born children. A risk of division also develops as Governor Perry explained when asked if challenging the Fourteenth Amendment was a good or a bad proposal. Perry contends,

“I think any of those types of legislation that create divisions are bad. . . . We need to look at ways to be bringing people together rather than driving wedges between them” (“Lawmakers Vow to Fight” n.p.). Most clear is this article’s ability to uncover many of the fears people hold towards immigrants, but it also works to illustrate the vast differences in opinions, approaches, and suggestions for addressing immigration. But the risk is still there that leadership will continue to ask for comprehensive reform and in return inherit xenophobic and unproductive legislation.

### *Conclusions*

My intention with the discussions above was to describe how a local newspaper, with close proximity to an important political issue that holds material consequences for the area, discussed immigration in the months leading up to and following the approval of the Secure Fence Act of 2006. In my analysis, I establish the *Brownsville Herald*, engaged a more productive and diverse dialogue about immigration and the border fence because the legislation, which eventually was enacted, mattered much more to the local community in a different manner than it did with the greater public established in locations at a distance from the border. Through my examination of these articles, unique opinions and alternative solutions proved to be the dominant frames discussed by local residents, businesses, and local, state, and federal elected officials.

Local concerns illustrated the significance and divisions that a fence would cause between two friendly and parallel communities. Residents did not desire a wall in their backyards and businesses objected to making it more difficult for people to work in our country legally without increased endorsement of work visas. In my estimation, hopes were high that President Bush, who requested that his party deliver comprehensive

immigration reform, would veto the Secure Fence Act since it differed so much from what he demanded of Congress. Consequently, what these communities received was dictated by a remote and displaced federal government, much like the situation of early Texans when they felt their federal government in Mexico City was failing to meet their needs. The Bush Administration succumbed to the anti-immigrant fervor of politicians trying to gain support before midterm elections and people genuinely opposed to immigrants and people who look like their impressions of immigrants. Promises to fight for alternative solutions and to argue against building walls were pledged by some state and local politicians, but federal elected officials for the state praised the bill as a victory for immigration reform.

One matter left uncertain is the future, and I must admit that this intrigues me because hope still reaches out to those encouraged by the efforts and actions of local heroes fighting on behalf of the people destined to battle this issue. Dr. Eloisa Tamez, who fought the Department of Homeland Security for the right to keep her backyard free of border fence, represents one of the many local concerns in the Valley of Texas.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Julieta Garcia, President of the University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College, fought off plans by the Department of Homeland Security to build a border wall that would divide much of the University. Dr. Garcia won a battle for her university and community with her stand, forcing DHS to re-evaluate their plans.<sup>3</sup> In these instances, local voices resist the plans and intentions of the federal government through the frame of local concerns. These marginalized voices offered, and continue to propose, alternative solutions to the border fence. With the future remaining unclear, the construction of the wall continues, just like the concerns of local community members. With or without these

concerns and solutions, certain politicians continue their pursuit of anti-immigration policy. Negative sentiment towards a number of these policies continues to spawn resistance from individuals opposed to such legislation, creating a space for local concerns and alternative solutions to determine the future of Brownsville and the United States.

Reflections on the Border:  
Final Thoughts and Comparisons  
Between Divergent Discourses

In March of 2007, I embarked on a journey to a land I knew from childhood vacations and the stories my father told me about his visits to Mexico as a child. A vacation that I remember vividly occurred during spring break of my junior year of high school, when I was sixteen years old. Eager to show his two youngest children the town that his mother's family departed for the mines of southern Colorado in the early twentieth century, my father drove his family across northern Mexico to what then seemed like the center of Mexico, in Guanajuato. This quiet and colonial Mexican town found itself right in the middle of Mexico's struggle for independence from Spain. In fact, when I was last there, I visited a historical building named *Alhóndiga de Granaditas*, which was the public granary in the 1800s when Mexican leader Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla led the Mexican people to their independence. However, Hidalgo y Costilla, one of the most respected Mexican heroes in the country's history, did not live to see the country's independence as he was captured and executed for his role in liberating the people and leading attacks in Guanajuato. After Hidalgo's execution, his head, and the heads of three other participants, were hung at one of the corners of the building where it would remain for ten years, reminding the people of their colonized condition, until the Mexican people secured their independence.

But returning to March of 2007, I embarked on a journey to a land I knew from childhood vacations, only this time I was on my own. I lived with a family in Guadalajara for two months. They were some of the kindest people I have ever met in my life. When I asked what were likely invasive and inappropriate questions about their personal and private political beliefs they helped me to understand these viewpoints and opinions by describing their experiences. They helped me to learn a language that I struggled with since I was a child, unable to communicate with an eighty-year-old great-grandmother who only spoke Spanish. They even called the taxi that drove me to the Guadalajara bus station in order to secure a price that did not take advantage of an ignorant American tourist when I left that beautiful city for the other Mexican cities that I would come to know and love. The people I met along my journey down the Pacific coast, through the interior cities of Mexico, and back to the northern territories that looked much more like my hometown of San Antonio, were both welcoming and curious about my trip across what was still a foreign land to me. One thing, however, was certain: I was faced with an existential dilemma.

At that moment in time, I was shaped by a set of circumstances and consequences that placed me in a moment where I simply desired to better understand who I was based on a history I tried desperately to imagine. I could never fully know the circumstances that brought my family to the United States without asking my now deceased ancestors. I could never fully understand the consequences of growing up in a country that physically punished my parents for speaking Spanish in high school or forced three of my four grandparents to cease their education before completing middle school because supporting their families was more important. In addition, none of us could ever grasp

how fundamentally different any of our lives would be if any one circumstance resulted differently, but I am still left attempting to determine my identity and how I am shaped by these situations and experiences.

The original purpose of this project involved understanding why so many people are willing to write-off an entire community of people simply because of the circumstances that drove them from their homes. I, fortunately, have never been forcefully driven from my home to enter a world so opposed to me that they enact legislation to refuse basic human rights to me and my family out of fear and apathy. I set out to examine the two very different discourses found in the *Washington Post* and the *Brownsville Herald* in an attempt to understand what drives certain individuals to hate a community of immigrants. I do not know if I can honestly answer the very question I set out to seek, but my reflections in this section of my essay attempt to summarize the main arguments uncovered in my analysis of immigration and the border fence. In addition, I describe a number of similarities and differences between the dialogues in the *Washington Post* and the *Brownsville Herald*. Lastly, I conclude with a description of where the immigration debate stands today, in hopes of establishing logical steps for comprehensive immigration reform in the United States.

### ***Main Arguments***

This thesis argues that during the three months leading up to and the three months following the approval of the Secure Fence Act of 2006 divergent discourses emerged that described and discussed immigration, immigrants, and the border fence in vastly distinct manners. As a result of the varied voices and locales from which these discourses surfaced, the *Washington Post* focused on immigration as costs, political risks, and

security threats, while the *Brownsville Herald* spotlighted local concerns and alternative solutions to the immigration debate. In this examination, I specifically evaluated two locations from which discourses about immigration arose and utilized reports and articles presented in a newspaper periodical from which common themes and metaphors were incorporated to describe and discuss immigration, immigrants, and the border fence. The frames and metaphors identified within my examination suggest that one way of understanding these differences is through a frame analysis in an attempt to catalog the consequences and risks they raise, which I address more thoroughly in the next two sections of this thesis. It is clear that some of the risks people face arise from the unhelpful and unsympathetic attempts made to reform immigration through anti-immigrant legislation. In my investigation of the *Washington Post* and the *Brownsville Herald*, I discovered that the two outlets provide different ways of understanding immigration because they are informed by fundamentally different experiences that shape their stance and reports on the issue.

First, a close look at the elements incorporated into the *Washington Post's* description of the immigration debate reveal three common themes that either describe immigrants or explain the impact of their presence in American society: as costs to taxpayers, potential risks, gains, or losses for political pundits, or dangerous threats to United States' national security. As a result of its prominence and presence in the nation's capital, I posit that the *Post* serves as the closest outlet to the spaces where policies are enacted on behalf of the American people through the decisions made by public elected officials. In this capacity, the newspaper engages opinions from politicians, government bureaucrats, and leaders of advocacy groups, but fails to engage the opinions



and voices locally affected by legislation passed in Congress. The *Post* is granted a tinge of authority in reporting on U.S. politics simply because it is a local newspaper that performs for a national audience. The initial frame substitutes the immigrant with economic figures and political risks, which I refer to as a *cost frame*, in an attempt to describe both the burden and boon of immigration as described in political discussions circulating Washington. The second frame suggests that frames of *political allegiance* inform audiences about the political platform(s) or agenda(s) of politicians and political parties in Washington. Within this frame, political attitudes are performed and affirmed by the players in Washington politics. Finally, immigrants and immigration often are categorized in frames of *national security*, which describe the two as threats or vulnerabilities to the security and safety of the United States through fear based rhetoric and legislation known as anti-immigrant policies. While my sample and analysis of the *Washington Post* produce rich areas to conduct criticism, the frames are fundamentally flawed because they fail to engage local voices and dialogues influenced by the consequences of political action.

In my attempt to measure the similarities and differences within these two outlets, which will be addressed shortly, I examined how a community more closely affected by the actions of federal officials reacted to discussions and actions taken in the name of comprehensive immigration reform. In my assessment of the *Brownsville Herald*, two dominant frames emerged to describe and discuss immigration through profoundly unique modes of interpreting the issue. The first frames to advance included a component clearly lacking in the *Washington Post*. In their description of immigration, the *Brownsville Herald* integrated a variety of local voices that described immigration very

differently than the *Washington Post*. Specifically, the *Herald* engaged the voices and opinions of local residents, business members, and local, state, and federal elected officials in frames of *local concerns*. The *Post* incorporated the two voices of Republican United States' senators from Texas, but failed to mention experiences and standpoints shared by the people who live along the border. Second, through a frame of *alternative solutions*, the *Brownsville Herald* offered a number of substitutes to the proposed, and later enacted, policies. The alternative solutions are vital to this debate because they provide steps to comprehensively reform immigration, which President Bush asked of Congress only to receive an approach that contradicted the President's suggestions.

As a result of this comparison, two exclusive ways of interpreting and understanding immigration in the United States are presented. The two examinations highlight the differences in the ways the two communities describe and discuss immigration, immigrants, and the border fence during contradictory moments of rising anti-immigrant rhetoric and growing support for immigrant rights. In many ways, these very debates have not disappeared because the consequences of the actions taken by Congress and President Bush during the fall of 2006 continue to impact Washington and the border regions in ways that Middle America is not challenged. A more detailed description of the consequences of legislation enacted by Congress will follow in the next section, along with a discussion of the similarities and differences between the two discourses examined in this project.

### ***Comparisons and Consequences***

By engaging the discourses of two separate entities like the *Washington Post* and the *Brownsville Herald*, I was allowed to compare the frames and metaphors integrated

into the two different outlets. This comparison results in a set of similarities and differences in the presentation of the respective outlet. In many instances, the similarities led me directly to the differences between the two outlets. Additionally, the juxtaposition of the two newspapers provided me with an opportunity to analyze the manner in which the consequences of immigration reform are discussed by two separate communities affected by such reform in vastly different ways. This section of my thesis suggests that both similarities and differences can be identified by comparing and contrasting the articles within the two newspapers, resulting in the identification of consequences described by each community affected by immigration reform. First, I will present the similarities found between the two outlets.

The first similarity involves the communities served by each respective newspaper. The frames suggest that both periodicals serve a local community. The *Washington Post* performs as the political voice of our nation's capital and the closest outlet to the location where federal laws are enacted. As I stated in my beginning chapter, according to the Encyclopedia of Media and Politics, "The *Washington Post* is considered one of the most authoritative news sources on the activities of the U.S. government, particularly within Congress and the White House" (Schaefer 300). Because of their proximity to government activities, the *Post* serves both a national community affected by the governmental policies and a local audience within Washington D.C. and surrounding areas. Conversely, the *Brownsville Herald* serves a local population, but this community is directly affected by the particular legislative steps set in motion by the Secure Fence Act of 2006. The *Herald's* proximity to the border, where a fence would now be constructed, offered different ways of thinking and talking about the legislation.

This conversation too was a local public dialogue that connected the actions of a displaced entity with the reactions of a local community. Though their responses and reactions to immigration and the border fence were vastly different, which I will discuss later in this section, the communities and interests served were local in comparison to the headquarters of each newspaper.

The second most distinguished similarity involves the use of frames that describe immigration in terms of political allegiances. Although I do not focus on frames of political allegiances in my analysis of the *Brownsville Herald* because it is not one of the most commonly utilized frames in the newspaper, it is clear that both periodicals associate anti-immigrant legislation with the Republican Party and afford future political clout to the Democratic Party since they are perceived as more supportive of immigration and immigrants than many of the Republicans we hear from in this debate. For instance, the *Washington Post's* coverage suggests the Republican Party's failure to deliver comprehensive immigration reform will sway Latino voters towards the Democrats. Additionally, the local community of Brownsville also condemned the Republican led campaign for a border fence. However, the new gained support also pressures the Democratic Party to deliver comprehensive immigration reform in return for the overwhelming political support they received from Latinos in the 2008 presidential election.<sup>4</sup> The similar use of political allegiance frames allows media outlets to divide this issue along party lines, typical of Washington politics and devastating to comprehensive immigration reform. Use of political allegiance frames function by polarizing immigration reform along party lines, which fails to address the needs of immigrants risking their lives to enter this country.

The final example that I will discuss is probably the most obvious similarity between the frames, but again leads to very important differences between the ways immigration is discussed by each of the two newspapers. The last similarity between the *Washington Post* and the *Brownsville Herald* is their concurrence that an immigration problem exists and requires attention and action from the federal government. On one hand, the articles in the *Post* claim that immigrants are a costly burden to our economy in the cost frame, a political asset in frames of political allegiance, and a threat to the security of our nation in the national security frame. In these ways, the *Post* defines ways that immigrants cause problems for the United States government. On the other hand, the *Herald* proclaims that immigration reform must include the basic human rights and desires of immigrants through discussions of local concerns. Additionally, the *Herald* suggests that local communities living along the border perceive the resolution of the immigration problem through frames that offer alternative solutions. Again, despite differing opinions on how to address immigration, the frames found in both samples agree that certain problems exist with regard to immigration.

As I suggest in my analysis above, many of the similarities between the two periodicals are directly linked to the differences amongst both outlets. For example, even though both newspapers agree that an immigration problem exists, they differ in their impressions of the problem. The *Washington Post* would have their readers believe that immigrants cause a number of social problems. Of the three dominant frames located within the *Post*, they all imply that immigrants are the problem. *Post* examples describe immigrants as costly burdens, political risks, national security threats, criminal drug smugglers, and a number of additional metaphors and stereotypical images that simply do

not justly describe the traits and characteristics of immigrants. In my opinion, many of the *Washington Post* articles dehumanize immigrants, as I argued in Chapter 2 of this thesis. The *Brownsville Herald*, on the other hand, describes the lives of immigrants in a style that humanizes the individual by telling his or her experience(s). The *Herald* actually provides immigrants with a voice through the anonymous interviews conducted to help readers better understand the experiences of an immigrant, as opposed to referring to that person as an economic unit, political risk, or security threat. The *Herald*, like the *Washington Post*, maintains that an immigration problem exists in our country, but the reasons that illustrate the problem significantly differ.

I propose in the previous section that both newspapers agree an immigration problem exists, but disagree in their understanding of that problem. Additionally, the two outlets differ in the ways they talk about fixing the problem. The *Washington Post*, for instance, does not provide any specific alternative solutions that might remedy the perceived immigration problem. Other than mentioning comprehensive reform as a failed proposal from President Bush, the *Post* offers no alternative solutions. Instead, the *Post* only reports from the political voices in Washington. The *Brownsville Herald*, however, incorporates local concerns and voices and offers alternative solutions like creating a guest worker program, recommending an increase in the amount of work visas awarded each year, and providing a path to citizenship for all immigrants and their families still living in this country. As I argue in the above section, the *Brownsville Herald* is more thoughtful when it comes to describing immigrants in a humanizing approach. In this way, the two styles of the newspapers vary in the ways they recommend the problem be fixed.

The final, and most notable, difference between the two outlets involves the types of voices engaged within each newspaper. In the *Washington Post*, for example, only a select group of individuals is allowed to participate in the political debate. The *Post* incorporates the voices of political elites, leaders of advocacy groups and think tanks, and staff writers. Absent from the *Post's* discussion of immigration is the use of divergent voices that add variety to the public debate. On the contrary, the *Brownsville Herald* relies on local and divergent voices to describe immigration. The *Herald* incorporates the voices of federal elected officials from the area, but also makes a point of engaging the opinions of local residents, business members, community activists, and for the first time, immigrants directly affected by this debate. The final difference between the two periodicals is the most noticeable and prevalent variation in the way immigration is discussed within this very different outlets. In addition to a number of similarities and differences, the debates that take place in the *Washington Post* and the *Brownsville Herald* recognize that certain consequences arise through the discussions and enactment of anti-immigration policies like the Secure Fence Act.

In my thesis, I believe that three consequences or problems with the current legislation are identified in the public debate about immigration in these two newspapers. First, I believe one of the problems associated with this plan is the fact that it gives, and in some cases requires, local law enforcement to enforce federal immigration laws, which some are in favor of, but others opposed because of a lack of proper training and resources needed to fulfill the roles of federal immigration officers. For example, according to the Nicolas Riccardi of the *Los Angeles Times*, "Arizona lawmakers on Tuesday approved what foes and supporters agree is the toughest measure in the country

against illegal immigrants, directing local police to determine whether people are in the country legally” (“Arizona passes strict” n.p.). A historical overview of anti-immigration policies displays an increased trend in stricter policies being enacted to enforce current immigration policies. However, as the article continues, it describes a contradiction caused by a police force divided on the matter. Ricarrdi writes, “police were deeply divided on the matter, with police unions backing it but the state police chief’s association opposing the bill, contending it could erode trust with immigrants who could be potential witnesses” (“Arizona passes strict” n.p.). The concerns with a portion of the police force given this newly established responsibility and authority again illustrates that political officials often ignore the issues most important to the local communities they serve.

The second risk concerned with this form of legislation involves the increased and adverse affects faced by many Latinos from across to world. I believe that as a result of anti-immigration policies, Latinos are at risk of continued discrimination and racial profiling based on the implementation of these policies designed to refuse basic human rights to immigrants. In fact, one article from the *Brownsville Herald* specifically cites increased discrimination and racial profiling occurring in Brownsville.<sup>5</sup> The consequences of these immoral reactions to immigrants lead to increased enforcement of federal immigration policies by local enforcement officers who are simply not prepared to handle more responsibilities. Asking law enforcement officers to pass judgments on the citizenship status of everyday people requires these officers to determine vital information without any proper resources to do so. Instead, it requires officers to police the visual markers of individuals living in border communities and make assumptions as



to people's citizenship based on visual indicators marked on our bodies, leaving room for increased discrimination and profiling.

Last, and most importantly, the frames and metaphors used to describe immigrants function in ways that dehumanize immigrants and their experiences and reduce all immigrants to unflattering stereotypes and comparisons with criminals, drug smugglers, and unwelcomed costs to the nation. The problem with reducing an entire population of people to living organisms without human characteristics is that you risk unfairly stereotyping an entire group of people who hold within themselves a unique set of variables that brought them to make a decision to leave their home for a country that generally does not accept them. In an examination of the *Brownsville Herald*, the reader is provided with an opportunity to break down the dehumanizing stereotypes utilized to describe immigrant communities. However, if this opportunity goes unnoticed, the risk of readers engaging in a set of discourses that fail to humanize immigrants presents itself. In any event, the discourses are constantly changing and shifting, which leads to new risks and consequences to overcome when evaluating the frames and discourses used to discuss immigration and describe immigrants in current times. Kent Ono and John Sloop best illustrate the importance of distinguishing between divergent discourses when they write, "The challenge today is to listen to and to hear what is being spoken but not being heard that should be, and to encourage others to do the same" (167).

On the one hand, Ono and Sloop suggest researchers examine what is and is not being said and heard within a debate like immigration. As I argue in my thesis, the *Brownsville Herald* is the type of newspaper that is not being heard on a dominant national level. Whereas, the *Washington Post* is a newspaper read by members of the elite

classes frequenting and controlling Washington and United States politics. On the other hand, Santa Ana implores us to investigate the most dominant frames on the most dominant stages. Santa Ana claims, “As long as the dominant stage directions formulate a marginal place for Latinos on the national stage, Latinos will have to struggle and resist the dominant discursive processes of marginalization, racism, and alienation” (293). It was my intent to expose the dominant discourses surrounding immigration with this thesis because I believe now more than ever the regions along the U.S.-Mexico border and the well-being of Latinos living in the United States are in jeopardy. The status of non-U.S. born immigrants and the border remain in limbo as states and towns take their own steps at reforming immigration, while Washington waits for the most suitable moment to readdress immigration and the border.

### *The Debate Today*

In many respects, the debates along the border and within Washington have not changed much in the few years following the passage of the Secure Fence Act. A number of the decisions and policies prepared in 2006, however, remain at the political forefront of debates over immigration. Many of the players are still the same, like the politicians, journalists, and lobbyists, but the outcomes of their decisions have not been revised or revisited since initiated by the 109th Congress and President Bush. For example, the border fence continues to receive criticism from local residents and immigration rights advocates because of their arguments against the effectiveness and necessity of the border wall. Unsurprisingly, many of the same frames are utilized in present-day discussions of immigration, immigrants, and the border fence within each respective newspaper, but little has been done by the government to address substantive reform.

Laura Martinez of the *Brownsville Herald*, for instance, reunites readers with Mr. Leonard Loop, the fourth generation Brownsville citrus farmer whom we heard from in Chapter 3. In this article, Martinez provides readers familiar with Mr. Loop's story or situation an update of his struggle to challenge the Department of Homeland Security in a fight for his property. Martinez writes, "retired farmer and citrus grower Leonard Loop will say goodbye to about 75 of his citrus trees," signifying that Mr. Loop has in fact lost this battle ("Border fence construction" n.p.). In an effort to take his land, the federal government condemned Mr. Loop's successful citrus farm, paid him \$24,000 for 1.73 acres of his property, and fought off his lawsuit against them in a U.S. District court (Martinez, "Border fence construction" n.p.). The article also informs its readers that Mr. Loop is not the only property owner embattled with the federal government. Martinez reports, "Loop is among several private landowners who sued the government over the fence's construction. . . . [in] a court battle that has been ongoing for 18 months" ("Border fence construction" n.p.). A look at contemporary discussions of immigration in Brownsville suggests that local concerns remain prevalent as a result of the government's lack of interest in their opinions.

The article also reports that the Sabal Palms Audubon Center, a "557-acre [wildlife] sanctuary," will be closed for the remainder of the year because it is now settled "behind the fence and officials are still trying to determine how this would affect visitor access to the center" ("Border fence construction" n.p.). Like much of Mr. Loop's farm, the Sabal Palms Audubon Center sits in a buffer zone between the fence and the Rio Grande River, which is still considered the United States but clearly influenced by the reality of a fence and river surrounding the area. In a final update of the completion of

the project, Martinez states, “In Cameron County, 34.8 miles of fencing is planned. . . . As of June 5 [2009], 11.7 miles of fencing had been completed” (“Border fence construction” n.p.). Almost three years after initial plans to construct a border fence took shape, the local community of Brownsville continues its battle against the border wall slated to divide two friendly countries.

The face of Washington has changed since the enactment of the Secure Fence Act of 2006. The Obama administration controls the White House, in part because of the overwhelming support received from Latino voters in the 2008 presidential elections, during which candidate Obama promised to address comprehensive immigration reform as a priority in his first term of office. However, immigration reform lies at a distance from the promises made by the Obama administration during his campaign for the presidency. In a recent White House briefing, according to Spencer Hsu of the *Washington Post*, “press secretary Robert Gibbs said the administration’s next two top priorities are financial regulatory reform and campaign finance legislation” (“Senators draft plan” n.p.). This statement suggests that after the administration’s attempts to enact health care reform, two priorities at the very least stand in front of immigration reform as political priorities. Subsequently, statements from Democrat and Republican leadership, in this case Senators Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) and Lindsay O. Graham (R-S.C.), that they will revisit comprehensive immigration reform are encouraging, but many of the same challenges present themselves.

For example, frames centered on political allegiances present themselves within the article. Hsu reports, “Reaction to the senators’ and White House statements fell along predicted line, with opponents dismissing the plan as an ‘amnesty’ for illegal immigrants,

and supporters calling it a necessary but insufficient ‘first-step’ to changing the law” (“Senators draft plan” n.p.). Readers are again presented with the dilemma of issues informed and influenced by political allegiances. Additionally, cost frames continue to be presented in the *Washington Post* because the reality of these reforms is that they utilize money to allegedly fix the problem. For instance, in a different article referring to the U.S.-Mexico border, Hsu informs his readers that “The Obama administration will halt new work on a ‘virtual fence’ . . . diverting \$50 million in planned economic stimulus funds for the project to other purposes,” as a result of technical problems and delays from its contractor, the Boeing Corporation (“Work to cease” n.p.). Hope is provided that maybe the Obama administration will spend U.S. taxpayers’ money more wisely and possibly heed the suggestions of local communities who reacted to the fence with alternative solutions, but as the article adds, “Napolitano said the department will immediately redeploy \$50 million of stimulus funds to other technology, including mobile surveillance devices, sensors, radios and laptop computers” (“Work to cease” n.p.). Thus, despite the administration’s recognition of the unproductive nature of a “virtual fence,” they continue to take steps to divide the two countries as opposed to alternative approaches provided by communities along the border, like the voices of Brownsville required.

In this investigation, the method of frame analysis coupled with texts that represented voices and opinions from Washington D.C., where legislation is enacted to enforce new federal laws, and Brownsville, where the border fence begins its journey westward, enabled a study that examines how newspapers and locations debate tough issues that materially affect their communities differently. Entman’s assertion that

framing “is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, casual interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described,” suggests that the frames used to describe immigrants and immigration undoubtedly meet the requirements of frame analysis (Entman 52). The newspaper articles serving as the texts under examination function by delivering the voices and opinions of various people affected by this legislation. Entman declares, “Frames . . . define problems . . . diagnose causes . . . make moral judgments . . . and suggest remedies” (52). As the above section recommends, the texts in each respective periodical perform a number of these functions.

Both the *Washington Post* and the *Brownsville Herald* agree that a problem exists, in essence defining the problem. Both the *Washington Post* and the *Brownsville Herald* differ in their arguments about the causes of the problem, but they both consent that immigration is a problem. Both the *Washington Post* and the *Brownsville Herald* pass moral judgments about immigrants, providing a variety of frames and metaphors to represent the entire immigrant population, as if all are the same. Finally, both the *Washington Post* and the *Brownsville Herald* offer solutions to remedy the range of the immigration dilemma that each paper recognizes. An analysis of two separately run newspapers can be productive because of the similarities and differences that can be identified by comparing and contrasting the different frames and metaphors used to described immigrants and immigration. Examining reactions from two unique communities also proves useful and can undoubtedly be incorporated into a study of diverse issues affecting various locales. In initiating this project, I anticipated the debate

and dialogue would be both contradictory, but I did not realize that the two newspapers would be so similar in their accounts of the issue. Another component influencing my study was the choice of key terms employed to identify a sample of texts to analyze.

Two key terms drove my study: immigration and border fence. The first word, immigration, obviously fit into this study since it serves as an umbrella term for issues that affect the migrations of people into the country. The term immigration offered too broad of a collection of texts. Therefore, in order to narrow my focus and concentrate around a specific and compelling time period, the term border fence, which resulted from the Secure Fence Act, led to a reasonable sample size that I believed would put forward a rich discussion for analysis since this issue concerned the communities involved in much different manners. The texts functioning as my sample illustrated that a number of frames are identifiable through the strictures of frame analysis. However, the key terms incorporated also restricted some equally important and consequential discussions of immigration that did not necessarily integrate arguments about the border fence. These under-analyzed articles nonetheless would have nullified my intentions to narrow the search to articles unique to discourses influenced by the Secure Fence Act. For future study, I believe that frame analysis would be of particular importance to investigations of discourses that lead countries to war, discussions that result in legislation that communities deem adverse, or dialogues that connect social issues with the people they affect.

I often recollect on the experiences that I shared with the country and people of Mexico in my unending journey to embrace both my American and Mexican heritages. People often asked me if I was scared traveling by myself through a country that they

perceived as dangerous and foreign. Truthfully, I never felt scared, rather protected by the kindness of a country opposed to walls. The paths and people that I crossed in this journey included Canadians, Belgians, Austrians, English, and Mexicans that equally enjoyed and felt welcomed by a country with so much culture to offer the world. Yet, the fate of immigration reform is clearly unpredictable. With a two party system of government, the polarization of this issue allows the immigration debate to be argued based on political affiliations that divide our country, but also divides our country from other countries. The future of immigrants and our nation's southern border are at stake. On the one hand, immigrants are reduced to unwelcomed stereotypes that dehumanize these individuals and attempt to strip the immigrant community of their agency. On the other hand, money continues to be poured into our nation's border and the construction of a fragmented border fence that does little, to nothing, to enact comprehensive immigration reform to allow immigrants to lead prosperous lives for themselves, their families, and their communities. However, the reality is that immigrants are faced with increased challenges that attempt to deny them of basic human rights, while others profit from their labors. The push for comprehensive immigration reform, consequently, is being revisited by Democratic-controlled Congress. My hope is that this time around Congress will more willingly listen to the people affected most by its sweeping actions.



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## Notes

- 1 The first article of my sample was published on the 22nd day of August 2006. The final article was released on the 20th day of January 2006. These two articles are almost exactly six months apart. Six of the articles printed require a brief explanation because of their unconventional nature as news articles. Of these six articles, the first fails to identify an author of the piece, another article only includes a one sentence reaction from Mexican President-elect Felipe Calderón to President Bush's signing of the Secure Fence Act, two were published editorials in response to previous articles, and two articles are practically identical, but released on subsequent days. The remaining authors are staff writers for the *Washington Post* and frequently contribute and report on the issue of immigration as evidenced by their repeated involvement and appraisal of immigration in these articles. I contend that of all the voices in this analysis, those of the *Washington Post* staff writers are most representative of the newspaper and its function as the reporter of political news in Washington D.C.
- 2 Dr. Eloisa Tamez's battle was discussed in Chapter 1 of my thesis. For an update on her struggle, please refer to Kevin Sieff's article titled "Borderlands: Land granted from King of Spain could see new owner --- Uncle Sam."
- 3 Dr. Julieta Garcia's struggle to keep the border fence off the campus of the University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College was described by Jazmine Ulloa in her article "Panel Remembers Fight Against the 18-foot U.S.-Mexico Border Wall."
- 4 Research suggesting a significant amount of Latino voters supported the Democratic Party in the 2008 general and presidential elections is discussed by Hugo Lopez and Susan Minushkin in the article "Latinos Overwhelmingly Support Obama and Democrats in 2008."
- 5 Refer to the article written by Emma Perez-Treviño of the *Brownsville Herald* entitled, "County judge candidate try to alleviate colonias' concerns." This article describes concerns from local residents about law enforcement probing them to determine their citizenship status.