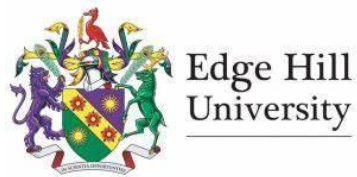


Towards more positive portrayals of Mexican immigration/immigrants in the American and Mexican press



Edge Hill
University

Edge Hill Corpus Research Group

9 November 2023



Katia Adimora

Contents

- Introduction: Discourse prosody and Analyst's perspective

Part 1. American immigration corpus (AIC)

- **Attitudes of the American corpus newspapers towards Mexican immigration/immigrants (2015-2021)**

Overall Results

Diachronic development of consistent positive attitudes

Time specific and absent attitudes

Diachronic development of consistent negative attitudes

Major findings

Contents

- **Part 2. Mexican immigration corpus (MIC)**
- **Attitudes of the Mexican corpus newspapers towards Mexican immigration/immigrants (2015-2021)**

Overall Results

Diachronic development of consistent positive attitudes

Infrequent and absent attitudes

Diachronic development of consistent negative attitudes

Major findings

Introduction

- CADS is “an approach to CDA which utilizes corpus linguistics methods to identify large-scale patterns.” (Baker and Ellice, 2011: 26)
- International corpus studies (e.g., Gabrielatos and Baker, 2008; Taylor, 2009; Galindo Gómez, 2019) identified mostly negative attitudes towards immigrants
- *RQ: How did the newspaper discourse of immigration in either country change/develop/evolve during Trump’s presidency?*
- Corpora building (search query)
- Collocation/Word Sketches analysis,
- Semantic preference analysis,
- **Discourse prosody analysis**

Discourse prosody

- Origins in the neo-Firthian analysis of collocation through concordances
- Sinclair (1999: 33-34) defines discourse prosody as “attitudinal,” concerned with speaker meaning (pragmatics)
- **Relates to ‘the way that the words in corpus can collocate with a related set of words or phrases, often revealing (hidden) attitudes’ (Baker, Hardie and McEnery, 2022: 58).**
- For example, the word ‘immigration’ may collocate with the semantic groups such as *illegality* (‘unauthorised’, ‘irregular’) and *criminality* (‘smuggling’, ‘threat’). Together with exploration of concordances, they uncover the discourse prosody of *opposition towards immigration*.

Analyst's perspective

- Van Dijk (1993:249) emphasises the importance of position of the discourse analyst towards social relations between discourse, power, dominance and social inequality.
- “There cannot be an aloof, let alone a 'neutral', position of critical scholars.” (ibid: 253)

American immigration corpus (AIC)

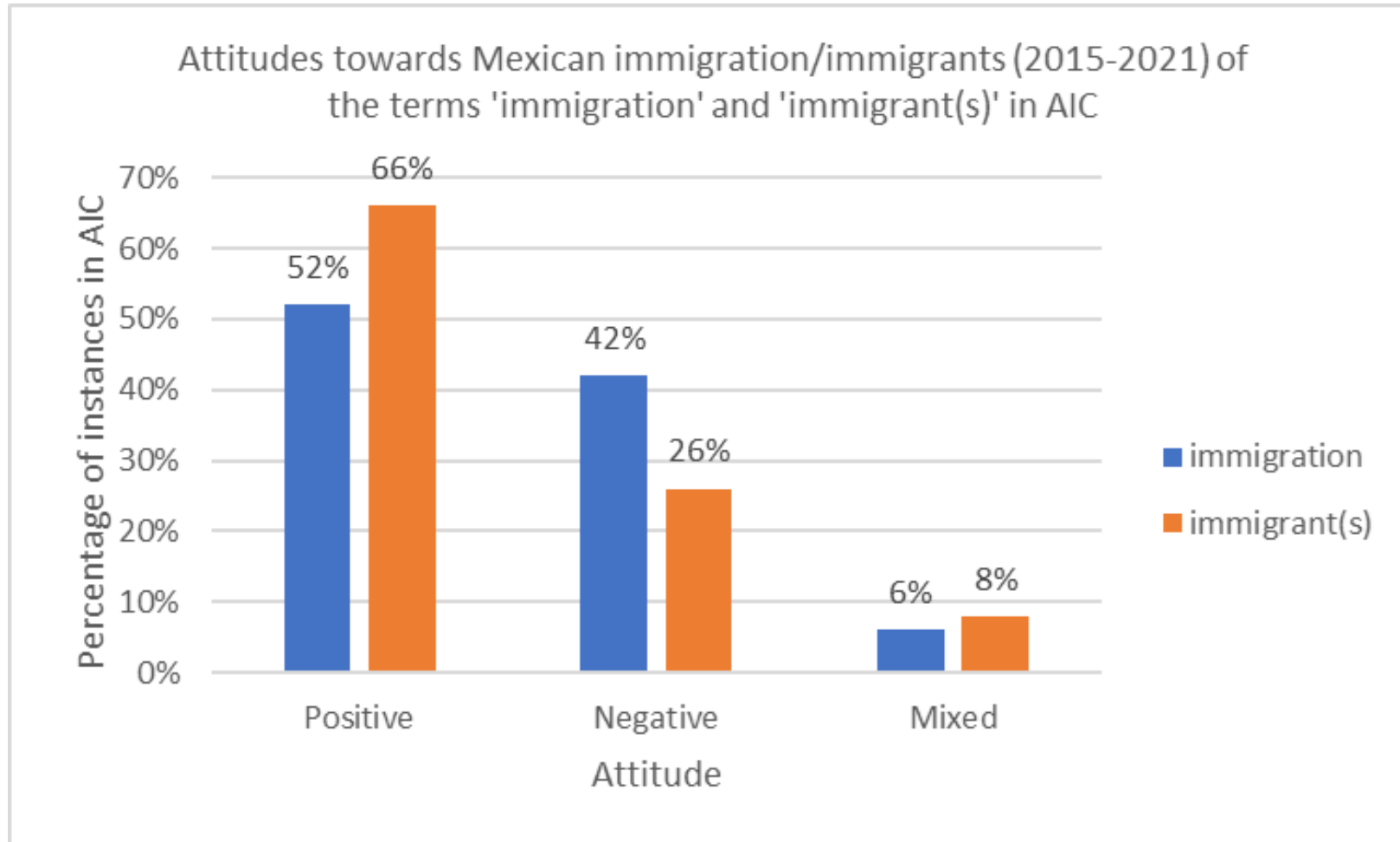
- American newspapers (in English): 16,619,929 words
- National newspapers:
 - The New York Times* (progressive),
 - The Washington Post* (progressive),
 - USA Today* (centrist)
- Regional newspapers:
 - Los Angeles Times* (progressive),
 - The Arizona Republic* (conservative),
 - Chicago Tribune* (conservative)

Attitudes of the American corpus newspapers towards

Mexican immigration/immigrants (2015-2021)

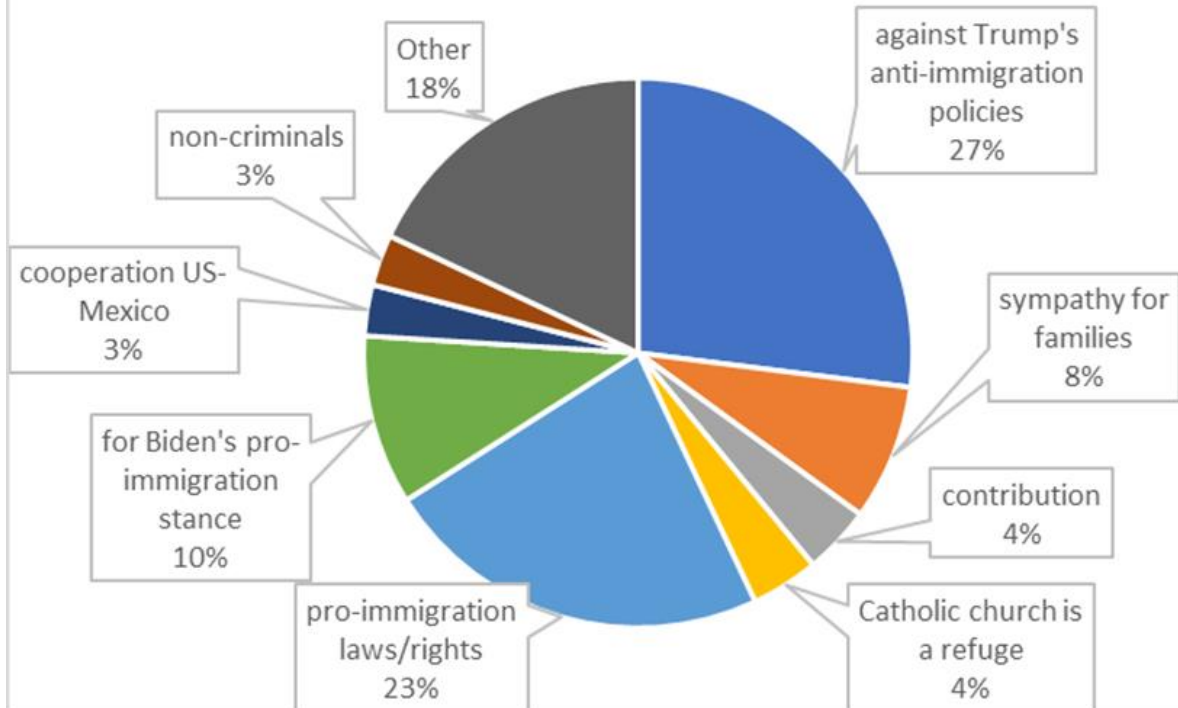
- Based on developed annotation scheme, 100 random instances of the term 'immigration' and 100 random instances of the term 'immigrant(s)' for each year between 2015 and 2021, were annotated.
- Neo-Firthian linguists (Sinclair, 1991; Stubbs, 2001; 2009) and other linguists that adopt Neo-Firthian CL (Xiao and McEnery, 2006) contend that different wordforms (including forms of the same lemma) enter different collocations, which results in different semantic preferences, and, consequently, can be expected to have different discourse prosodies.
- Proportions of specific positive/negative attitudes were calculated in relation to the frequency of positive/negative attitudes in a specific year.

Overall results (for AIC)

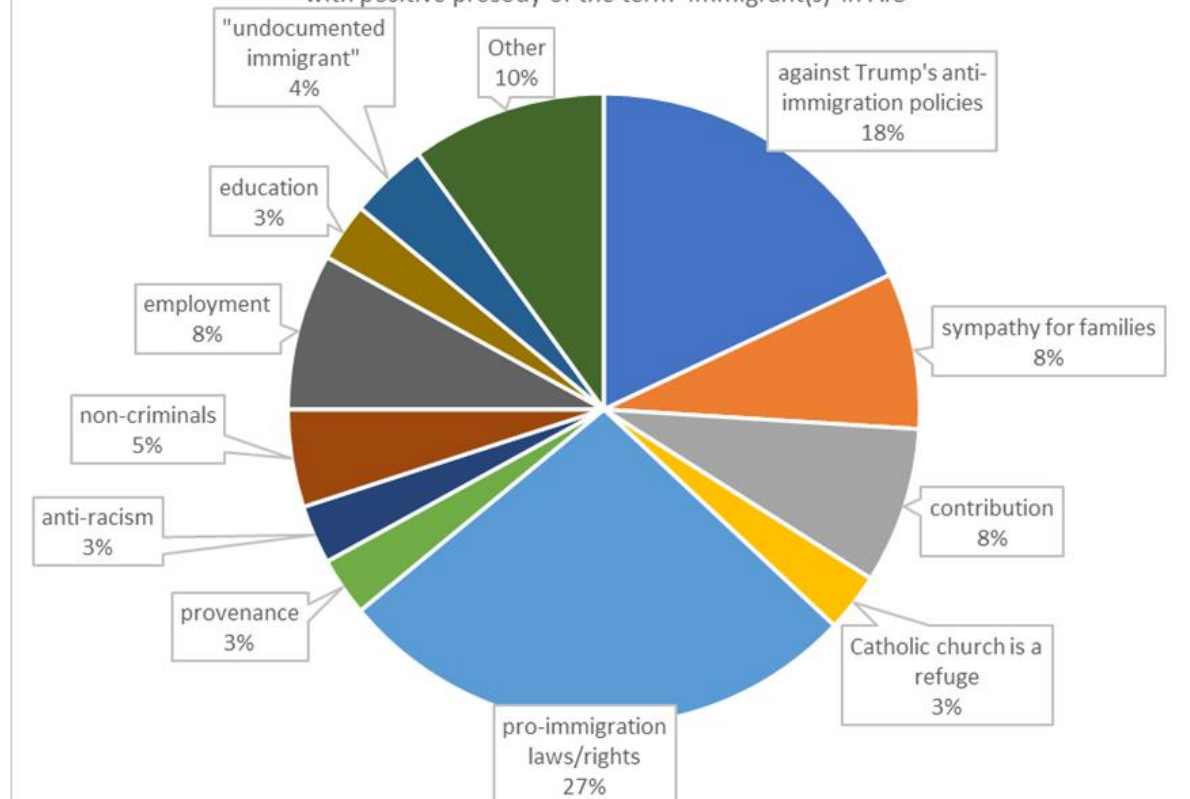


Positive attitudes towards 'immigration' and 'immigrant(s)'

Proportions of specific positive attitudes towards Mexican immigration in instances with positive prosody of the term 'immigration' in AIC

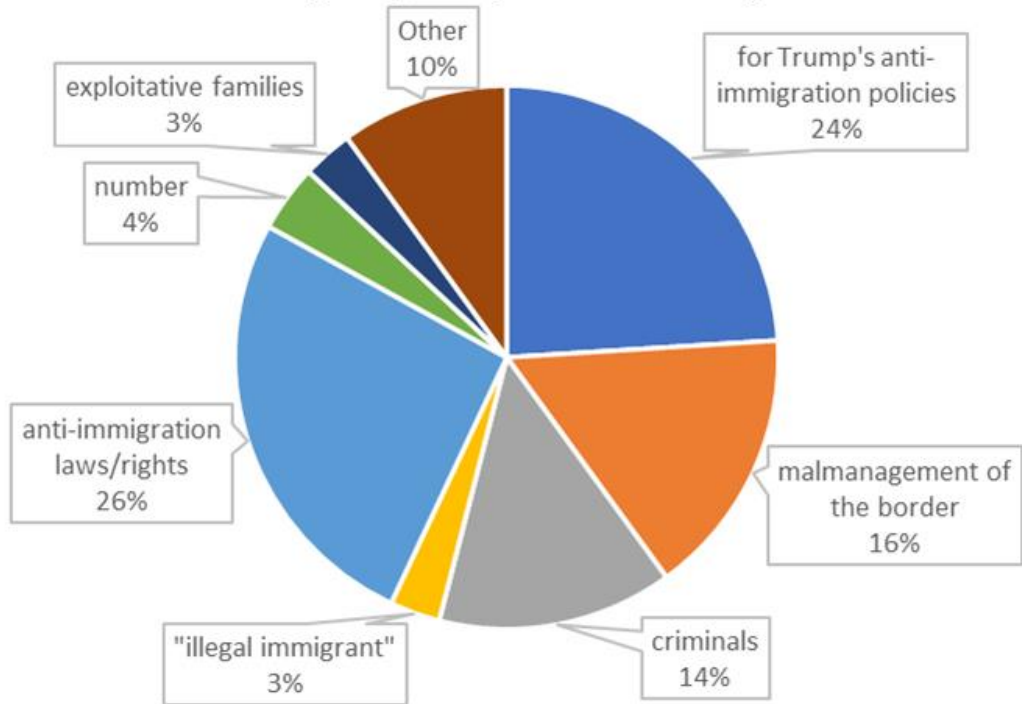


Proportions of specific positive attitudes towards Mexican immigrants in instances with positive prosody of the term 'immigrant(s)' in AIC

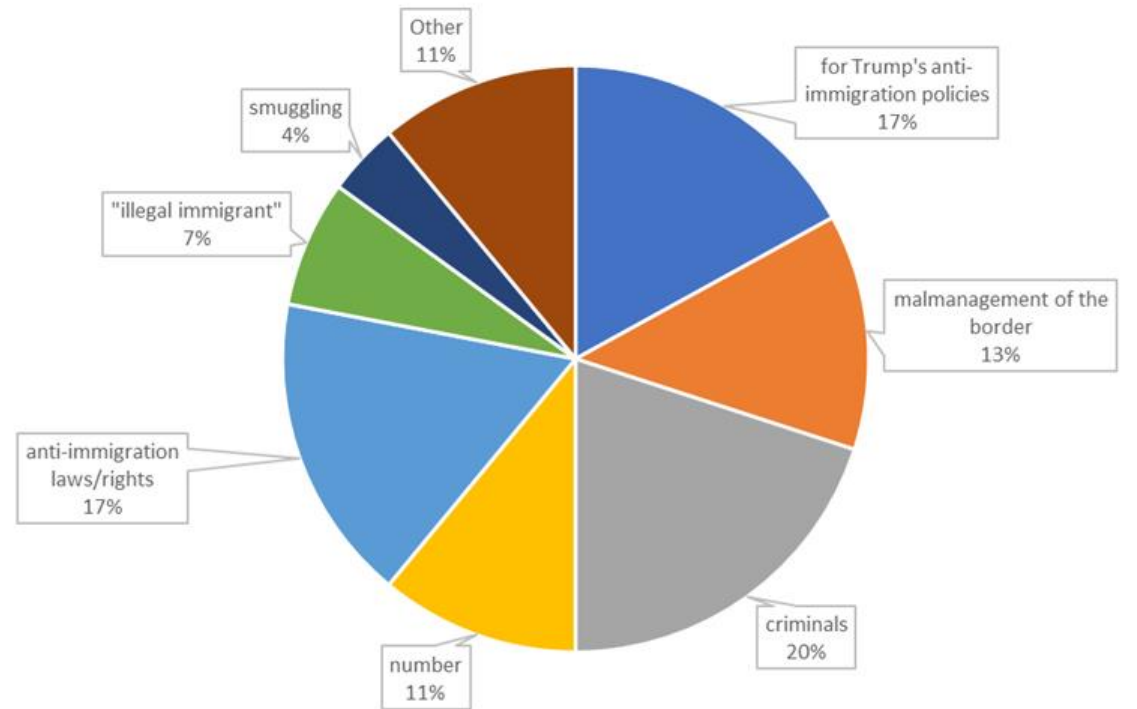


Negative attitudes towards 'immigration' and 'immigrant(s)'

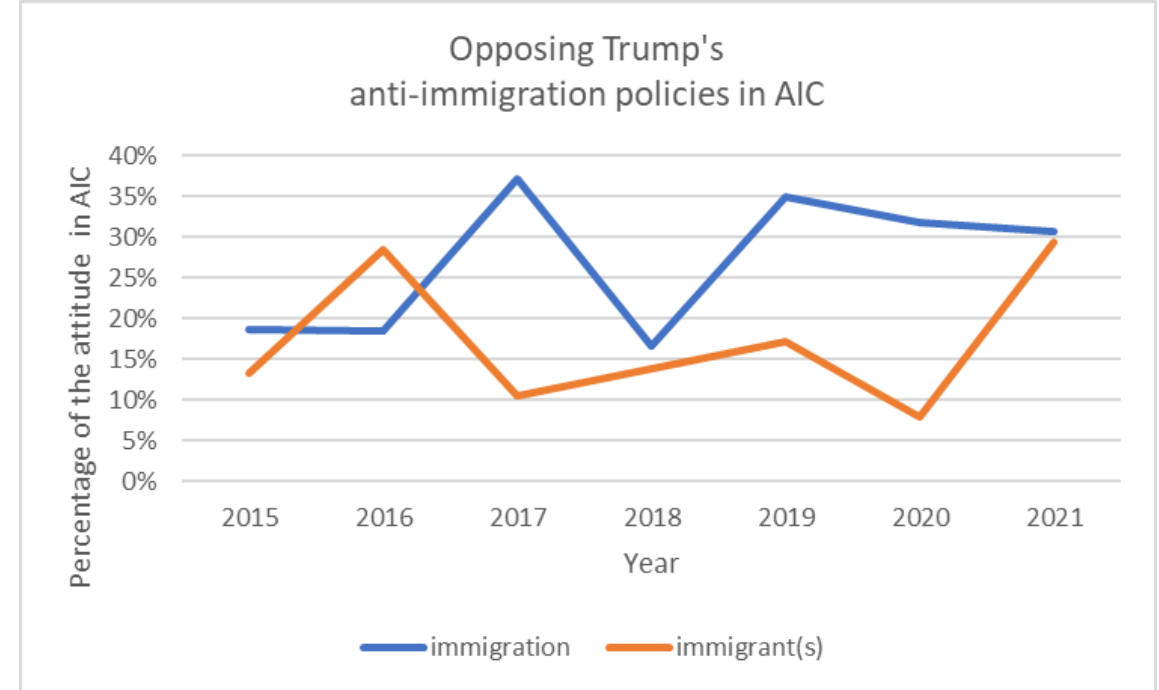
Proportions of specific negative attitudes towards Mexican immigration in instances with negative prosody of the term 'immigration' in AIC



Proportions of specific negative attitudes towards Mexican immigrants in instances with negative prosody of the term 'immigrant(s)' in AIC

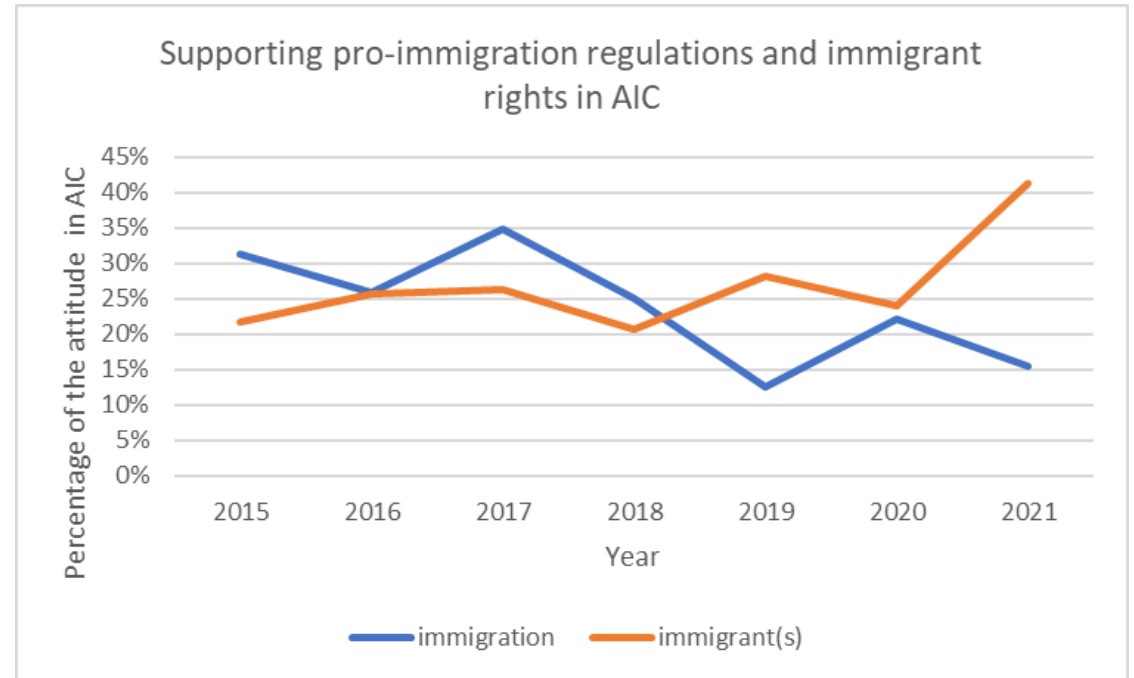


Diachronic development of consistent positive attitudes

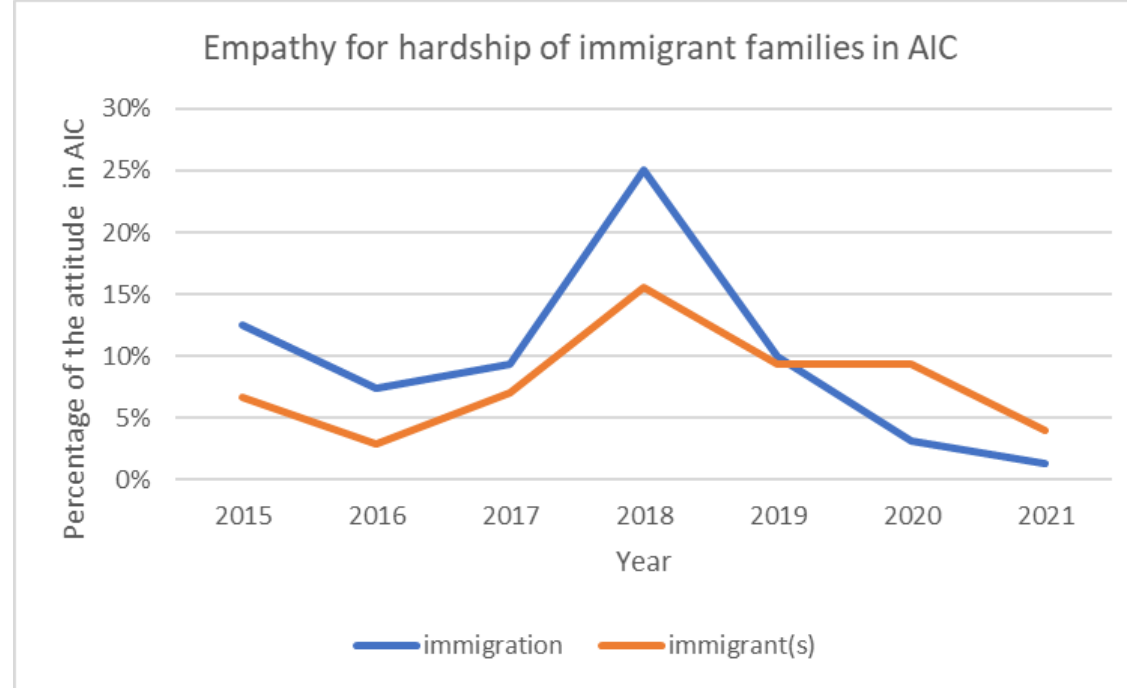


- **Trump's decision in 2017 to phase out DACA**, might have influenced the fall in positive 'immigrant(s)' discourses towards the 'Dreamers'. However, at the same time, Trump's appeal against legalising their status might have fuelled positive 'immigration' discourses.
- Positive attitudes towards 'immigration' and (much less so) 'immigrant(s)' rose in **2019**. This might reflect a **disapproval** of AIC newspapers towards Trump's newly established anti-immigration policy, **MPP** (Migrant Protection Protocols)
- In **2020**, positive attitudes towards 'immigrant(s)' fell. The reason for that might be that during the pandemic Americans were more preoccupied with their own health issues and, thus, less compassionate towards immigrants stranded at the border because of 'Title 42'. On the other hand, the positive attitude towards 'immigration' expressed via opposition against 'Title 42' stayed at the same level as in 2019, implying that 'immigration' as an issue remained unwelcome.

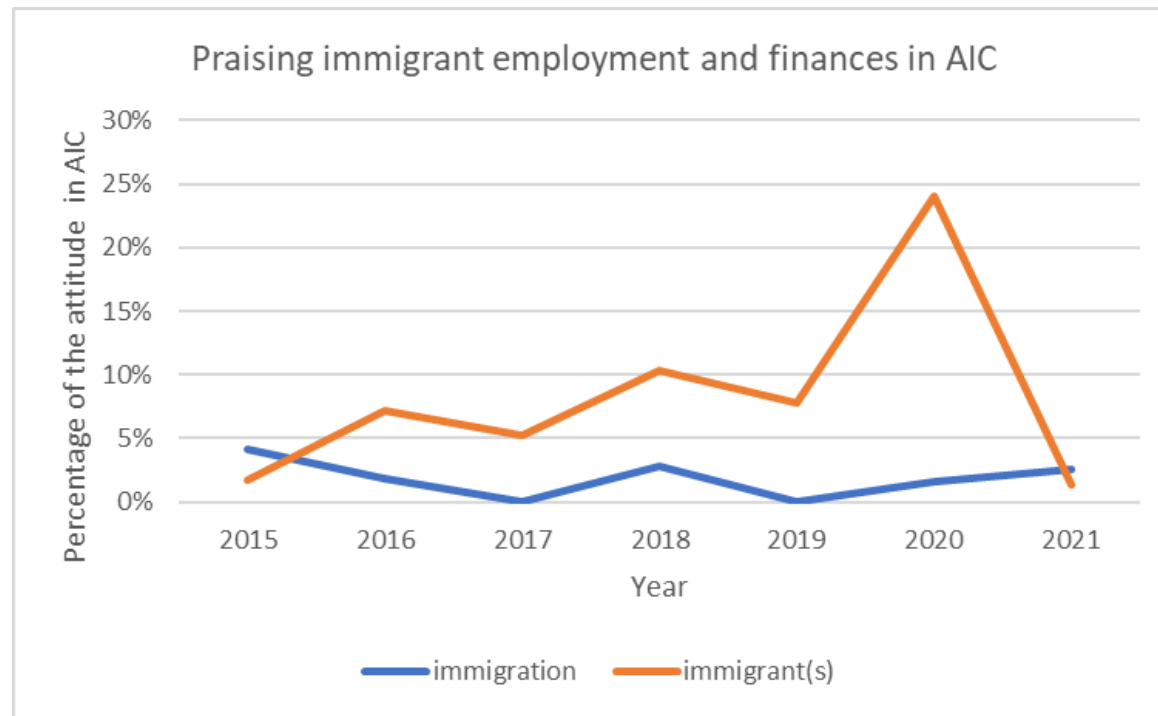
The trough in positive attitudes towards ‘immigration’ in 2019 might be due to Trump’s **threat to impose tariffs on all Mexican goods entering the US**, while high in ‘immigrant(s)’ discourses might be due to newspapers democratic leaning, which defends immigrant rights.



- *“President-elect Joseph R. Biden Jr. will propose far-reaching legislation on Wednesday to give the 11 million undocumented immigrants living in the United States a chance to become citizens in as little as eight years, part of an ambitious and politically perilous attempt to undo the effects of President Trump's four-year assault on immigration.” (New York Times, 20 January 2021)*



- The exception is 2018, when positive attitudes towards ‘immigration’ and ‘immigrant(s)’ and their families peaked. This was most probably in **response to Trump’s family separation policy**.
- “These immigrant children crying out for their mothers and fathers are collateral damage, pawns in a political battle to wring strict legislation out of Congress -- medieval torture displays meant to serve as deterrents.” (*The New York Times*, 25 June 2018)



- From the analysis it could be plausible to conclude that **immigrant workers were depicted positively during Covid-19**, most probably because they were **essential** in jobs that native-born immigrants did not want to do.
- “Dorado, an American-born son of a Mexican immigrant, has been running what is probably New York's largest restaurant-quality active cooking operation during the pandemic lockdown, serving 6,000 meals a day.” (*The Washington Post*, May 13, 2020)

Low frequency (8% and below) consistent positive attitudes

- Mexican immigrants as contributors to US society (to rebut Trump's policy stance of 'America First')
- Mexican immigrants are not criminals (in progressive newspapers)
- Pro-immigrant Catholic church (visit of Pope Francis to the US in 2015)
- Anti-racist attitude towards immigrants (the pandemic and racist enforcement laws)

Other positive attitudes

- **Discontinuous-time specific attitudes**

1. supporting Biden 's pro-immigration stance
2. criticism of anti-immigration policies introduced due to coronavirus

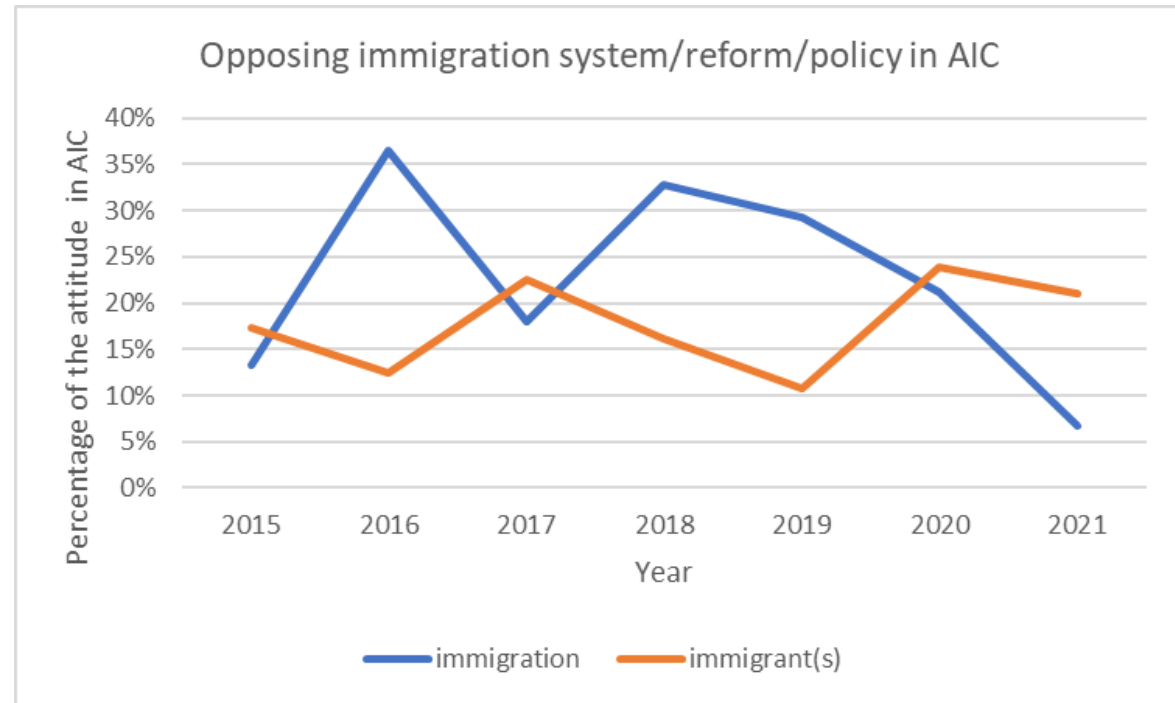
- **Absent positive/negative attitudes**

1. relationship between the US and Mexico
2. the provenance of immigrants
3. the smuggling of immigrants
4. immigrant education
5. addressing the root causes of immigration

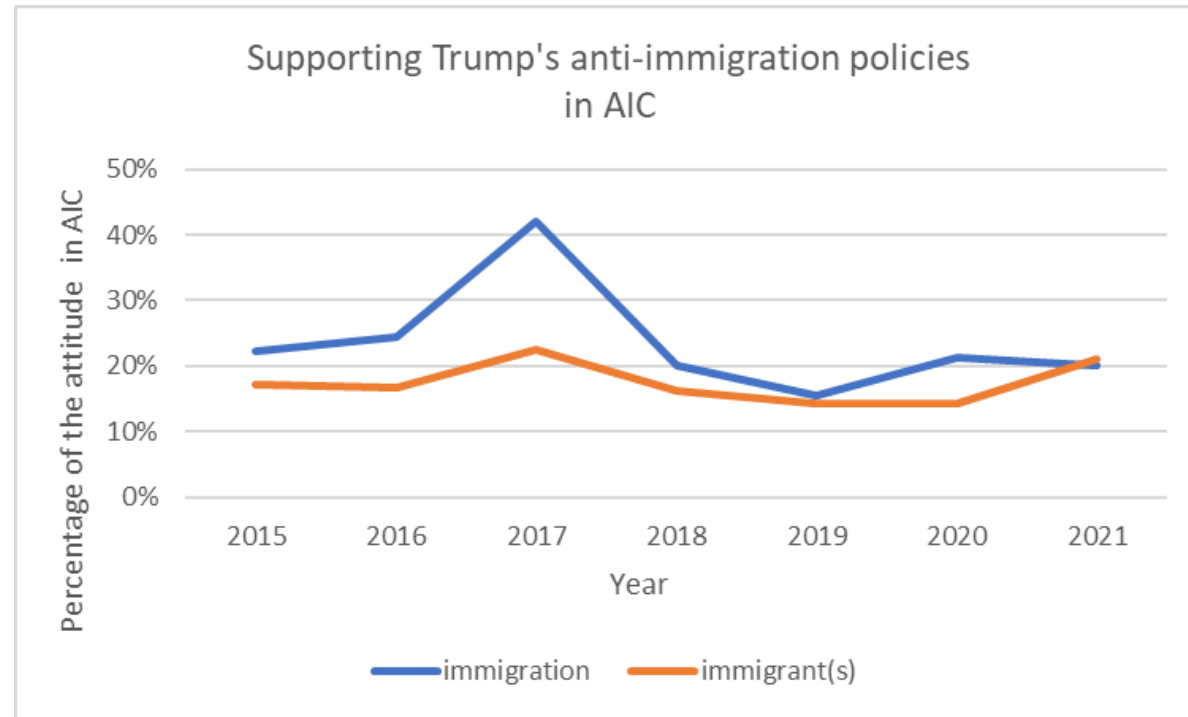
Negative media portrayals drive perception of immigration issues, study by University of Kansas finds



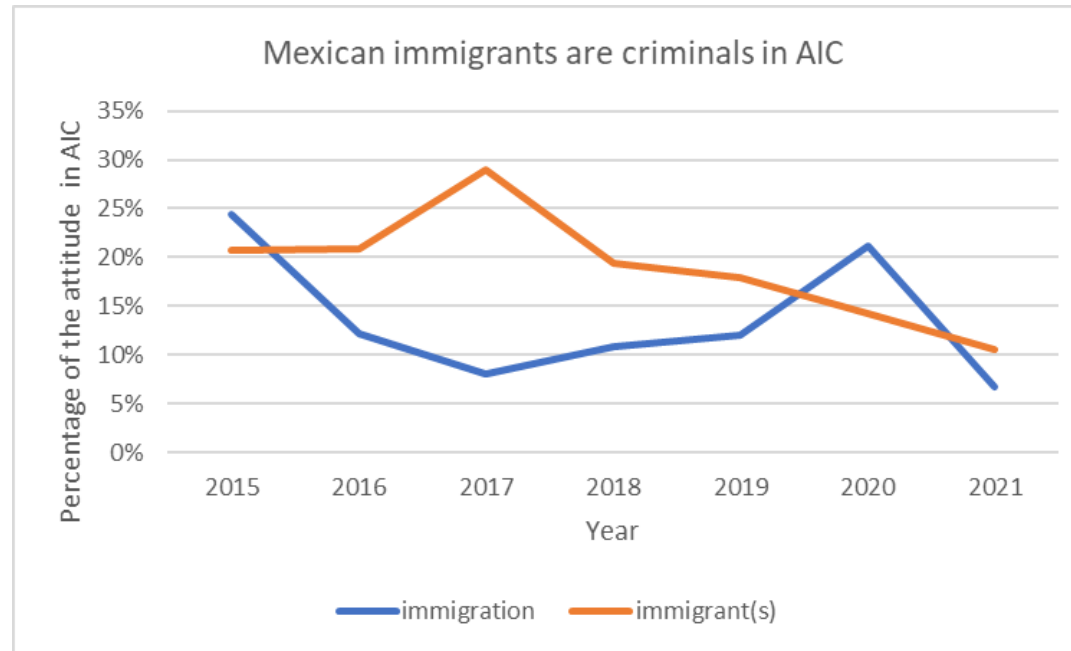
Diachronic development of consistent negative attitudes



- 'Immigration' discourses reached the most critical points in **2016**, when Trump won the US presidential elections, and in **2018**, the year of the mid-term elections.
- Negative attitudes towards 'immigrant(s)' showed less significant changes, with the lowest point being in **2019** when Migration Protection Protocol was introduced and peak in **2020** during Covid-19 and the use of 'Title 42'.



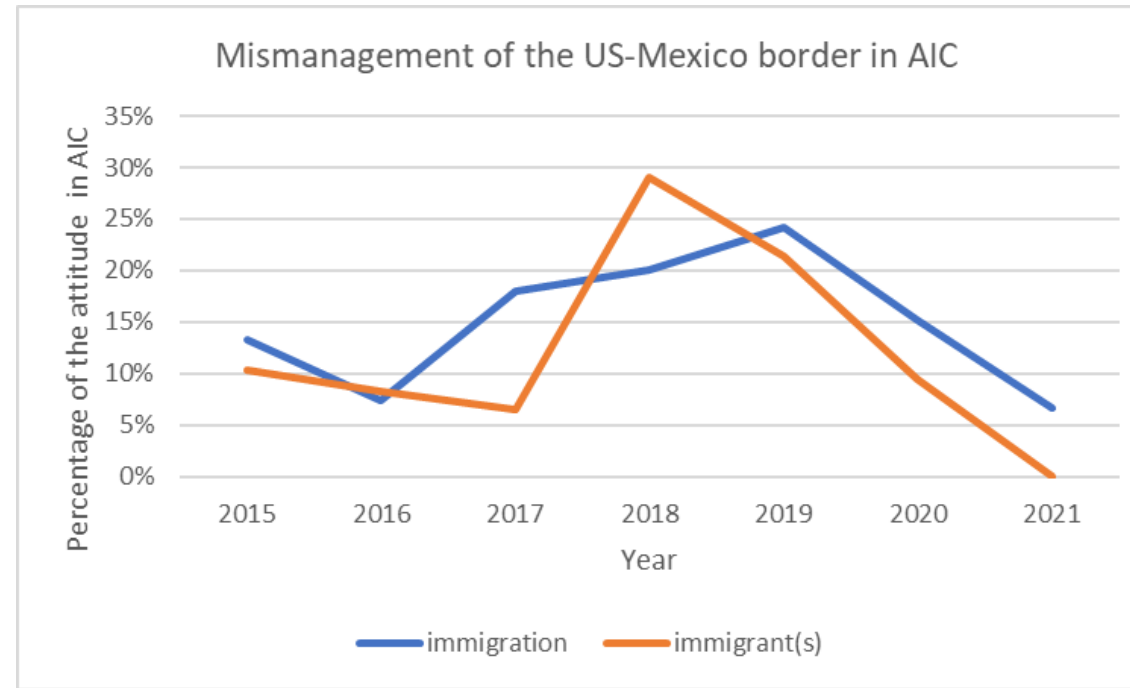
- In **2017** the frequency of the negative attitude was significantly higher in ‘immigration’ discourses (42%), which might be due to **Trump’s stepped-up approach towards a border wall and enforcement** when he took Office. Trump’s harsh approach towards ‘immigration’ was expressed via reports of approval by Republicans:
- “She [Kirstjen Nielsen] pledged to continue the work Kelly had begun, which included carrying out the Trump administration's push for a border wall and tougher immigration enforcement, both of which fall under the jurisdiction of Homeland Security.” (*The Arizona Republic*, 10 November 2017)



The **2017** ‘immigrant(s)’ sample and the 2020 ‘immigration’ sample are especially critical of Mexican immigrants, who are represented as criminals (29% and 21% respectively), not only because of committing **serious crimes**, but also because of their **illegal re-entry**.

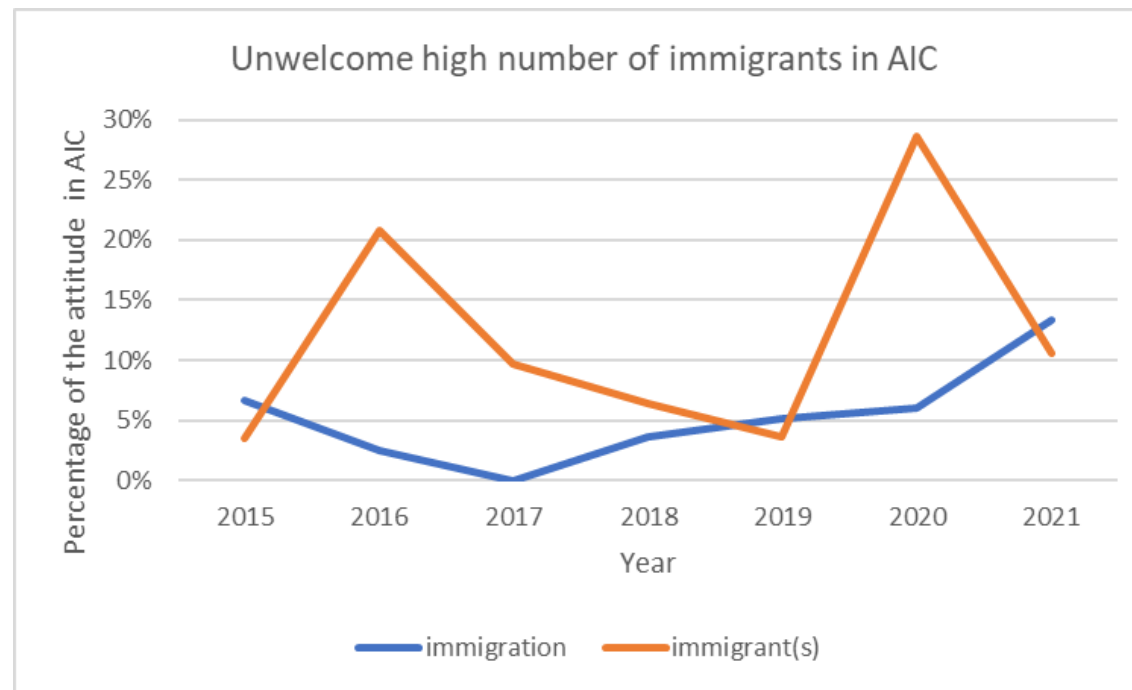
“During an April visit to Nogales, Ariz., Sessions announced a directive to federal prosecutors to bring felony criminal charges against immigrants suspected of multiple illegal entries.” (*The Arizona Republic*, 14 May 2017)

Light, He and Robey (2020) show that **US-born citizens are twice as likely** as undocumented immigrants **to be arrested** for committing a crime.



The crisis at the border in 2018 related to Trump's deployment of additional troops to stop unwelcome caravans coming from Central America, to the increase of immigration officials to process asylum cases with the only goal to deport them (*Arizona Republic*, 30 April 2018), and to the construction of the wall and its funding in exchange for keeping the 'Dreamers' in the US (*The USA Today*, 15 June 2018).

The number of encounters at the US-Mexico border increased from 216,370 in 2017 to 281,881 in 2018 (see Adimora, 2023), however, the sense of crisis could have been created by Trump in the run-up to the 2018 mid-term congressional election.



- The **peak in the negative discourses** regarding the number of immigrants **in 2016** (21% of negative attitudes) may be explained by **the record 1.8 million entries to the US** in that year (Camarota and Zeigler, 2017).
- *“The wall along the border with Mexico was one of the president-elect’s signature campaign promises, as he railed against illegal immigration and vowed to seal the borders against criminals, terrorists, and millions [of] people trying to enter the U.S. legally.” (The USA Today, 15 November 2016)*
- The **2020** ‘immigrant(s)’ sample was **the most critical** (29% of negative instances) towards a perceived high number of immigrants **during the first year of Covid-19**. Immigrants were portrayed as an **unwelcome burden** to be kept out of the US by **closing the border**.

Major findings

- **Positive** corpus discourses about 'immigration' and 'immigrants' **prevail** over negative.
- Overall pattern of positive 'immigrant(s)' discourses outnumbering positive 'immigration' discourses, and negative 'immigration' discourses outnumbering negative 'immigrant(s)' discourses, did not always repeat in the analysis of diachronic frequency development for each attitude.
- The corpus newspaper attitudes **fluctuated** during Trump's presidency in accordance with **major political events**.
- More **negative** attitudes towards Mexican immigration/immigrants **at the beginning** of Trump's campaigning, and more **positive coverage at the end** of his presidency.
- **Correlation between socio-political events, the political leaning of the corpus newspapers and public opinion/attitudes towards immigration/immigrants.**
- AIC newspapers were **not as politically polarised** as expected.

Part 2. Mexican Immigration Corpus (MIC)

- Mexican newspapers (in Spanish): 12,258,126 words

- National newspapers:

El Universal (progressive/centrist),

Elimparcial.com (progressive),

Reforma (conservative)

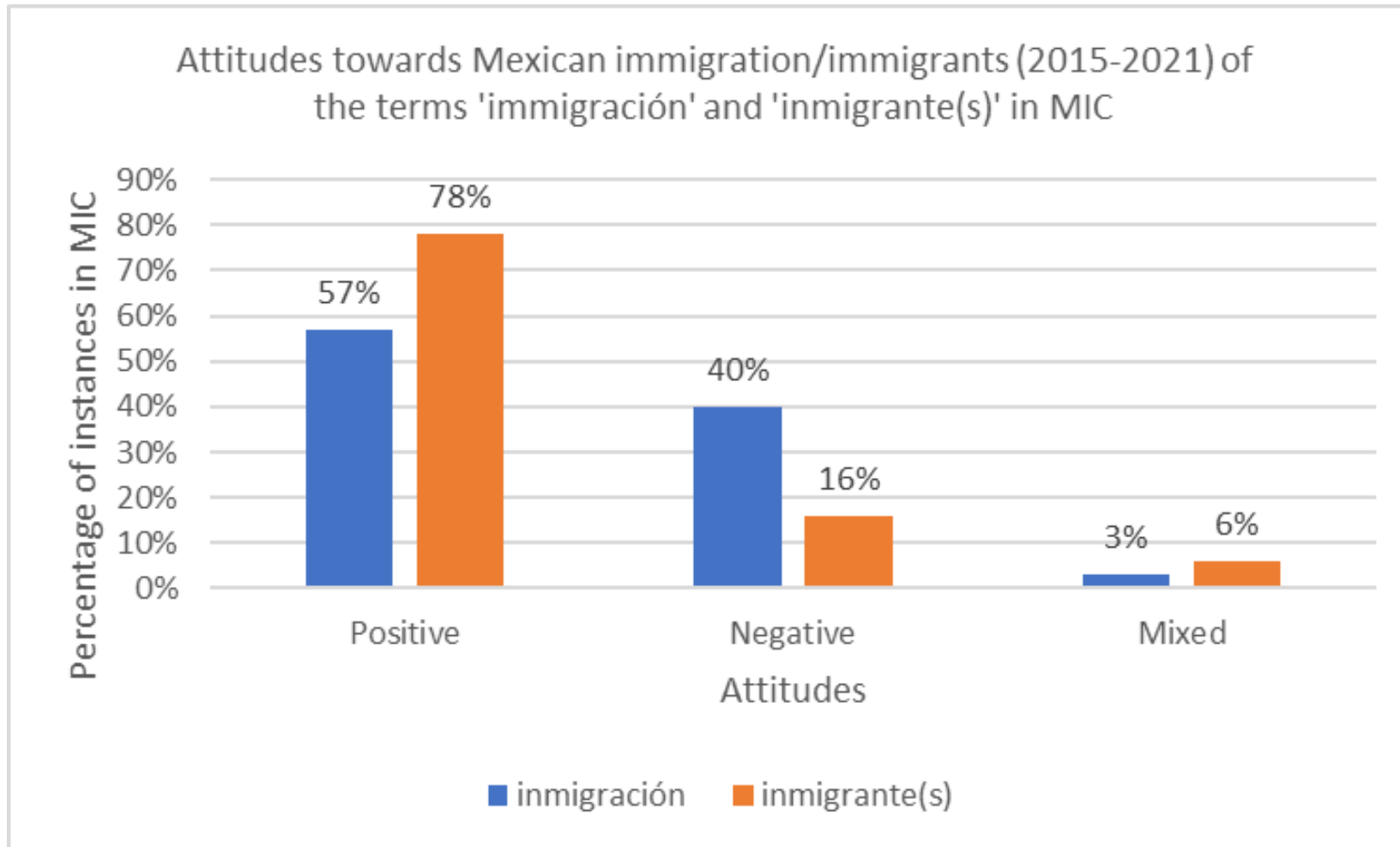
- ***Regional newspapers:***

El Norte (conservative),

Lacronica.com (progressive),

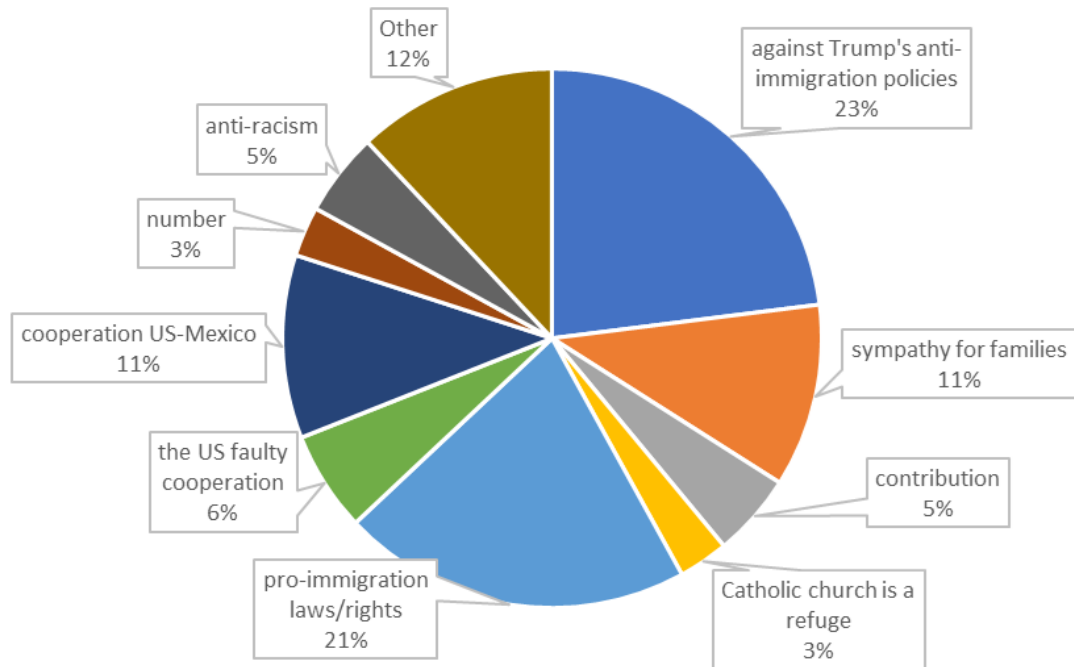
Mural (conservative)

Overall results (for MIC)

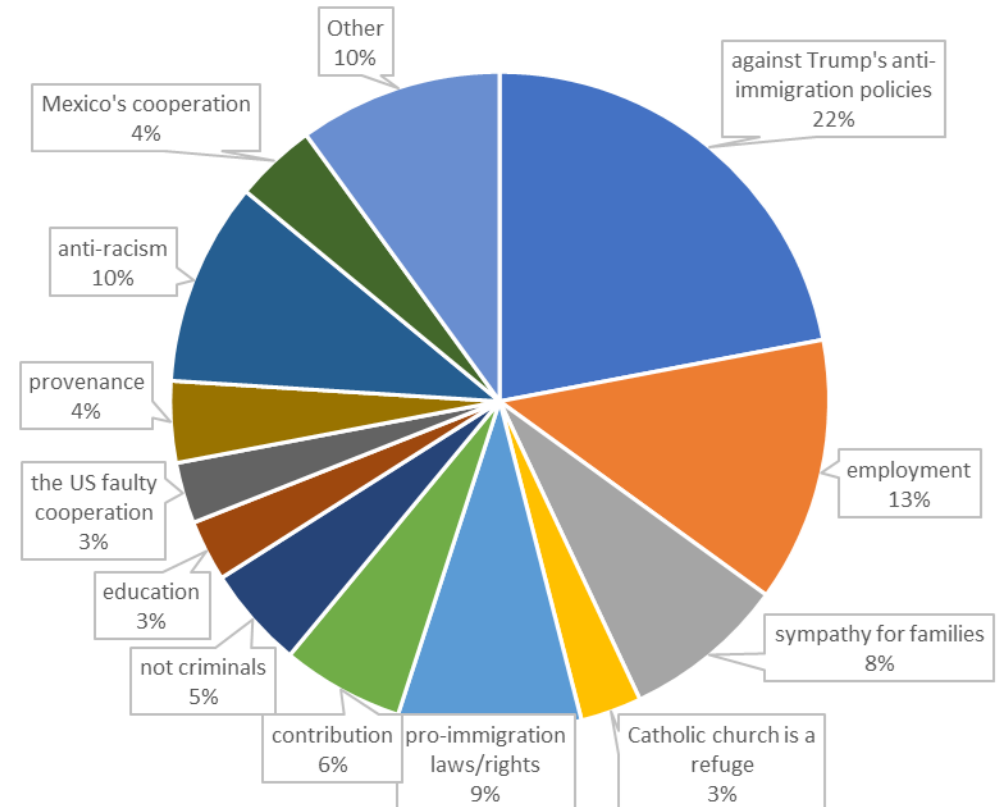


Positive attitudes towards 'inmigración' and 'inmigrante(s)'

Proportions of specific positive attitudes towards Mexican immigration in instances with positive prosody of the term 'inmigración' in MIC

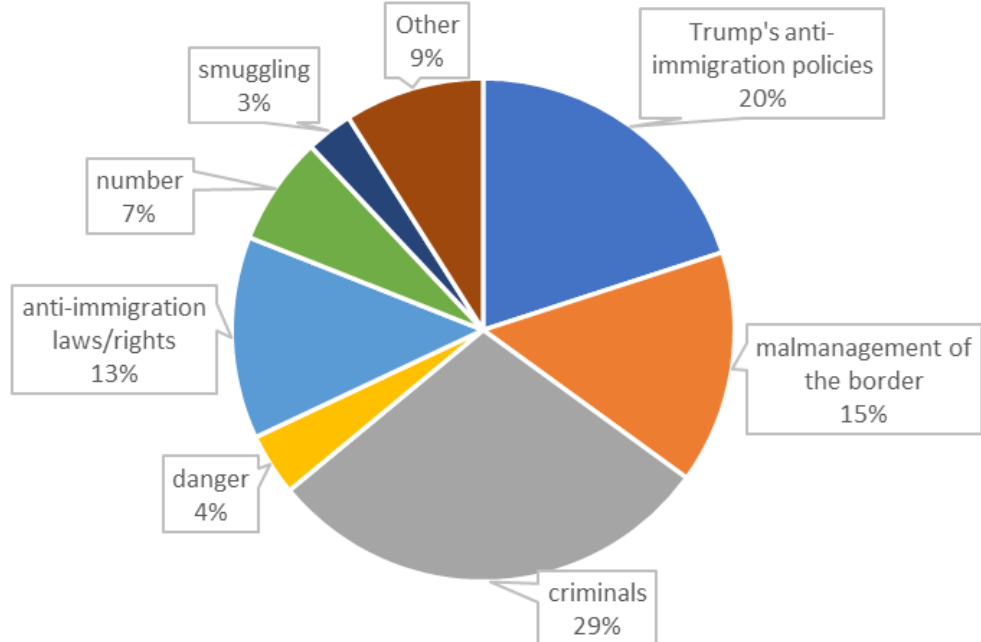


Proportions of specific positive attitudes towards Mexican immigrants in instances with positive prosody of the term 'inmigrante(s)' in MIC

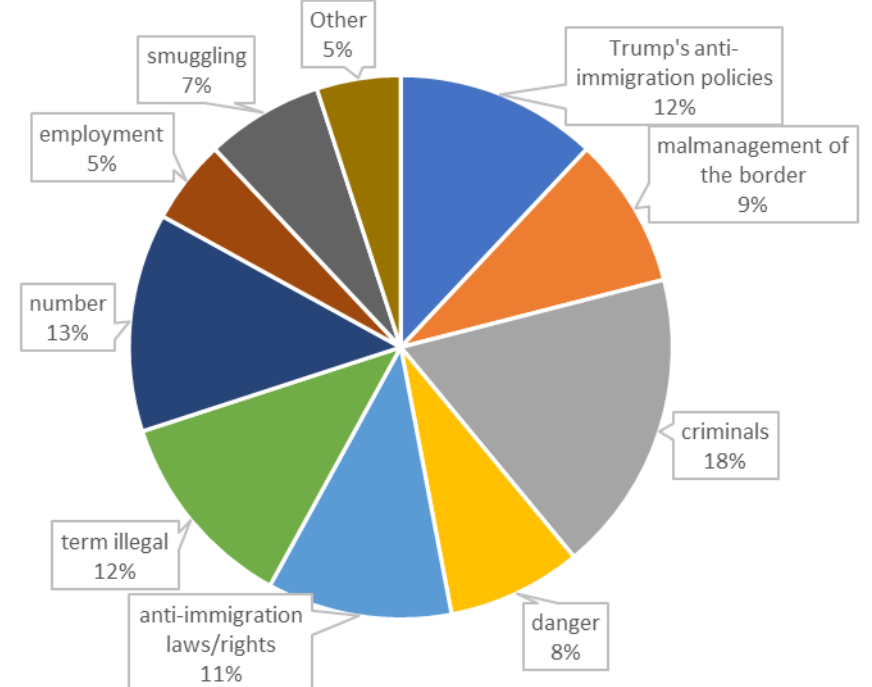


Negative attitudes towards 'immigración' and 'inmigrante(s)'

Proportions of specific negative attitudes towards Mexican immigration in instances with negative prosody of the term 'inmigración' in MIC

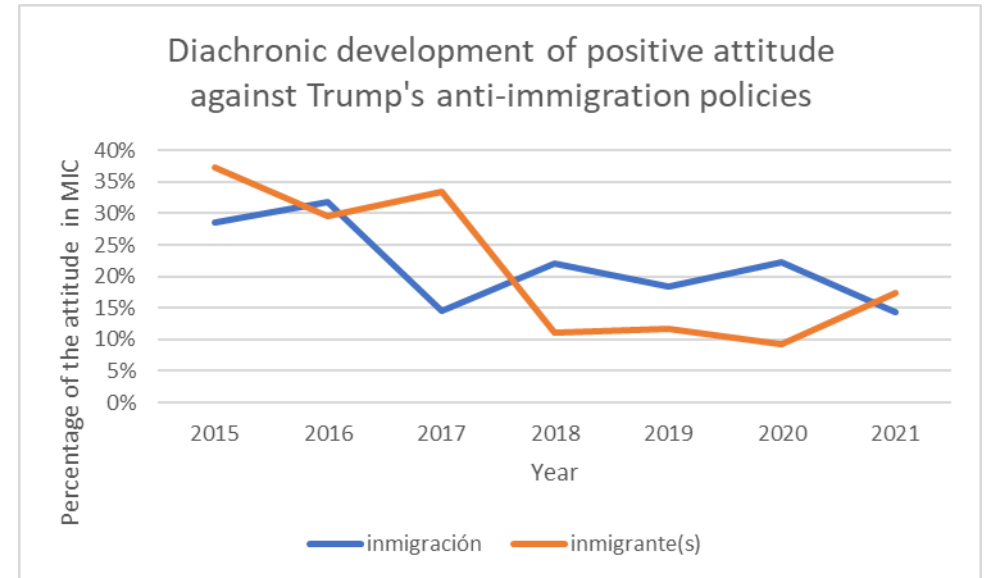


Proportions of specific negative attitudes towards Mexican immigrants in instances with negative prosody of the term 'inmigrante(s)' in MIC



Diachronic development of consistent positive attitudes in MIC

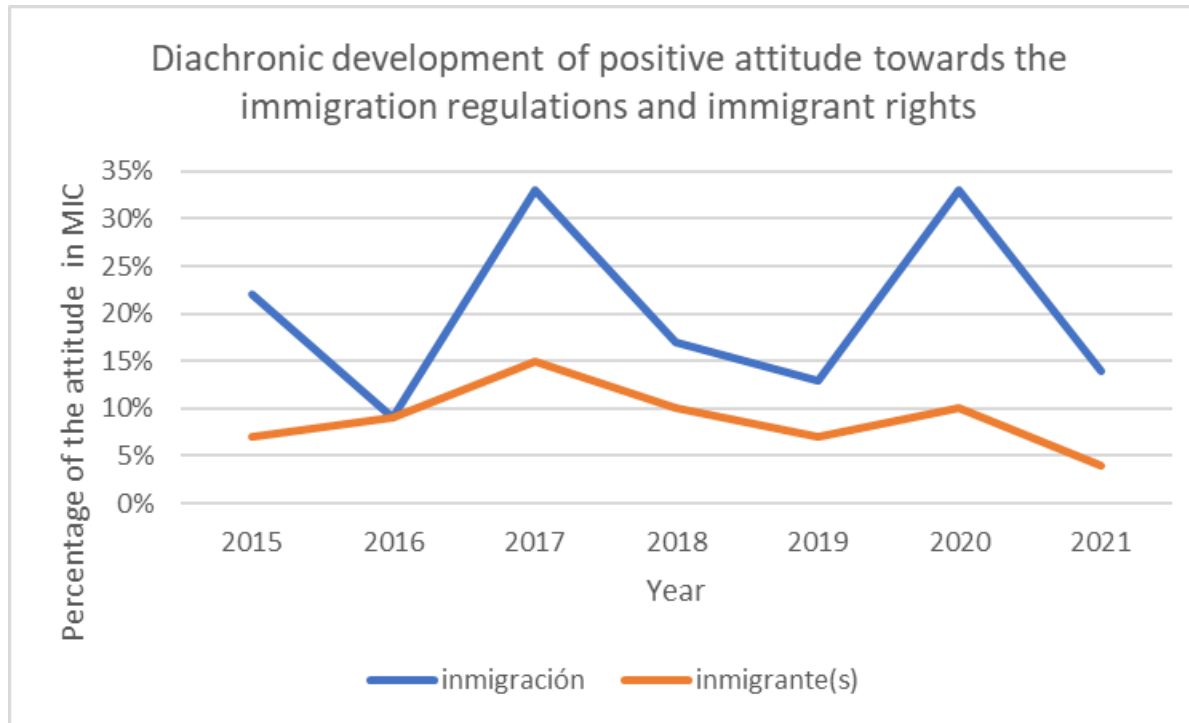
In 2017 criticism towards Trump's policies increased, which might have been ignited by **anti-Trump protests** in American and Mexican cities.



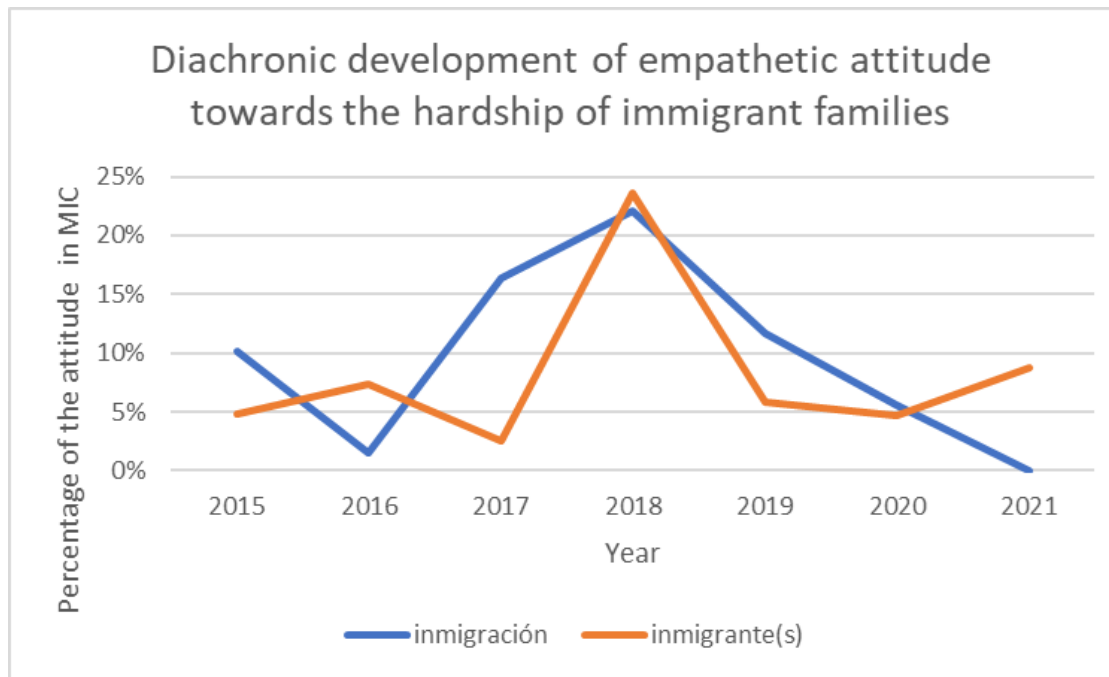
“En Nueva York, unas 25 personas fueron arrestadas tras ingresar a la Torre Trump para escenificar un mitin contra las políticas antiinmigrantes del gobierno. Los manifestantes coreaban consignas como: Sin prohibición, sin muros, sin redadas, o Dilo fuerte, dilo claro, los inmigrantes son bienvenidos aquí.” (El Universal, 14 April 2017)

[“In New York, about 25 people were arrested after entering Trump Tower to stage a rally against the government's anti-immigrant policies. The protesters chanted slogans such as: No ban, no walls, no raids, or Say it loud, say it clearly, immigrants are welcome here.”] (El Universal, 14 April 2017)

Decreased criticism of Trump's policies in 2018 (negative attitude of the Mexican public (49,4%) towards the first large caravan from Honduras and El Salvador).

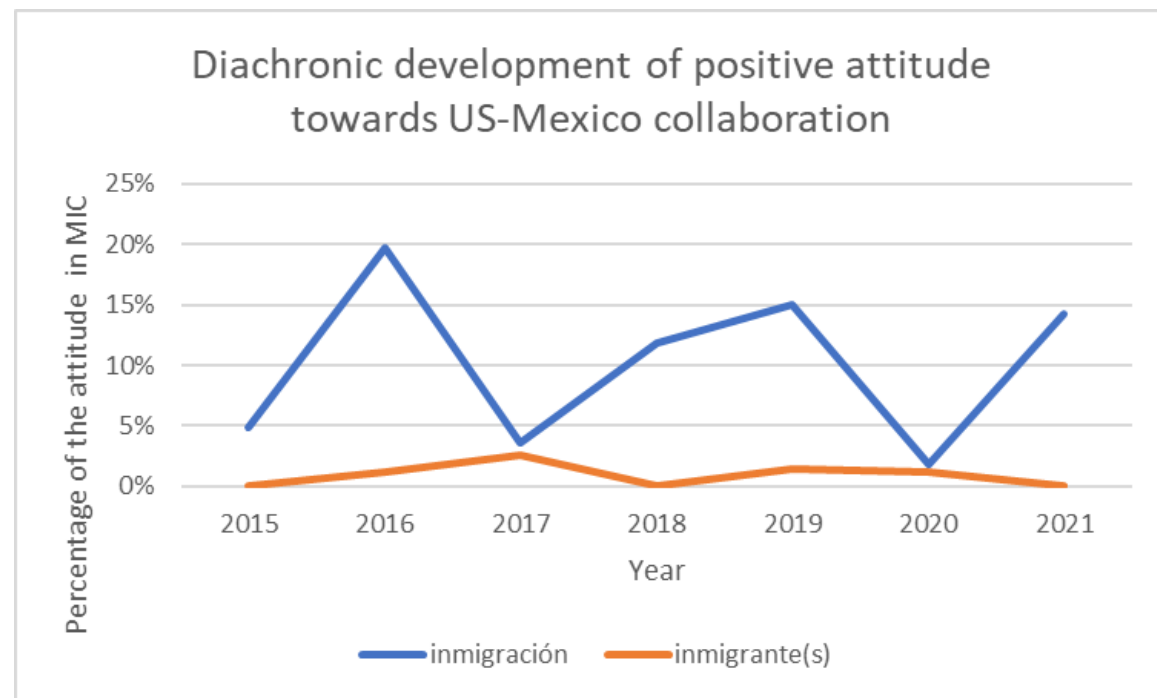


- The years **2015, 2017 and 2020** were especially **positive** towards immigration, which might be motivated by **legal documents** (e.g. *el Acuerdo de Conciliación “López Venegas” (Conciliation Agreement “López Venegas”)*), **executive orders** (No. 13767, 2017), and **anti-immigration policies (MPP)**.
- Positive attitudes towards immigrant(s) are less frequent, which could have correlation with the **negative perception among Mexicans about massive caravans** passing through Mexico towards the US.

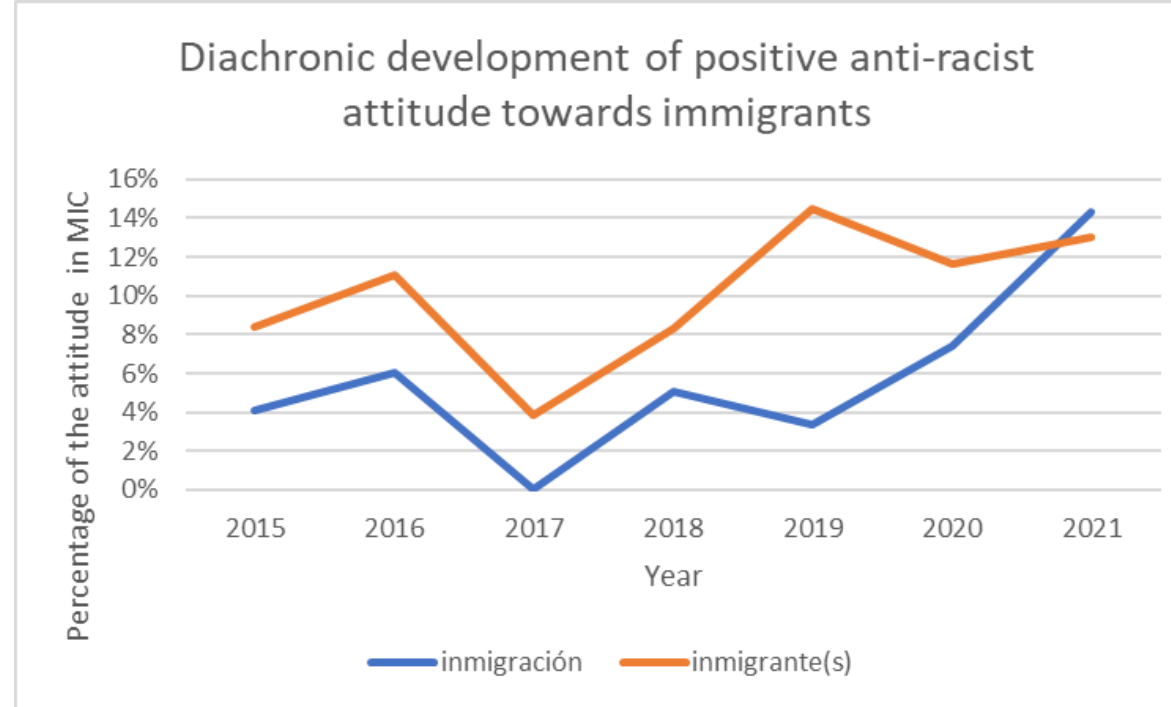


Both attitudinal frequencies reached its **peak in 2018**, when MIC newspapers expressed **empathy towards immigrant children separated from their parents** communicated via opposition to Trump's family separation policy.

- 31st August 2016, the meeting between Donald Trump and the ex-president of Mexico, Enrique Peña Nieto took place in Mexico City. At the press conference the day after, both countries committed to cooperation and respect.



- The 2019 ‘inmigración’ discourses evolve around the immigration from the Triangle countries and the need for the US and Mexico to tackle it together.
- The 2021 ‘inmigración’ discourse expresses positive attitude towards immigration as binational issue, which might be motivated by Biden’s pro-immigration policies and proposed Immigration Bill .



- The frequency difference between the two lines is biggest in **2019**, when ‘inmigrante(s)’ discourses expressed **positive attitude via criticism of Trump’s racist and xenophobic rhetoric** towards Mexican immigrants in **his speeches** (e.g., Florida rally).
- The anti-racist attitude in 2019 ‘inmigrante(s)’ discourses might have been motivated by **El Paso mass shooting against Latinos** on 3rd August 2019.

Low frequency (8% and below) consistent positive attitudes

- **Mexican immigrants as contributors to the US** (also in conservative newspapers)
- **Mexican immigrants are not criminals** (undocumented immigrants commit less crime than American citizens)
- **Criticism of US faulty collaboration with Mexico** (Trump's threats to impose tariffs on Mexican goods)

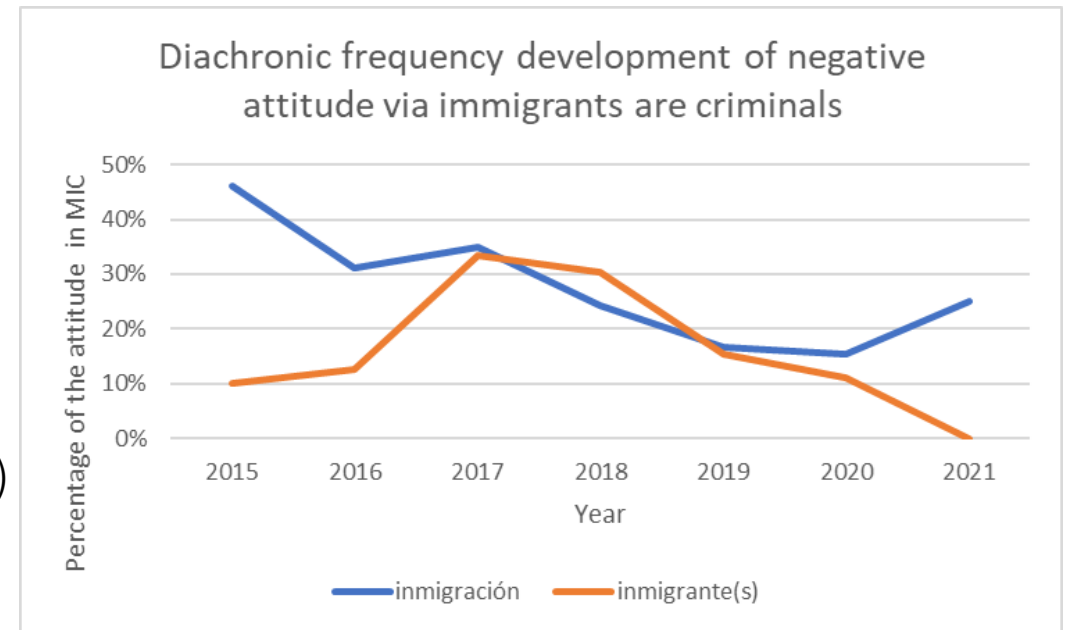
Diachronic development of consistent **negative** attitudes in MIC

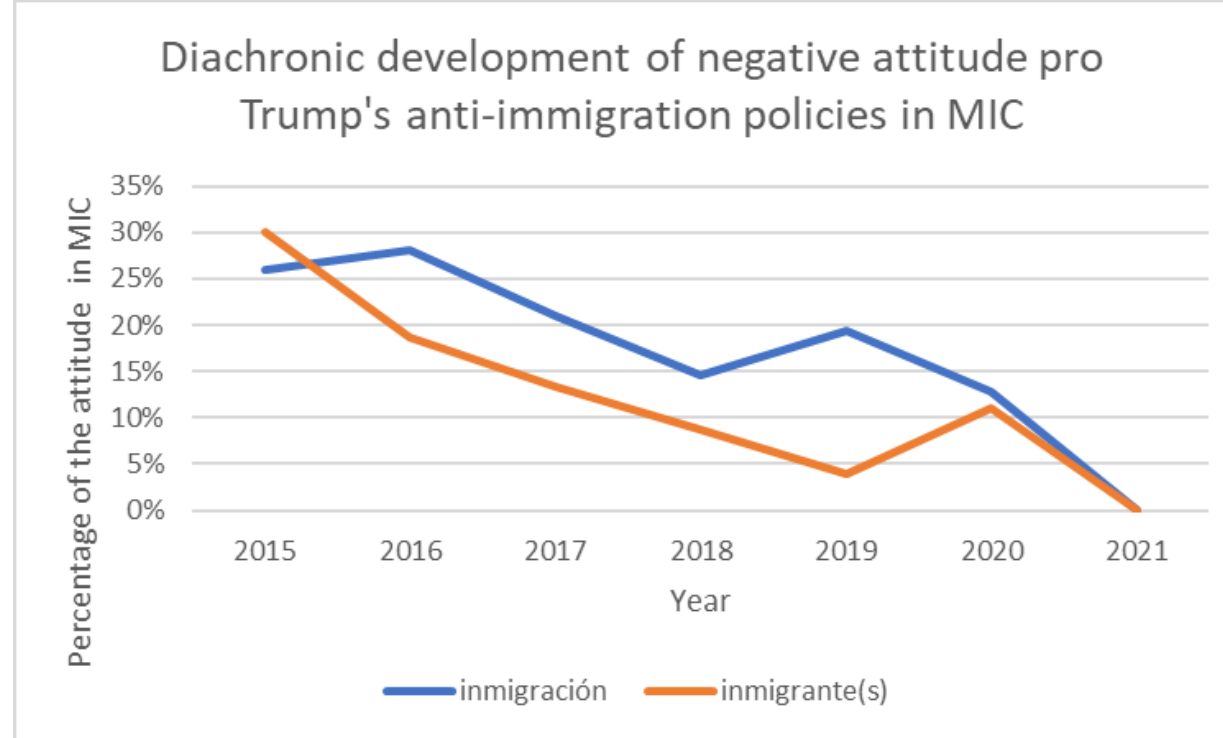
The 2015 and 2016 'inmigración' discourses focused on **criminal and drug organisations**

could have been motivated by the escape from prison (2015) and arrest (2016) of **Joaquín Guzmán, 'El Chapo'**,

the leader of the Sinaloa Cartel.

- *"En el grupo está José Emanuel García Sota, presunto integrante de Los Zetas, acusado de participar en el asesinato del agente del Servicio de Inmigración y Control de Aduanas (ICE, por sus siglas en inglés), Jaime Zapata, cometido en San Luis Potosí el 15 de febrero de 2011."* (El Universal, 1st October 2015)
- *["In the group is José Emanuel García Sota, alleged member of Los Zetas, accused of participating in the murder of an agent of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Service (ICE), Jaime Zapata, committed in San Luis Potosí on February 15, 2011."]* (El Universal, 1st October 2015)





In 2019 the frequency of the negative attitude was higher in 'inmigración' discourses (19%), which might be due to Trump's **stepped-up approach towards detention and deportation** of undocumented immigrants with record high 359,885 removals and 171,445 returns.

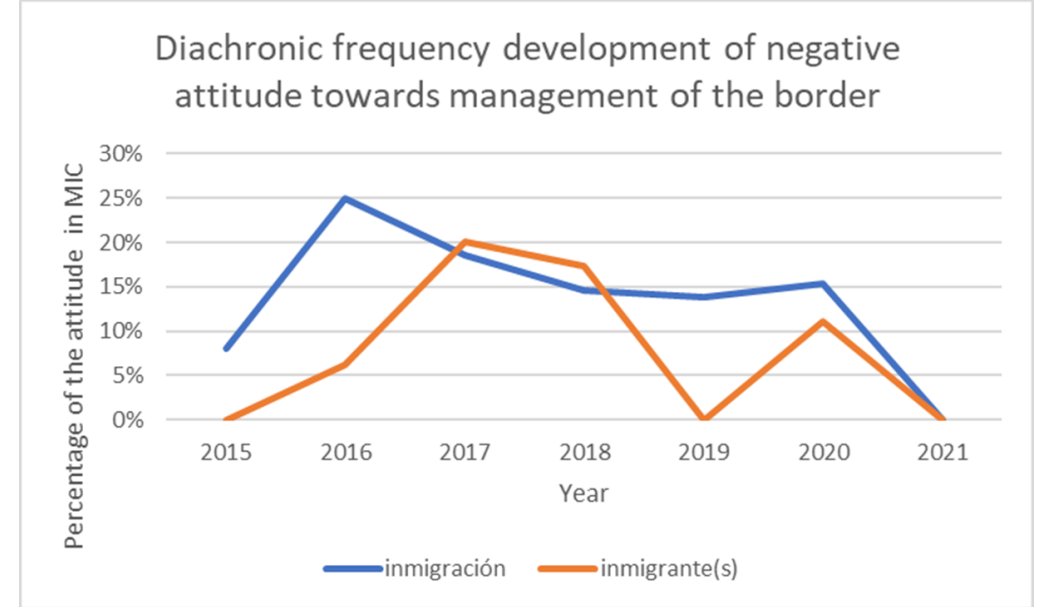
Also, the negative narrative towards 'inmigración' could have been fuelled by Trump's announcement to conduct **raids** against undocumented immigrants .

While attitudes towards ‘inmigrante(s)’ stayed low in 2016, the negative attitudes towards ‘inmigración’ reached its peak revolving around the **border wall**.

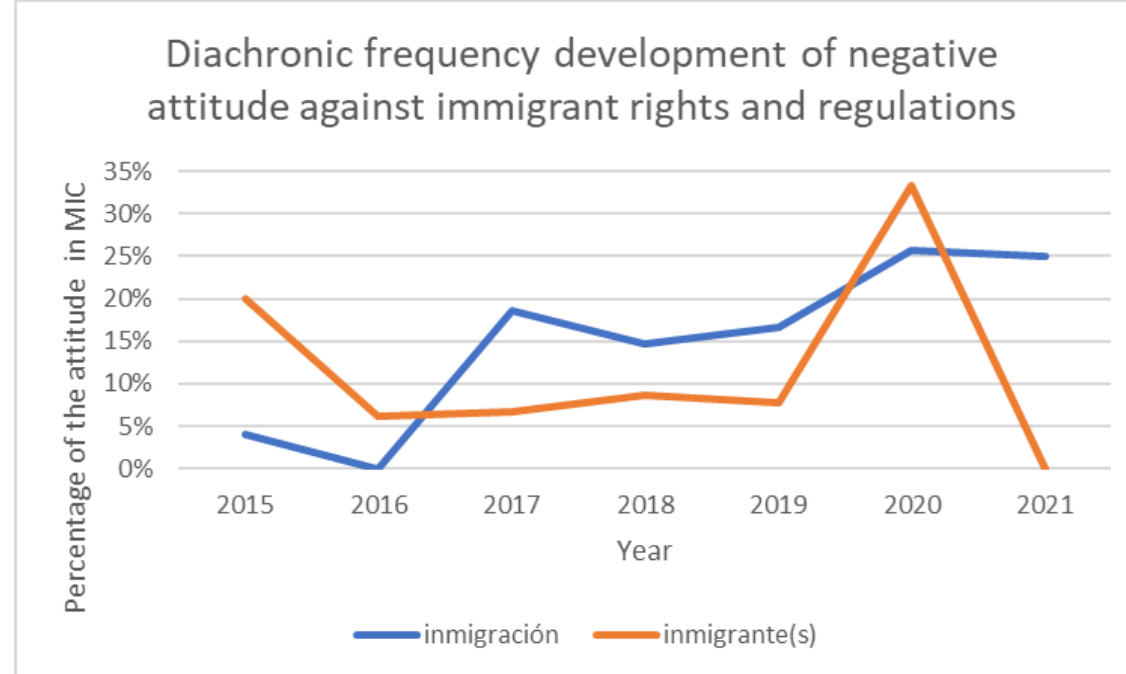
- *El aspirante republicano a la Casa Blanca considera que este muro, cuya altura será de entre 10 y 12 metros, es fundamental para detener el tráfico de drogas y la inmigración ilegal desde el vecino del sur. (El Universal, 9 May 2016). (Elimparcial.com, 9 May 2016)*

[The Republican candidate for the White House considers that this wall, whose height will be between 10 and 12 meters, is essential to stop drug trafficking and illegal immigration from the southern neighbor.] (Elimparcial.com, 9 May 2016)

The newspaper could be seen as perpetuator of anti-immigration and pro-Trump attitudes among the readership via advocating the advantages of the wall.

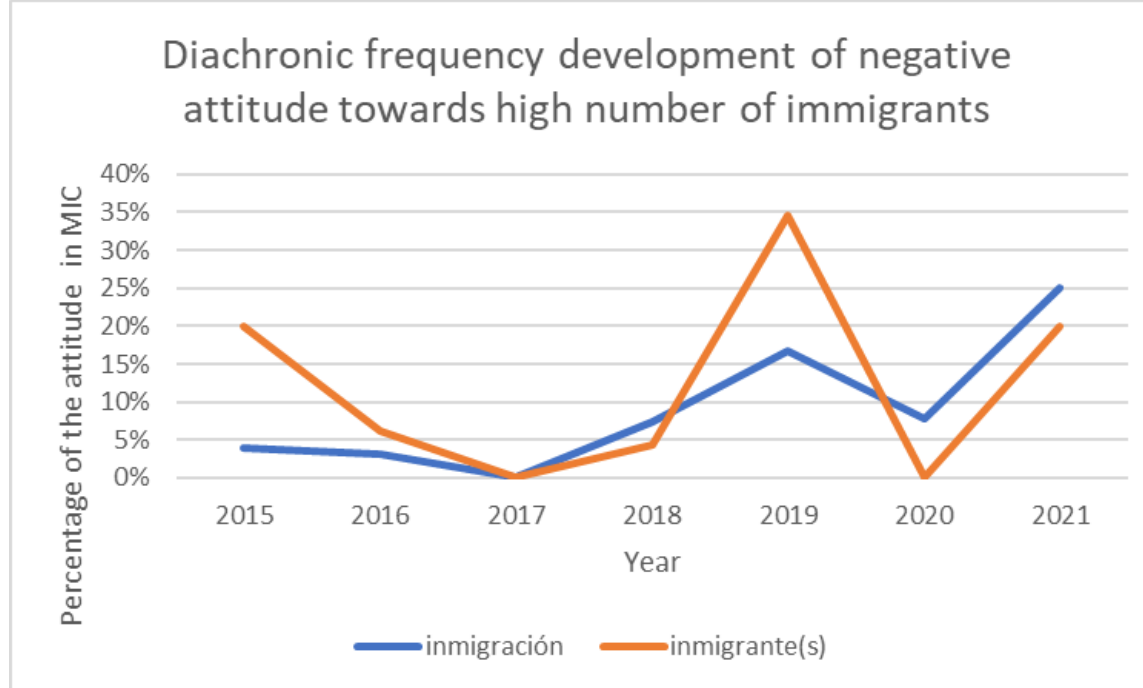


The unfavourable attitudes towards ‘inmigración’ in 2019 could have arguably been affected by the longest **shutdown of the US government** followed by National Emergency declaration due to Congress’ unwillingness to approve Trump’s request for the funding of the wall.



The 2020 'inmigrante(s)' discourses revolve around the **negative influence of Covid-19 on the legal rights of immigrants** (33% of negative attitudes), such as obtaining visas.

The reason for frequency difference between the discourses in 2021 MIC might be that 'inmigración' discourses refer directly to immigration laws and regulation, while 'inmigrante(s)' discourses refer to individuals or group of people.



In 2019 there was a spike in negative attitudes towards ‘inmigrante(s)’ (35% of negative instances), which might correlate with the emergence of the new **caravan** in Honduras in January 2019.

“El flujo de inmigrantes centroamericanos que pasan por México y que logran cruzar la frontera estadounidense sin papeles creció dramáticamente desde diciembre pasado.”(El Norte, 11 June 2019)

[“The flow of Central American immigrants who are passing through Mexico and manage to cross the US border without documents has grown dramatically since last December.”] (El Norte, 11 June 2019)

Other negative attitudes

- **Low frequency consistent negative attitudes**

immigrants are illegal goods of smuggling

immigrants are danger to US society and economy

- **Absent positive/negative attitudes**

the provenance of immigrants

Church as a refuge was infrequent attitude

immigrants' education and health

addressing the root causes of immigration

Biden's immigration approach

Major findings

- **Positive** corpus discourses about ‘immigration’ and ‘immigrants’ **prevail** in MIC newspapers over negative, which does not seem to be reflected in public opinion about migrants in Mexico.
- The trend in MIC newspapers showed **more negative** attitudes towards Mexican immigration/immigrants especially **in 2019**, when there was a surge of Central American immigrants in caravans, and more positive coverage at the end of Trump’s presidency.
- There seems to be the trend of **progressive leaning MIC** newspapers being more **pro-migrant** than conservative leaning MIC newspapers.
- The newspapers **close to the border** do **not always** express **negative** stance towards immigration/immigrants.

Thank you for your attention!



References (1)

- Adimora, K. (2023) *Expert Focus on US Immigration: Challenges and Possible Solutions*, Policy brief no. 03.14.23. Houston, Texas. Available at: <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.25613/KHPE-DE58>.
- Baker, P. and Ellece, S. (2011) *Key Terms in Discourse Analysis*. Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Baker, P., Hardie, A. and McEnery, T. (2022) *A Glossary of Corpus Linguistics*. Edinburgh University Press. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780748626908-002>.
- Camarota, S.A. and Zeigler, K. (2017) *1.8 Million Immigrants Likely Arrived in 2016, Matching Highest Level in U.S. History*, Center for Immigration Studies. Available at: <https://cis.org/Report/18-Million-Immigrants-Likely-Arrived-2016-Matching-Highest-Level-US-History> (Accessed: 18 June 2023).
- Gabrielatos, C. and Baker, P. (2008) 'Fleeing, sneaking, flooding: A corpus analysis of discursive constructions of refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK Press, 1996-2005', *Journal of English Linguistics*, 36(1), pp. 5–38. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0075424207311247>.
- Galindo Gómez, S.E. (2019) 'Las palabras importan: representación de los inmigrantes mexicanos en periódicos de México y Estados Unidos', *Migraciones internacionales*, 10(36), pp. 1–22. Available at: <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.33679/rmi.v1i1.2024>.
- Light, M.T., He, J. and Robey, J.P. (2020) 'Comparing crime rates between undocumented immigrants, legal immigrants, and native-born US citizens in Texas', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 117(51), pp. 32340–32347. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2014704117>.

References (2)

- Sinclair, J. (1991) *Corpus, Concordance, Collocation*. Oxford (UK): Oxford University Press.
- Sinclair, J. (1999) *Concordance Tasks, The Tuscan Word Centre*. Available at: <http://www.twc.it/happen.html> (Accessed: 14 July 2022).
- Stubbs, M. (2001) *Words and Phrases: Corpus Studies of Lexical Semantics*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Stubbs, M. (2009) 'The search for units of meaning: Sinclair on empirical semantics', *Applied Linguistics*, 30(1), pp. 115–137. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amn052>.
- Taylor, C. (2009) 'The representation of immigrants in the Italian press', *CIRCaP Occasional Papers*, (21), pp. 1–40.
- Van Dijk, T.A. (1993) 'Principles of critical discourse analysis', *Discourse & Society*, 4(2), pp. 249–283. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926593004002006>.
- Xiao, R. and McEnery, T. (2006) 'Collocation, semantic prosody, and near synonymy: A cross-linguistic perspective', *Applied Linguistics*, 27(1), pp. 103–129. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/ami045>.