

The media coverage of Venezuelan migration in Mexico and its impact on public opinion.

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Abstract. In 2019, about 4 million Venezuelans have left the country looking for a better landscape for them and their families. Thousands, even entire families, have arrived in Mexico, trying to regularize their situation and to stay permanently in the country. The purpose of this work is to analyze how the media portrays the Venezuelan migration in Mexico, and in what way this coverage influences people's judgements about migration. Particularly to understand what kinds of arguments are used to justify hostility and xenophobic opinions. Data collection focuses on a textual analysis of online news generated by Mexican and international media. Final outcomes will show how the media serves to preserve a particular coverage based on traditional prejudiced stereotypes that serve to set a hostile ambient towards migrants and to justify violations to their human rights.

Keywords. Venezuelan migration; Xenophobia; Mexico; Media coverage; Social media

[es] El encuadre mediático de la migración venezolana en México y su impacto en la opinión pública.

Resumen. Para el año 2019, cerca de 4 millones de venezolanos han abandonado su país en busca de un panorama mejor; miles de ellos han llegado a México. El propósito de este texto es analizar cómo los medios de comunicación retratan la migración venezolana en México y cómo este encuadre mediático influye en la opinión pública sobre la migración. Particularmente, entender qué tipo de encuadres mediáticos se usan para justificar la hostilidad y las opiniones xenófobas hacia los migrantes. El trabajo de campo se centró en un análisis textual de noticias en línea generadas por medios mexicanos e internacionales. Los resultados finales muestran cómo los medios de comunicación sirven para preservar y difundir un tipo de encuadre mediático basado en estereotipos xenófobos tradicionales que favorecen la construcción de un ambiente hostil hacia los migrantes y así justificar las violaciones a sus derechos humanos.

Palabras clave. Migración venezolana; Xenofobia; México; encuadre mediático; Redes sociales.

Sumario: 1. Introduction 2. Theoretical background. 3. The case. 4. Methodology. 5. Outcomes. 6. Conclusion. 7. References 8. Annex. Sources consulted.

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1. Introduction

What started as a small flow of political dissidents and oil workers by mid-2010, considered as traitors by the former Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez's sympathizers, it is now in 2019 a huge humanitarian tragedy. According to some sources, about 4 million Venezuelans have left the country looking for a better landscape for them and their families (Long, 2019) (The Economist, 2019b). The exodus has reached not only neighboring countries like Colombia or Brazil, but it has spread across the American continent. In recent years, thousands of Venezuelans, even entire families, have arrived in Mexico. Most of them are escaping from scarcity, political repression and, paradoxically, a high level of insecurity. By now, Venezuela is among the most dangerous countries in the world to live in (Statista, 2019). This migration trend characterizes because before Mexican and interna-

tional laws, the citizens from this South American country are considered refugees, and therefore they receive special considerations when applying for asylum in the country. Yet, no matter these facilities, their arrival and establishment in Mexico is quite hazardous and complex. The Venezuelan authorities' control over foreign currencies, particularly the US dollar and the Euro, and the collapse of the economy, have made it quite difficult to gather foreign currencies to purchase an airplane ticket or gather resources to travel. In fact, many tickets are bought by relatives outside the country and sent by email to the travelers. When landing in Mexico, migrants suffer mistreatments and abuses from national authorities; many times, they are not allowed to enter and are sent back immediately without any justification or legal support. Despite the risks of losing all the money they have invested; many are still attempting to come. Though, for those who have been able to pass

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the migratory controls, the social and labor panorama are not very promising. Many of them lack the proper permits to labor in the country, so they are forced to work in low-wage activities or even in illegal ones, like prostitution or narcotrafficking.

Besides the undeniable differences among the Venezuelan and the Syrian migration crisis, their irruption concurs in a context shaped by information technologies: Internet, smartphones, social media, etc. This hyper-mediatizing has enabled the global coverture of international and local migration flows, sometimes even in “real time.” Refugees’ misfortunes and casualties are no longer anecdotic and segregated events, but thanks to digital media, they are close to us. Online news and social media platforms have given a face and a voice to the millions of people that have been forced to depart from their homelands. The traditional global monopoly of media over information has ended, now there are several local and international sources that provide a huge amount of news and reports about the migrants’ situation. Social platforms, indeed, have opened the access to global media, allowing migrants to share their experiences and to forge transnational collaboration networks to support their journey and settlement. Thanks to digital media, the world has witnessed the terrible life conditions in countries like Venezuela, Nicaragua and Syria that have triggered a massive exodus of people.

Though, these information technologies have also served to negatively depict the presence of migrants in Europe and to set a hostility context based on xenophobic and racist assumptions. Syrian and African refugees are often portrayed in traditional and digital media as “potential terrorists,” “invaders” or “unassimilated” who do not share Western traditional values, culture and religion. This coverage has triggered violence towards Muslims in general, not only to refugees and but also to citizens, and have prompted an increasing nationalism used by extremist political parties to obtain electoral wins. In the Venezuelan case, contrary of what has happened in Europe, prejudices are not based on religion or ethnicity. Venezuelans, as Latin-Americans, share a common history and similar cultural elements with other countries in the region: food, language, religion, skin color, etc. However, refugees are not immune of being subjects of verbal and physical maltreatment, and to be the aim of xenophobic invectives, many times fueled by news shared on social media and users’ commentaries who usually emit judgements or opinions without giving a proper read to the information, or use, deliberately or inadvertently, false and untrusted sources which replicate traditional stereotypes associated with Venezuelans. The purpose of this paper is to analyze how media, local and international, portrays the Venezuelan migration in Mexico, and how this coverage influences people’s judgements and considerations about the presence of Venezuelans in the country. Particularly to understand what kind of settings are used to justify hostility and xenophobic opinions.

2. Theoretical background

The 2008 economic crisis severely affected welfare and employment across the globe. In Spain, for example, the loss of jobs was massive, and many people were forced to look for better labor conditions in Germany or England. In addition, it has been a growing exodus of Africans and Syrians fleeing from war and paucity, which have collapsed immigration centers and caused an international humanitarian crisis (Adam, 2015). But the situation has become even worse since recent terrorist attacks across Europe have nourished a hostile ambient for migrants in general, and refugees in particular (Fangen & Vaage, 2018). This xenophobia and Euroscepticism have powered the uprising of populism and extremist political parties which have gotten important electoral wins in recent years in Europe and the United States. In Europe during 2018, extremist and Eurosceptic political parties have won significant electoral victories in several countries like Italy, Sweden, Poland and Switzerland among others (BBC, 2018) (The Economist, 2019a). Amid the most important impacts caused by the uprising of the far-right wing is a growing “side-stepping” policy in where everyday discrimination and racist acts are not faced directly, but rather they are circumvented by using the official discourse based on “integration.” Under “side-stepping,” public policies focus their attention on the problem of racism against migrants not as a social problem, but as acts committed by isolated individuals (Jensen, Weibel, & Vitus, 2017). In addition, the EU asylum system is particularistic and divided. It is characterized by including diverse reception standards and several national variations in rejection and the refugee’s recognition rates (Valenta, 2017). This complexity has raised hostility against refugees, and there have been several street protests asking for migration policy tightening, and a diminishing of refugee rights and support. This adverse context has settled a very complex and peril situation for refugees in Europe, The United States or even in Mexico. In this last country, refugees, most of them from Central America and Venezuela, are not allowed to legally work until they change their migration status. However, the processing of these requests could last for years, this causes an impoverishment of migrant living conditions. In early 2018, according to Eurostat (2018), about 4 out of 10 foreign citizens in the EU were among the people with a higher risk of being poor, materially deprived and socially excluded. In countries like The Netherlands, more than half of all households with people from refugee countries had an income below the low-income threshold (Statistics Netherlands, 2018). In the meantime, social workers and relief organizations, on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, have to deal with a more adverse situation in where governments are reluctant to continue supporting refugee relief programs and the citizens are less confident with foreign migration (McCleary &

Chaudhry, 2017). This complex panorama has been shaped as well by the popularization of smartphones and social platforms like Facebook and Twitter. For refugees, technologies like smartphones and social media have allowed them to access crucial information to support their travel from Syria and Africa up to Europe (McGregor & Siegel, 2013). Though, in many cases, digital media has served to promote a negative view about migrants, who are usually portrayed as potential terrorists. These views have been reinforced by the massive spread of fake news which distorted the information about migrants.

As a matter of fact, there has always been a strong association between how immigrants are depicted on media and the conformation of people's opinions and attitudes towards the presence of migrants in their communities (Wright, 2002) (Balabanova & Balch, 2010). Called as media framing among scholars (Joslyn & Haider-Markel, 2002), it is a very common action in where media highlights some aspects of a particular event in which they appear more important or bigger than they really are. (Abreu, 2015). The purpose is to drive public opinion into a particular point of view or judgement (Quinsaas, 2014) (Di Renzo, 2017) (Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017). Political parties or media make use of framing to encourage people to support ostracized or unethical proposals such as the rise of taxes or new security barriers and controls.

However, what is different now, regarding the media framing, is the fact that the world is dwelling with a more open and diverse scenario in where traditional media corporations are no longer the exclusive players that can monopolize information and decide what can be broadcasted and how to do it. Digital media has brought accessible tools and platforms, giving a virtual voice to dissident beliefs (Ferra & Nguyen, 2017). But this mediatic diversification is not absent of glitches and limitations: the dissemination of false and distorted information. The Internet is a social sphere in where reliability concurs with deception and untruth. Many times, the spread of false information is backed by media corporations and politicians that get substantial gains by setting a fictional or exaggerated context. Migration flows are not exceptions (Wilmott, 2017): The actual refugee crisis in Europe, particularly the mediatic exploitation of terrorist attacks, the collapsed and overloaded shelters, and the huge refugee casualties across the Mediterranean ocean have served to bring back from the past extremist ideologies and to empower far-right political parties.

Sometimes, the use of textual and visual narrative elements has given a human face to the problem, causing a huge impact on public opinion, encouraging mobilization to relief refugees and to avoid their deportation (Figenschou & Thorbjørnsrud, 2015). Still, this narrative technique, or human-interest framing as it is known in academia, has been employed to oversimplify and negatively polarize the presence of

refugees as well (Ihlen & Thorbjørnsrud, 2014) as it has happened with the mediatic coverture of terrorist attacks, in where the victims' personal histories are used not to create understanding and kindness, but to spread stereotypes and promote a very hostile attitude towards all migrants. In recent years, Muslim migrants have received a partial and tendentious coverture in newspapers more than other immigrants who do not profess this religion. They are usually demonized and treated as dangerous (Rettberg & Gajjala, 2016) (Sulaiman-Hill, Thompson, Afsar, & Hodliffe, 2011) or are portrayed in a dehumanized way in newspapers, considered as threats to security (Bleiker, Campbell, Hutchison, & Nicholson, 2013). Sometimes, this particular coverture promotes controversial political resolutions such as increasing deportations, even infringing refugees' legal rights, or to justify the presence of military forces, limiting civil rights, discriminating travelers and demonizing the migrants' culture. The US president Donald Trump has frequently used this extremist rhetoric towards Mexican migrants who are considered by his administration as a threat to homeland security and people who steal US citizens' jobs. He has promoted during his political campaign and, now as president of the United States, the construction of a "Big Wall" in the Mexican-US border to stop illegal immigration and to secure US citizens against potentials dangers. In some cases, however, the total silence about the problem constitutes a kind of frame, since the media prefers to avoid discussing an unpleasant topic during the 2015 general election in Spain (Alcántara-Plá & Ruiz-Sánchez, 2018).

The recent migration studies have been shaped by the refugee crisis in Europe (Leurs & Smets, 2018), which has surpassed public expectation and preventions on how to deal with millions of Syrians and Africans trying to reach Europe. Actually, there is plenty of scholar production related with diverse aspects of this crisis from the digital activism in pro-migration and the conformation of collaborative networks to relief migrants' situations against the negative portrayals of migrants in the media and the study of xenophobic aptitudes in diverse European countries (Ferris & Kirişci, 2016) (Nshimbi & Moyo, 2016) (Staples, 2017) (Bennett, 2018) (Bock, 2018). Notwithstanding, there is a less known refugee crisis in Latin America that is starting to gain international concern (John, 2018). This article aims to provide theoretical discussions and fact-finding data to expand the general scope of media and migration research, particularly regarding other contexts far beyond Europe or the United States.

3. The case

The arrival of Hugo Chavez to the Miraflores Palace (The president's official house in Venezuela) in 1999 was perceived as a very positive change to improve

the national economy and solve social problems in the country. In 2000, about 80% of the population approved Hugo Chavez's electoral win, however only a few years later the panorama was very different, his support decreased down to 48% in 2002. Despite the installment of a socialist government and an important growth in the oil revenues during those years, poverty continued rising (Welsch, 2002). The economic global crisis in 2008 affected even more its already fragile economy, but "the last nail in the coffin" was the collapse of international oil prices which deprived the government from its main source of revenues (Lin, et al., 2013). Later decisions, committed by Nicolas Maduro, Hugo Chavez's successor, like the expropriation of companies, particularly food and medicine producers, and the rising of political repression towards dissidents, have just worsened the social panorama in the country. Every day, Venezuelans face a severe food and medicine shortage, social oppression and high levels of criminality and murders. These harsh conditions have expelled millions, not only to neighboring countries, but also Europe (Spain) and The United States. Those who enjoy of a dual citizenship and practice a profession have been able to travel to developed countries and to apply for a job. However, even with those potentials, many have been forced to labor in low-wage jobs as caregivers or sellers. But for a vast majority, without resources, social linkages or professional backgrounds, the arrival has translated into a very hard situation in where many have had to work in "negró," illegally and without any benefit, driving taxis or selling Venezuelan food (arepas or patacones) (The Economist, 2017). Besides, this migration crisis is affecting several countries in America and Europe, the greatest flows focused in adjacent countries like Brazil and Colombia. According to some estimates, there are about 1.4 million Venezuelans who have established in Colombian cities like Bogotá or Cucuta, a city in the Colombian-Venezuelan border (The Economist, 2019b). In 2018, living conditions in Venezuela have equated to those in countries that are actually at war, like Syria: sanity problems, scarcity and high levels of mortality not only due to criminality. But due to the lack of medicines and the poor conditions of operating rooms at hospitals, even forgotten epidemic diseases that isolated the region in the past, like measles, are starting to resurrect. Entire families are migrating no matter their resources or support. International press and social media have given coverture to the hazardous and uncertain journey of thousands of Venezuelans travelling without money, using auto-stop, sleeping in charity shelters and begging for money or food at streets (Cassese, 2018).

In North America, after the electoral win of Donald Trump in 2016, border security protocols in the United States rose, making the arrival to this country even more difficult and dangerous for many migrants, as the case of Cubans, Central Americans, Mexicans, Haitians, and more recently, Venezuelans (The Economist, 2018). In recent years, many of

them have shifted their route to Mexico, a nation that besides a long-lasting Narco war, enjoys better economic and social conditions than in those migrants' countries (Martínez, 2015). In fact, since 2010, the country has become an important target for people that have been forced to move from their homelands looking for better labor opportunities as in the case of the Spaniards (El País, 2013), or for those migrants that intended to reach the United States but that could not make it. Mexican states like Jalisco have experienced an incredible rise in their foreign habitants. In one decade, from 2010-2010, the rate increased from 48,000 up to 83,000 (Huérffano, 2014). The increment of migrants in Mexico has reached such pronounced levels that the Mexican government has been compelled to modify the immigration law in 2012, raising the requirements for migrants to apply for a labor permission. Though, the number of asylum applications filed before the COMAR (Mexican Refugee Commission) have risen abruptly. In May 2018, the system collapsed, and the Commission suspended the processing of asylum requests.

By the year of 2010, Venezuelans in Mexico concentrated in the capital of the country, Mexico City and in southern states in which the main economic activity is the oil industry, like Tabasco. Most of these workers enjoyed high salaries and good labor conditions. These were the years in which the oil prices were high. But six years later, the price collapsed, affecting oil-exporting countries like Russia, Mexico and Canada. However, the consequences in Venezuela were awful since the oil import is the most important source of revenue in the country (Bermúdez, 2016). Actually, the Venezuelan migration flow and the labor conditions are quite different, in spite of the fact that there is not an exact number of how many Venezuelans have arrived in Mexico. Since 2015, their presence in main cities, Guadalajara, Mexico City or Monterrey is becoming more numerous. In 2017, Mexican authorities issued nearly 33,000 resident and labor permissions for Venezuelans (Zermeño, 2017). Many migrants have been able to regularize their migratory situation and find a job as a professional or to set a business. But the majority, who are unable to obtain a legal permission to stay and work in the country, are compelled to fill low-wage vacancies, many times without any labor benefit, as vendors, waiters, or driving taxis or Uber cars. In some cases, their urgency to stay in the country has caused the irruption of fraudulent incidents in where fictitious agents have asked them for money to regularize their situation (Sáez, 2018), and the cases of human-trafficking related with Venezuelan women have grown significantly in 2018 (El Debate, 2018).

4. Methodology

This paper focuses on how the media portrays the presence of Venezuelans in Mexico and its impact

in the conformation of peoples' opinions regarding migrants. Particularly, what kind of arguments are frequently used by the news' readers against Venezuelan migration? Fieldwork bases on analyzing virtual discourse generated on the Internet, mainly online news. In terms of this paper, discourse will refer to a chain of interconnected ideas that spread using diverse communication media like radio, television, Internet, etc. (Jones, Chik, & Hafner, 2015) (O'Keeffe, 2011). Virtual discourse contrasts from that generated in traditional media like print newspapers, since virtuality embraces all those medias. In a virtual portal, it is possible to stay in contact with diverse sources of information from audio, video, image, text and animations. Another important characteristic is "interactivity." In traditional media, the communication is unidirectional, in digital media (Internet, smartphone applications and tablets), on the contrary, people can interact with each other. This interaction allows people the interchange of information "in real-time" (Unger, Wodak, & KhosraviNik, 2016). An additional attribute of digital media is the fact that it could be potentially accessed and shared instantly, free of charge by almost all people in the world who have access to the Internet. However, as it happens with traditional media, there is an inner tendency to frame online news, and to influence the reader's predilections, using argumentative tools to normalize a reasoning as the unique and possible interpretation of a complex problem (Rambe, 2012). This work attempts to understand how discourse is built to legitimize a social and political order or to impose a specific reasoning as the only possible explanation or interpretation to a very complex social phenomenon (Van Dijk, 2003) (Curci-Wallis, 2016). This study will follow empirical findings that show how media tends to give a more mediatic attention to illegal activities committed by immigrants (Rettberg & Gajjala, 2016), or to accuse migrants for the rise in criminality (Clare & Abdelhady, 2016). A key aim in this research is to understand how media serves to preserve and to spread across the countries where the presence of Venezuelans has risen, a particular framing based on traditional xenophobic stereotypes that set a hostile ambient towards migrants and justifies the violation of human rights.

The unit analysis of this research is online news produced from 2010-2018 by Mexican and international media covering the Venezuelan migration in Mexico. The sample was selected following two main criteria (a) to include sources not only from Mexico, but from International media that could provide a different perspective on the situation of Venezuelans living in the country, and (b) to embrace news covering negative incidents involving migrants and news reporting maltreatment towards Venezuelans as well. This allows to understand how media tends to emphasize the negative events and give minor mediatic coverage to the actions against migrants. After a careful search among diverse media sources in Mexico

and Ibero-America, during a period of four months, from September to December 2018, 60 news were selected. From that total, 42 news correspond to Mexican media, and the rest to foreign press (18), mainly from Colombia (4), Argentina (4), and The United States (3). In order to accomplish the research's main objectives, articles were categorized and coded in five main categories: **(A)** Venezuelans in Latin America (4 items), **(B)** Venezuelans in Mexico (24 items), **(C)** Venezuelans involved in criminal activities in Mexico (13 items), **(D)** Violence against Venezuelans in Mexico (9 items) and, **(E)** Violence against Venezuelan escorts in Mexico (10 items). When a particular news is cited, the mention will appear like this *(D1)*, *D*= Category 5 (Violence against Venezuelan escorts in Mexico) and *I*= refers to the place held by the news in the table (See Annex). In some cases, the platforms allowed readers to publish commentaries on the news, that enables the option to analyze how media coverage prejudice user's opinions about the presence of Venezuelans in Mexico. When a user's commentary is analyzed in the present article, it will always be referred to the news from where it has been obtained (See Annex).

5. Outcomes

A) Venezuelans in Latin America

In a few years, the Venezuelan migration crisis gained global coverage (A1). Actually, there is a lot of news generated by diverse local and international media that have monitored the different topics associated with this crisis: economy, scarcity of food, xenophobia, international solidarity etc. In addition, there are several spaces in social media, like Facebook groups, where migrants share their testimonies. This hyper-mediatization, however, has triggered people's concerns about the presence of Venezuelans in their communities (A2). In a recent case, in the Brazilian state of Roraima, near the Venezuelan border, a refugee camp was destroyed in retaliation of a robbery apparently committed by Venezuelans. Incidents of this kind have transformed the refugee crisis into an important electoral topic as well (Bermúdez, 2018). Venezuela has become a constant example used by right-wing political candidates in Mexico, Colombia and Brazil to attack left or moderate opponents and to praise for more migratory controls. In addition, at a local level, Venezuelans have been blamed of being the cause of diverse social problems like criminality, prostitution, and even the spread of contagious diseases. In September 2018, a news headline appeared in where "The Colombian government accuses Venezuelan migrants of triggering a huge increment in Malaria and HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) cases in the country" (A3). Nonetheless, no further evidence was provided in the running text to sustain this temerity assumption. However, no matter the

lack of reliable data, this news had a deep impact on the Facebook readers who expressed several negative comments towards Venezuelans... “Sad news, but government does not control the entry of Venezuelans... We need to close the border” (Male), and “The HIV is because the men are crazy for the Venezuelan women... They do not take care of themselves and have sex with any *guaricha* (prostitute)” (Female) (A3). This last commentary is quite special because it brings a traditional stereotype shared across the region which associates Venezuelan females with prostitution. Allusions to this stereotype appear frequently in the readers’ commentaries in other news (A4) (C1) (E12).

B) Venezuelans in Mexico

In 2018, Mexico turned out to be one of the countries which deports more Venezuelans in the region. In this context, some sources highlight the necessity to protect migrants’ human rights, particularly of Venezuelans and Central Americans (B6) (B3). Others news have underlined the rise in the refugee status applications (B4), and how the migration crisis impacts local communities (B5), like in Tampico (a northern city near the US border) in where Venezuelans are struggling to get a job and to sustain their families. The complex situation in Venezuela has forced migrants to intend to regularize their situation (B19). For those who are able to stay in the country and to apply for a refugee status, the situation is still challenging since they cannot go back to Venezuela and they are unable to work during the process. Most of the time they are supported by relatives living in Mexico, who many times sponsored their travel, or are compelled to work “under the radar” without any labor right (B16), or even risking their lives in illegal and dangerous works.

Users’ commentaries about the presence of Venezuelans in Mexico are varied, some of them applause for the necessity to relief migrants, but others are against their presence. Some argue that Mexico has its own problems and it cannot help migrants, or that they, the migrants, are only taking advantage of the situation, “I am not against it (to help migrants) but we need to think in our future as well” (Male) (B5). Usually the xenophobia against Venezuelans lays behind economic and labor justifications or is associated with security issues. A recurrent recrimination is to characterize all migrants as latent criminals, as these commentaries illustrate (B17), “Out all Venezuelans and other “sudacas” (a scornful word to name people from South America)” (Male), “we are infested of criminals, Colombians, that forge bands and steal homes.” (Male) (B18). Occasionally, people from Venezuela and Colombia have participated in criminal incidents, most of them related with robbery.

But, besides a shared idealization of a “huge invasion of Venezuelans,” most of them are denied the entrance to the country and are sent back. Across the

years, international and local medias (B7, B8, B9) have collected several personal testimonies of illegal expatriations in where the migrants’ rights are not respected. During the deportation process, Venezuelans are subjects of verbal insults, maltreatments and seclusion until they are sent back without an explanation (B20) (B24). This coverage has served as a way to denounce this situation and to ask for a better comportment when people arrive to the airports (D1). This rising of deportations in where migrants’ rights are not respected has motivated some media to accuse immigration authorities of having a “Trumpist” attitude against Venezuelans. References to Donald Trump and “The Wall” are frequently used, particularly when Venezuelans and other migrants complain about how they are treated in Mexico. In international medias like Infobae (Argentina), it is possible to find commentaries made by Venezuelans in where they complain about “the Mexican double moral” (B7), “They do not respect Latin Americans, but they ask the US government for a good treatment for their migrants” (Male), “Can you believe this xenophobic attitude from Mexicans?” (Male). However, besides the complaints that accuse Mexican authorities of having a more xenophobic attitude than others, this mistreatment is becoming more frequent and generalized as their presence grows across the region (B2).

C) Venezuelans involved in criminal activities in Mexico / D) Violence against Venezuelan escorts in Mexico

One of the most covered topics related with the presence of Venezuelans in Mexico are criminality and security issues. Usually Venezuelan criminals are involved in robbery or fraud (C1, C2, C3, C4). Nonetheless, the headlines typically omit when the nationals participated with migrants in the crime and emphasize the fact that there were foreigners involved in the incident. Besides, the number of crime cases in where Venezuelans and other migrants are involved is very low compared with crimes committed by nationals (C13), less than the 0.09% (INEGI, 2018). There is a growing concern among authorities and citizens about the impact of migration in local security. The next headlines well illustrate this issue: “*Preocupa a Zapopan presencia de delincuentes extranjeros*” (Zapopan – A city in the state of Jalisco- worries about the presence of foreign criminals) (C9), “*De Sudamérica a Puente Grande* (A penitentiary center in Jalisco)” (From South America to Puente Grande) (C12), “*Arman extranjeros atracos en la ZMG*” (Immigrants commit crimes in the ZMG -Guadalajara Metropolitan Zone) (C7), and “*Azotan Ciudad ladrones sudamericanos.*” (South American thieves flagellate the city). This last headline was published at the end of the year 2017, by Mural (Right-wing), a local newspaper in the city of Guadalajara (C13). According to the information, 44 south Americans, 29 Colombians and 15 Venezuelans, were captured

by the local police under the accusation of robbery. However, this number languishes against the 43,023 criminal incidents (murder, robbery, fraud, etc.) reported in Jalisco during 2017 (INEGI, 2018).

This kind of coverture has a profound effect in spreading the traditional stereotype that links Venezuelans and Colombians with crime, triggering xenophobic opinions that foster traditional enterotypes, like “*Que lástima que GDL este repleto de malditos colombianos, venezolanos.*” (What a pity that GDL (Guadalajara) is full of damn Colombians, Venezuelans), or “They (Migration authorities) let in more criminals from Venezuela, Colombia, Honduras, El Salvador” (Male). This extended tracking contrasts with the poor coverture and visibility that crimes committed against Venezuelans in the country usually receive (D3, D4, D7). In 2018, however, the assassination of Fabio Melanitto, a former member of the music band “Uff,” which was very popular in Latin America during the 90s, got a huge coverture, and until now the case remains unsolved. At the end of 2017 and during 2018, a series of murders of Venezuelan women, who worked as sexual workers, got huge mediatic attention, and set the spotlight to a less known problem that has exacerbated during the migration crisis: the sex-slave trade in Mexico.

E) Violence against Venezuelan escorts in Mexico

Traditionally, the country has been an important target for white slave traffic organizations that introduce women from Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela and Eastern Europe under false contracts of modeling (E1). Most of these women come to the country with the promise to labor as fashion models, but most of times are forced to work as prostitutes (escorts) or dancers in night clubs in Mexico’s main cities like Guadalajara, Mexico City or Monterrey (E1) (E2) (E4). However, with the situation in Venezuela, the cases of white slave traffic related with females from that country has risen (E1) (E6). Unfortunately, this issue has taken a dangerous turn in recent years. Since November 2017, six escorts have been murdered. Four of them were from Venezuela, one Mexican and the other from Argentina (E5). Besides the coverture in media digital portals, the information about these cases were rarely shared on social media, limiting the coverage of the topic and avoiding converting into a subject of public debate. The few commentaries on Facebook, yet, provide some light about the lack of empathy for prostitutes, these women are blamed of causing their own death because of their work, and the use of xenophobic stereotypes to justify those murders (E9) (E10), (Female) “*Pobrecita, la belleza es perdición para muchas muchachas, no las deja ver su realidad ni poner los pies sobre la tierra... su ambición la llevó a la muerte,*” (Poor her, beauty is the perdition for many girls, it does not let them see their reality or put their feet on the ground ... her ambition caused her death), (Female) “*Por ambiciosas le pasa*

eso” (Because of their ambition, they are dead), and (Male) “*Modelo o escort, para no decir prostitute. Esas venecas y colombianas siempre andan metidas en problemas*” (Model or escort, not to say hooker. Those Venecas -a despective form to name Venezuelans - and Colombians are always in trouble).

6. Conclusion

In mid 2019, the world is testifying profound and concerning political, social and economic changes: 1) a tariff war among the United States and China and the rise of commercial protectionism, 2) a political turn to the right-wing and the rise of populism on both sides of the Atlantic ocean, and 3) huge humanitarian and refugee crises across the globe: Syrians, Africans, Nicaraguan, Venezuelans and Rohingyas. Latin American countries are not immune to these trends. The economic protectionist encouraged by Donald Trump has had a deep impact on countries like Mexico, Brazil and Argentina, causing uncertainty, a truncated economic growth and resentment, not only towards the United States, but against their neighboring countries, particularly towards immigrants. Economic deficit, inflation, and social discontent have encouraged the electoral wins of populist candidates across the region: Andrés Manuel López Obrador (Left), who has already won the presidential election in Mexico, Jair Messias Bolsonaro in Brazil (Right), Iván Duque Márquez in Colombia (Right). In addition, the region is suffering the effects of massive refugee flows of Venezuelans and Nicaraguans that are escaping from scarcity, insecurity and political repression. In this context, migrants have become ideal scapegoats of social discontent and subjects of maltreatment and xenophobic attitudes. However, contrary of what has happened in Europe, this xenophobia is not based on cultural and religious basis, but on traditional stereotypes nourished by tendentious and simplistic mediatic coverture and political opportunism. Nicaraguans settled in Costa Rica, for example, are usually depicted as criminals who commit most of the crimes in the country. In August 2018, there was a huge public demonstration in San Jose, the capital city, in where thousands of people were brandishing Costa Rican flags and yelling ¡Fuera, Nicas! and ¡Asaltantes! (Out Nicas! Thieves! – Nicas is a pejorative form to name people from Nicaragua).

This research provided empiric evidence on how media forms public opinions through the use of headlines that usually highlight a partial vision about the events, sometimes even overstating the possible causalities or explanations that could be deduced by the information provided in the lead paragraph. Mexican media tends to offer a biased vision about the criminal incidents related with the Venezuelans living in the country. Emphasizing the news, when a migrant participates, but giving limited coverture regarding the abuses or criminal actions towards Venezuelans.

It was possible to observe that readers' opinions were influenced not just because of how the media wrote the headlines, but the readers gave a null or improper read to the whole information in the news. Maltreatment and insults towards Venezuelans are founded in customary labels as well. Women are usually associated with prostitution and men with crime and fraud. In Mexico, as this study has exposed, these stereotypes have served as an excuse to justify the reiterated violation of migrants' human rights at the Mexican airports, the recent murders of Venezuelan women in the country and to exonerate local authorities of the rampant insecurity that is ravaging Mexico's main cities. Additionally, as this study and the recent literature have shown, the new information technologies, particularly social media, play a key role in the negative frame about migrants (Bleiker et al., 2013) (Rettberg & Gajjala, 2016). Refugees in Mexico, as the case of Venezuelans or people from Central America, are not invulnerable to verbal and physical maltreatment. They are usually the aim of xenophobic invectives, many times fueled by news

and commentaries shared on social media. In Mexico, the lack of efficient migration policies has triggered poverty and exclusion among refugees. In some cases, the process of regularization is very slow, in the meantime, they are not allowed to legally work or to access public assistance programs in the country. However, as other studies have shown, in order to improve migrants labor conditions, it is important not only to improve migration policies and to provide social medical aid (McCleary & Chaudhry, 2017), but to stop assuming a "side-stepping" policy and to have a more direct approach to racism and discrimination (Jensen et al., 2017). Finally, it is important to understand that this rising of prejudices around the world towards migrants is caused not only because the mediatic coverture or the political immorality, but due to the absence of an informed civil society that calls into question these simplistic, reductionist and partial explanations to a complex social phenomenon, as in the case of migration crises, and that have paved the path to the actual crisis of credibility and trust in journalism.

7. References

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8. Annex. Sources consulted.

News)	Country	Code
A) Venezuelans in Latin America		
AVB. (2018, May 16). Venezolanos en Cuenca: desde hace 7 años se elevó a 4.000 inmigrantes. <i>El Mercurio de Ecuador</i> .	Ecuador	A1
Marques, M. (2018, August 18). Venezolanos são atacados em Roraima após assalto a comerciante. <i>O Globo</i> .	Brazil	A2
Noticias Caracol. (2018, September). Preocupante aumento de malaria y VIH en Colombia por migración de venezolanos. <i>Noticias Caracol</i> .	Colombia	A3
Noticias Caracol. (2018b, July 28). Sebastián Infante, niño de 18 meses raptado hace una semana en Cúcuta, apareció en Ecuador. <i>Noticias Caracol</i> .	Colombia	A4
B) Venezuelans in Mexico		
Agencia Anadolu. (2018, February 8). Solicitudes de refugiados venezolanos en México crecieron un 1119%. <i>El Espectador</i> .	Colombia	B1
Avendaño, O. (2018, March 21). Venezolanos denuncian maltratos y deportaciones de México. <i>Panam Post</i> .	US	B2
Baranda, A. (2018, June 20). Urgen a fortalecer la Comar. <i>Reforma</i> .	Mexico	B3
Butrón, J. (2018, June 4). Crecen 1000% solicitudes de refugio a México de venezolanos. <i>La Razón</i> .	Mexico	B4

Cedillo, J. A. (2018, May 20). Tampico, con una “pequeña” crisis humanitaria por éxodo de venezolanos. Proceso.	Mexico	B5
Díaz Briseño, J. (2018, March 27). Abordan México y EU éxodo venezolano. Reforma.	Mexico	B6
Díaz, J. (2018, April). “Hay una incongruencia con su visa”: Testimonios de venezolanos deportados de México. Infobae.	Argentina	B7
EFE Noticias. (2018, January 13). Venezolano denuncia abuso de poder en el aeropuerto de CDMX. Udgvtv.	Mexico	B8
Forbes Staff. (2018, April 6). Confidencias México con actitud ‘trumpista’ ante los venezolanos. Forbes México.	Mexico	B9
García Mora, I. (2015, de August). El sueño mexicano de los venezolanos. Emeequis.	Mexico	B10
Infobae. (2018, March 7). ACNUR calificó oficialmente a los migrantes venezolanos como refugiados – Infobae.	Argentina	B11
Marí, C. (2010, February 2). Atrae a extranjeros industria petrolera. Mural.	Mexico	B12
Milenio. (2018, July 8). Por la crisis, llegan a México más venezolanos expulsados. Milenio.	Mexico	B13
Noticieros Televisa. (2018, May 24). Extranjeros, sin posibilidad de tramitar refugio en México. Noticieros Televisa.	Mexico	B14
Peña, J. (2018, August). Pierde todo en Venezuela y la arma en grande en Saltillo. La Vanguardia.	Mexico	B15
Pernalte, V. (2018, March 12). El silencioso y agri dulce destino del exilio venezolano en México. El Tiempo. (Colombia)	Colombia	B16
Rivas, J. (2017a, July 25). Venezolanos se refugian en México; huyen de represión de Maduro. UNOTV.	Mexico	B17
Rivas, J. (2017b, September 7). Impiden que venezolanos ingresen a México. UNOTV. (Mexico)	Mexico	B18
Sáez, A. (2018, May 9). Estafas y falsos contratos: la trampa migratoria a los venezolanos en México. Deutsche Welle.	Germany	B19
Staff. (2018, March 4). Venezuela huye del hambre y busca refugio en México. Vanguardia MX.	Mexico	B20
Suárez, A. (2016, January 5). En cuatro años, se triplican los venezolanos que llegan a México a trabajar. 24 Horas.	Mexico	B21
Zambrano, L. (2018, July 21). Meditan crisis de Venezuela. Reforma.	Mexico	B22
Zermeño, R. (2017, July 21). Venezuela, el exilio. Reporte Índigo.	Mexico	B23
Zermeño, R. (2018, April 25). Agentes de migración prohíben entrada a venezolanos entre amenazas y burlas. Reporte Índigo.	Mexico	B24
C) Venezuelans involved in criminal activities in Mexico		
Yucatán al Minuto (2018, September). Cae banda de venezolanos que estafaba. (2018, August 24). Yucatán al Minuto.	Mexico	C1
Contreras, O. (2018, March 29). Asaltante que intentó robar Rolex en Puebla, traía pistola de juguete. El Universal.	Mexico	C2
Gaspar, D. (2018, June 21). Llevan relojeros 12 atracos en Zapopan. Mural. (Mexico)	Mexico	C3
Noticias Puerto Vallarta. (2010, January). Venezolanos Banda Organizada, Especializados en Asaltos. Noticias Puerto Vallarta.	Mexico	C4
Ortiz Mayén, A. (2016, March 10). Caen dos venezolanos que se dedicaban a saquear residencias. El Gráfico. (Mexico)	Mexico	C5
Osorio, E. (2016, December). Indagan a robarrelojes por doble homicidio. Mural.	Mexico	C6
Osorio, E. (2017, October 5). Arman extranjeros atracos en la ZMG. Mural.	Mexico	C7
Pulso. (2018, May 5). Desmantela PME banda de ladrones de cajeros (FOTOS). Pulso Diario de San Luis.	Mexico	C8
Saavedra Ponce, V. (2018, April 9). Preocupa a Zapopan presencia de delincuentes extranjeros. El Occidental.	Mexico	C9
Talavera, G. (2018, August). Tendrán segunda acusación por robo de tarjetas. El Norte.	Mexico	C10
Velázquez, I. (2017, August). Trabaja PF contra extorsiones en Edomex. Mural.	Mexico	C11

Casillas, T., & Magallón, N. (2018, October 4). De Sudamérica a Puente Grande. Mural.	Mexico	C12
Osoño, E. (2017, October 4). Azotan Ciudad ladrones sudamericanos. Mural.	Mexico	C13
D) Violence against Venezuelans in Mexico		
Avendaño, O. (2018, March 22). Venezolanos denuncian maltratos y deportaciones de México. PanAm Post.	US	D1
Camarena, S. (2010, August 25). Las 72 personas asesinadas en México eran inmigrantes “sin papeles.” El País.	Spain	D2
Cifuentes, G. (2018, April). Apuñalan, estrangulan y queman a venezolana junto a su hija en México. LaRepublica.pe.	Peru	D3
De los Santos, A. (2014, December 29). Asesinan a venezolano y colombiana en las afueras de Tomatlán. Noticias Puerto Vallarta.	Mexico	D4
El informador. (2018, de August de). ¡Matan a ex integrante de grupo Uff! En CDMX. El Informador. (Mexico)	Mexico	D5
Jurado, A. (2016, August 17). Venezolano implicado en narcotráfico fue asesinado con el “tiro de gracia.” A Todo Momento.	Venezuela	D6
Magallón, N. (2017, May 5). Quería mejor vida. Mural.	Mexico	D7
SIPSE, G. (2015, July 4). Caen 4 tras crimen contra uno de los mejores DJ de Venezuela. SIPSE.com.	Mexico	D8
Trinidad, H. A. (2016, August, 6:25 pm). Comando armado ejecutó a venezolano en Tabasco. La Prensa.	Mexico	D9
E) Violence against Venezuelan escorts in Mexico.		
Diario de las Américas. (2018, April). Rescatan en México a venezolanas víctimas de una red de trata de blancas. Diario de las Américas.	Mexico	E1
El Debate. (2018, July 28). Las escorts que llegaron a México por un sueño y fueron asesinadas. El Debate.	Mexico	E2
Excélsior. (2012, December 20). Matan a modelo venezolana en Guadalajara. Excélsior.	Mexico	E3
Infobae. (2018, April). Rescataron a 10 venezolanas, 7 colombianas y una paraguaya, víctimas de una red de trata en Ciudad de México. Infobae.	Argentina	E4
Infobae. (2018, March 2). Torturadas, violadas y desfiguradas: las seis modelos asesinadas en México. Infobae.	Argentina	E5
Méendez, J. (2018, May 8). Mafias colombianas enganchan a venezolanas y las traen a México. El Universal.	Mexico	E6
Pineda, G. (2018, July 27). Mayerlin, la sexta escort extranjera asesinada en México. Cultura Colectiva News.	Mexico	E7
Ruiz Parra, C. (2018, July 27). Esta escort venezolana fue a trabajar en un hotel de Cancún, pero el desenlace no fue sexual. EL Nuevo Herald.	US	E8
El Universal. (2018, March). “Las maté a todas, ahora sigues tú”: La historia de Kenni, la joven dama de compañía que fue brutalmente asesinada en México. La Prensa Gráfica.	El Salvador	E9
El Piñero de la Cuenca (Newspaper) / Facebook Profile. (2018, March). Kenny, modelo venezolana asesinada en Ecatepec, alertó en video antes sobre un hombre que la hirió con un machete. El Piñero de la Cuenca.	Mexico	E10

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