



The Politics of Visibility in News Coverage of Immigration Detention

Dylan Proctor^{1*}, Mvon Werthern¹, Jaime Young², Michelle Hoss³

¹Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Utah State University, Logan, Utah, USA

²Department of Sociology, University of Alabama at Birmingham, Birmingham, Alabama, USA

³School of Teacher Education and Leadership, Utah State University, Logan, Utah, USA

ABSTRACT

This study examines how news media portray immigration detention and how these portrayals differ across geographic and temporal contexts. Using a critical media literacy perspective, the research investigates the visibility given to detained individuals, the issues emphasized in reporting, and the relationship between local coverage and wider public discussions of immigration. A critical content analysis was conducted on 180 news articles concerning Stewart Detention Center published between 2006 and April 2020. The articles were examined according to publication year, geographic level, and major themes associated with detention and immigration. The findings indicate that news attention varied considerably across different periods, with reporting increasing during years marked by detainee deaths, allegations of mistreatment, legal disputes, and heightened political attention to immigration. State-level newspapers accounted for a substantial share of the coverage, while national and international reports presented different emphases. The analysis also identified a notable gap between the issues receiving attention in coverage of the detention center and those dominating broader immigration discussions. Reports concerning detainee deaths and conditions of confinement were especially prominent in coverage of the facility but received comparatively limited attention in wider national debates. These patterns demonstrate how geographic reach and media priorities can shape public understanding of detention and determine which experiences become visible. The study highlights the value of critical media literacy for recognizing omissions, examining power relations, and developing a more informed understanding of immigration detention.

KEYWORDS: Immigration Detention; Media Framing; News Narratives; Critical Media Literacy; Content Analysis; Media Representation; Public Discourse; Human Rights; Immigrant Visibility; News Coverage.

INTRODUCTION

News media have a significant influence on the way immigration is understood within public life. The language, images, and perspectives used in news reports can shape whether immigrants are viewed with empathy or associated with fear, insecurity, and social disorder [1]. Media narratives that connect immigration with criminality can contribute to the perception that immigration represents a public crisis requiring stronger enforcement and restrictive measures [2,3]. Such representations are particularly important in discussions of detention, where media coverage can influence how the public understands both immigration policy and the people subjected to it [4–6].

Immigration detention exists within a broader system involving government agencies, political institutions, private corporations, and news organizations. Previous research has identified a growing tendency to present immigration

through a law-and-order framework, emphasizing legality, enforcement, and criminality [7,8]. The expansion of privately operated detention facilities has added an economic dimension to this system, with government contracts and corporate interests contributing to the continued operation of detention facilities [9]. These institutional relationships are important when examining media coverage because the interests and perspectives of powerful organizations may receive greater visibility than those of detained individuals. The unequal distribution of power can make it difficult for immigrants to publicly challenge the narratives constructed around their experiences [2].

The visibility of detained individuals is another important concern. Detention facilities are often located in geographically isolated communities, placing them outside the everyday experience of much of the public. News reporting may therefore serve as an important source of information

about what occurs within these facilities. When coverage concentrates on employment, economic development, administrative decisions, or immigration enforcement, the experiences of detainees may receive limited attention [10]. Previous research has described this form of omission as an “apathy strategy,” in which inequality and the experiences of marginalized populations are minimized or excluded from public discussion [11]. Such patterns matter because silence can influence public understanding as strongly as direct representation.

The geographic level of news reporting also affects the way immigration detention becomes visible. National news organizations frequently discuss immigration through broader themes involving security, federal policy, border enforcement, and political conflict, while local news may focus more closely on events occurring within communities [12]. Despite the widespread presence of detention facilities, relatively limited research has examined how individual facilities are represented across local, regional, national, and international news environments [13]. Differences between these levels of reporting may produce substantially different understandings of detention. Readers who encounter local reporting may therefore receive information about detainee experiences and facility conditions that is largely absent from broader national discussions.

Media attention can also change in response to political and social developments. Major policy decisions, enforcement initiatives, deaths in detention, legal disputes, protests, and reports of mistreatment can influence the volume and subject matter of news coverage [14]. At the same time, the issues emphasized in reporting about a particular detention facility may not correspond with the themes dominating the broader immigration debate. Examining these differences provides an opportunity to understand whether local experiences become incorporated into wider public discussions or remain confined to geographically limited news audiences [15].

The present study addresses this issue by examining news coverage of a single immigrant detention facility over an extended period. The analysis considers changes in the frequency of reporting over time, differences in coverage according to geographic level, and the relationship between reporting about the facility and broader national discussions of immigration. Attention is given to the topics that receive visibility within news narratives, including detainee deaths, human rights concerns, legal issues, family separation, and other developments associated with detention [16,17].

This approach is important because knowledge about detention facilities is frequently produced by people and institutions located outside the detention environment [18]. The experiences of detained individuals can therefore become filtered through journalistic decisions concerning

which events, voices, and issues are considered newsworthy. Examining patterns of visibility and omission can provide a clearer understanding of how media practices shape public knowledge about immigration detention.

The study contributes to critical media literacy by encouraging closer examination of how news narratives are constructed and whose experiences are made visible. Understanding differences between local and broader reporting can help readers recognize that media coverage does not necessarily provide a complete representation of an issue. Attention to geographic variation, changes over time, and differences in subject emphasis can reveal gaps between institutional narratives and the lived realities associated with detention. Such analysis may support more informed engagement with media coverage and contribute to broader discussions concerning immigration, human rights, representation, and social justice [19,20].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A quantitative content analysis was used to examine patterns in news reporting concerning an immigrant detention facility. Content analysis provided a systematic way to identify changes in the volume, geographic distribution, and thematic focus of published reports over an extended period [21]. The study was designed to examine three dimensions of media coverage: changes in reporting frequency over time, differences according to geographic level, and the relationship between coverage of the selected facility and broader immigration-related discourse.

Data Source and Study Period

News articles were collected through the Nexis Uni database using the name of the selected detention facility as the primary search term [22]. The search covered publications from January 1, 2006, corresponding to the opening of the facility, through April 30, 2020, when visitation activities at detention facilities were disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The search included material published through newswires, newspapers, web-based publications, magazines, and journals.

The initial database search produced approximately 500 records. Because the Nexis Uni database was continuously updated during the research process, the number of available records varied between approximately 472 and 529. Articles that had been coded before subsequently disappearing from the database were retained in the study dataset [23].

Article Selection

The retrieved articles were reviewed individually to determine whether they provided substantive coverage of the selected detention facility. Press releases, editorials, letters to the editor [24], and duplicate publications were removed from the dataset. When duplicate reports were identified, the earliest published version was retained.

Articles that merely mentioned the facility without providing substantive information about it were also excluded.

Following the screening process, 180 articles were retained for analysis. The final corpus therefore represented news reports that directly addressed the detention facility rather than articles in which the facility appeared only as a passing reference.

Coding Procedure

The selected articles were examined through several rounds of systematic coding. For the analysis of reporting frequency, each article was assigned to its year of publication. Frequency counts were then used to identify changes in the volume of coverage across the study period [25].

A geographic classification was developed to examine differences in reporting according to the location of the publishing outlet. Articles published within the state where the detention facility was located were classified as State coverage. Reports originating from states bordering that state were categorized as regional coverage. Articles published in other states were classified as National coverage, while reports originating outside the country were categorized as international coverage [26].

The articles were also coded according to the principal topics discussed in the reporting. Attention was given to recurring issues involving detainee experiences, deaths, human rights concerns, detention conditions, legal proceedings, family separation, immigration policy, and other significant events associated with the facility [27]. The thematic coding allowed the researchers to examine whether the subject's receiving attention in facility-specific reporting corresponded with broader immigration discussions during the period under examination.

Comparative Analysis

The study included a comparison between reporting about the selected detention facility and major themes present in the broader immigration discourse during the later years of the study period. Key sociopolitical developments and immigration-related policy events were identified and organized chronologically. These events were then considered alongside changes in the volume and subject matter of facility-related news coverage [28].

The comparison was intended to identify periods in which facility-specific reporting converged with or differed from wider immigration discussions. Attention was given to the years 2017–2020, when immigration enforcement and detention received substantial political and media attention [29,30].

Reliability and Coding Agreement

Each round of coding was conducted independently by all three researchers. After independent coding was completed, differences in classification or interpretation

were reviewed collectively. Disagreements were discussed among the researchers and resolved through consensus [31]. This procedure was used to maintain consistency in the classification of articles and to reduce the influence of individual interpretation on the final coding decisions.

Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis was used to summarize the frequency and distribution of news coverage. Measures of central tendency, including the mean, median, and mode, were calculated to describe annual reporting patterns. Geographic frequencies were also calculated to determine the proportion of articles published at state, regional, national, and international levels [32,33].

Thematic patterns were examined by comparing the subjects reported during individual years and by considering their relationship with major developments in the broader immigration debate [34]. The resulting patterns were used to assess how media attention to the detention facility changed over time, how coverage differed according to geographic reach, and whether facility-specific reporting reflected or diverged from broader immigration narratives.

RESULTS

Patterns of News Visibility

The analysis of news coverage concerning the selected detention facility revealed substantial differences in the amount and character of attention given to detention-related issues. Across the study period, reporting did not remain constant. Certain years generated considerably more coverage, particularly when events involving detainee deaths, allegations of mistreatment, legal challenges, and changing immigration policies brought the facility into public discussion.

The findings indicate that detention facilities can remain relatively distant from public attention despite their importance within the immigration enforcement system. Coverage increased when specific incidents created a clear news event, suggesting that routine conditions inside the facility were less likely to receive sustained attention than exceptional or highly visible incidents. This pattern is consistent with earlier research showing that detention facilities can remain socially and geographically removed from ordinary public view [35–37].

Geographic Distribution of Coverage

News reporting varied according to the geographic location of the publishing outlet. State-level reporting represented the largest share of coverage, followed by national, international, and regional reporting [38]. The concentration of reporting at the state level indicates that proximity played an important role in determining whether events at the facility received media attention.

State-based reporting also provided greater opportunity for coverage of specific experiences and conditions within the detention facility. Reports concerning detainee deaths, allegations of mistreatment, access to medical services [39,40], and other facility-level concerns were more visible within geographically proximate coverage. This finding is important because national discussions of immigration often emphasize broader questions of policy, border enforcement, and political conflict, while local reporting can bring attention to events that are less prominent in wider public discourse.

Representation of Detainee Experiences

The analysis showed that detainees were not consistently positioned at the center of news narratives [41]. Some reports addressed individual experiences, deaths, conditions of confinement, and allegations of human rights violations, while other forms of coverage emphasized institutional or community-level concerns. This variation suggests that the visibility of detained individuals depended substantially on the nature of the event being reported.

Reports concerning deaths and allegations of poor treatment created opportunities for detainee experiences to become more prominent. In contrast, coverage focused on the detention facility as an institution could discuss its economic or administrative role without giving equivalent attention to the people held there. A similar pattern has been identified in previous research examining media coverage of privately operated detention facilities, where a considerable proportion of reports discussed privatization without directly mentioning immigrants or immigration [42].

Human Rights and Conditions of Detention

Human rights concerns emerged as an important component of facility-related reporting. The documented concerns included inadequate food, solitary confinement, forced labour, sexual abuse, and inadequate medical care [43,44]. These issues demonstrate that conditions within detention facilities can involve multiple dimensions of vulnerability rather than a single form of institutional hardship.

Medical care represented a particularly serious concern. Previous evidence has documented deaths within detention facilities associated with inadequate medical treatment and suicide [45]. Such reports contribute to a broader understanding of detention as an environment in which institutional practices can have direct consequences for the safety and well-being of detainees.

The findings also indicate that the existence of oversight mechanisms does not necessarily ensure that concerns about detention conditions receive adequate institutional attention. Reports have identified weaknesses in external monitoring and continuing concerns about conditions within privately operated facilities [46]. The persistence of these concerns

provides an important context for understanding why certain incidents become significant subjects of news reporting.

Institutional and Economic Narratives

Coverage of detention facilities also reflected institutional and economic dimensions. Facilities located in economically disadvantaged communities have sometimes been presented in relation to employment opportunities and local economic benefits [47]. Yet available research has questioned whether detention facilities produce the promised economic improvements and have identified negative effects in some local employment sectors [48].

This tension between economic narratives and human-rights narratives was evident in the broader literature surrounding privately operated detention. News coverage can present detention facilities as sources of employment, public revenue, or institutional infrastructure while giving comparatively less attention to the experiences of detainees. Such differences in emphasis affect the way readers understand the purpose and consequences of detention [49].

Visibility of the Selected Facility

The selected detention facility provides a useful case for examining these patterns because it has been associated with allegations involving deportation practices, forced labor, medical neglect, and other concerns relating to detainee welfare [50]. Reports concerning the facility have documented conditions that raised questions about compliance with federal detention standards and the protection of detainees' health, safety, and rights [51].

The facility's position within a privately operated detention system also created an important distinction between institutional visibility and detainee visibility. The detention center itself could become visible through government inspections, corporate contracts, employment discussions [52], or policy debates, while the experiences of individuals held inside remained less consistently represented. This distinction is central to understanding how news reporting can make an institution visible without necessarily making the people affected by that institution equally visible.

Relationship Between Media Attention and Broader Discourse

The results indicate a distinction between facility-specific reporting and broader immigration discourse [53]. News coverage concerning the detention facility frequently concentrated on concrete events occurring within or around the facility, whereas wider immigration discussions were more strongly shaped by national policy debates and political developments. Consequently, audiences exposed primarily to national reporting could encounter a substantially different understanding of immigration detention from audiences who followed state or local reporting [54].

The differences were particularly evident when reports concerning detainee deaths, human rights concerns, or facility conditions received attention at geographically closer levels but did not become equally prominent within broader immigration discussions. This pattern suggests that geographic reach influences not only how frequently detention is reported but also which dimensions of detention become part of public understanding [55].

The findings demonstrate that media visibility is unevenly distributed. Institutional decisions, political developments, and economic narratives can receive attention without providing equivalent space for the experiences of detained individuals [56]. At the same time, major incidents can temporarily increase visibility and bring otherwise overlooked conditions into public discussion. The resulting pattern is one in which detention remains a persistent institutional practice while public awareness of the people and conditions within detention fluctuates according to news events and reporting priorities [57].

Reporting Frequency Over Time

The analysis identified noticeable changes in the volume of news coverage across the study period. The dataset contained 180 articles published between 2006 and April 2020. Across the full period, the average number of articles was 12 per year, while both the median and mode were 10. When the first year, which contained only one article, and the incomplete final year were excluded, the mean increased to 13 articles per year, while the median remained 10. These figures indicate that coverage was generally moderate for much of the study period, with several years producing substantially greater attention [58].

The earliest coverage appeared in 2006, when only one article was identified. That report focused on the financial performance and potential profitability associated with the facility. In 2007, the number of reports increased to seven. Four of these articles were connected to an immigration raid at a meat-processing facility that resulted in workers being detained at the facility. The sequence of coverage moved from reporting on the raid to community and religious protests, official responses, and the effects of detention on families. This progression illustrates how a single enforcement event generated several related news narratives [59].

Between 2008 and 2010, the number and subject matter of reports continued to change. Coverage during 2008 included discussion of the facility's role as an employer as well as reports concerning deportation and alleged mistreatment. In 2009, attention shifted toward a detainee death and conditions inside the facility. By 2010, protests and the financial consequences of immigration proceedings became more prominent subjects. These changes suggest that reporting was strongly influenced by specific events rather than following a uniform pattern throughout the period [60].

A substantial increase occurred in the later years of the dataset. Coverage reached 28 articles in 2017 and increased further to 42 articles in 2018. Reports during these years included detainee deaths, suicides, conditions within detention facilities, and litigation involving the facility. Coverage declined to 14 articles in 2019 but remained above the overall mode of 10 articles per year. The 2020 dataset covered only the first four months of the year and therefore cannot be compared directly with complete calendar years. The concentration of reporting during 2017–2020 demonstrates a clear increase in media attention during a period of heightened political and public interest in immigration detention (Table 1) [61].

Table 1: Distribution of news coverage of the selected detention facility across the study period.

Year/Period	Number of News Articles	Observation
2006–2016	Approximately 10 per year	Relatively consistent coverage
2017	28	Noticeable increase in reporting
2018	42	Highest level of reporting
2019–April 2020	Increased activity	Continued attention to major events
Total	180	Articles included in the analysis

Geographic Distribution of News Coverage

The second research question examined the geographic origin of the news reports. State and national publications accounted for most of the dataset, together representing 83% of all coverage. State-level publications produced 100 articles, while national publications contributed 48. Regional outlets accounted for 13 articles, and international outlets accounted for 19 [62].

The strongest concentration of coverage came from the newspaper located closest to the detention facility. This publication contributed 74 of the state-level reports. State-level attention increased notably after 2010, when immigration and detention became a more established subject within its reporting. The data also suggest that coverage evolved over time, with later reports placing greater emphasis on individual detainee experiences and allegations concerning inhumane treatment [63].

The geographic distribution demonstrates that proximity remained important in determining media visibility [64]. Although national reporting was substantial, the largest body of facility-specific information appeared within state-level coverage. Consequently, readers outside the immediate geographic area may have had less exposure to detailed reporting concerning conditions inside the facility (Table 2).

Table 2: Geographic patterns in news coverage of the selected detention facility.

Geographic Level	Relative Level of Coverage	Main Characteristics
State	Highest	Dominant source of reporting; greater attention to facility-specific issues
Regional	Moderate	Coverage increased during events affecting neighboring areas
National	Lowest	Limited facility-specific reporting; greater focus on broader immigration issues

Reporting Themes During 2017

News coverage in 2017 reflected the increased national attention given to immigration enforcement. Three major subjects dominated reports concerning the facility: calls for closure, detainee deaths, and human rights violations. Eight articles addressed detainee deaths, eight focused on human rights concerns, and three called for closure of the facility [65].

Reports concerning human rights documented issues involving access to medical care, food conditions, solitary confinement, hunger strikes, forced feeding, and due-process concerns. The geographic distribution of these reports was uneven. Six of the eight articles concerning detainee deaths and four of the eight articles concerning human rights violations appeared at the state level. This indicates that serious conditions within the facility were more frequently documented in geographically proximate reporting than in national coverage [66].

Reporting Themes During 2018

The pattern changed in 2018 as family separation became a major subject within the wider immigration debate. Coverage of the selected facility, however, concentrated more heavily on detainee deaths, treatment of detainees, litigation, and family separation. Thirteen reports concerned detainee deaths, eight addressed cruelty or mistreatment, four focused on legal action against the facility, and three discussed family separation [67].

The three articles addressing family separation appeared at different geographic levels. One was international, one national, and one state-level. Although all three concerned the broader issue of separated families, they presented different circumstances and perspectives. The state-level report focused on the experience of an individual family, while broader reports situated family separation within larger immigration-policy developments. The findings indicate that the same immigration issue could be framed differently depending on the geographic reach of the news outlet (Table 3) [68].

Reporting Themes During 2019

In 2019, facility-specific coverage again differed from the dominant national immigration discussion. The principal subjects in the dataset were detainee deaths, human rights violations, and an escape from the facility. Five reports addressed detainee deaths, four discussed human rights violations, and two concerned an escape [69].

The human rights coverage included concerns about medical treatment and access to legal representation. National reports provided accounts of inadequate medical care and difficulties experienced by attorneys attempting to assist detainees. State-level reporting also highlighted barriers to legal representation and problems encountered by immigrants while navigating the legal system. These reports placed greater emphasis on individual experiences than on the broader political debate surrounding immigration [70].

Reporting During 2020

The 2020 findings were shaped strongly by the COVID-19 pandemic. Because the dataset ended in April, only a limited portion of the year was available for analysis. Five articles concerning the facility focused on COVID-19, while two addressed immigration courts [70].

The pandemic created a closer relationship between facility-specific reporting and broader national concerns. Three of the five COVID-related reports appeared at the national level, indicating greater movement of facility-related issues into wider news coverage. Reports addressed the health risks faced by detainees, restrictions on visitation, positive cases within detention facilities, and a hunger strike associated with concerns about safety [71].

Table 3: Major themes and reporting patterns identified in news coverage.

Major Theme	Coverage Pattern Identified	Representation
Detainee Deaths	Most prominent facility-specific issue	Human-centered
Human Rights Concerns	Increasing attention in later reporting	Critical
Medical Care	Reported in connection with detainee welfare	Critical
Detainee Experiences	Became more visible over time	Humanizing
Legal Issues	Appeared in individual and facility-related stories	Institutional
Immigration Enforcement	Present but less dominant than national discourse	Policy-oriented
Alleged Criminality	Relatively limited	Less prominent
Economic Impact	Associated with claims about local benefits	Community-oriented

The 2020 coverage also demonstrated how a major public-health event could alter the visibility of detention conditions. Issues that might otherwise have remained primarily within local reporting received broader attention when they became connected to a nationally significant crisis [72].

Detainee Deaths as a Recurring Theme

Across the later years of the study, detainee deaths emerged as the most persistent subject in facility-specific reporting, apart from the pandemic-related coverage in 2020. More than half of the articles in the study period were published between 2017 and 2020, with 93 articles appearing during these years. Twenty-six of those reports concerned detainee deaths [71].

The geographic distribution of death-related reporting was particularly uneven. Twenty-four of the 26 reports concerning detainee deaths were published at the state level, while only one appeared at the international level. In 2017, four of the six reports concerning detainee deaths were state-level publications [73]. This concentration demonstrates that some of the most serious issues associated with detention received considerably greater attention in local and state reporting than in broader immigration coverage.

Comparison With Broader Immigration Discourse

The third research question revealed a recurring difference between the subjects emphasized in reporting about the facility and those dominating wider immigration discussions. During 2017, national attention was strongly associated with immigration enforcement and major political initiatives, whereas facility-specific reporting concentrated on deaths, human rights violations, and calls for closure [74].

A similar difference appeared in 2018. While family separation dominated the broader immigration news cycle, reports concerning the facility focused heavily on deaths, detainee treatment, litigation, and individual cases of family separation [73]. In 2019, national discussion continued to emphasize immigration policy and family separation, while facility reporting remained centered on detainee deaths, human rights concerns, legal access, and an escape [74].

The relationship became closer in 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic became a dominant national issue. Facility-specific reporting increasingly addressed the same public-health concerns appearing in broader news coverage [75]. These findings indicate that major national events could influence facility-level reporting, but facility-specific coverage frequently maintained a distinct focus on conditions and experiences within the detention setting.

Summary of Findings

The results show three consistent patterns. First, the volume of reporting varied over time, with substantially greater attention during the later years of the study. Second, state-

level news organizations produced the largest share of coverage, indicating the importance of geographic proximity in reporting on detention. Third, the subjects emphasized in facility-specific reporting often differed from those dominating broader immigration discourse.

Detainee deaths and human rights concerns were especially prominent in coverage of the facility but were comparatively less visible within broader national discussions. The findings therefore indicate that the geographic level of news reporting can influence which aspects of immigration detention become visible to the public. Local and state reporting provided greater attention to specific experiences and conditions, while national coverage more often connected detention to wider political and policy developments [75].

DISCUSSION

The analysis of 180 news articles shows that coverage of the selected detention facility varied across time, geographic level, and subject matter. Most years produced approximately 10 reports, while coverage increased substantially in 2017 and 2018, reaching 28 and 42 articles, respectively. These increases were closely associated with detainee deaths, allegations of mistreatment, and legal disputes. The findings suggest that major incidents were more likely to bring detention conditions into public attention than routine reporting.

Geographic differences were also evident. State-level publications accounted for the largest share of coverage, despite the growing dominance of national immigration reporting [76]. This indicates that proximity remained important in reporting on detention. Later state-level reports increasingly focused on individual detainee experiences and allegations of inhumane treatment, providing perspectives that were less visible in national coverage.

A major finding was the difference between reporting about the facility and the broader national immigration discourse. National discussions frequently emphasized border enforcement, family separation, and immigration policy, whereas coverage of the detention facility focused more strongly on detainee deaths, human rights concerns, medical care, and legal difficulties [77]. Detainee deaths represented the most persistent topic in facility-specific reporting, yet they received comparatively limited attention in the wider national conversation. More than 200 immigrants died in detention between 2003 and 2021, including 11 associated with the selected facility [78].

The findings also challenge the frequent association of immigrants with criminality. References to alleged crimes by detainees were limited, while several reports emphasized workplace raids, traffic stops, documentation issues, and family experiences. This differs from broader media and political narratives that connect immigration with

criminality and threat [79]. Research also indicates that immigrants have lower crime rates per capita than U.S.-born citizens [80].

The study highlights the importance of critical media literacy. Much of the detailed reporting about detention remained within state-level news, meaning national audiences may have had limited exposure to reports concerning detainee deaths and human rights concerns. The difference between local and national coverage demonstrates how geographic reach can influence which experiences become visible in public discourse [81-83]. Understanding these differences can help news consumers recognize both the information presented and the perspectives that may remain outside the dominant narrative.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how news coverage of an immigrant detention facility changed across time, geographic levels, and major immigration debates. The analysis of 180 articles showed that coverage remained relatively limited during most years but increased sharply when detainee deaths, human rights concerns, legal disputes, and other significant events attracted attention. State-level newspapers produced the largest share of reporting, providing greater visibility to detainee experiences and conditions than was evident in broader national coverage. A clear difference also emerged between facility-specific reporting and national immigration discourse. While national discussions frequently emphasized border enforcement, family separation, and immigration policy, reporting on the facility focused more strongly on deaths, medical care, legal access, and allegations of mistreatment. These findings demonstrate that geographic location and editorial priorities can determine which aspects of detention become visible to the public. Critical media literacy is therefore important for recognizing gaps between local and national narratives and for identifying whose experiences receive attention within immigration reporting.

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