

# WHOSE BORDER?

FINDING THE MODERN AMERICAN TERRITORY



**How can we steer voters' emotional engagement on the issue of Immigration toward more unifying, positive "America-building" reforms?**

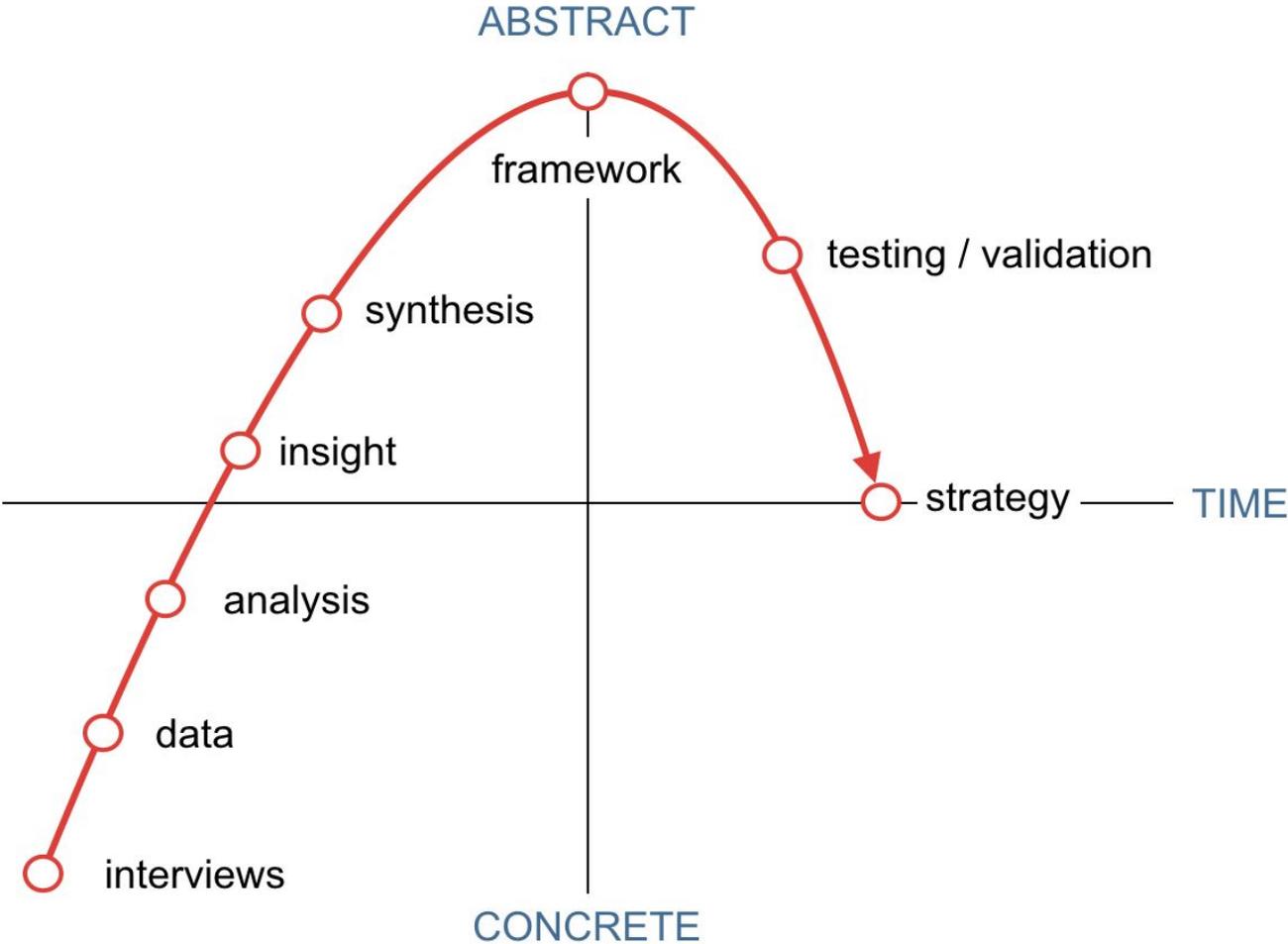
## BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVES

The national debate over immigration has been framed as a choice between compassion for others and security in the homeland. This positions proponents of immigration security as anti-humanitarian. The goal of this research is to: (1) identify new framing for immigration policy that will resonate deeply with voters; (2) weaken the appeal of progressive immigration policies and messaging, and; (3) identify patterns that lead voters to change opinions in favor of greater immigration security.

The Frontier Lab interviewed 162 voters in Texas and beyond to identify the deepest-held values that underlie opposing views on Immigration policy. This preliminary analysis is based on “values laddering” and behavioral event modeling (BEM) to reframe how immigration policies and communication around immigration security can be conveyed. The analysis includes examination of how voters view the Wall and Amnesty, and provides new frames that can be tested through polling.

- **Maintains and strengthens Rule of Law**
- **Places American interests first**
- **Preserves national and state sovereignty**
- **Satisfies market demand for labor**
- **Humane**

RESEARCH DESIGN



# RESEARCH DESIGN

**INTERVIEW METHODS**

“Values” and “Behavioral Event Modeling” in-depth interviews conducted via telephone in March 2019

**LENGTH**

30 to 60 minute sessions

**NUMBER**

162

**TOPIC**

Immigration Reform (pro, anti)  
Amnesty Focus  
Wall Focus

**RECRUITING CRITERIA**

- Ages 18+
- Likely voters
- High-intensity strong champions of Immigration positions; recent change of opinion
- 60 interviews with “pro” champions
- 30 interviews with “anti” champions
- 40 interviews with “pro” Texans (quota: 50% Hispanic)
- 40 interviews with those who changed opinions to “pro”

# 170 INTERVIEWS

	Progressive Immigration	Immigration Security – National	Immigration Security - Texas
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Gender			
Male	15	38	22
Female	15	38	42
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Age			
18-24	2	3	0
25-34	11	9	8
35-44	11	16	10
45-54	5	14	21
55-70	1	34	25
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Race			
Hispanic	8	9	33
African American	8	3	2
White	10	58	29
Native American	0	2	0
Asian / Pacific	1	1	0
Other	3	3	0

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The perception of the immigration debate as a showdown between humanitarians and security hawks divides Americans and obscures the true nature of the conflict.

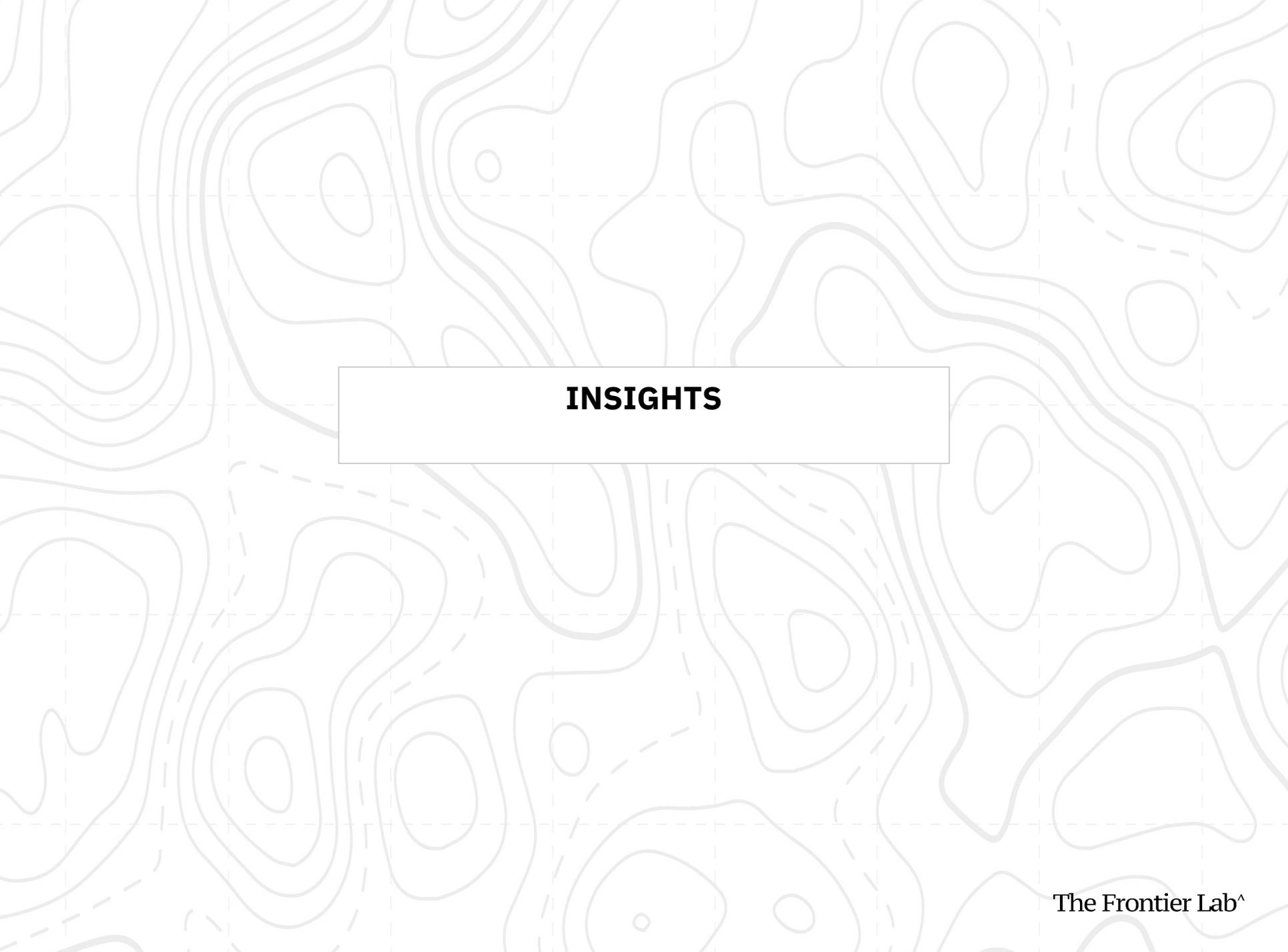
Though opposed in their views, Immigration Security proponents and Progressive Immigration proponents share a common interest—both want our immigration system to reflect their values.

Immigration Security proponents see a breakdown in the rule of law, safety concerns relating to their lives, their communities, and their jobs, and a purposeful hijacking of our national values. The “border” represents a way to protect a cultural territory.

Progressive Immigration proponents believe everyone has a right to enjoy the privileges of America and seek to make immigration policies more open. However, they seek to place “borders” on opposing viewpoints and values.

A common interest between the groups—desire to protect a “territory”—may lead to common goals on immigration. Rather than restrict focus to a physical border, a new narrative is needed—this is about the *moral* borders that unify Americans.

The Frontier Lab research on immigration sentiment provides guidance on how to understand and define a new Modern American Territory.



**INSIGHTS**

The research identified the values that underlie opinions:

- **Values** that explain immigration opinion (7)

*Why is it important to reform immigration?*

- **Values** that explain “the Wall” opinion (8)

*What does the Wall mean?*

## **VALUES LADDERING METHODOLOGY**

**Values:** Psychographic in-depth interviews to determine the values-based drivers of attitude and opinion.

**Application:** By understanding why opinions form marketers can devise strategies to strengthen associations, or reframe or create new associations with target audiences.

## **BEHAVIORAL EVENT MODELING METHODOLOGY**

**BEM:** Situational in-depth interviews to identify the occasions that precipitate changes of behavior or opinion.

**Application:** Identifying the behavioral events that link with intervention – what binary intervention will change these outcomes?

## IMMIGRATION REFORM

**LAW AND ORDER:** A growing sense of chaos can be constrained by equal application and enforcement of the law.

**DISTINCTIVENESS:** Foundational aspects of American culture such as Rule of Law and Safety seem weakened by our current immigration policies, so voters are concerned about preserving America's distinctive nature: its founding on an "idea" (freedom), and shared desire by its citizens that we possess a distinct, positive culture.

**HOPE:** Voters use the state of our immigration system to evaluate the health of our governing institutions. When that health is in peril, voters lose hope – a reformed immigration system would re-instill hope, and voters' abilities to convey hope to future generations.

**SECURITY:** Voters are concerned about the lack of priority given to American lives lost in the broader conflict, and view the Progressive Immigration approach as an attack on the country.

## THE WALL

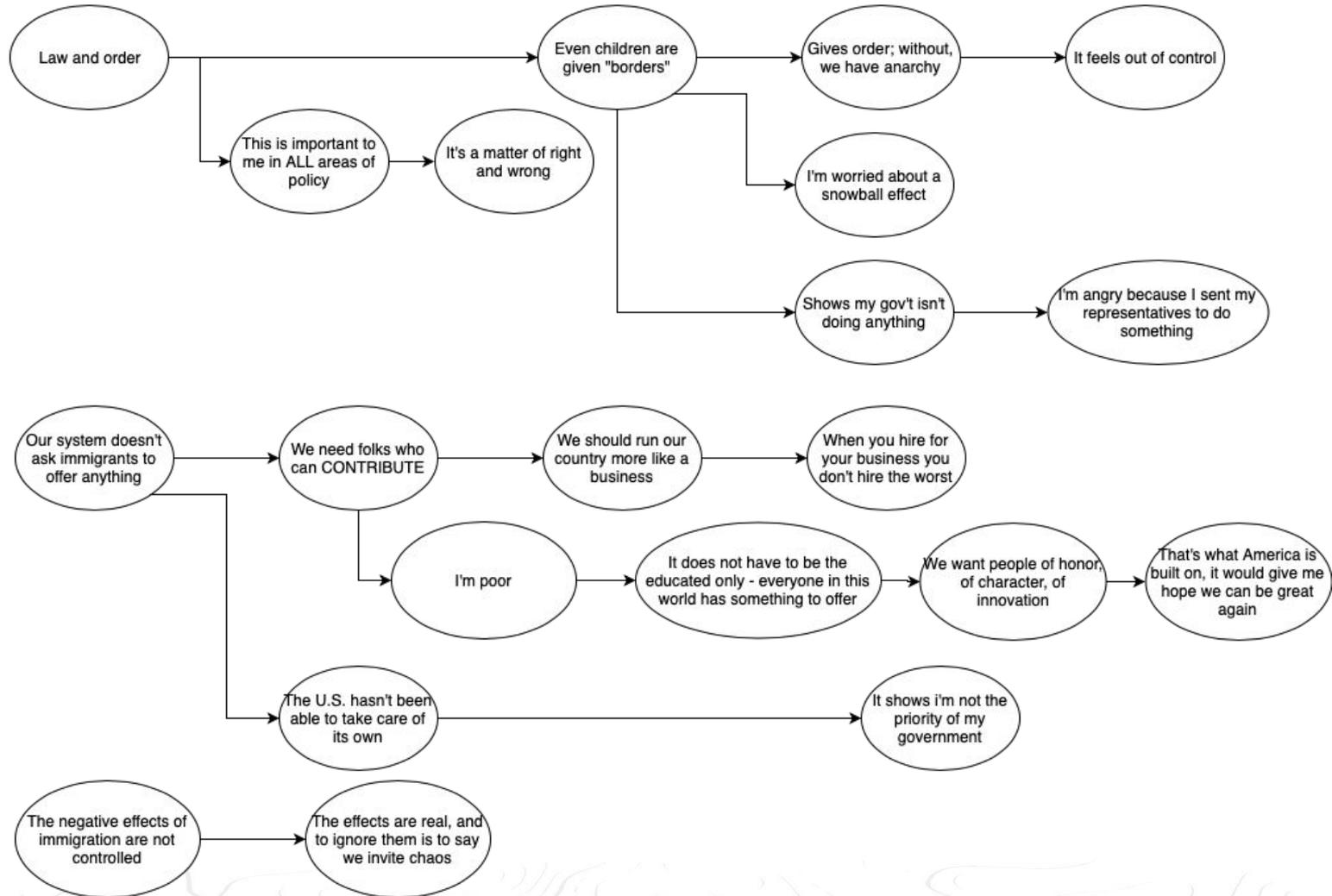
**RESPONSIBILITY:** Opportunities to align with the Wall solution allow voters to feel they are helping save our country, and are assuming an important responsibility. The change in tone on the Wall by our leaders from passive to active also signifies that they are taking responsibility in the face of this challenge.

**SECURITY:** America will be stronger and safer when others respect our notions of Rule of Law, and when citizens gain a greater sense of Security due to the Wall's deterrent effect.

**IDENTIFICATION:** Government's failure to reflect the values held by Immigration Security proponents can be connected by supporting the Wall because of the "tone" this action will set— a tone that conveys a fighting spirit.

**HOPE:** The Wall signifies a "start," and for those frustrated by years of inaction, this allows for the return of hope. Committing to the Wall also gives hope that America will make its citizens proud again.

# EXAMPLE INSIGHTS FROM "KAY":



# IMMIGRATION SECURITY

"Why is it important to fix our immigration system?"

## values

ORDER

DISTINCTIVENESS

HOPE

SAFETY

## consequences

Reconfirms that we are a just nation

Our culture is basis for America's success

America has ceased as an "idea"

I can't tell my kids it is going to get better

Health of nation's institutions

An American value

There's hope for us to prevail

I want immigrants to be treated fairly

Without law and order feels unmoored

Next generation won't know what our culture values

Unfair to those trying to come legally

Basic aspect of American culture

Protection is basic function of government

Requires urgent attention

We need to take care of our own first

The country is under attack

Need to ensure American values passed on

We don't have Rule of Law

American lives being lost

When we are stronger we can help others

The U.S. is being used

## attributes

We need to bring immigrants who share our values

Not enforcing laws that exist

Safety: crime, guns, germs, drugs

Has reached a crisis point

Protect American jobs

Unfair access to public services

Push back against political strategy of the left

# IMMIGRATION SECURITY / Wall

"Why do you support building a Wall?"

values

**RESPONSIBILITY**

**SECURITY**

**IDENTIFICATION**

**HOPE**

consequences

I'm contributing to saving our country

We will be stronger

Not ignoring problems anymore

My government reflects my values

I can be proud of my country

America will be safer

Hope for better governance

Others will respect us more as a nation

Change in tone from past

We still have fighting spirit

More likely to get under control

Tangible effect

Lost faith in government

I can work to support it

More respect for our laws by us and others

Sends message within our country – and to the world

Aggressive move outside old politics

Establishes we are the priority

Deterrent

Frustrated with inaction

attributes

Feasible solution

Enforces existing law

Big action (not a tweak)

Safety concern at borders

Decreases success rate

Signifies a start

# VALUES: PROPONENTS OF PROGRESSIVE IMMIGRATION

## IMMIGRATION REFORM

**MORALITY:** The current immigration system is unjust and racist, the stakes are high enough to warrant intervention on behalf of others, and actions to intervene are morally correct. Desires to see outsiders gain opportunities uniquely held by Americans flow from the desire to reduce one's own national privilege.

**OPINION OF OTHERS:** The Progressive Immigration approach adds greater diversity of culture, grows our respect for others, and enriches Americans' lives. This not only improves opinions of America, but also translates to more respect for Progressive Immigration proponents individually.

**COMMUNITY:** The positive economic impact of a Progressive Immigration approach comes in the form of tax revenues, labor, and great work ethic, which means our sense of community will be strengthened in the face of an otherwise divided American culture.

## THE WALL

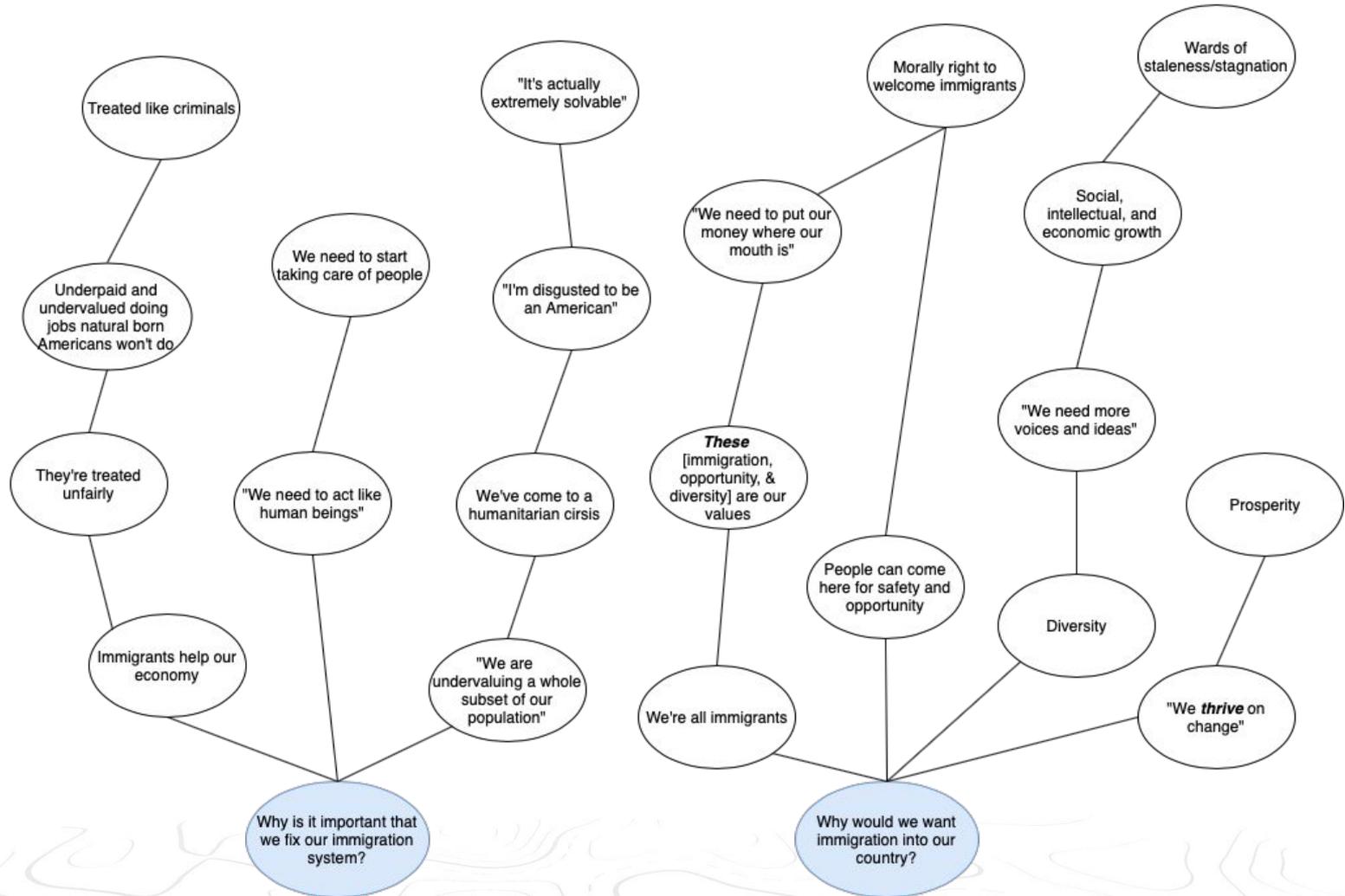
**SELF-GOVERNANCE:** By representing a “loss” to President Trump, the Wall stings Progressive Immigration proponents who feel they have lost their states' rights to push back against the federal government, and therefore have lost their self-governance.

**HISTORY:** The alienating aspect of the Wall not only divides people against each other, but also falsely represents what America stands for, according to Progressive Immigration proponents who prize the interpretation of American history as “without boundaries.”

**ALIENATION:** The Wall will exacerbate feelings of alienation—from the world community for voters who want affiliation with a country that values world community, and from each other for voters who feel they are living in a fractured culture.

**SECURITY:** U.S. standing in the world decreases because of the Wall, as does belief that other countries will be willing to ally with America. In addition to these national security concerns, there are heightened personal financial security concerns that wasted money for the Wall ought to instead benefit those who need financial help.

# EXAMPLE INSIGHTS FROM "MARISSA":



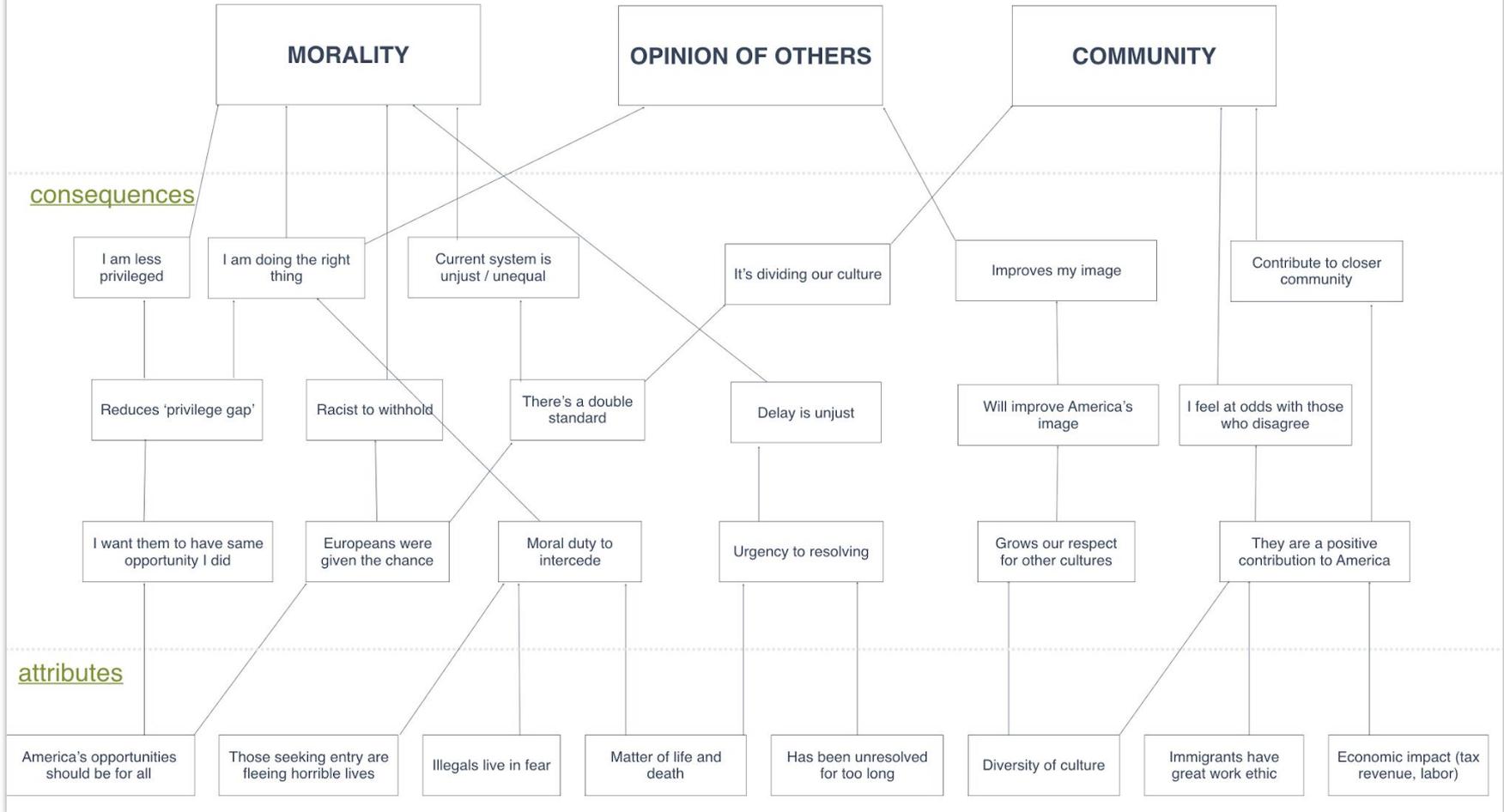
# PROGRESSIVE IMMIGRATION

"Why is it important to fix our immigration system?"

values

consequences

attributes



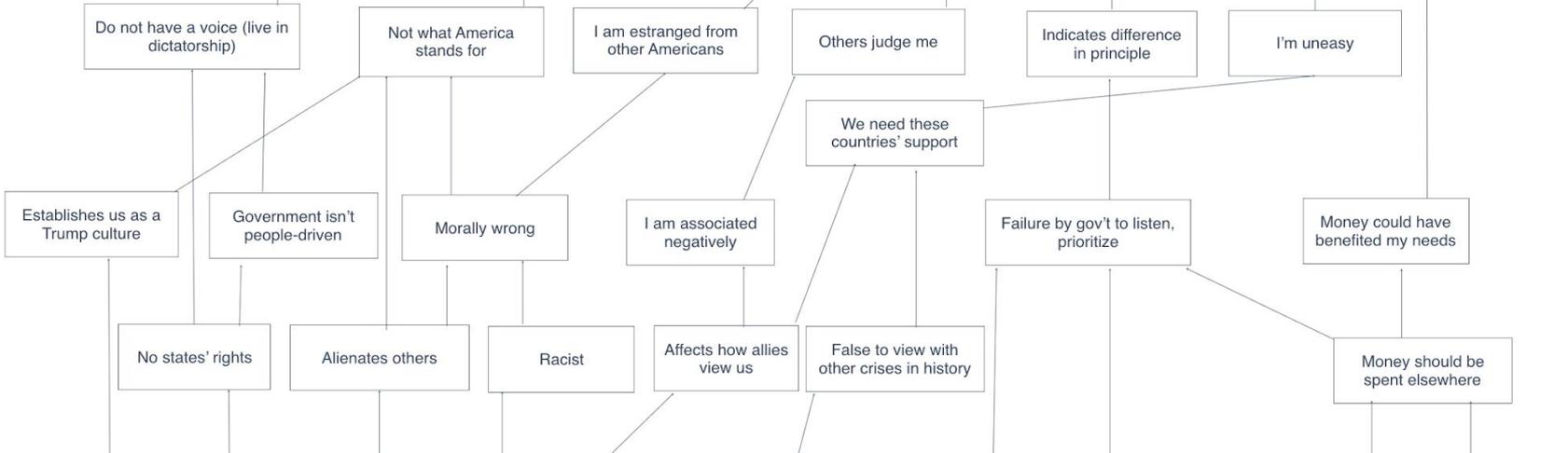
# PROGRESSIVE IMMIGRATION / No Wall

"Why do you oppose building a Wall?"

values



consequences



attributes



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# **STRATEGY**

Based on the research, our immigration approach should be:

- **Moral**
- **Unifying**
- **Able to Convey Americans' values to the world**
- **Affirming of American institutions**

“Moral” describes the most foundational goal voters—on both sides—want for our immigration system:

- **Recognizing and affirming legal immigrants’ integrity**
- **Acting on a moral duty to intercede for others**
- **Moving swiftly to deliver justice and to resolve unenforced laws**
- **Evening out the ‘privilege gap’ between themselves and non-Americans**

## A “UNIFYING” TERRITORY

When voters explain their immigration position, they cite “unity” as evidence of the validity of their views.

Unity with their faction of Americans, to defend the territory of their shared, distinctive values.

Unity with their government that comes with a sense of “being heard,” or self-governance.

Intergenerational unity with their history (“America has always been a nation of immigrants”) and with the future (responsibility to transfer our founding culture to the next generation)

## A TERRITORY THAT AFFIRMS AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS

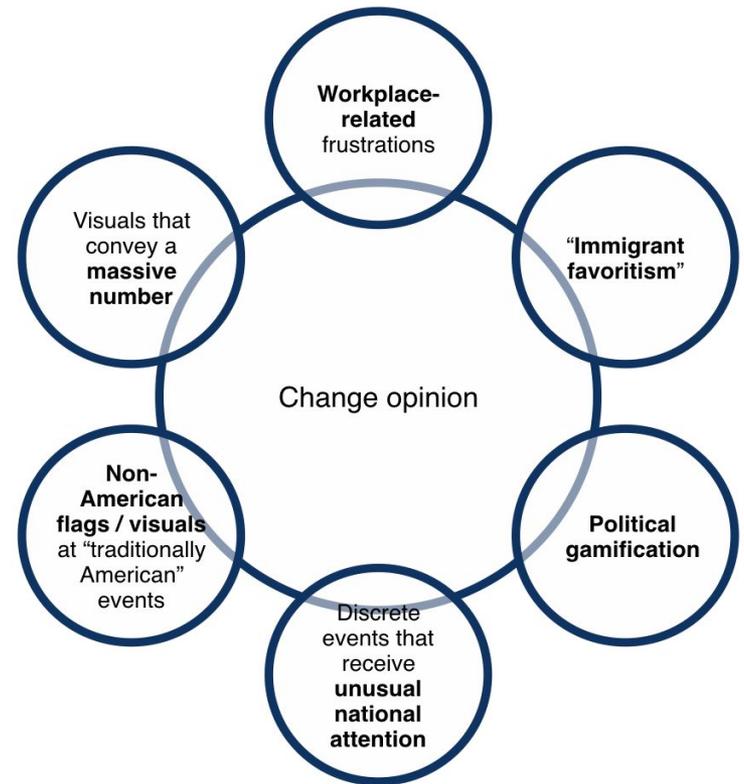
Our institutions are affirmed if we are “heard”  
—our government is representative.

Enforcement of laws means that an essential  
and distinctive attribute of our justice system  
remains.

A disposition toward resolving and delivering  
justice without delay.

## Six patterns to explain changing immigration opinion on policy and/or level of concern

1. Workplace-related frustrations with illegal immigrants.
2. Perceiving or interacting with “immigrant favoritism.”
3. Sensing political gamification under immigration policies (“more votes”).
4. Discrete events that produce unusual national attention featuring immigrants (terrorist attacks, for example).
5. Observing non-American flags / non-American visuals at “traditionally American” events.
6. Visuals that convey massive numbers of immigrants seeking illegal entry.



# EVENT PATTERNS OF CHANGED OPINIONS: **THE TEXAS ELEMENT**

## Similarities between Texas and the National Sample:

- Current system provides privileges for favored people
- Delayed fixes = injustice
- Concern for children and their cultural assimilation

## Differences between Texas and the National Sample

- More *vehement* in two directions:
  - a. confident about the value of immigrants AND their ability to “assimilate,” but
  - b. specific about the impact on their day-to-day lives
- More likely to equate delays in fixing the system with ineptitude of government
- More likely to cite concrete examples of how the current system drains resources (such as in the education system)

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# **OPPORTUNITIES**

**How can the Modern American Territory become a unifying theme for immigration reform?**

## OPPORTUNITY AREAS: WHERE TO FOCUS EXPLORATION

Expanding and strengthening the demand for Immigration Security should begin by developing a new story of *who America is* (what is our common “territory?”). Communication efforts should define America’s Modern Territory as a collection of uniquely American ideological/cultural values.

1. Progressive Immigration proponents are attuned to states’ rights as they relate to building a federal border wall; direct their attention to opportunities to “be heard” by developing state-level reforms.
2. Explore a concept of “Focused Immigration” that moves from surface-level requirements for entry into America to defining the inner capabilities, dispositions, and values of potential immigrants that will allow America to thrive.
3. Immigration Security proponents are concerned that they are not a first priority for the government. They also feel empowered by a concrete and feasible solution – the Wall – that they can engage directly. Identify policy solutions that are tangible and can be implemented in real time.
4. Refocus concerns for ensuring justice to concern for immigrants already here.
5. Redirect concerns about reducing the ‘privilege gap’ to identifying other positive benefits potential immigrants can attain.

### **Filter and direct ideas to meaningful implementation:**

1. Enable them (and their values) to feel as though they are a priority of their government.
2. Be honest (about the division we have had until now).
3. Communicate the shared desires that unite them even today.
4. Describe America's immigration history in a unifying way.
5. Assume that both sides wish for a moral outcome.
6. Communicate that world opinion will be tended to and considered.
7. Acknowledge that our Rule of Law and Institutions have been broken.
8. Incorporate intergenerational connection points to the past and to the future.

## SUMMARY

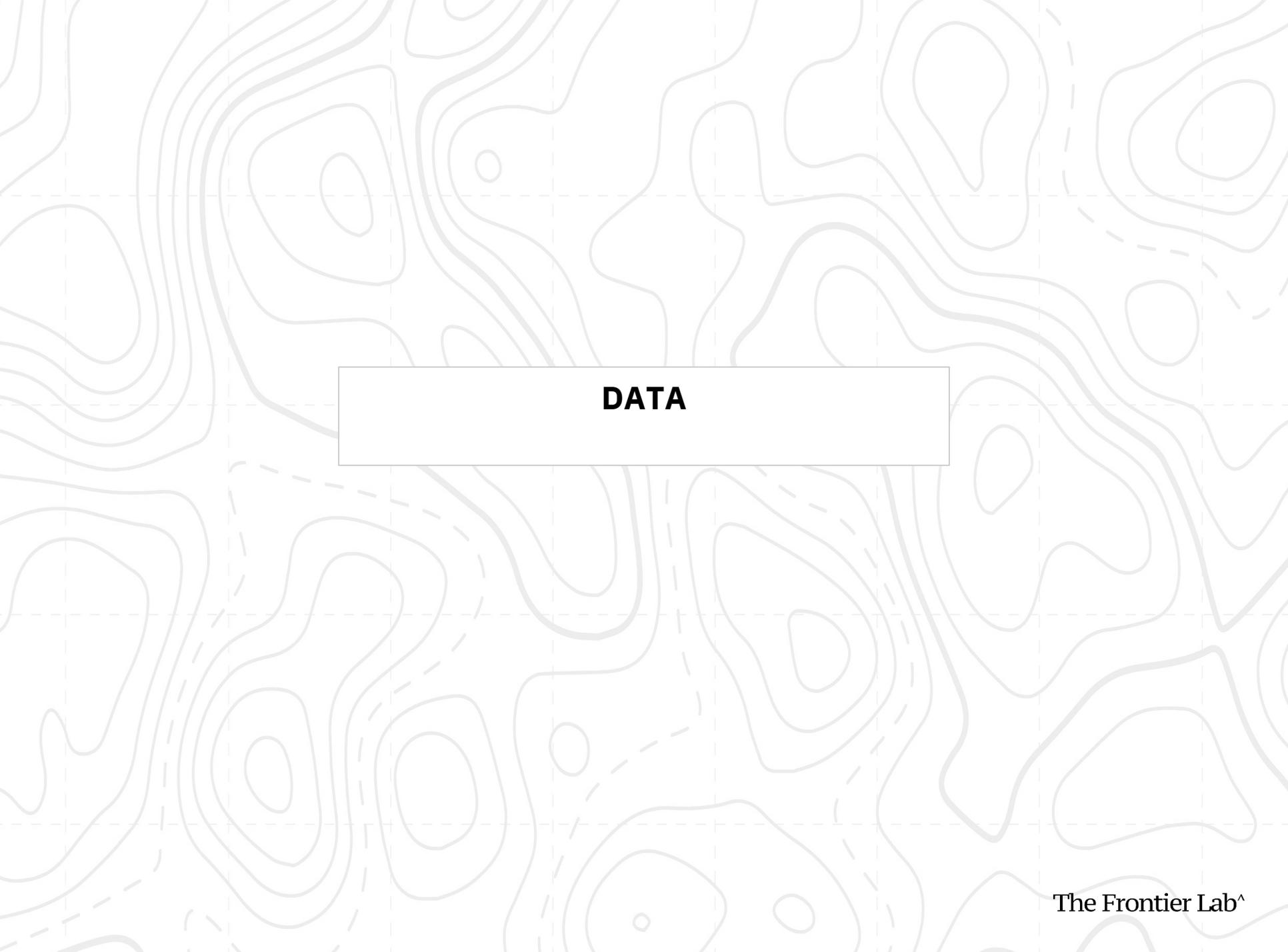
Research interviews on immigration – our borders, the Wall, humanitarian considerations, amnesty, and labor – revealed a stumbling block due to preoccupation with physical borders instead of values-based borders.

While we listened to concerns about the geographic/physical border, we found insights about friction with fellow Americans.

While we spoke about immigration protocol and policy, we found insights about the historic values of our nation.

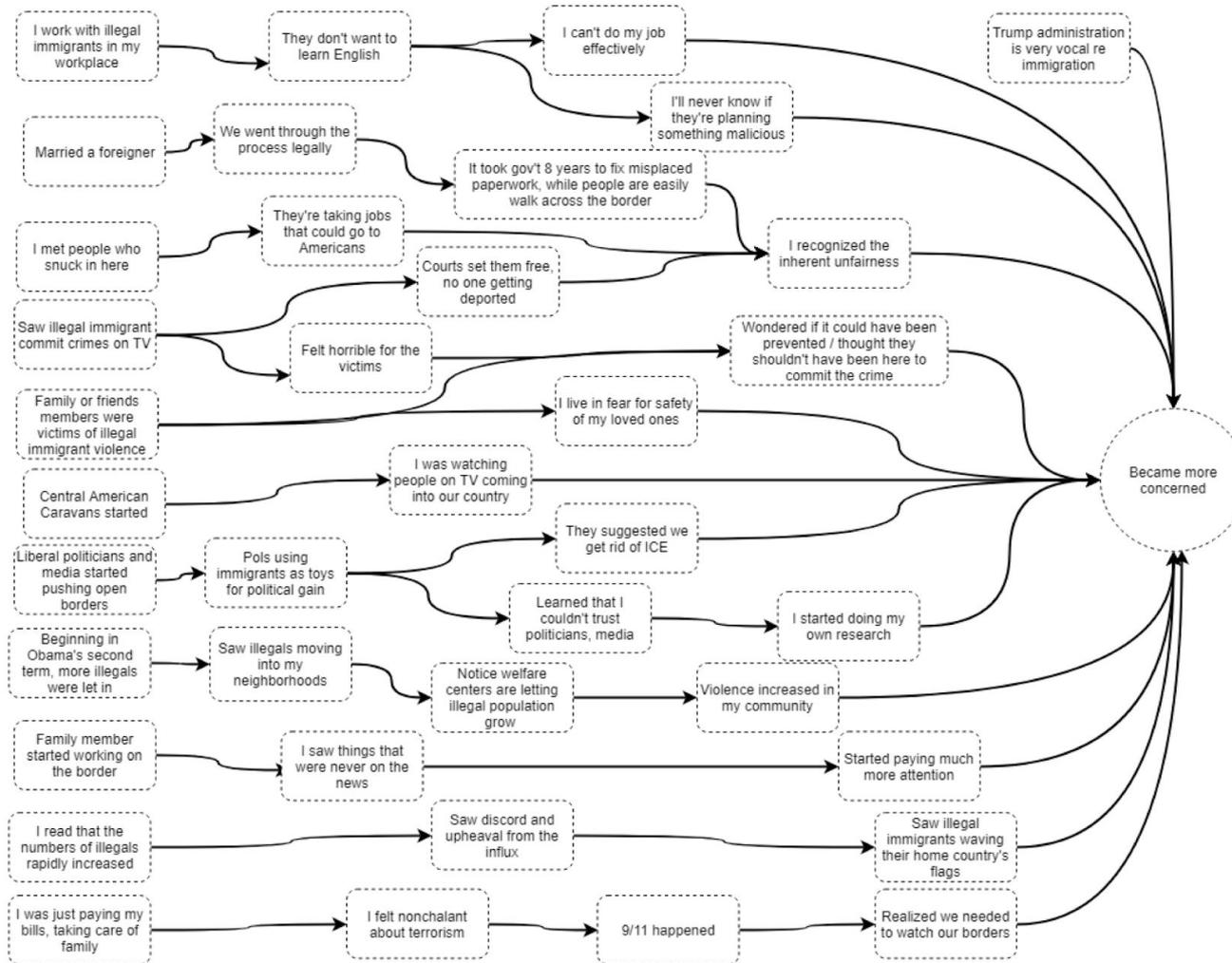
While we engaged on family separation and cartel violence and crime, we mapped concerns with national reputation and the inadequacy of our representation in government.

These insights present an opportunity to lead voters to new, realistic, and unifying options that will strengthen our institutions and present modern notions of the American story.

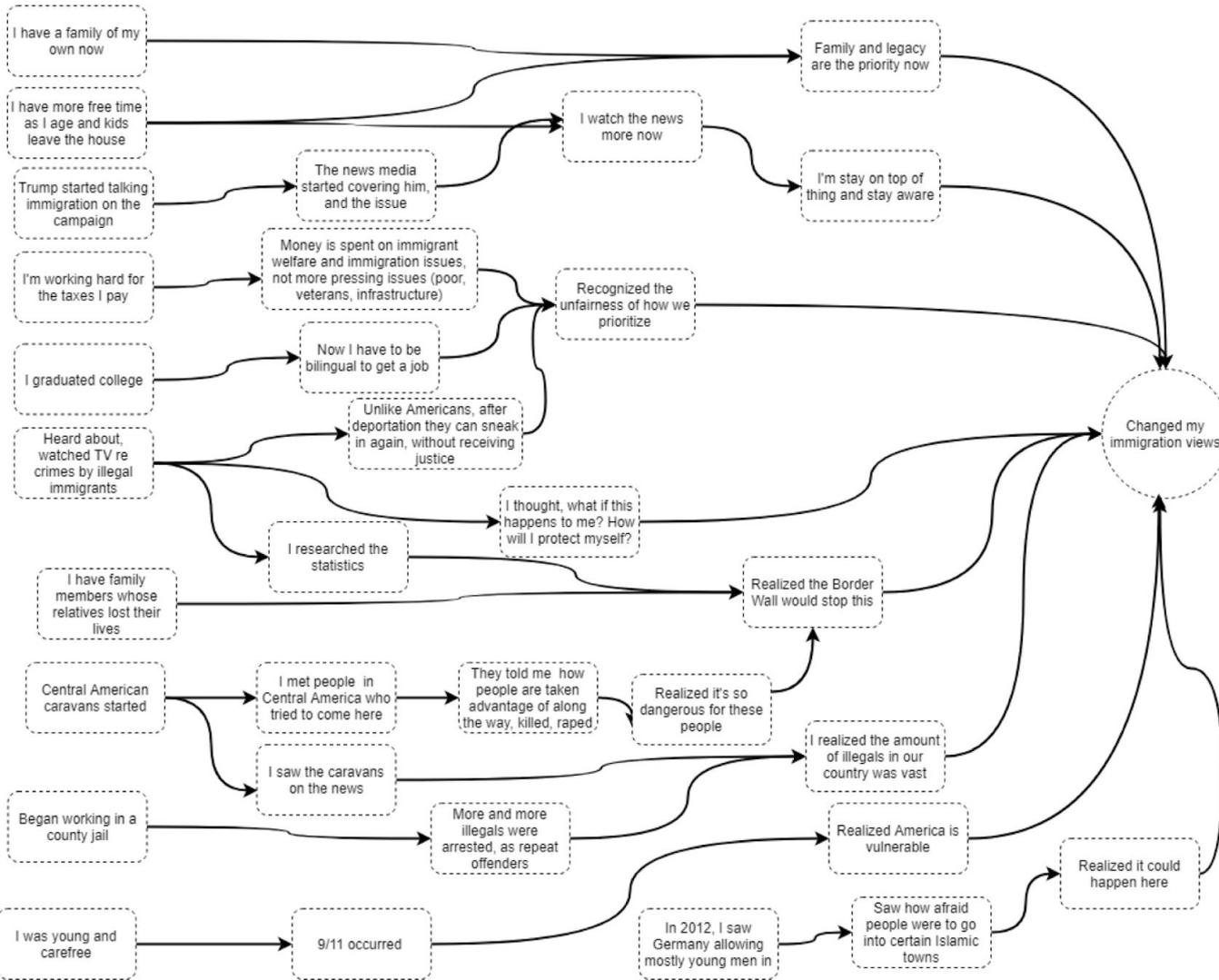
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**DATA**

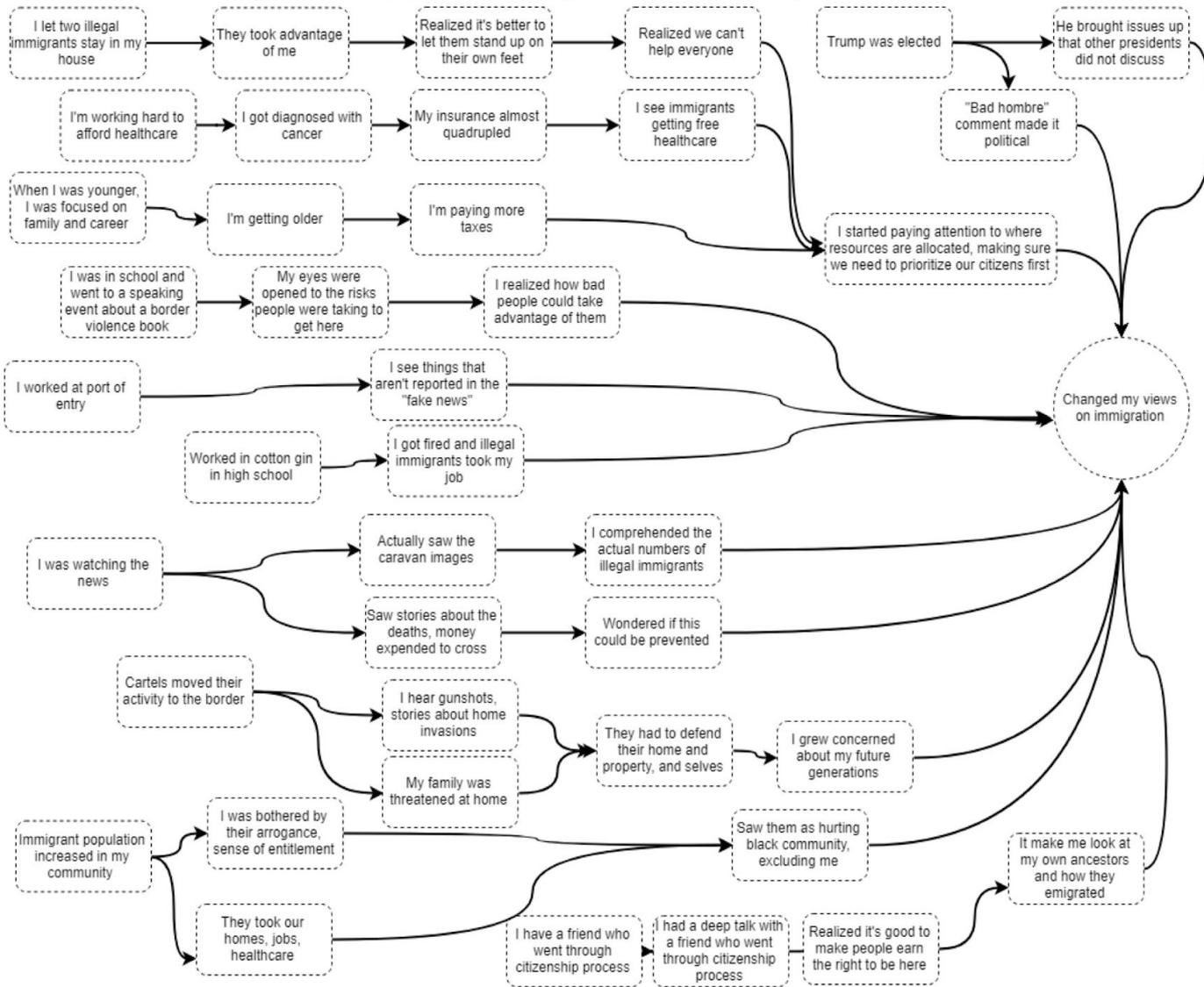
# Change to Support Immigration Security Position - National



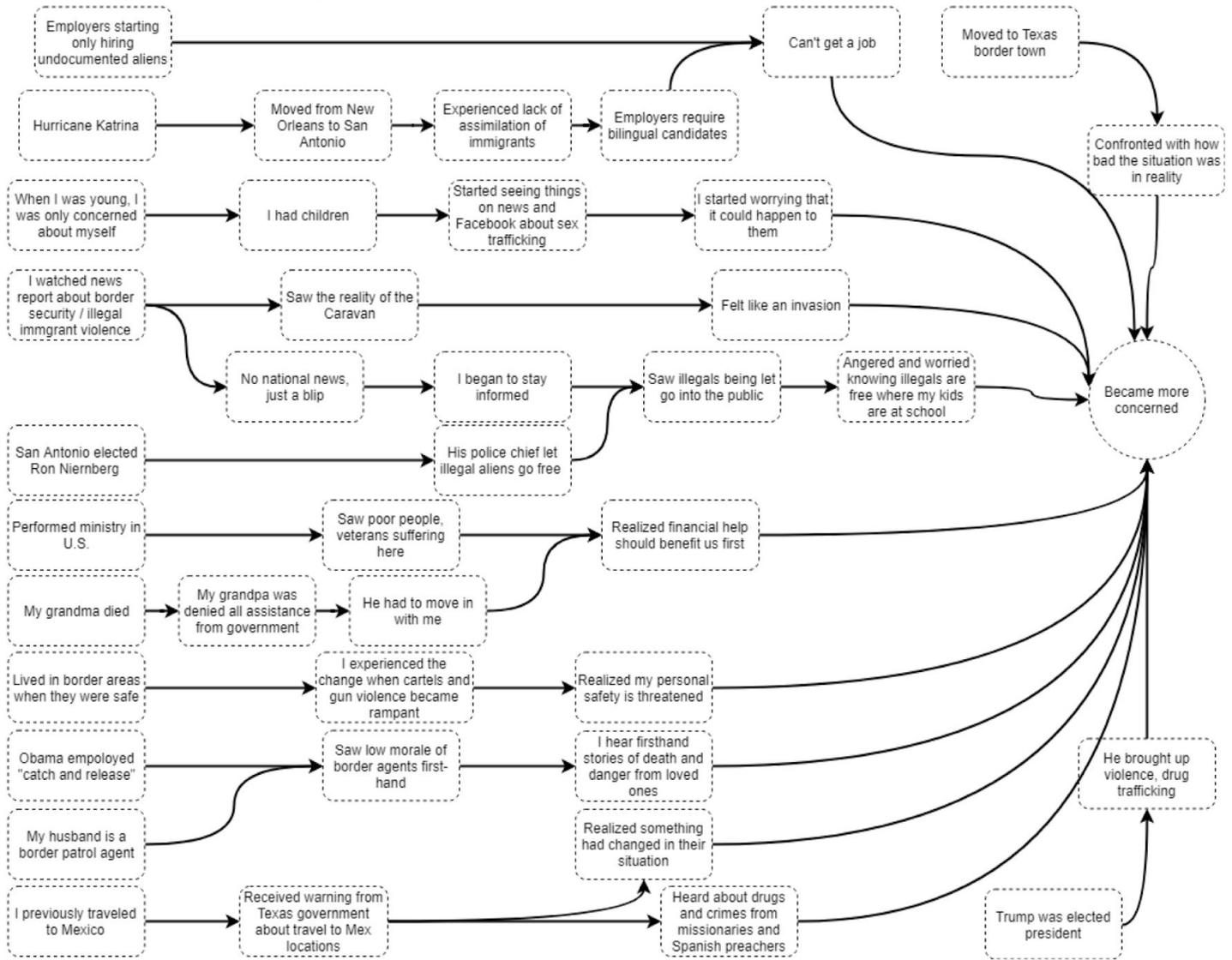
# Change to Increased Level of Concern - National



# Change to Support Immigration Security Position - Texas



# Change to Increased Level of Concern - Texas



## **NEXT STEPS**

Phase 2 research will: (1) quantify how Republican, Independent, and Democratic opinions respond to messages, and; (2) identify target audiences within each market segment.

Each of the Opportunity Concepts will be refined after soliciting feedback from target audiences.

Final opportunity areas should be evaluated to ensure they meet the TPPF guardrails and research-identified principles.