

In the Frame?  
Public and Political Discourses of Migration,  
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**Irish Parliamentary Members' Discursive  
Representations of "Illegal Immigrants" in Ireland and  
"Undocumented" Irish Migrants in the US.**

# Context

## Illegal Immigration

- ▶ Ireland
- ▶ US

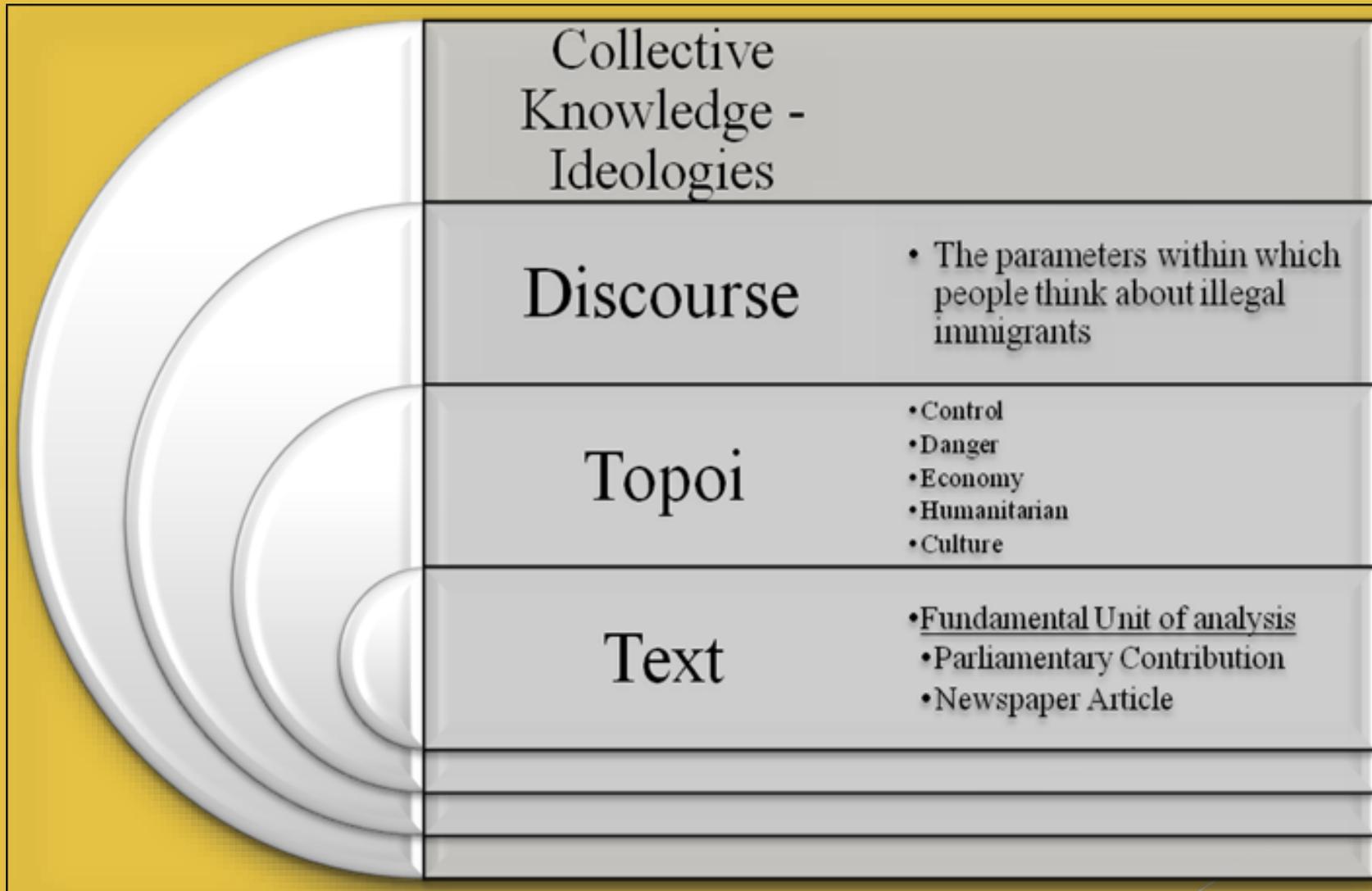
## Terminology

- ▶ “Illegal”
- ▶ “Undocumented”

# The Importance of the Parliament as a site of Discourses

- ▶ The Parliament is a place of official political discussion on immigration.
- ▶ Parliamentary Discourses tend to be:
  - ❖ Strategic
  - ❖ Argumentative
  - ❖ Persuasive
  - ❖ Formal
  - ❖ Prepared in advance and approved at the political party level
  - ❖ Placed on the official record
- ▶ **Parliamentary Discourses hold great authority.**

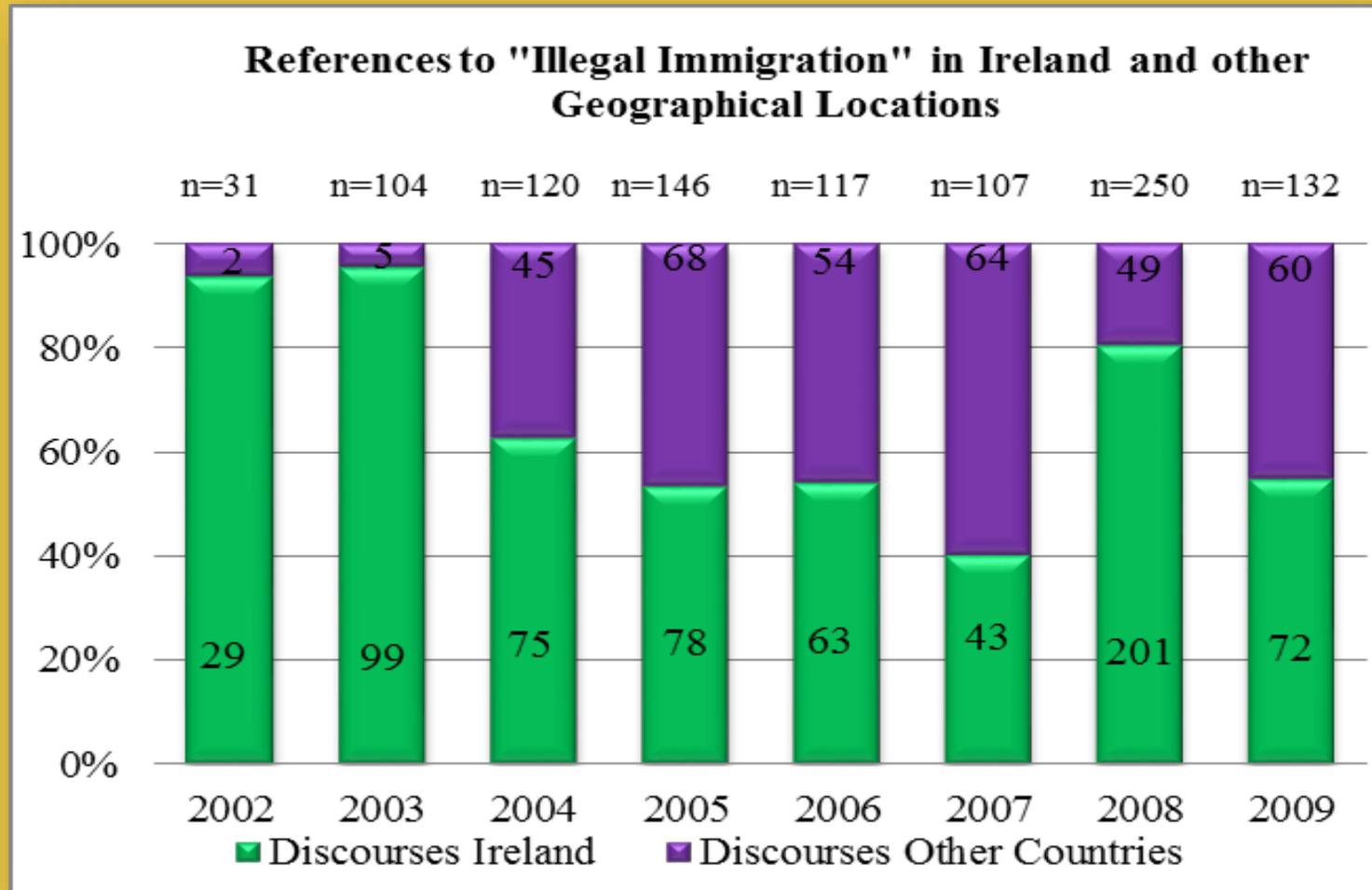
# Topoi Analysis



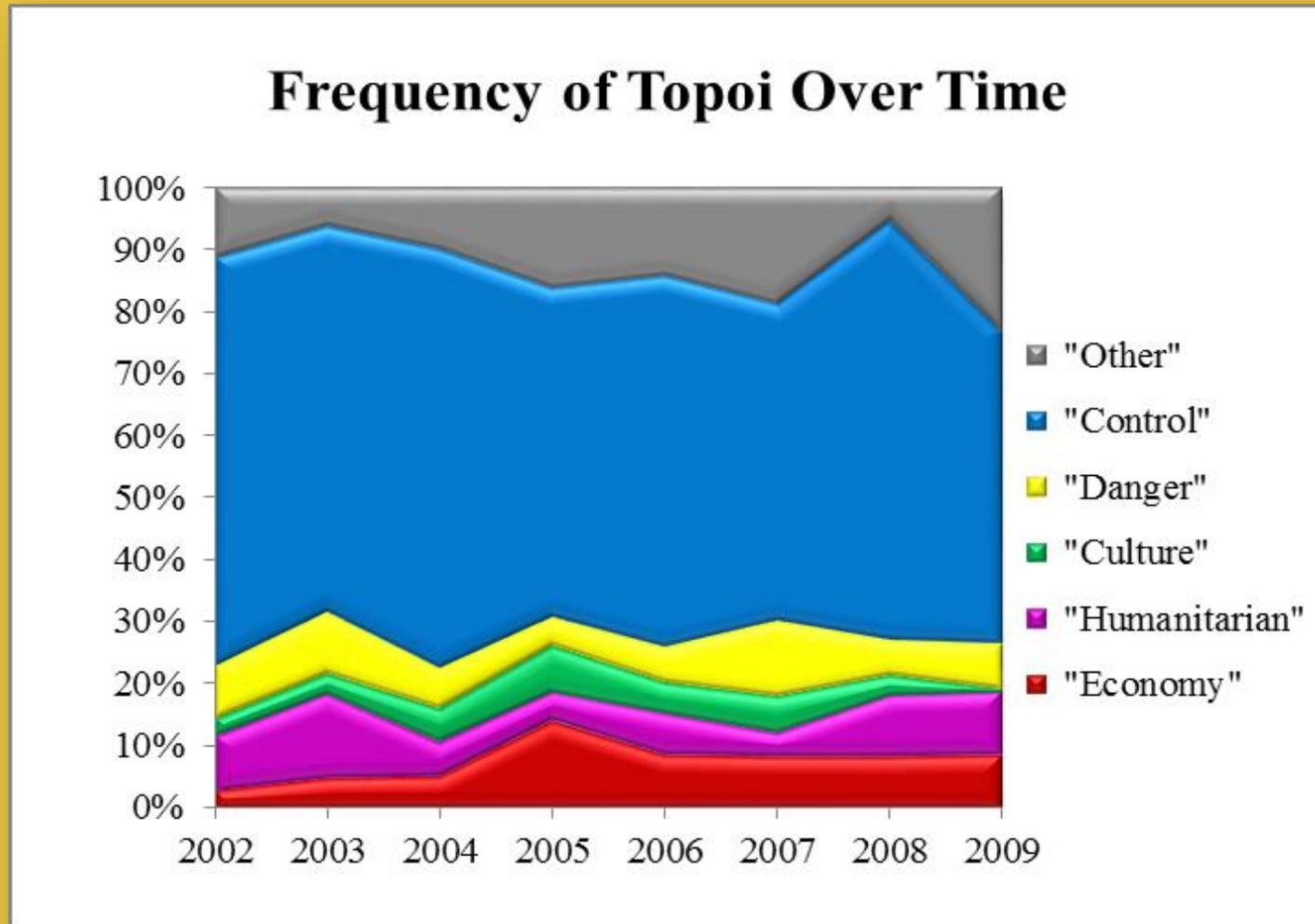
# Interviews with Political Elites

<b>Interviewee Status Between 2002-2009</b>	<b>Name</b>
1. Fianna Fáil Minister	Identity is Confidential
2. Fine Gael TD	Bernard Durkan
3. Fine Gael TD	Denis Naughten
4. Green Party TD	Ciaran Cuffe
5. Sinn Féin TD	Caoimhghín O' Caoláin
6. Independent TD	Finian McGrath

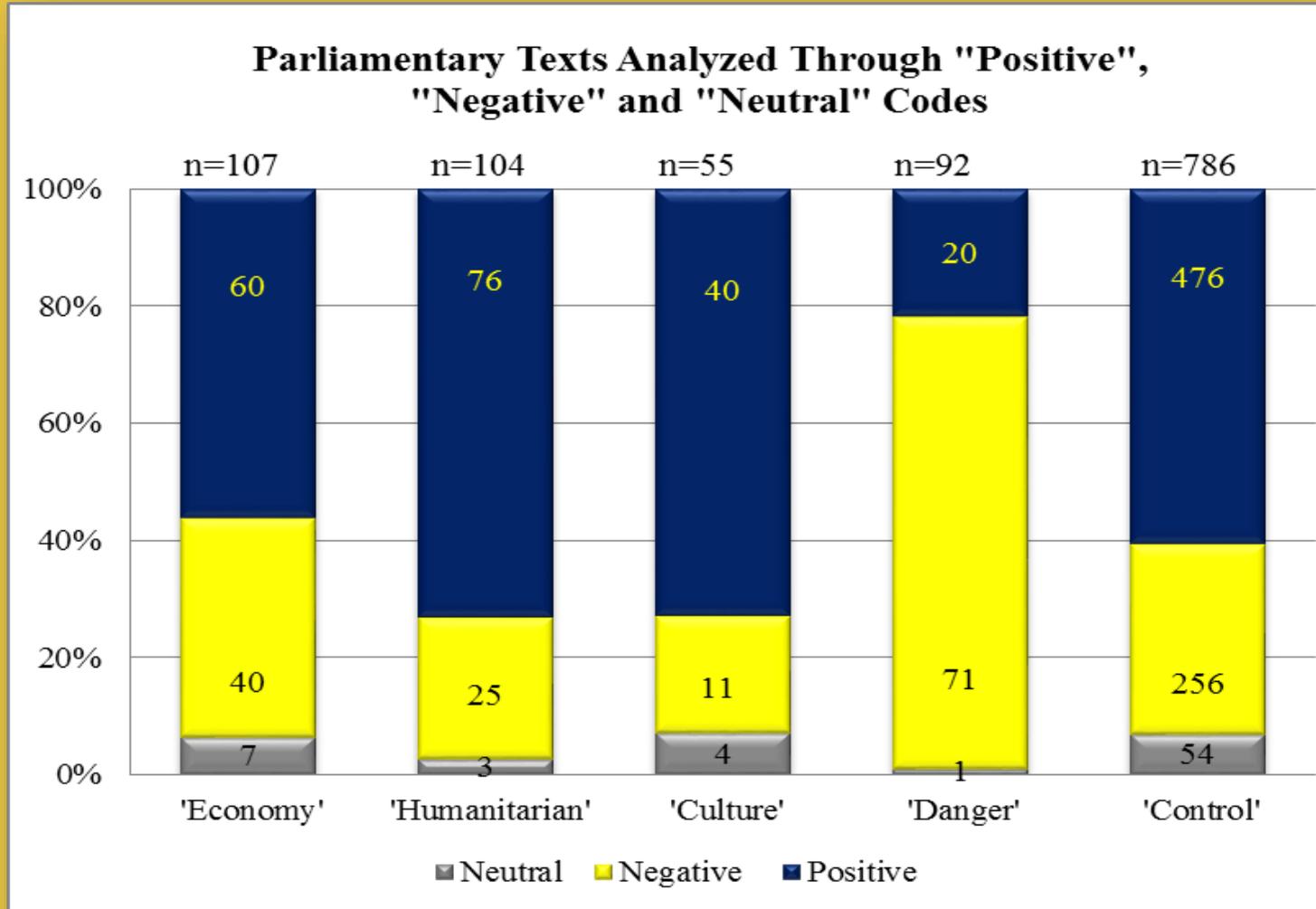
# Findings from the Parliament



# Findings from the Parliament



# Findings from the Parliament



# Control Discourse

## ▶ Three Key Control Discourses:

1. “Illegal immigration” in Ireland must be prevented and controlled.
2. The Irish Government’s controlling of “illegal immigration” is too restrictive.
3. US immigration policies are too restrictive and regularizations for the “undocumented” Irish in the US should be implemented.

▶ *“bogus refugee”*

▶ *“tolerance”*

▶ *“our kith and kin”*

# Economy Discourse

## ▶ Four Key “Economy” Discourses

1. Preventing and controlling “illegal immigration” is an expense on the State.
2. “Illegal immigrants” are an expense when they are in the State.
3. The State incurs an expense when they have to remove “illegal immigrants”.
4. “Illegal immigrants” in Ireland and the US can benefit the economy.

▶ *“necessary”*

▶ *“sponge off the State”*

▶ *“this is a perfect opportunity for ordinary citizens to become racists”*

▶ *“significant amount of money”*

▶ *“contribute greatly to the US economy”*

# Humanitarian Discourse

## ▶ Two Key Humanitarian Discourses

1. "Illegal immigrants" in Ireland must be afforded rights and protection.
  2. Sympathy is expressed towards the "undocumented" Irish in the US.
- ▶ "*compassion*" in dealing with "*vulnerable*" migrants
  - ▶ "*a basic human right*"
  - ▶ "*our people*"

# Danger Discourse

## ▶ Two Key Danger Discourses

1. “Illegal immigrants” are portrayed as a threat to border control and are represented as criminal elements who could invade or who could be operating as terrorists.
2. “Illegal immigrants” in Ireland and the US are not dangerous.

▶ *not “sinister”*

# Culture Discourse

## ▶ Two Key Culture Discourses

1. “Illegal immigrants” in Ireland and the “undocumented” Irish in the US are culturally desirable.
  - ▶ *“decent, hard-working”*
  - ▶ *“the economic, cultural and social life”*
2. “Illegal immigrants” in Ireland are undesirable people due to their different cultural practices, perceived criminality, and potential “negative” financial implications they may have on the Irish State.

# Findings from the Interviews

## ▶ Control Discourses

- ❖ The Irish immigration system is heavily criticized.
- ❖ “Illegal immigration” must not be tolerated.

## ▶ Economy Discourses

- ❖ “Illegal immigrants” have a negative impact on the economy.
- ❖ Positive discourses were minimal.

## ▶ Humanitarian Discourses

- ❖ Interviewees are mainly positive about providing humanitarian assistance.

## ▶ Danger Discourses

- ❖ The act of migrating “illegally” is a crime, and there is a link between “illegal immigration” and criminal activities.

## ▶ Culture Discourses

- ❖ “Illegal immigrants” as “desirable” individuals.

# Conclusion

- ▶ **Parliamentary discourses are placed-based**
  - ❖ “Illegal immigration” in Ireland is mainly portrayed negatively.
  - ❖ “Undocumented” Irish in the US are mainly represented positively.
- ▶ **Interview discourses** were mainly positive about “illegal immigration” in Ireland and did not discuss the “undocumented” Irish in the US.
- ▶ **Overall Findings**
  - ❖ 5 key topoi
  - ❖ The “control” topos dominated
  - ❖ The 5 topoi also materialized in the interviews with political elites

I welcome your questions or  
comments.

Many thanks for your attention.

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