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Nov 8th, 3:30 PM

# Cross-National Coverage of Cross-Border Transit Migration: A Community Structure Approach

John C. Pollock

*College of New Jersey*, [pollock@tcnj.edu](mailto:pollock@tcnj.edu)

Kevin O'Brien

*Syracuse University*, [keobrien@syr.edu](mailto:keobrien@syr.edu)

Madison Ouellette

*College of New Jersey*, [ouellem1@tcnj.edu](mailto:ouellem1@tcnj.edu)

Maria Gottfried

*College of New Jersey*, [gottfrm1@tcnj.edu](mailto:gottfrm1@tcnj.edu)

Petra Kovacs

*Central European University*, [kovacsp1@tcnj.edu](mailto:kovacsp1@tcnj.edu)

*See next page for additional authors*

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Pollock, John C.; O'Brien, Kevin; Ouellette, Madison; Gottfried, Maria; Kovacs, Petra; Longo, Lauren; and Hart-McGonigle, Taylor, "Cross-National Coverage of Cross-Border Transit Migration: A Community Structure Approach" (2017). *The Social Practice of Human Rights: Charting the Frontiers of Research and Advocacy*. 2.  
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**Presenter/Author Information**

John C. Pollock, Kevin O'Brien, Madison Ouellette, Maria Gottfried, Petra Kovacs, Lauren Longo, and Taylor Hart-McGonigle

# The Social Practice of Human Rights: Charting the Frontiers of Research and Advocacy

2017 Conference of the University of Dayton Human Rights Center

Nov. 8-10, 2017, Dayton, Ohio

For the archive of the conference, see [http://ecommons.udayton.edu/human\\_rights/2017/](http://ecommons.udayton.edu/human_rights/2017/)

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## **Research Panel:** Mass Displacement and Migration

**Presenters:** John C. Pollock, College of New Jersey; Kevin O'Brien, Syracuse University; Madison Ouellette, College of New Jersey; Maria Gottfried, College of New Jersey; Petra Kovacs, Central European University; Lauren Longo, Johns Hopkins University; and Taylor Hart-McGonigle, College of New Jersey

**Title:** Cross-National Coverage of Cross-border Transit Migration: A Community Structure Approach

### **Abstract:**

A community structure analysis (exploring variations in community/national demographics linked to differences in reporting on critical issues) compared cross-national coverage of cross-border transit migration through Mediterranean and Central European countries in leading newspapers, one per country, in 16 countries, analyzing all articles of 250 words or more from 10/01/14 to 11/01/15. The resulting 238 total articles were coded for “prominence” and “direction” (“government responsibility,” “society responsibility” — including foreign aid, or “balanced/neutral” coverage) and combined into composite “media vector” scores for each newspaper (range 0.1132 to -0.2785, a total range of .3917). A majority of 12 of 16 (75%) of media vectors reflected societal responsibility of transit migration, with the minority (4 of 16, or 25%) registering government responsibility.

Pearson correlations revealed the strength of three significant national demographic indicators, two of the three associated with coverage emphasizing government responsibility for transit migration. Crop production index ( $r = .423$ ,  $p = .051$ ), a measure of agricultural/economic vulnerability, was linked to coverage emphasizing government responsibility for transit migration. In contrast, another vulnerability measure, global peace index, was associated with more media emphasis on societal responsibility for transit migration ( $r = -.466$ ,  $r = .050$ ).

One measure of privilege, females in the workforce ( $r = .426$ ,  $p = .05$ ), was also linked to government responsibility for transit migration. A regression analysis revealed the strength of a nation’s crop production index (21.2% of the variance), females in the workforce (22.2%) and corruption score (9.8%) all connected to coverage emphasizing government responsibility, collectively accounting for 53.1% of the variance.

Contrary to conventional assumptions that media typically act as “guard dogs” reinforcing the interests of political and economic elites, systematic research on demographically linked variations in transit migration coverage reveal that media can “mirror” the interests of a society’s most “vulnerable” inhabitants.

### **About the presenters:**

John C. Pollock (PhD, Stanford), is a professor of health and human rights communication, communication studies department, College of New Jersey. His most recent books include *Tilted Mirrors: Media Alignment with Political and Social Change* (2007); *Media and Social Inequality: Innovations in Community Structure Research* (2013); *Journalism and Human Rights: How Demographics Drive Media Coverage* (2015); and (co-edited with Morton Winston) *Making Human Rights News: Balancing Participation and Professionalism* (2017). With special interests in media sociology and political communication, he conducts research on health communication and human rights.

Kevin O'Brien, is a candidate for a Master's in Public Administration from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University.

Madison Ouellette is a graduate of the College of New Jersey.

Maria Gottfried is a senior at the College of New Jersey majoring in communication studies with a minor in marketing.

Petra Kovacs is a master's candidate in human rights at the Central European University, Budapest.

Lauren Longo is a candidate for a master's in public health at Johns Hopkins University's Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Taylor Hart-McGonigle is a senior majoring in international/global studies and public policy at the College of New Jersey.