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Refugee and Asylum News Coverage in UK Print and Online Media

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Abstract

The representation of asylum is important, yet there is little research of how this topic is reported online. This article addresses this gap through a study of UK print and online media (N = 2018). Articles were examined for their soft and hard news focus. Results show both partisanship and the medium play an important role. Online news covered more soft and hard news topics regardless of partisanship. However, examining the focus and style, right- leaning print and online publications focused more on criminality, while left-leaning publications focused on victimisation. These findings question the received wisdom that partisanship is the most significant variable shaping when reporting asylum. We purport that both the medium and partisanship are important to consider.

The reporting of asylum matters. Negative news coverage is regularly cited by refugee support organisations as a significant problem affecting the quality of life of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK (International Policy Institute 2004). And even with improvements (Smart et al. 2005), some scholars have called on news media to take more responsibility in their role in informing the public about refugees and asylum seekers (Chouliaraki and Stolic 2017) Indeed, academic scholarship into how the UK press covers asylum has found patterns of misleading, simplistic, and sometimes even racist reporting in local (Bates 2017) as well as national newspapers (Banks 2012). This underpins larger patterns found in politics and in news coverage that espouse the UK is greatly impacted by illegal immigration (Berry, Garcia-Blanco, and Moore 2016; Ibrahim and Howarth 2016).

Despite the importance of news reporting on asylum, there is little research examining online coverage—even though online media is increasingly the major source of news and information for audiences (Nielson 2017). Some studies conclude that journalism published online varies significantly from journalism published in print newspapers (Jacobi, Kleinen-von Konigslow, and Ruigork 2016). Other studies argue that any observed differences are dwarfed by the similarities (Ghersetti 2014). This study compares and contrasts both print and online news media through a content analysis (N = 2018), as an exploratory step to better understand how emerging news media are covering this important issue. In the process, this study contributes to a wider, and important, theoretical debate in journalism studies over the difference between

online and print journalism more generally. Specifically, the analysis concentrates on article topics and their corresponding foci and style.

To classify these article topics and their potential accompanied article attributes, we apply the commonly used soft/hard news dichotomy (Shoemaker and Vos 2009). Journalists use news classifications as a way to prioritise hard news topics (Shoemaker and Reese 2014; Thomson, White, and Kitley 2008). Besides topics, soft/hard news is approached differently. Soft news tends to include more individual case studies, emotion, and personalisation; whereas, hard news concentrates more on societal impact of issues and attempts to be unemotional (Reinemann et al. 2012). As a result, the reporting of asylum seekers will vary, depending on whether it appears within soft news or hard news. For instance, refugees and asylum seekers have been commonly associated with being a "threat" via hard news topics like crime (Innes 2010), economics (Chouliaraki and Zaborowski 2017), and even terrorism (Esses, Medianu, and Lawson 2013). Conversely, human interest stories found in soft news can provide humanised portrayals of refugees and asylum seekers (Steimel 2010). By focusing on soft/hard news, this study compares how online and print news media include article topics and attributes in their coverage, which ultimately shapes how refugees and asylum seekers are portrayed.

A secondary aspect of this study is to explore the impact of news partisanship on asylum coverage. It is important to this study to delineate between right-leaning and left-leaning sources since previous research shows that partisanship makes an impact on news coverage of asylum (e.g., Bolte and Keong 2014; Hoewe 2018; Newman 2018; Scribner 2017). Consequently, when comparing online and print media, results can significantly differ when also considering if a news source is partisan.

It is important to make a brief note about terminology. The acronym RASIM has been used to group refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants, and migrants together (Baker et al. 2008), which can be both useful, but also problematic if there is a lack of understanding as to their unique legal classifications. Asylum seekers are those who have applied for asylum and are waiting for a decision from government authorities on their status (Stevens 2004). According to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, refugees have legal status that is protected by international law, in which refugees cannot be expelled or returned to harmful situations (UNHCR.org). An immigrant is a person who permanently relocates to a country not of their birth for various reasons— including personal, economic, political, etc. (Hatton 2005). Finally, a migrant is a broader term that can refer to movement(s) both within and between countries. The movement(s) can be temporary or for specific time periods, and done for work, education, family reunion, etc. (UNHCR 2016). In this study, we focus our search term to asylum, which mainly included refugees and asylum seekers. Accordingly, the study refers to mainly these two categories; however, there is some overlap with immigrants and migrants as well, as is common in news coverage.

Online News Reporting

There is a large research literature comparing online and print journalism. Reich (2016) identifies two, very general schools of thought in this literature. On the one hand, researchers see journalistic work as fairly "generic" across different media (e.g., Gans 2004). New institutionalists, for example, argue that the greatest influences on news production occur at the industry level as well as the macro level, and these largely surpass the differences between individuals and the medium (e.g., Cook 1998; see also Bourdieu 1993). Humprecht and Esser (2018) found in a six country comparative study of online news media, that online and off-line news are similar in terms of limited news diversity (referring to geographic focus, source use, and viewpoints). However, there were differences at the meso level in that private news organisations were less diverse than public, and at the macro level, as findings differed between countries (Humprecht and Esser 2018). In another study comparing the influence of media systems or the macro level on print and online news, Benson et al. (2012) conclude, "media systems cannot stop internetled change, but perhaps they can limit it or shape it…." (p. 32).

This "generic" view has become more popular as a result of technological developments, and new economic models for news production that have brought journalists from different media closer together in practice. There are now high levels of crossmedia production, collaboration, convergence and even plagiarism between journalists working for online, print, and multimedia formats (e.g., Boczkowski and De Santos 2007). At the micro level, this may result in extremely high levels of convergence and similarity: an item published on the website will likely be published, word for word, in the newspaper.

In the second school of thought, researchers have taken a more "particularistic" position, and argued that journalists working in different media follow quite distinct "medium logic" (Altheide and Snow 1979; Dahlgren 1996; Deuze 2008). Mitchelstein and Boczkowski (2010) note that some studies have overlooked differences in online news logic by focusing exclusively on traditional journalism norms rather than the adapted routines of the online environment. Furthermore, the "tension between the established ways of producing news, and the changes in journalistic practices that the online medium affords play out in distinct ways…" (567) in different settings. For instance, Reich (2016) found in Israel, online news reporting was more source-dependent and less thorough than print and television news.

Because news websites tend to run a 24/7 operation, and they have almost limitless space, there is generally far more content online—and more frequent opportunities to elevate stories to the "front page" (Welbers et al. 2018). Specifically, online news media can extend beyond traditional reporting to include immediate (Singer 2008) and interactive content (Barnhurst 2012), and/or more contextual information (Cui and Liu 2017; Schifferes and Coulter 2013). Online content also tends to rely more on wire copy than

print (Boczkowski and De Santos 2007; Johnston and Forde 2011; Klinenberg 2005; Welbers et al. 2018). In the UK context, when observing how print and broadcast news organisations adapt to online reporting, Saltzis (2012) found a blending of traditional routines and adapting to the fluidity of an online environment—namely updating and correcting content. In summary, online news has unique qualities that need further exploration, but it is not totally dissimilar from traditional journalism.

Online News Coverage of Asylum

It is not clear, from the existing research, how online news outlets might report asylum, and whether this varies from their depiction in traditional print reporting in the UK. Overall, research into online news coverage of the topic is relatively scant, and what exists is somewhat conflicted. Since scholarship is limited, we draw on research from various countries to present the overall scope of what has been found in online news media.

Online and new media can provide participatory and empowering spaces for refugees and asylum seekers (Rovisco 2014) or advocacy messaging from NGOs, activists, and nonprofits (Siapera 2004). Moreover, because the audiences of digital-first outlets are, on average, much younger than the readers of UK print newspapers (Nielson 2017) editors and journalists catering to their views may produce more progressive representations of refugees and asylum seekers than in print (Gabrielatos and Baker 2008). Yet, some literature shows that online platforms are sources of negative content about asylum seekers. When looking at Syrian refugee stories, Abid, Manan, and Rahman (2017) found that negative metaphors (such as flood) were present in sites of both host and non-host countries.

When the public are invited to become part of the journalistic process (Jarvis 2009) this further complicates things. Suler's (2004) work on the disinhibition effect of being online suggests that people act out more frequently or intensely than they would do in person. McKay, Thomas, and Blood (2011) examined the reporting of asylum in Australian newspapers and their accompanying websites, and found the websites were populated with user-generated comments, which contained extensive racism and xenophobia. Similarly, Savolainen (2015) found comments about immigration on the Finnish website Suomi24 had predominantly negative emotions—primarily anxiety and fear—although Pantti (2016) found that online discourse in Finland did challenge racist ideologies after a specific incident of anti-asylum seeker protest.

This suggests that, even when news websites are attached to traditional print publications, the more disinhibited online news environment may lead to more controversial content overall. Whilst some publications in the UK have restricted comments (Canter 2013), and specifically analysing comments is beyond the scope of this study, McKay, Thomas, and Blood's (2011) and others' findings point to the challenges of reporting asylum in less restricted online platforms.

Soft and Hard News Topics

One important difference between online and print news may be the extent to which each medium privilege "soft" and "hard" news. News topics are commonly divided as "soft" or "hard" as a way to help news professionals organise the large amount of potential stories they cover (Shoemaker and Vos 2009). Hard news is generally associated with topics with high impact, are timely, and have perceived prominence (Thomson, White, and Kitley 2008). Hard news usually includes breaking news and topics such as government, politics, natural disasters, crime, conflict, and business (Horan 2013; Shoemaker and Reese 2014). Soft news can be non-scheduled events, which heavily rely on human interest (Shoemaker and Reese 2014) such as education, entertainment, religion, and culture (Horan 2013).

The soft/hard news dichotomy can be problematic in that it is often divided by gender, race, class, abilities, and so forth (Marchi 2008; North 2016; Topic 2018; Voinché, Davie, and Dinu 2010), which highlights the ongoing quandary of how or why to distinguish between soft and hard news. Mott (1952, 58) found journalists defining hard news as "interesting to human beings" and soft news as "interesting because it deals with the life of human beings"—a definition as Tuchman (1973) explains in her key work on the sociology of news rooms, as "difficult, if not impossible" to distinguish between the overlap, despite journalists' insistence that they were different concepts (113). To address this in an online age, Reinemann et al. (2012) operationalised soft and hard news beyond topic only, to also include style (soft news = emotional/personal vs. hard news = unemotional/impersonal) and focus (soft news = individual relevance vs. hard news = societal) dimensions. In other words, topics are important, but also how those topics are covered or how they are individualised matter.

Some have suggested there are not major differences between print and online news coverage in terms of topics covered (Ghersetti 2014; Hoffman 2006). However, Powers and Benson (2014) found that there is a greater diversity of perspectives within online news. Part of the mixed results of topic coverage between print and online media emerge by focusing on the soft/hard news dichotomy. Online news consumers tend to self-select soft news topics over hard news (Horan 2013; Pearson and Knobloch-Westerwick 2018). Yet, online news reporters continue to place higher emphasis on conventionally hard news topics (Boczkowski and Peer 2011; Doudaki and Spyridou 2013). Despite valuing journalism routines, online news organisations have adapted by including more soft news (Boczkowski and Peer 2011; Hamilton 2004).

News Topics and Asylum News Coverage

It is useful to understand what topics dominate the news coverage of asylum as these have a direct bearing on the portrayal of refugees and asylum seekers, and the concepts they are associated with. For example, the 9/11 attacks in New York led to greater asylum coverage, which connected refugees to terrorism (Esses, Medianu, and Lawson 2013; see also KhosraviNik 2009, 2010).

Building upon identifying news topics, this study also looks at the dimensions of soft/hard news stories as defined by Reinemann et al. (2012)—specifically style and focus. Generally, when included in hard news, refugees and asylum seekers are positioned as outsiders, and consequently coverage is impersonal and primarily focused on negative societal impact (KhosraviNik 2009, 2010). Indeed, asylum is often portrayed as a threat to society (Esses, Medianu, and Lawson 2013; Innes 2010). In a study of European and UK newspapers, Chouliaraki and Zaborowski (2017) found coverage focused on economic, geopolitical, cultural, and moral negative consequences of refugees and asylum seekers. Furthermore, the personal experiences of refugees and asylum seekers are frequently missing from print media discourses (Holzberg, Kolbe, and Zaborowski 2018).

Since soft news includes human interest stories, there is an opportunity to personalise and thereby humanise refugees and asylum seekers (Steimel 2010). A common (albeit limiting) way to do that in news coverage is to emphasise their victimisation, which is why they seek asylum (Greussing and Boomgaarden 2017; Van Gorp 2005).

Interestingly, one of the few studies about asylum and online news coverage in the UK illustrates the distortion between soft and hard news online. In an analysis of BBC online, Horsti (2016) reports that framing migrants as threats or victims dominated coverage. But, also highlighted were so-called "hero" stories of migrants overcoming great obstacles in their European journeys (Horsti 2016).

News Partisanship and Asylum

When examining print and online news media in the UK, another important dimension beyond medium, is the potential differences in news coverage between partisan news sources. The UK has a vibrant partisan press of right-leaning, left-leaning, centralist, and mixed publications (Wring and Deacon 2010). Though some scholars have looked beyond only right- or left-leaning dichotomies in asylum analysis (e.g., Balabanova and Balch 2010), this study focuses on partisanship to account for current populist and conservative movements in the UK and Europe in regards to migration (e.g., Chouliaraki and Zaborowski 2017; Dines, Montagna, and Vacchelli 2018; Holzberg, Kolbe, and Zaborowski 2018; Matthews and Brown 2012).

Media commentators and researchers have commonly observed the right-leaning press has adopted a negative approach towards foreign nationals. KhosraviNik's (2009) critical analysis of asylum coverage showed right-leaning newspapers often presented these groups as being involved in asocial or negative activities. The left-wing papers, by contrast, were more likely to employ the strategies of individualisation and humanisation (Pupavac 2008).

Partisan news coverage coincides with Conservative led policies to limit refugee settlement numbers in the UK (Tonkiss 2018). Not surprisingly, Conservative politicians are heavily sourced in right-leaning publications (Berry, Garcia-Blanco, and Moore 2016) and coverage will more likely contain anti-immigration and anti-refugee messages (Kirkwood

2017). Anti-foreigner rhetoric was highly visible in the UK press during the Brexit campaign of 2016 and, again, these views appeared to correlate with the partisanship of the news outlet (Moore and Ramsay 2017). The researchers found that immigration was the most prominent referendum issue, and this coverage of immigration was overwhelming negative, particularly in the right-leaning tabloids (Moore and Ramsay 2017).

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Based on the literature review, this study seeks to understand how the medium and partisanship results in differing news topics and article dimensions in the soft/hard news dichotomy through a content analysis. Riffe, Lacy, and Fico (2014) note that systemic analysis of messages, as done in quantitative content analysis, shows important patterns and relationships in various media content. Neuendorf (2016) also notes content analysis follows an a priori design, is reliable, valid, and generalisable, as defined in the scientific method. Content analysis was chosen as the appropriate method for this study because as one of the first studies in how online news coverage portrays refugees and asylum seekers in the UK, it is important to examine media systematically in order to identify overall patterns.

Firstly, it is hypothesised that online media will continue patterns of focusing on soft news over print media (Horan 2013; Pearson and Knobloch-Westerwick 2018):

H1a: Online media focus more on soft news topics that print media.
H1b: Print media focus more on hard news topics than online media.

Next, partisanship is considered. Previous research shows that partisanship influences news coverage of asylum in various ways, with an underlying factor that right-leaning. news media tend to humanise refugees and asylumseekers less than left-leaning (Pupavac 2008). Examples include the amount refugees and asylum seekers are quoted—with left-leaning being higher (Chouliaraki and Zaborowski 2017). Or the tendency to report on asylum primarily via hard news topics such as crime, economy, and politics (KhosraviNik 2009; Moore and Ramsay 2017). Furthermore, since soft news gives opportunities to portray refugees and asylum seekers in non-threatening situations (Horan 2013), it is anticipated, left-leaning news media will concentrate on soft news more than right-leaning. It is accordingly, predicted:

H2a: Left-leaning media will focus more on soft news topics than right-leaning media.
H2b: Right-leaning media focus more on hard news topics than left-leaning media.

Commonly, refugees and asylum seekers are presented as victims or threats in news coverage (Van Gorp 2005). Since research on this is limited according to the medium, a research question asks:

RQ1: How do threat and victimisation dimensions manifest between online and print media?

Finally, research shows that partisanship does influence the degree to which refugees and asylum seekers are presented as threats (KhosraviNik 2009, 2010) or humanised (Pupavac 2008), the third set of hypotheses state:

H3a: Left-leaning media focus more on personalising refugees and asylum seekers by
victimisation.
H3b: Right-leaning media focus more on personalising refugees and asylum seekers by threat.

Method

A quantitative content analysis of UK newspapers and popular news websites was conducted in order to answer the research question and hypotheses. Content analysis is a well-established method to systematically analyse texts and images (Krippendorff 2013). It followed an a priori design (Neuendorf 2016) in which variables were carefully created in a codebook, coders were trained, and the sample was then coded.

Sampling

The study examined national print (n = 974) and online (n = 1044) news media in the UK. Fifteen UK national newspapers were selected: Daily Mail (109), Daily Mirror (75), The Telegraph (106), The Guardian (102), Metro (46), The Sun (51), The i (88), Daily Express (39), London Evening Standard (22), The Times (194), Financial Times (71), The Observer (14), Daily Star (12), The Sunday Telegraph (16), and The Sunday Times (29). The online sample was chosen based on page views (Schwartz 2016) and archive accessibility. In total, eight websites were chosen: BBC.com (85), HuffPost UK (93), Mail Online (169), The Independent (165), The Telegraph online (10), Mirror Online (51), The Sun online (128), and Daily Express online (193). All the sources chosen for the online sample are either from traditional news organisations or in the case of HuffPost UK, uses traditional journalistic norms in their reporting (Cui and Liu 2017). This was to maintain equivalency between the print and online sample. Certainly, online media can include several varieties of sources. In this study, it was important for both samples to be comparable and accordingly, only news organisations were used which included daily news coverage, a variety of topics, and used article formats similar to traditional print media.
Relevance sampling (Krippendorff and Bock 2009) was used in order to target the pertinent coverage of asylum seekers. The sampling period was all of 2017, and included any article that contained major mentions of the word "asylum". LexisNexis was first used to

gather all newspaper articles. Any article that was a repeat, opinion piece, editorial, or not relevant was eliminated. The online sample was accessed through each website's searchable archive using the word "asylum". Once again, any unrelated article or editorial was eliminated. Along with asylum, refugees were included in 52.1% of the coverage.

Code Development

A codebook was developed using Riffe, Lacy, and Fico's (2014) three-part design of writing an introduction, defining each variable, and including instructions on how to code each defined variable.

Article Topics

Thirteen article topics were coded as dichotomous variables to cover a range of applicable soft and hard news topics. The soft/hard division was based on previous research (Horan 2013; Shoemaker and Reese 2014; Shoemaker and Vos 2009; Thomson, White, and Kitley 2008), personalising topics commonly associated with asylum news coverage. Specifically, hard news included: terrorism, crime, legal, economic, Brexit, UK government, EU government, and international government. Soft news included: health/social topics, gender inequality, race and ethnicity, religion, and culture/sports.

Article Dimensions

Within the dichotomy of hard and soft news, Reinemann et al. (2012) highlight the importance of style (personalised vs. impersonal) and focus (individual relevance vs. societal impact). There are many variables scholars could measure regarding article dimensions, but this study uses two overarching ways that journalists have personalised refugees and asylum seekers, namely as threats/criminals (Innes 2010; KhosraviNik 2009, 2010) or as victims (Greussing and Boomgaarden 2017; Pupavac 2008). This has been found in print and online news coverage (Horsti 2016). To measure if the article included individual relevance (focus), two case study variables were created: case study where object is named as a criminal and case study where object is not named as a criminal. Case studies are commonly used in news coverage to show the individual impact of larger societal issues (e.g., Barnas and White 2013).

Next, variables were developed to measure the personalisation of the article (style) as asked in RQ1 and H3. Violence is measured because it is commonly associated with either being a threat or a victim. Two variables were developed to measure if the object (1) was responsible for perpetrating violence or (2) experienced violence. Lastly, three variables were developed to measure if the article described the asylum seeker as a victim within their home country, in the UK, or within a third country. It is common for asylum seekers to face adverse treatment in and outside their country of origin. This includes physical abuse, denial of basic rights, and emotional or psychological trauma.

Two indices were then created from the listed items: threat and victimisation. Style and focus dimensions were combined because they overlap. Morrison (2009) states that an index consists of items combined by sum or average, which represent causes of a latent concept. The threat index consists of the "case study criminal" and "violence by." The victimisation index consists of the "case study not criminal," "violence to," "victim in home country," "victim in UK," and "victim in third country" variables.

Partisanship

We also coded the news media according to partisanship based on previous research (Smith 2017; Wring and Deacon 2010). Since there were some centrist publications such as the BBC.com, or others with mixed coverage such as The Times, only explicitly left- or right-leaning publications were used for this specific measure. Left-leaning publications (n = 588) included: Daily Mirror (print and online), The Guardian, The Observer, The i, The Independent, and HuffPost UK. Right leaning publications (n = 833) included: Daily Express (print and online), The Telegraph (print and online), Daily Mail, Mail Online, and The Sun (print and online).

Coding Procedure and Intercoder Reliability

Three coders were used for this research project: One of the researchers and two hired graduate assistants. After the codebook was finished, the coders trained together to ensure all variables were understood and measured correctly. 140 coding units were then chosen from the sample for intercoder reliability. Recal2 (dfreelon.org) was used to calculate Krippendorf's alpha. After the first round, 28 variables (not all used in this study) achieved acceptable results ($\alpha \geq .80$). This included the article topics: terrorism ($\alpha = .88$), Brexit ($\alpha = 1.0$), and culture/sport ($\alpha = .85$) achieved acceptable results. Also acceptable were: case study criminal ($\alpha = .85$), case study not criminal ($\alpha = .83$), victim in home country ($\alpha = .87$), victim in UK ($\alpha = .92$), and victim in third country ($\alpha = .80$).
After discussion and review amongst the coders, a second round of coding produced acceptable results for about 24 variables ($\alpha \geq .80$). This included: violence to refugee ($\alpha = .85$), violence by refugee ($\alpha = .82$), legal ($\alpha = .80$), EU government ($\alpha = .83$), and economic ($\alpha = .80$). After further discussion and explication of variables, a third round produced acceptability for the remaining variables ($\alpha \geq .80$) including: crime ($\alpha = .81$), international government ($\alpha = .89$), UK government ($\alpha = .80$), and health/social topics ($\alpha = .82$).

Results

The first set of hypotheses predicted online media will focus more on soft news topics and print media on hard news topics. To answer this question, chi-square tests were run between medium type and article topics. Table 1 shows the full results. Note percentages are listed by total per medium. For example, 16.6% of

all print coverage included the topic of terrorism. Standardised residuals of +/−
2.0 or higher indicate where significance occurs. The results show online media
cover each topic significantly more, and print media significantly less than
expected. H1a is supported since online media cover soft news topics more than
print media; however, H1b is not supported since print media also cover hard
news topics less than online media. Overall, hard news topics were more
common than soft news topics. The most covered topic was crime for both print
(52.1%) and online (75.4%). The least covered topic was race and ethnicity for
both print (0.8%) and online (2.2%).

Table 1. Chi-square results for topics by medium ($df = 1$). Percentages calculated by total per
medium.

	X^2	p	Print (%)	Online (%)
Terrorism	13.86	< .001	16.6**	23.3*
Crime	119.21	< .001	52.1**	75.4*
Legal	62.30	< .001	20.8**	36.8*
Economic	17.35	< .001	13.7**	20.7*
Brexit	7.27	≤ .01	3.7**	6.3*
UK Government	22.24	< .001	38.7**	49.1*
EU Government	28.37	< .001	41.8**	53.6*
International Government	38.77	< .001	22.9**	35.5*
Health/Social Topics	145.60	< .001	29.4**	56*
Gender Inequality	19.50	< .001	9.7**	16.3*
Race and Ethnicity	6.36	≤ .01	0.8**	2.2*
Religion	95.61	< .001	3.7**	17.1*
Cultural/Sports	19.55	< .001	6.1**	11.7*

*Notes significant standardised residual of +2.0 or higher.
**Notes significant standardised residual of -2.0 or lower

To further investigate, partisanship and article topics were examined.
H2a stated left-leaning media will focus more on soft news topics, and H2b
stated right-leaning media will focus more on hard news topics. Once again,
chi-square tests were run. This time between partisanship of media and article
topics. See Table 2 for full results. Note the centralist news sources have been
removed (see method section). When comparing partisanship and medium in
regards to article topics, left-leaning online media cover more soft news topics
than the remaining media including left-leaning print media. Moreover, left-
leaning and right-leaning online media are more alike in overall coverage, and
left-leaning and right-leaning print media are more alike in overall coverage.
Consequently, H2a is only supported for left-leaning online media. H2b is also
only supported for right-leaning online media.

Table 2. Chi-square results for topics by partisanship ($df = 3$). Percentages calculated by total
per medium.

	X^2	p	Left Print (%)	Right Print (%)	Left Online (%)	Right Online (%)
Terrorism	48.29	< .001	6.8**	16.5	23.3	26.4*
Crime	176.73	< .001	44.4**	46.1**	76.7*	81*

Legal	96.61	< .001	14**	16.2**	38.2*	39.7*
Economic	58.65	< .001	7.9**	7.2**	17.5	24.2*
Brexit	16.95	≤ .001	1.4**	3.1	6.1	7.4*
UK Government	32.56	< .001	39.8**	45.8	61.8*	46
EU Government	108.88	< .001	34.1**	34.9**	46.6	66*
International Government	74.91	< .001	30.5	11.8**	42.1*	25.8
Health/Social Topics	239.96	< .001	36.9**	13.1**	71.1*	53.8*
Gender Inequality	25.10	< .001	8.6**	8.7**	4*	6.4*
Race and Ethnicity	13.01	≤ .01	2.9	0**	1.3	3.4*
Religion	109.22	< .001	1.8**	0.3**	15.9*	19.8*
Cultural/Sports	49.57	< .001	8.2	1.9**	18.1*	9.4

*Notes significant standardised residual of +2.0 or higher.
**Notes significant standardised residual of -2.0 or lower

The remaining research question and hypotheses focus on article dimensions commonly found in connection with asylum news coverage. RQ1 asked how threat and victimisation dimensions manifest between online and print media. To answer this question, an independent t-test was run for medium type with significant results for the threat index, $t(2016) = -4.85$, $p \leq .001$, and the victimisation index, $t(2016) = -3.37$, $p \leq .001$. Online media (M = .26, SD = .01) used the threat index significantly more than print media (M = .18, SD = .01). Likewise, online media (M = .24, SD = .01) used the victimisation index more than print media (M = .20, SD = .01). Just as online media cover more variety and a greater percentage of article topics compared to print media, online media also include more dimensions in their coverage than print media.

The final set of hypotheses predicted that left-leaning media will focus more on the victimisation
of refugees and asylum seekers (H3a), and right-leaning media will focus more on the threat associated with refugees and asylum seekers (H3b). To answer H3a, a oneway ANOVA was run between partisanship and the victimisation index with significance, $F(3, 1409) = 60.96$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta2 = .12$. Post Hoc Bonferroni test comparisons showed that left-leaning print (M = .25, SD = .28) and left-leaning online (M = .39, SD = .32) media were significantly higher than right-leaning print (M = .15, SD = .22) and right-leaning online (M = .16, SD = .25) media. Furthermore, left-leaning online media used the victimisation index significantly more than left-leaning print media. There was no significant differences between right-leaning print and right-leaning online media. Since left-leaning media personalise refugees and asylum seekers by victimisation more than right-leaning media, H3a is supported.

H3b was answered through a one-way ANOVA between partisanship and the threat index, once again with significance, $F(3, 1409) = 43.61$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta2 = .10$. Bonferroni comparisons indicate that right-leaning print (M = .21, SD = .36) and right-leaning online

(M = .38, SD = .56) media were significantly higher than left-leaning print media (M = .08, SD = .24). Right-leaning online media was also significantly higher than left-leaning online media (M = .16, SD = .33). Right-leaning print media was higher than left-leaning online media, but not significantly. Right-leaning online media was significantly higher than right-leaning print media. There was no significance between left-leaning print and left-leaning online media. H3b is consequently supported with the exception between right-leaning print and left-leaning online media.

Discussion

This study analysed how asylum seekers are covered in UK print and online news. It adds to literature on politicising of asylum in media discourses (Buchanan and Grillo 2004; Philo, Briant, and Donald 2013) by focusing on the medium and partisanship in a non-event driven sample.

Firstly, although there is a rich research literature on the UK press coverage of refugees and asylum seekers (e.g., Chouliaraki and Zaborowski 2017; Dines, Montagna, and Vacchelli 2018; Holzberg, Kolbe, and Zaborowski 2018; Matthews and Brown 2012), up until now there has been little research on how asylum and refugee stories are covered online. Research in general has rather mainly focused on the impact of online media's unique features such as user-generated comments (McKay, Thomas, and Blood 2011; Pantti 2016; Rovisco 2014; Savolainen 2015). What is particularly pertinent in our findings is that the medium—online versus print—is a strong indicator of how asylum seekers are represented, which is further compounded with partisanship. The findings suggest the particularistic position that each medium has a logic (e.g., Dahlgren 1996; Deuze 2008).

Like Boczkowski and Peer (2011) found, there is more soft news online but hard news is still important. When compared to print media, online media had higher percentages and significant chi-square results for each topic included in the coding. As noted, the soft/hard news dichotomy can be problematic because stories outside the hegemonic status quo (Shoemaker and Reese 2014) are often neglected or less emphasised because they are considered to be less of a priority as "soft" news (Marchi 2008; North 2016; Topic 2018; Voinche, Davie, and Dinu 2010). Certainly, all news topics included in this sample are important and some may argue shouldn't be divided by soft or hard. However, the results show that with the exception of health/social topics, soft news was less of a priority to report—especially for print media. This is standard to journalism (Thomson, White, and Kitley 2008), but as we argue, limiting to the full scope of human experiences. Especially when considering the potential soft news has to humanise refugees and asylum seekers (Pupavac 2008), and include personal stories, which are often absent in asylum news coverage (Holzberg, Kolbe, and Zaborowski 2018).

Further dividing online and print by partisanship showed that both the medium and partisanship are important to consider. Right-leaning and left-leaning print media covered many topics similarly, with the exception that left-leaning print included more health/social, and culture and sports topics than

right-leaning print. Similarly, leftleaning and right-leaning online media were more alike to each other than to print. Online left-leaning covered overall more topics than print media. Right-leaning media also covered more topics than print media; however, additionally it covered terrorism, economy, Brexit, and the EU government the most of all media. Although migration was strongly associated with the Brexit campaign (Moore and Ramsay 2017), Brexit was not strongly present in asylum coverage in 2017. The most coverage of Brexit was not surprisingly found in right-leaning online media, but only at 7.4%. These results can add to previous scholarship, which indicates that right-leaning news media tend to portray refugee and asylum seekers in a narrow, often negative way (KhosraviNik 2010). With the advent of a new medium, news coverage is still partisan, but conforming to new online routines.

Where partisanship made the most difference was examining the article dimensions of focus and style (Reinemann et al. 2012), which were combined in order to form the threat and victimisation indices. The intention of this was to look beyond the article topics of soft/ hard news to understand if and how refugees and asylum seekers are personalised and individualised. Threat and victimisation were chosen because they have commonly been found in news coverage (e.g., Greussing and Boomgaarden 2017; Horsti 2016; Innes 2010). Once again online used the victimisation and threat indices more than print. But, a one-way ANOVA between the partisanships and media shows left-leaning print and left-leaning online used the victimisation index more than right-leaning media. Also, right-leaning media used the threat index more than left-leaning media. Just as others have shown left-leaning media are more sympathetic to asylum (KhosraviNik 2009; Pupavac 2008) and right-leaning media focus more on violence (KhosraviNik 2009), similar results were found here. Consequently, it should be noted that even though online routines may result in online news media having collective similarities compared to traditional print news media (in terms of variety of coverage), partisanship can't be ignored, as there are deeper dimensions, which continue to separate partisan sources.

There may be several reasons behind why there is overall more variety of topics and article dimensions for online news. A RISJ survey of UK journalists found in 2015 that those journalists working exclusively online typically processed twice as many news items as those working in print (Thurman, Cornia, and Kunert 2015). Added to that, online journalism relies heavily on clickability and shareability (Lee, Lewis, and Powers 2014). We hypothesise that more dramatic and varied coverage may be the result of this. The age and experience of journalists who work online may also be lower than their print counterparts (Deuze and Paulussen 2002; Quandt et al. 2006), which may be relevant to the production values and sourcing patterns they follow.

Also noteworthy, was the sampling of this study over an entire year. One criticism of news research, especially around human rights related events, is that it is reported episodically within news cycles (Joyce 2013). Researchers often do the same by investigating the effects of specific events, i.e., 9/11 (Esses, Medianu, and Lawson 2013) or Brexit (Moore and Ramsay 2017). Of course, it is important to focus on heightened coverage around such events;

nevertheless, by sampling the entirety of 2017—a sample that certainly had the backdrop of asylum and migration, but did not concentrate on a singular event, we could identify overall patterns of asylum coverage.

Limitations and Future Research

This study is not without limitations. Firstly, it focuses on the UK only. As its intent was to provide a holistic view of national print and online UK publications, it seemed appropriate to focus on a single region. Additionally, though content analysis systematically analyses news, it can lack the nuances that qualitative investigation provides. Therefore, future research in qualitative approaches such as textual analysis can supplement what was found here. Further investigation into the production of news, such as interviewing and surveying journalists could also give further insight into the routines and attitudes of covering asylum. Just as incorporating online media showed significant results, more research into broadcast media is also needed, especially visual analysis.

Conclusion

As previously shown, granting asylum and immigration are often presented negatively in the UK press. We call for more focus on online and other media, whilst also focusing on partisanship. We propose there is further work needed to prevent overemphasising crime perpetrated by asylum seekers. This is not to imply crime shouldn't be reported; rather, we suggest news organisations avoid special emphasis when compared to other crime reporting, since this can consequently damage the public's perceived legitimacy of asylum.

  An effective way to do that is to place more emphasis on reporting about refugees and asylum seekers via soft news topics. Though soft news is often seen as a lesser priority to hard news (Shoemaker and Reese 2014), it can help humanise new members of society, that are otherwise perceived as being "the other" (Davies 2013). As explored in agenda setting's contingent condition of obtrusiveness, the less personal experience a person has to an issue, the more likely they will be influenced by news messages (McCombs 2004). Since many in the public have low obtrusiveness to refugees or asylum seekers, news representations are particularly important. In this study, online news media were more diverse in their topic coverage—having more hard and soft news. Further research is needed to understand the potential of how consuming more diverse coverage shapes public perceptions of asylum.

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