

Crisis Communication on Twitter: Differences Between User Types in Top Tweets About the 2015 “Refugee Crisis” in Germany

SANJA KAPIDZIC

GESIS—Leibniz-Institute for the Social Sciences, Germany

FELIX FREY

University of Leipzig, Germany

CHRISTOPH NEUBERGER

Free University of Berlin, Germany
Weizenbaum Institute for the Networked Society, Germany

STEFAN STIEGLITZ

University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany

MILAD MIRBABAIE

Paderborn University, Germany

The study explores differences between three user types in the top tweets about the 2015 “refugee crisis” in Germany and presents the results of a quantitative content analysis. All tweets with the keyword “Flüchtlinge” posted for a monthlong period following September 13, 2015, the day Germany decided to implement border controls, were collected ($N = 763,752$). The top 2,495 tweets according to number of retweets were selected for analysis. Differences between news media, public and private actor tweets in topics, tweet characteristics such as tone and opinion expression, links, and specific sentiments toward refugees were analyzed. We found strong differences between the tweets. Public actor tweets were the main source of positive sentiment toward refugees and the main information source on refugee support. News media tweets mostly reflected traditional journalistic norms of impartiality and objectivity, whereas private actor tweets were more diverse in sentiments toward refugees.

Keywords: refugee crisis 2015, Germany, social media, Twitter, user types

Sanja Kapidzic: sanja.kapidzic@gesis.org

Felix Frey: ffrey@uni-leipzig.de

Christoph Neuberger: christoph.neuberger@fu-berlin.de

Stefan Stieglitz: stefan.stieglitz@uni-due.de

Milad Mirbabaie: milad.mirbabaie@uni-paderborn.de

Date submitted: 2021-06-23

Copyright © 2023 (Sanja Kapidzic, Felix Frey, Christoph Neuberger, Stefan Stieglitz, and Milad Mirbabaie). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at <http://ijoc.org>.

In the fall of 2015, an unprecedented number of people sought refuge in the European Union. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2015) reported that by the end of 2014, almost 60 million people, more people than ever recorded before, had to leave their homes. Those numbers rose steadily, and refugees from the Middle East and Africa increasingly sought refuge in Europe with asylum applications in the European Union rising. In Germany alone, more than 440,000 people applied for asylum in 2015 (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge [BAMF], 2016, p. 91). In 2022, with Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the issue of refugees has once again gained importance in Europe.

Internet access and social media made the refugee crisis in 2015 more visible than previous refugee plights (Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017; Guidry et al., 2018, p. 513) and gave all types of actors the opportunity to participate in public discourse on the topic. Although social media users are not representative of the population and only a fraction of the population are active Twitter users, news media and even politicians use Twitter as a shortcut to informally gauge public sentiment (Hölig, 2018). Therefore, it is especially relevant to explore social media communication on sensitive and controversial issues. In this vein, researchers have called for further investigation of the role of social media in shaping public opinion about the refugee crisis in 2015 (Glăveanu, Saint-Laurent, & Literat, 2018, p. 443) and for a nuanced approach that differentiates between news media and other user types in the analysis (Nerghes & Lee, 2019, p. 284) to assess their respective roles in the public debate.

To fill these research gaps, we examine the Twitter discourse on one of the most controversial topics in recent years in Germany and Europe, the so-called refugee crisis in 2015. In many European countries, the refugee crisis led to disinformation being spread on social media, led to heated debates, and strengthened populist movements and parties (Dell'Orto & Wetzstein, 2019), with radical right populist challenger parties using immigration issues strategically in Western European countries (Grande, Schwarzbözl, & Fatke, 2019).

The aim of the present study is to analyze the most visible German Twitter communication during the peak of the refugee crisis in 2015. Our content analysis of 2,495 top tweets focuses on a comparison of the formal and content-related characteristics of the tweets of four groups of actors: news media, public actors, celebrities, and private actors. In previous research of Twitter communication during the refugee crisis, few studies examined the characteristics of different user types (Bozdog & Smets, 2017). We aim to add to this research by providing a detailed analysis of differences between user types on various aspects of their Twitter communication (topics, opinions, sentiment, tone, links) about the 2015 refugee crisis in Germany to get a deeper insight into their role in public discourse on this issue.

Actors in the Online Public Sphere

In general, social media have transformed the public sphere, both allowing formerly excluded actors to participate in public discourse and redefining traditional roles and interaction patterns of actors already present in the public sphere (Jungherr, Rivero, & Gayo-Avello, 2020, pp. 30–68). In this vein, the role of news media as gatekeepers has diminished (Bruns, 2018), and actors in other roles have gained direct access as communicators to the broader public. Contrary to positive expectations, the current discussion about the digitalized public sphere is dominated by crisis diagnoses: They state a "new crisis of public

communication" (Chadwick, 2019, p. 4), a "disinformation order" (Bennett & Livingston, 2018, p. 122), or "fractured democracy" (Entman & Usher, 2018, p. 298).

Several suggestions have been made to capture the new actor constellation in the public sphere with a multitude of voices and fluid relationships in a renewed model, like the "cascading network activation model" from Entman and Usher (2018, p. 288; see also Benkler, Faris, & Roberts, 2018, pp. 75–82). In their model, they consider the various relationships between political elites, mainstream media, ideological (alternative) media, and audiences. The question here is how the different actors communicate about a political topic, especially in times of crisis. We distinguish four different communicator roles: news media, public actors, celebrities, and private actors.

The traditional role of *news media* has shifted from "gatekeeper" to "gatewatcher" (Bruns, 2018) because their control over which information and stories are publicized to a wider audience has diminished. Many journalists use social media for research, publishing, and interaction (Neuberger, Langenohl, & Nuernbergk, 2014), and news organizations use social media to link to content found on their websites (Russell, 2019). As a result, journalism is evolving into "network journalism" (Heinrich, 2011) that is closely intertwined with other actors with the help of social media. Journalists can be expected to transfer their professional norms and practices to social media.

Public actors are governments, political parties, movements, companies, interest groups, and other organizations, or representatives of these organizations. Social media provide public actors with a direct channel to their target audiences, allowing them to circumvent news media as gatekeepers. The "platformisation of the party" (Gerbaudo, 2019, p. 69) leads to data-driven campaigning and the promise of direct participation of citizens. At the same time social media promote the emergence of populist "hyperleaders." Hierarchies in parties do not disappear but are less visible (Gerbaudo, 2019), and single politicians use social media extensively to inform, debate, mobilize, and connect (e.g., Kelm, Dohle, & Bernhard, 2019). Nonprofit organizations as a sort of interest group use social media for information, community building, and action (Kim, 2022). Social media also open new ways for social movements and "connective" or collective action, like mass protests (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Jungherr et al., 2020, pp. 132–144).

Celebrities are well-known and respected figures, including actors, musicians, scientists, and athletes. They express themselves on social media not only about their own work and private life but also about politics and other news issues. In this way, they can convert attention and acceptance into political influence.

(4) Finally, ordinary citizens (which we name *private actors*) with Internet access and social media accounts have the possibility to directly address both elite actors such as politicians and the broader public. Social media allow ordinary citizens to create and post content and directly interact with each other and with news media, public actors, and celebrities, changing their role at least partially (democratic divide) from the role of passive audience members to that of active participants (e.g., Büchi & Vogler, 2017).

Differences in the social media practices and contributions of news media, public actors, celebrities, and private actors are to be expected. These differences can, at least in part, be mapped on a distinction of elite professional versus nonprofessional communicators. Within the first category, a further distinction of different subtypes of “communication experts” can be made, first and foremost between journalists, sharing a particular “occupational ideology” (Deuze, 2005), and strategic communication professionals (“public relations”) including spokespersons and politicians. Traditional news media generally use Twitter to promote stories already published on their websites (Tandoc & Vos, 2016), possibly mirroring the mainstream media agenda and professional norms. Nonprofessional actors can use social media to bypass traditional media agendas and highlight topics not prominently featured by traditional news outlets (Rogstad, 2016). In this vein, differences seem to exist between traditional mainstream media and social media, with several prominent aspects of traditional news reporting not featured to the same degree on social media (Bright, 2016).

The “Refugee Crisis” 2015 on Social Media

The refugee crisis unfolding in the fall of 2015 across Europe was more visible than previous refugee crises because of increased Internet access and social media use (Guidry et al., 2018). The available studies on the media discourse have captured sentiments, frames, topics, and participants (for a research overview, see Eberl et al., 2018).

The diversity of user types present in the online public sphere may contribute to differences between the salience of topics and opinions expressed. In this vein, Bozdog and Smets (2017) found differences in the tweets from Turkey and Flanders (Belgium) posted by citizens, politicians, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) during the refugee crisis (pp. 4056–4062). Their qualitative analysis indicates that citizen communication surrounding the drowning of a refugee child on the Turkish coast was divided into the discussion of refugees as victims or refugees as a threat. Politicians, in contrast, represented refugees not only as victims or threats but also as opportunities for the country or active agents. NGOs seem distinct from the other two user types, focusing on posting information about their campaigns and calls for solidarity.

An analysis of the members of national parliaments from six European countries on Facebook showed that in Germany, the right-wing, antirefugee party Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) had by far the greatest visibility by number of posts. In general, sentiment toward migration was more negative at the right and left end of the political spectrum, compared with the parties of the middle (Heidenreich, Eberl, Lind, & Boomgarden, 2020, pp. 1270–1272). A study of talk shows and social media (Twitter and Facebook) in four Western democracies showed that exclusion of outgroups as a defining element of populism was “almost only used by right-wing politicians” (Blassnig, Ernst, Büchel, & Engesser, 2018, pp. 354–355). The results point to differences in the contributions of ordinary citizens and elite users such as politicians and NGOs during the refugee crisis. A number of other studies have captured characteristics of posts about refugees (sentiments, frames, hashtags, topics) in social media, but without considering the role of the communicators involved.

Both positive and negative sentiments were present in the discussion of the refugee crisis on social media. An analysis of 82,573 tweets from six languages posted in 2015 and 2016 found that social media

was used to express empathy for refugees, share information about ways to help refugees, and show solidarity (Gualda & Rebollo, 2016, p. 206). A topic modeling study of English language tweets posted following a tragic event during the refugee crisis found that Twitter was used to express empathy in various ways, ranging from putting oneself in the position of refugees to calling politicians to action. While mainstream media politicized the event, "Twitter created an alternative narrative of the refugee crisis through solicitations of sympathy and prominent calls-to-action" (Nerghes & Lee, 2019, p. 284).

However, social media was also used to discredit refugees and to stir up negative sentiment (Walker Rettberg & Gajjala, 2016). A qualitative analysis of 100 tweets using the hashtag #refugeesnotwelcome from the height of the refugee crisis in Europe showed that negative characteristics were ascribed to refugees to differentiate them from locals and characterize refugees as outsiders (Kreis, 2017, p. 511). Negative discourse discussed the refugee crisis as an "invasion," even describing refugees as "terrorists" (Gualda & Rebollo, 2016, p. 208). In this vein, even authentic accounts by refugees were discredited on social media in discussions led by refugee opponents (Walker Rettberg & Gajjala, 2016, p. 179). Furthermore, Bozdag and Smets (2017) found that Turkish and Flemish users did not change their sentiment toward the refugee crisis, even when confronted with harrowing "historic images" (p. 4048). As expected, results of evaluations are somewhat dependent on tweet selection. Tweets with the hashtag #refugeesnotwelcome, for example, mostly evaluate refugees negatively and distance themselves from them (Kreis, 2017).

Beyond evaluations, framing analyses show how the refugee crisis has been interpreted (Eberl et al., 2018, pp. 211–215; see also Czymara & van Klingeren, 2021). An analysis of close to 7.5 million tweets with refugee-related keywords and hashtags posted by almost 1.8 million users in 2015–16 in seven languages found that the hashtags used indicated that communication about the refugee crisis focused on political frames from a far-right perspective and on humanitarian frames (Siapera, Boudourides, Lenis, & Suiter, 2018, p. 7). However, differences also exist in the framing of positive and negative communication about the refugee crisis on social media. An analysis of 750 Instagram and 750 Pinterest English language posts from 2016 found differences in the depictions of positive (humanitarian focus) and negative (security focus) portrayals of the refugee crisis (Guidry et al., 2018). According to Guidry et al. (2018), humanitarian concerns were more likely to be depicted as episodes, highlighting specific events or persons (p. 525). Security concerns, in contrast, were more likely to focus on more general issues.

Furthermore, the topics prominently featured in Twitter communication about the refugee crisis seem distinct from the topics featured in traditional news media. A comparison of 1,935 news media articles and 369,485 tweets from a three-day period in September 2015 following the drowning of a refugee child showed an overlap of topics between news media and Twitter, with distinct topics emerging on Twitter that were not mentioned in news articles (Nerghes & Lee, 2019, p. 284).

Research Questions

Although studies have examined many aspects of communication on social media pertaining to the refugee crisis, further research into the impact of social media on public opinion about the refugee crisis and research differentiating between user types communicating about the refugee crisis is necessary (Glăveanu et al., 2018, p. 443; Nerghes & Lee, 2019, p. 284). As reported in detail above, research points to a controversial discussion of refugees on social media, with refugees being portrayed in both a positive and negative light (e.g.,

Gualda & Rebollo, 2016; Guidry et al., 2018; Nerghees & Lee, 2019). Differences between user types have been explored in more detail for other topics (e.g., Kapidzic, Neuberger, Stieglitz, & Mirbabaie, 2019), but only a few studies have explored differences between user types for Twitter communication about refugees (Blassnig et al., 2018; Bozdog & Smets, 2017; Heidenreich et al., 2020). It is often assumed that particularly politically extreme groups and opponents of refugees use social media because they find little resonance in the mass media. Based on these studies, we formulated four research questions to explore the differences in tweets between user types communicating about the 2015 refugee crisis in Germany.

RQ1: What differences are there in tweet topics between news media, public actors, celebrities, and private actors?

RQ2: What differences are there in (a) the expression of sentiment toward refugees, (b) calls for inclusion into and exclusion of refugees from German society, and (c) the use of the hashtags #refugeeswelcome and #refugeesnotwelcome between news media, public actors, celebrities, and private actors?

RQ3: What differences are there in (a) the expression of opinion and (b) tone between news media, public actors, celebrities, and private actors?

RQ4: What differences are there in the type of linked websites between news media, public actors, celebrities, and private actors?

Context: The “Refugee Crisis” in 2015 in Germany

In 2015, more people than ever recorded before left their homes because of armed conflict, political oppression, and lack of economic prospects in the Middle East—especially in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan—as well as North and East Africa (UNHCR, 2015). For many refugees arriving in Europe, Germany was the most attractive destination because of its economic power, but also promoted by a series of political decisions made by chancellor Merkel’s government, such as the suspension of the Dublin procedure for Syrians on August 25, 2015. On August 31, Merkel’s statement “Wir schaffen das!” (“We can do it!”) encouraged the local population to get involved in helping refugees, representing the “welcome culture” supported by a large part of the population. Even the country’s largest tabloid, *BILD*, initiated a campaign in support of refugees, promoting the hashtag “#refugeeswelcome” (Jamal & Xie, 2021, p. 21). After less than 40,000 refugees per month had entered Germany during the first months of 2015, the number of registered entrances increased to over 200,000 in November 2015. By the end of the year, about 890,000 refugees had entered into Germany (BAMF, 2016, p. 15).

Over the course of 2015, however, domestic political pressure to limit the number of refugees increased. Part of the population expressed skepticism about the successful integration of refugees into German society and warned of the danger of criminals and terrorists. Such concerns were instrumentalized by the political right, especially the right-wing populist AfD, and right-wing motivated demonstrations, riots, and attacks on refugees were reported (Jamal & Xie, 2021, p. 23). German mainstream media were accused of reporting too positively about refugees and not critically addressing the consequences of so many refugees entering the country. As a result of these protests and criticisms, measures to limit the number of refugees entering the country were implemented in September 2015 (Ayoub, 2019). On September 13, border controls were

introduced at the German-Austrian border despite the Schengen Agreement. By the end of September, a stricter asylum law was passed, and more countries were declared safe countries of origin.

Data

To capture German Twitter communication on the topic, we collected all German language tweets containing the keyword "Flüchtlinge" (refugees) during a one-month period between September 13 and October 12, 2015, when German policy shifted from a rather permissive stance to greater regulation of refugee movements. The study period began on the day the German government introduced border controls, marking a key historical moment in the refugee crisis in Germany and the EU. The data collection period was limited to one month because of coding resources.

A customized tracking tool was used to retrieve all tweets containing the word "Flüchtlinge" from the Twitter API, resulting in the collection of 763,752 tweets (original tweets and retweets). A single keyword was sufficient because there are no direct synonyms of the word "Flüchtlinge" in the German language. From this data set, the 2,544 original tweets with the most retweets on the day of retrieval (April 12, 2016) were selected for in-depth content analysis (top 0.33%). The delayed retrieval was implemented to ensure that the number of retweets could consolidate for tweets at the end of the study period. Top original tweets were selected for in-depth analysis because they present the most visible messages, acknowledged as important and appropriate by the community of Twitter users (Rogstad, 2016, p. 146). During initial coding, 49 tweets were excluded from analysis because they did not refer to the refugee crisis taking place in 2015. The final sample for analysis consisted of 2,495 tweets.

Method

The tweets ($N = 2,495$) were coded by five student assistant coders. Training was conducted over several weeks. All five coders then independently cross-coded the same set of 100 tweets. The reliability sample size was based on the recommendations in Früh (2015, p. 182). According to the guidelines provided by Krippendorff (2013), 500 codings per variable are sufficient to test the reliability of variables with up to 30 categories, given a minimum acceptable Krippendorff's α of 0.67 and a target significance level of 0.05 (p. 322). Most variables reached satisfactory intercoder reliability after the first test. For variables with unsatisfactory results, further training was provided, followed by a second round of coding using 40 tweets. After that, all variables reached at least the minimum requirement of $\alpha = .67$ for Krippendorff's α , which is commonly regarded as a conservative coefficient (e.g., Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002, p. 596, α for each variable is reported below). The remaining sample was coded individually.

Variables

User Type

The Twitter accounts of all tweets were coded for user type. Similar to previous research (Kapidzic et al., 2019), we classified accounts into six groups: (a) news media, (b) public actor, (c) private actor, (d) celebrity, (e) spam account, and (f) unclear (Krippendorff's $\alpha = .85$). "News media" was assigned to accounts belonging to traditional news outlets, journalists associated with news outlets, or freelance journalists. Accounts of government officials, political parties, interest groups, movements, companies, organizations, or individual

representatives of institutions and companies were coded as "public actor." Verified accounts of celebrities (including actors, musicians, scientists, and athletes) were coded as "celebrity." The code "private actor" was assigned to accounts in which the self-description pointed to a personal Twitter account of a citizen. Accounts that automatically forwarded tweets were coded as "spam accounts." If accounts could not be clearly classified, they were coded as "unclear." Accounts that were coded as spam or unclear were excluded from analysis.

Tweet Topic

To fully capture the range of topics pertaining to the refugee crisis, a detailed list of 30 topics was compiled based on common category schemes of newspaper news sections (Meier, 2002), which we adapted to the refugee topic. For the purpose of analysis, the topics were classified into seven broad categories: (1) political decision-making (e.g., financial aid for refugees, transit zones, asylum legislature, border closure), (2) criticism of political decision-making, (3) refugees and German society (e.g., impact on economy, impact on education), (4) reports about refugees (e.g., refugees drowning at sea, crime), (5) refugee opponents, (6) volunteer support for refugees, and (7) other (seven category scheme: $\alpha = .71$).

Expression of Opinion

All tweets were coded for whether they contained the opinion of the account holder ($\alpha = .83$). An opinion was defined as a personal view or conviction clearly expressed in the body of the tweet. Indicators were phrases such as "I believe" or "I think." Opinions of other people reported by the tweet author were not coded.

Inclusion/Exclusion

All tweets were coded for approval of the inclusion or exclusion of refugees as an outgroup in relation to the population already living in Germany as the ingroup. The following classification was used: (a) inclusion, (b) exclusion, (c) unclear, and (d) not present ($\alpha = .77$). Tweets were given the code "inclusion" if they explicitly approved of or called for the inclusion of refugees into German society or economy, highlighted aid and support for refugees, or discussed events organized to help or welcome refugees. Tweets were given the code "exclusion" if they explicitly called for refugees to be sent back, to be sent away at the border, or to be excluded from society.

Sentiment Toward Refugees

The sentiment toward refugees was coded as (a) neutral/not present, (b) positive, (c) both positive and negative, (d) negative, and (e) not clear ($\alpha = .69$).

Link

When present, the first link in each tweet was coded for link type. Similar to account classification, links were classified into seven groups: (a) news media, (b) public actor, (c) private actor, (d) celebrity, (e) sharing site (social media), (f) spam account, and (g) unclear ($\alpha = .98$). "News media" was assigned to websites of traditional news outlets. Websites of government officials, political parties, interest groups, movements, companies, and organizations were coded as "public actor." Websites of celebrities were coded as "celebrity." The code "private actor" was assigned to personal websites or

blogs of ordinary citizens. "Sharing site" was assigned to links leading to social media such as Twitter, YouTube, or Facebook.

Tone

The tone of the tweet was coded on a binary level distinguishing (a) rational, objective, factual, unemotional, and respectful contributions to discourse following the ideal of deliberative democracy (see, e.g., Friess & Eilders, 2015), from (b) tweets deviating from this mode of communication in one or more respects (e.g., emotionality, irony, sarcasm, cussing/flaming, $\alpha = .72$).

Hashtags

The hashtags #refugeeswelcome and #refugeesnotwelcome were extracted from the tweets and counted as (a) present or (b) not present.

Results

The top 2,495 tweets according to retweets (top 0.33%) were analyzed. One tweet was coded as unclear for user type and one came from a spam account. These tweets were excluded from analysis, resulting in 2,493 tweets. The average number of retweets per top tweet was 56.5, and the median was 34, with numbers ranging from 23 to 1,499 (Table 1). Only 25% of the top tweets achieved 50 or more retweets, 7.2% ($n = 184$) achieved 100 or more retweets, and only 15 tweets (0.6%) achieved more than 1,000 retweets. A Welch-corrected ANOVA revealed significant differences between user types in the number of retweets, $F(3, 161.52) = 6.30, p < .001, \omega^2 = .007$, with news media tweets receiving significantly fewer retweets than both private and public actors in our corpus. Almost half of all top tweets came from news media, followed by private (31.1%) and public actors (20.7%). More than one-third of tweets (34.3%) from public actors were sent by organizations of civil society ($n = 177$), whereas 30.8% ($n = 159$) came from political parties, and 19.8% ($n = 102$) from interest groups. Fewer than 5% of public actor tweets came from the government (4.8%), the public sector (4.0%), companies (3.3%), and others (2.9%). Remarkably, celebrities contributed only 35 tweets (1.4%) to our top tweet sample, which is why this group is not discussed in detail in the following analyses. All analyses were conducted using tweets as units (as opposed to individual users).

Table 1. Distribution of Top Tweets and Number of Retweets per Tweet According to User Type.

	News Media	Public Actor	Private Actor	Celebrity	Total
<i>n</i> Tweets	1,165	517	776	35	2,439
% Tweets	46.7	20.7	31.1	1.4	100.0
<i>Number of retweets</i> ***					
<i>M</i>	47.3	56.4	70.1	65.3	56.5
<i>SD</i>	57.6	69.9	169.6	69.1	108.0
<i>Md</i>	34	36	34	44	34
<i>Min</i>	23	23	23	23	23
<i>Max</i>	1,034	790	1,499	347	1,499

Notes. One tweet was sent from an account that could not be clearly classified, and one was from a spam account and was excluded from analysis. *** $F(3, 161.52) = 6.30, p < .001, \omega^2 = .007$.

RQ1 asked about differences in tweet topic between user types. Overall, a similar number of top tweets discussed political decisions (23.9%) and reports about refugees (22.1%). However, the proportions of tweet topics significantly differed between user types, $\chi^2(18, n = 2,493) = 208.63$, Fisher's $p < .001$, Cramér's $V = .17$ (Table 2). The strongest differences were evident on the topics of political decisions and refugee support through volunteer work. Almost 30% of news media tweets were on the topic of political decisions (29.8%), whereas only 22.1% of public actors and 16.6% of private actor tweets discussed political decisions. In contrast, a quarter of public actor tweets were about volunteers supporting refugees, which was the topic of 10.7% of private actor tweets and only 8.1% of news media tweets. Interesting differences were also evident between different types of public actors, with organizations of civil society (30.5%) and interest groups (35.3%) tweeting about volunteer support more than political parties (5.7%), who focused on political decisions (33.3%) and their criticism (20.8%), $\chi^2(36, n = 2,493) = 147.90$, Fisher's $p < .001$, Cramér's $V = .22$.

RQ2 asked about differences in how refugees were referenced in tweets by different user types. Specifically, it asked about differences in (a) the expression of sentiment towards refugees, (b) calls for inclusion and exclusion of refugees in relation to German society, and (c) the use of the hashtags #refugeeswelcome and #refugeesnotwelcome in the analyzed top tweets. There were significant differences in the sentiment expressed toward refugees, $\chi^2(6, n = 1,841) = 173.49$, Fisher's $p < .001$, Cramér's $V = .22$ (Table 3). Although the majority of refugee mentions in news media tweets carried no sentiment at all (91.4%), more than a quarter of public actor tweets carried positive sentiment, and 7.7% carried negative sentiment. The sentiment in private actor tweets was more nuanced—16.1% carried positive sentiment and 12.1% carried negative sentiment toward refugees. At that time, positive and negative evaluations of refugees were roughly equal among the German population (ARD & infratest dimap, 2015).

Table 2. Distribution of Tweet Topics According to User Type.

	News Media	Public Actor	Private Actor	Celebrity	Total
Political decisions	347	114	129	6	596
	29.8 %	22.1%	16.6 %	17.1%	23.9 %
Criticism of decisions	82	54	79	5	220
	7.0 %	10.4 %	10.2 %	14.3%	8.8 %
Refugees and society	106	40	107	5	258
	9.1 %	7.7 %	13.8 %	14.3 %	10.3 %
Reports about refugees	291	84	172	4	551
	25.0 %	16.2 %	22.2 %	11.4 %	22.1 %
Refugee opponents	138	48	61	2	249
	11.8 %	9.3 %	7.9 %	5.7 %	10.0 %
Refugee support	94	129	83	9	315
	8.1 %	25.0 %	10.7 %	25.7 %	12.6 %
Other	107	48	145	4	304
	9.2 %	9.3 %	18.7 %	11.4 %	12.2 %
Total	1,165	517	776	35	2,493
	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %

Notes. $\chi^2(18, n = 2,493) = 208.63$, Fisher's $p < .001$, Cramér's $V = .17$.

Similar differences were evident in the calls for inclusion/exclusion of refugees, $\chi^2(6, n = 2,493) = 188.74$, Fisher's $p < .001$, Cramér's $V = .20$ (Table 3). Overall, one-quarter of top tweets called for inclusion or exclusion ($N = 613$). However, whereas only 14.2% of media tweets included such calls (predominantly for inclusion), 36.0% of public actor and 19.8% of private actor tweets called for inclusion. In contrast, 8.5% of private actor tweets called for exclusion, such as returning refugees at the border. Again, differences were also evident between different types of public actors, with 49.0% of interest group tweets calling for inclusion, 35.0% of organizations of civil society, and 24.5% of political parties, $\chi^2(12, n = 516) = 47.81$, Fisher's $p < .001$, Cramér's $V = .22$. Interesting differences were also evident in the means of inclusion the top tweets called for, $\chi^2(9, n = 491) = 18.79$, $p = .016$, Cramér's $V = .11$. The majority of private actor tweets (76.0%) called for inclusion through integration into society, a further 15.6% called for refugee aid, and 5.2% pointed to events organized to aid refugees. In contrast, only 60.8% of public actor tweets called for inclusion through integration, whereas almost a quarter (23.7%) called for aid, and a further 14.0% pointed to events organized to aid refugees. Two-thirds (67.2%) of news media tweets called for inclusion through integration, 19.7% called for refugee aid, and 8.8% pointed to events organized to aid refugees.

Overall, 70.2% (1,751) tweets contained hashtags, for a total of 3,496 hashtags. Significant differences were evident between user types in hashtag use, $\chi^2(3, n = 2,493) = 49.37$, Fisher's $p < .001$, Cramér's $V = .14$, (Table 3), with public actor tweets more frequently including hashtags than private actors and news media tweets. The hashtag #refugeeswelcome was one of the most frequent hashtags and was included in 330 tweets. However, there were significant differences between user types in the use of #refugeeswelcome, $\chi^2(3, n = 1,751) = 64.72$, Fisher's $p < .001$, Cramér's $V = .19$

(Table 3). It was used the most by public actors and private actors. Only 10.8% of hashtags in media tweets with hashtags were #refugeeswelcome. The hashtag #refugeesnotwelcome was only used in 30 tweets (1.7% of tweets with hashtags), 26 of which came from private actors (4.9% of tweets with hashtags). This means that an analysis of tweets with this hashtag only captures a very small fraction of the discourse on refugees (Kreis, 2017).

Table 3. Sentiment Toward Refugees, Calls for Inclusion/Exclusion, and Hashtag Use According to User Type.

	News Media	Public Actor	Private Actor	Celebrity	Total
<i>Sentiment tow. refugees ***</i>					
Positive	65 7.4 %	99 26.3 %	91 16.1 %	6 24.0 %	261 14.2 %
Negative	10 1.1 %	29 7.7 %	68 12.1 %	0 0.0 %	107 5.8 %
Neutral	801 91.4 %	248 66.0 %	405 71.8 %	19 76.0 %	1,473 79.6 %
Total	876 100.0 %	376 100.0 %	564 100.0 %	25 100.0 %	1,841 100.0 %
<i>Calls for in-/exclusion ***</i>					
None	1,000 85.8 %	304 58.8 %	556 71.6 %	20 57.1 %	1,880 75.4 %
Inclusion	137 11.8 %	186 36.0 %	154 19.8 %	14 40.0%	491 19.7 %
Exclusion	28 2.4 %	27 5.2 %	66 8.5 %	1 2.9 %	122 4.9 %
Total	1,165 100.0 %	517 100.0 %	776 100.0 %	35 100.0 %	2,493 100.0 %
<i>Hashtag use</i>					
Hashtag present ***	771 66.2 %	426 82.4 %	534 68.8 %	20 57.1 %	1,751 70.2 %
#refugeeswelcome ***	83 10.8 %	122 28.6 %	121 22.7 %	4 20.0 %	330 18.8 %

Notes. Expression of sentiment toward refugees was coded as "not present" in tweets in which the word "refugee" was, for example, placed in a hashtag. This was the case for 652 (26.2%) of all tweets. The basis for the percentages of the use of #refugeeswelcome is the number of tweets with hashtags (see column "number hashtags present"). *** $p < .001$. Sentiment: $\chi^2(6, n = 1,841) = 173.49$, Fisher's $p < .001$, Cramér's $V = .22$. Calls for in-/exclusion: $\chi^2(12, n = 516) = 47.81$, Fisher's $p < .001$, Cramér's $V = .22$. Hashtag present: $\chi^2(3, n = 2,493) = 49.37$, Fisher's $p < .001$, Cramér's $V = .14$. Hashtag #refugeeswelcome present: $\chi^2(3, n = 1,751) = 64.72$, Fisher's $p < .001$, Cramér's $V = .19$.

RQ3 asked about differences in (a) opinion expression and (b) tweet tone between user types. There were significant differences between user types in opinion expression in top tweets, $\chi^2(3, n = 2,493) = 275.81$, $p < .001$, Cramér's $V = .33$ (Table 4). More than half of private actor tweets expressed opinions, as well as 44.6% of public actor tweets. However, only 17.7% of news media tweets expressed opinions. In

addition, significant differences were evident in the use of affective, emotional, and/or unobjective tone, $\chi^2(3, n = 2,493) = 389.08, p < .001$, Cramér's $V = .40$ (Table 4). Whereas more than half of private actor tweets used an affective and/or unobjective tone, only a few news media tweets did so.

Table 4. Overview of Differences Between User Types in Opinion Expression and Tone.

	News Media	Public Actor	Private Actor	Celebrity	Total
Opinion expression ***	206	227	402	19	854
	17.7 %	43.9 %	51.8 %	54.3 %	34.3 %
Affective tone ***	126	192	396	16	730
	10.8 %	37.1 %	51.0 %	45.7 %	29.3 %

Notes. $N = 2493$. *** $p < .001$. Opinion expression: $\chi^2(3, n = 2,493) = 275.81, p < .001$, Cramér's $V = .33$. Affective tone: $\chi^2(3, n = 2,493) = 389.08, p < .001$.

RQ4 asked about differences regarding the presence and types of linked websites. First, there were significant differences between user types in the presence of links, $\chi^2(3, n = 2,493) = 108.08, p < .001$, Cramér's $V = .21$. Whereas 84.7% of news media tweets contained links, only 72.9% of public actor, 65.1% of private actor, and 57.1% of celebrities' tweets in our top tweet sample contained any links. Furthermore, significant differences between user types existed in the type of websites linked in the top tweets, $\chi^2(12, n = 1,889) = 609.51, p < .001$, Cramér's $V = .33$ (Table 5). More than 70% of news media tweets with links pointed to news media sites (mostly their own), whereas most private actor tweets and almost half of public actor tweets containing links pointed to sharing sites. The overwhelming majority of links to sharing sites led back to Twitter (88.6%), followed by Facebook (4.1%) and YouTube (3.8%). Only 31% of private actor tweets and 17.8% of public actor tweets with links led to traditional news media sites. Overall, there were almost no links to the sites of private actors. However, almost one-quarter of links from public actor tweets led to the websites of public actors such as companies, institutions, or NGOs.

Table 5. Type of Linked Websites According to User Type.

	News Media	Public Actor	Private Actor	Celebrity	Total
News media	708	67	157	9	941
	71.7 %	17.8 %	31.1 %	45.0 %	49.8 %
Public actor	17	90	29	0	136
	1.7 %	23.3 %	5.7 %	0.0 %	7.2 %
Private actor	3	1	11	0	15
	0.3 %	0.3 %	2.2 %	0.0 %	0.8 %
Sharing site	254	175	292	10	731
	25.7 %	46.4 %	57.8 %	50.0 %	38.7 %
Other	5	44	16	1	66
	0.5 %	11.7 %	3.2 %	5.0 %	3.5 %
Total	987	377	505	20	1,889
	100 %	100 %	100.0 %	100 %	100 %

Notes. $\chi^2(12, n = 1,889) = 609.51, p < .001$, Cramér's $V = .33$.

Discussion

The aim of the present study was to explore the top German tweets posted during a key period of the refugee crisis in the fall of 2015 and to uncover differences between tweets from news media, public actors, celebrities, and private actors pertaining to the refugee crisis both in form and content. Our study points to distinctive differences between user types in the top tweets posted about the refugee crisis. It seems that public actors, such as NGOs with humanitarian goals (Siapera et al., 2018), are a driver of positive sentiment toward refugees, as well as the main proponents and information sources on refugee support and volunteer efforts. This is in line with the results of a study about British refugee-specific NGOs (Kim, 2022).

Our first research question asked about differences in tweet topic between the tweets of different user types. Clear differences emerged, with tweets from news media more prominently featuring political decisions, such as the decision to close borders in Germany, or political discussions about limiting migration. When highlighting political decisions, public and private actor tweets pertained to criticism of decisions and discussions of political leaders. A further strong difference was evident in tweets about volunteer help for refugees, which was present in a quarter of public actor tweets and was far less frequent in the tweets of private actors and news media. This finding is in line with previous research that public actors, such as NGOs, use social media to organize help for refugees and point to events to support the refugee population (Bozdog & Smets, 2017; Kim, 2022).

Our second research question asked about differences between user types in the mention of refugees. News media tweets rarely included evaluations, calls for inclusion or exclusion, or hashtags welcoming refugees. However, public actors stood out as drivers of positive views of refugees again. More than one-quarter of public actor tweets presented a positive evaluation of refugees, more than one-third called for inclusion, and 29% of public actor tweets with hashtags included the hashtag #refugeeswelcome. Contrary to criticism, the media did not show strongly positive ratings. Tweets from private actors reflected both positive and negative sentiments toward refugees. Whereas a larger percentage expressed positive sentiment and called for inclusion, private actor tweets contained negative evaluations of refugees and called for exclusion more often than news media and public actor tweets. In addition, the hashtag #refugeesnotwelcome was used most often in private actor tweets. Overall, the tenor toward refugees was rather positive in German top tweets. This contradicts the general assumption that populist defense against refugees dominated on Twitter. Rather, the German "Willkommenskultur" ("welcome culture") was evident here.

The third research question asked about differences in tweet characteristics between user types. More than half of private actor tweets expressed opinions and featured an emotional tone. This confirms Papacharissi's (2015) statement that the discursive affordances of Twitter are affective (which can be explained by the brevity of tweets and the speed of dissemination; p. 118). But this is not true without exception. News media tweets had the lowest proportion of tweets expressing opinions and the highest proportion of objective or unemotional tweets. This is in line with research suggesting that representatives of news media tend to follow journalistic norms in their Twitter communication (Lasorsa, Lewis, & Holton, 2012).

The fourth research question asked about the general types of websites linked in the tweets. Again, differences were evident between user types. Links in news media tweets mostly led to news websites,

which is not surprising, because news media organizations tend to use Twitter to promote content already posted to their website (Russell, 2019). However, we found that tweets from public and private actors mostly linked to sharing sites, with fewer than a third of private actor links and fewer than a fifth of public actor links leading to news media. Previous research indicates that across all user types, news outlets are the most frequently linked content (Kapidzic et al., 2019). Our findings might indicate that not only do the Twitter agenda and the news agenda differ on the refugee crisis (confirming Nerghes & Lee, 2019) but they also point to a diminishing role of news media as information providers on certain issues.

Conclusion

Taken together, our results point to strong differences between news media, public actor, celebrity, and private actor tweets in the Twitter communication regarding the refugee crisis. This suggests that the multiplicity of voices in the digital public sphere also contributes to greater diversity. We did not find strong antirefugee sentiment in the top tweets posted in September and October 2015, which is surprising considering studies pointing to the presence of negative sentiment and discourse on the topic (Kreis, 2017), especially in German Twitter communication (Gualda & Rebollo, 2016). A possible explanation is that we analyzed the tweets that were retweeted most often and were thus most visible. A random sample of tweets, which also includes the "long tail" of the Twittersphere, might yield a different picture. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that the tweets that were acknowledged and retweeted most often did not express negative sentiment toward refugees. Moreover, a leaning toward positive sentiment, with calls for inclusion and the use of the hashtag #refugeeswelcome, was evident.

However, the time frame of the present study also needs to be considered. Refugees were arriving in Europe in large numbers during the period under investigation, and governments and societies faced complex administrative and humanitarian challenges. An exploration of the Twitter communication at a later point might paint a different picture. Other studies show that tweeting about refugees is very much stimulated and shaped by single events (Siapera et al., 2018). The relatively short timeframe selected for analysis is a limitation of our study. In this vein, future research on the refugee crisis should explore changes in tweet sentiment and characteristics over a longer time period. Furthermore, our study is limited by our tweet selection. To analyze the most visible and prominent Twitter communication, we selected the most retweeted 0.3% of all tweets published during the period of investigation for our analysis. It is therefore not possible to generalize these results to the entire German Twitter communication during that period. However, an explorative analysis using a Naïve Bayes classifier trained on our manually coded top tweet sample to code the remaining 99.7% of the original tweets collected in the sampling period ($n = 341,867$) also revealed significant, albeit less pronounced differences between the tweets of different user types in largely the same directions as for the top tweet sample. For example, significant but smaller differences between user types and the proportion of tweets containing an opinion ($V = .12$ in long-tail tweets vs. $V = .33$ in top tweets), affective/unobjective tone ($V = .12$ vs. $V = .40$), positive vs. negative sentiment toward refugees ($V = .05$ vs. $V = .22$) and calls for inclusion or exclusion ($V = .05$ vs. $V = .20$) were observed for the long-tail tweets. The only differences in direction for these four tweet characteristics emerged for private actors' tweets, where higher proportions of nonopinion (ca. 60%) and objective tweets (ca. 70%) were observed in the long-tail tweets whereas small overweights of tweets featuring an opinion and affective/unobjective tone were found in the top tweet sample. This pattern of results suggests that top

tweets do not fundamentally differ from less retweeted tweets in the characteristics examined here. Rather, Twitter discourse seems to reward tweets that particularly meet specific expectations of users regarding the communication behavior of different user types, so that their tweets become increasingly distinct from each other as their visibility increases. However, this hypothesis needs to be tested in future studies.

Finally, to fully explore whether news media play a less prominent role in the discussion of the refugee crisis, it would have been necessary to analyze the links to sharing sites to explore whether they linked back to news media. Research suggests that news media are still the main source of information linked in social media postings (Bruns, 2019). Future research should explore these social media links in more detail.

These limitations notwithstanding, our study makes a valuable contribution to uncovering differences between user types in the German Twitter communication on the refugee crisis in 2015. Our study differentiated communicators on Twitter by type. The results show that their communication reflects their distinct perspectives on the topic. News media transfer their professional norms to Twitter. They remain largely neutral, refrain from evaluations and emotions, and focus on political decision-making when selecting topics. Public and private actors add new perspectives to the Twitter public sphere, compared with mass media. Similar to previous research (Bozdog & Smets, 2017), our findings suggest that public actors, especially organizations of civil society and interest groups, are the main proponent of positive sentiment and calls for inclusion and support of refugees. Furthermore, they function as the main information source on providing refugee support and organizing volunteers. Therefore, nonnuanced findings of positive Twitter communication about refugees might not necessarily reflect the sentiment of the broader Twitter public but might be skewed by public actor communication. In this vein, public actor communication might have created a positive selection effect, with positive messages and sentiments toward refugees being retweeted and shared more frequently.

The same may be true for both positive and negative sentiments on other controversial topics. This highlights the importance of differentiating between user types, especially in discussions of controversial topics. In light of Twitter being used by news media and political leaders as an informal measure of public sentiment (Hölig, 2018) and the possibility that online discussions on controversial issues may affect the general perception of a topic (Williams, McMurray, Kurz, & Lambert, 2015, p. 136), a faceted approach to exploring the contributions of different user types is paramount.

References

- ARD & infratest dimap. (2015). *ARD Deutschland TREND. Oktober 2015. Eine Studie im Auftrag der tagesthemen* [ARD Germany TREND. October 2015. A study commissioned by tagesthemen]. Retrieved from <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/deutschlandtrend/archiv/2015/>
- Ayoub, M. A. (2019). Understanding Germany's response to the 2015 refugee crisis. *Review of Economics and Political Science*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1108/REPS-03-2019-0024
- Benkler, Y., Faris, R., & Roberts, H. (2018). *Network propaganda*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

- Bennett, W. L., & Livingston, S. (2018). The disinformation order: Disruptive communication and the decline of democratic institutions. *European Journal of Communication, 33*(2), 122–139. doi:10.1177/0267323118760317
- Bennett, W. L., & Segerberg, A. (2013). *The logic of connective action*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Blassnig, S., Ernst, N., Büchel, F., & Engesser, S. (2018). Populist communication in talk shows and social media. A comparative content analysis in four countries. *SCM Studies in Communication and Media, 7*(3), 338–363. doi:10.5771/2192-4007-2018-3-338
- Bozdag, C., & Smets, K. (2017). Understanding the images of Alan Kurdi with “small data”: A qualitative, comparative analysis of tweets about refugees in Turkey and Flanders (Belgium). *International Journal of Communication, 11*, 4046–4069.
- Bright, J. (2016). The social news gap: How news reading and news sharing diverge. *Journal of Communication, 66*(3), 343–365. doi:10.1111/jcom.12232
- Bruns, A. (2018). *Gatewatching and news curation: Journalism, social media, and the public sphere*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Bruns, A. (2019). *Are filter bubbles real?* Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Büchi, M., & Vogler, F. (2017). Testing a digital inequality model for online political participation. *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World, 3*(January–December), 1–13. doi:10.1177/2378023117733903
- Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge. (2016). *Migrationsbericht des Bundesamtes für Migration und Flüchtlinge im Auftrag der Bundesregierung—Migrationsbericht 2015* [Migration report of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees commissioned by the Federal Government—Migration report 2015]. Berlin, Germany: Bundesministerium des Inneren.
- Chadwick, A. (2019). *The new crisis of public communication*. Loughborough, UK: Loughborough University.
- Chouliaraki, L., & Zaborowski, R. (2017). Voice and community in the 2015 refugee crisis: A content analysis of news coverage in eight European countries. *International Communication Gazette, 79*(6–7), 613–635. doi:10.1177/1748048517727173
- Czymara, C. S., & van Klingeren, M. (2021). New perspective? Comparing frame occurrence in online and traditional news media reporting on Europe’s “migration crisis.” *Communications: The European Journal of Communication Research, 47*(1), 136–162. doi:10.1515/commun-2019-0188
- Dell’Orto, G., & Wetzstein, I. (Eds.). (2019). *Refugee news, refugee politics. Journalism, public opinion and policymaking in Europe*. London, UK: Routledge.

- Deuze, M. (2005). What is journalism? *Journalism*, 6(4), 442–464. doi:10.1177/1464884905056815
- Eberl, J.-M., Meltzer, C. E., Heidenreich, T., Herrero, B., Theorin, N., Lind, F., . . . Strömbäck, J. (2018). The European media discourse on immigration and its effects: a literature review. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 42(3), 207–223. doi:10.1080/23808985.2018.1497452
- Entman, R. E., & Usher, N. (2018). Framing in a fractured democracy: Impacts of digital technology on ideology, power and cascading network activation. *Journal of Communication*, 68(2), 298–308. doi:10.1093/joc/jqx019
- Friess, D., & Eilders, C. (2015). A systematic review of online deliberation research. *Policy & Internet*, 7(3), 319–339. doi:10.1002/poi3.95
- Früh, W. (2015). *Inhaltsanalyse* [Content analysis] (8th ed.). Konstanz, Germany: UVK.
- Gerbaudo, P. (2019). *The digital party. Political organization and online democracy*. London, UK: Pluto Press.
- Glăveanu, V. P., Saint-Laurent de, C., & Literat, I. (2018). Making sense of refugees online: Perspective taking, political imagination, and internet memes. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 62(4), 440–457. doi:10.1177/0002764218765060
- Grande, E., Schwarzbözl, T., & Fatke, M. (2019). Politicizing immigration in Western Europe. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 26(10), 1444–1463. doi:10.1080/13501763.2018.1531909
- Gualda, E., & Rebollo, C. (2016). The refugee crisis on Twitter: A diversity of discourses at a European crossroads. *Journal of Spatial and Organizational Dynamics*, 4(3), 199–212.
- Guidry, J. P. D., Austin, L. L., Carlyle, K. E., Freberg, K., Cacciatore, M., Jin, Y., & Messner, M. (2018). Welcome or not: Comparing #refugee posts on Instagram and Pinterest. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 62(4), 512–531. doi:10.1177/0002764218760369
- Heidenreich, T., Eberl, J.-M., Lind, F., & Boomgaarden, H. (2020). Political migration discourses on social media: A comparative perspective on visibility and sentiment across political Facebook accounts in Europe. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 46(7), 1261–1280. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2019.1665990
- Heinrich, A. (2011). *Network journalism: Journalistic practice in interactive spheres*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Hölig, S. (2018). Eine meinungsstarke Minderheit als Stimmungsbarometer?! Über die Persönlichkeitseigenschaften aktiver Twitterer [An opinionated minority as mood barometer?! The personality traits of active tweeters]. *Medien & Kommunikationswissenschaft*, 66(2), 140–169. doi:10.5771/1615-634X-2018-2-140

- Jamal, M. A., & Xie, Y. (2021). Evaluating the German position towards asylum seekers during the 2015 European refugee crisis. *European Scientific Journal*, 17(28), 18–34.
doi:10.19044/esj.2021.v17n28p18
- Jungherr, A., Rivero, G., & Gayo-Avello, D. (2020). *Retooling politics. How digital media are shaping democracy*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Kapidzic, S., Neuberger, C., Stieglitz, S., & Mirbabaie, M. (2019). Interaction and influence on Twitter: Comparing the discourse relationships between user types on five topics. *Digital Journalism*, 7(2), 251–272. doi:10.1080/21670811.2018.1522962
- Kelm, O., Dohle, M., & Bernhard, U. (2019). Politicians' self-reported social media activities and perceptions: Results from four surveys among German parliamentarians. *Social Media + Society*, 5(2), 1–12. doi:10.1177/2056305119837679
- Kim, M. D. (2022). Advocating "refugees" for social justice: Questioning victimhood and voice in NGOs' use of Twitter. *International Journal of Communication*, 16, 719–739.
- Kreis, R. (2017). #refugeesnotwelcome: Anti-refugee discourse on Twitter. *Discourse and Communication*, 11(5), 5–14. doi:10.1177/1750481317714121
- Krippendorff, K. (2013). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Lasorsa, D. L., Lewis, S. C., & Holton, A. E. (2012). Normalizing Twitter: Journalism practice in an emerging communication space. *Journalism Studies*, 13(1), 19–36.
doi:10.1080/1461670X.2011.571825
- Lombard, M., Snyder-Duch, J., & Bracken, C. C. (2002). Content analysis in mass communication: Assessment and reporting of intercoder reliability. *Human Communication Research*, 28(4), 587–604. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2958.2002.tb00826.x
- Meier, K. (2002). *Ressort, Sparte, Team* [Department, division, team]. Konstanz, Germany: UVK.
- Nerghes, A., & Lee, J.-S. (2019). Narratives of the refugee crisis: A comparative study of mainstream-media and Twitter. *Media and Communication*, 7(2), 275–288. doi:10.17645/mac.v7i2.1983
- Neuberger, C., Langenohl, S., & Nuernbergk, C. (2014). *Social Media und Journalismus* [Social media and journalism]. Düsseldorf, Germany: Landesanstalt für Medien Nordrhein-Westfalen (LfM).
- Papacharissi, Z. (2015). *Affective publics: Sentiment, technology, and politics*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Rogstad, I. (2016). Is Twitter just rehashing? Intermedia agenda setting between Twitter and mainstream media. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 13(2), 142–158.
doi:10.1080/19331681.2016.1160263

- Russell, F. M. (2019). Twitter and news gatekeeping: Interactivity, reciprocity, and promotion in news organizations' tweets. *Digital Journalism*, 7(1), 80–99. doi:10.1080/21670811.2017.1399805
- Siapera, E., Boudourides, M., Lenis, S., & Suiter, J. (2018). Refugees and network publics on Twitter: Networked framing, affect, and capture. *Social Media + Society*, 4(1), 1–21. doi:10.1177/2056305118764437
- Tandoc, E. C., Jr., & Vos, T. P. (2016). The journalist is marketing the news. *Journalism Practice*, 10(8), 950–966. doi:10.1080/17512786.2015.1087811
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2015, June 18). *Worldwide displacement hits all-time high as war and persecution increase*. UN Refugee Agency. Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2015/6/558193896/worldwide-displacement-hits-all-time-high-war-persecution-increase.html>
- Walker Rettberg, J., & Gajjala, R. (2016). Terrorists or cowards: Negative portrayals of male Syrian refugees in social media. *Feminist Media Studies*, 16(1), 178–181. doi:10.1080/14680777.2016.1120493
- Williams, H. T. P., McMurray, J. R., Kurz, T., & Lambert, F. H. (2015). Network analysis reveals open forums and echo chambers in social media discussions of climate change. *Global Environment Change*, 32, 126–138. doi:10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2015.03.006