

Deciding Who’s Legitimate: News Media Framing of Immigrants and Refugees

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With its relatively high immigration levels and comparatively favorable public opinion, Canada is often seen as a bastion of support for immigrants and refugees. We argue that support is uneven because Canadians differentiate between economic immigrants and those who arrive on humanitarian grounds. Our conclusion is supported by an automated content analysis of Canadian print media coverage over a 10-year period, an approach that allowed us to capture a wide swath of discourse. We found distinct differences in the framing of immigrants and refugees. Immigrants are framed in economic terms, whereas greater attention is focused on the validity of refugee claims, potential security threats, and the extent to which refugees “take advantage” of social programs. More focus is also given to refugees’ national origins, and that framing is disproportionately negative. Our analysis illustrates the discursive distinctions that are drawn between immigrants and refugees and the hierarchy of preferences for the former over the latter.

Keywords: media coverage, immigrants, refugees, automated text analysis, framing, Canada

Support for immigration in Canada is relatively strong and consistent, but public opinion toward refugees is more variable (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012). Many Canadians voice concern over the legitimacy of refugee claims, and public discourse² around refugees often links these individuals to security threats, “bogus claims,” and the abuse of social programs (Krishnamurti, 2013). The media have been found to disproportionately focus attention on the economic impact of migration (Bauder, 2008; Lawlor, 2015), migrants’ use of social services (Benson, 2010), multiculturalism or ethnoracial considerations (Baker, 2010), and particularly since 9/11, migrants as security threats (Brader, Valentino,

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² We use the word *discourse* in a generic sense to refer to public discussion, conversation, and narratives.

& Suhay, 2008; Grimm & Andsager, 2011). Media framing of migration can influence public opinion, promote various interpretations of the immigration system (e.g., too lenient vs. not accommodating enough), or cue specific considerations, including legitimacy, "need," and security (Bleich, Bloemraad, & de Graauw, 2015; Iyengar, 1990; Merolla, Ramakrishnan, & Haynes, 2013).

Existing literature shows that the media can lead or follow public opinion (Shanahan, McBeth, Hathaway, & Arnell, 2008; Soroka & Wlezien, 2010). Some studies propose a feedback loop between the media, policymakers, and the public, whereas others suggest that these entities are not mutually reinforcing (Birkland, 2007; Jacobs & Shapiro, 2000). Although this is an important area of study, we do not delve into this equation, instead viewing the media as a signifier of public narratives around immigrants and refugees. For our purposes, whether the media lead or follow is orthogonal. Instead, we examine media coverage as indicative of public opinion and policy responses toward immigrants and refugees.

Although there has been research on the relationship between the media and public opinion, few studies have observed whether or how these trends have changed over time. Yet, untangling longitudinal shifts that incorporate event-driven coverage is arguably as important as looking solely at a specific moment in time. This is because changes to public policy tend to respond to a combination of focusing events and the "general mood." In addition, few have explicitly compared the framing of immigrants with that of refugees, and popular discourse regularly conflates the two categories (Fleras, 2014).

To address these gaps, this article provides a longitudinal comparison of the media's framing of immigrants and refugees. We use automated content analysis to examine local and national print media framing of immigrants and refugees from 2005 to 2014. Local analysis of coverage targets two of Canada's largest refugee-receiving cities: Toronto and Vancouver. Analyses examine (1) whether print media coverage of refugees—and, by extension, public discourse—became more negative in the past 10 years, (2) how this compared with the tone and frequency of immigration-related coverage, and (3) how the framing of immigration- and refugee-related coverage varied over time, geography, and the ethnicity of migrants.

Our findings demonstrate the discursive distinctions that are made in the framing of immigrants and refugees, a conclusion that has implications beyond the Canadian case. First, the media's structural and institutional features are consistent across many Western liberal democracies (Soroka, 2014), so findings from the study of media coverage in one country can logically be applied to other contexts. Second, for European countries where public opinion toward newcomers is more hardened than in Canada (Banting & Kymlicka, 2010; Simon & Sikich, 2007), where in the period under the study the proportionate and per capita numbers of refugees accepted was generally higher, and where geographic realities were correlated with the mass arrivals that precipitated public discord, our findings are a cautionary tale. Our analysis demonstrates the distinctions that are drawn between immigrants and refugees and that there is a preference for migrants who are perceived to be economic contributors and who originate from a select group of countries. By focusing on a decade of media coverage in a country with a relatively welcoming context, we demonstrate the durability of these negative associations in public discourse, a conclusion that can be applied to countries where suspicions about refugees are arguably more deeply engrained.

Public Discourse and Media Framing of Immigrants and Refugees

Scholars who study the media's coverage of migration have demonstrated the relationship between media framing and public discourse across all types of migration, including economic, family reunification, and undocumented border crossing (Benson, 2010; Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart, 2007). Whether in print news (Bradimore & Bauder, 2012; Henry & Tator, 2002; Lawlor, 2015), editorials (Greenberg, 2000; Hardy & Phillips, 1999), or blogs and online comments (Krishnamurti, 2013), there is a tendency to couple an episodic, "human interest" narrative—typically focused on individual immigrants and refugees—with a broader, more thematic policy-based or demographically oriented angle (see Iyengar, 1991, for a discussion of thematic vs. episodic coverage).

The emphasis on episodic flashpoints is in part a reflection of the "nature of news" (Lippmann, 1922). The economics of the news business encourage stories that will appeal and be accessible to consumers; thus, there is an emphasis on conventional understandings of a situation, on accounts that can be quickly and easily portrayed, and on the most plausible explanations. As a result, the media naturally focus on stories that are proximate (e.g., a ship of migrants arriving on the city's shore), large in scope (e.g., an influx of 25,000 refugees), timely (e.g., recent policy changes), and contain an element of conflict (e.g., security concerns).

Media coverage is not simply a textual artifact, but a data source from which we can draw inferences about public discourse (Nesbitt-Larking, 2007). This is because the media do not exist in a vacuum, but are situated in societal norms and culture and present stories in ways that are likely to resonate with the intended audience (Fleras, 2011; Tolley, 2016). Others have argued that the construction of immigrants and refugees as foreign, threatening, or illegitimate is one means through which national identities are forged and understood. Dhamoon (2009) refers to the distinction between foreigners and benevolent host societies as part of a complex process of "meaning-making" (p. 69) and identity formation. We complicate these scholars' work by suggesting that while immigrants and refugees are understood in relation to Canadian citizens—a dialectic that Bauder (2011) emphasizes in his research—they are also understood in relation to each other. That is, we extend Bauder's analysis of dialectics by looking more closely at the immigrant-refugee dialectic. Our core argument is that refugees are portrayed as less deserving and less beneficial to Canada and more threatening than immigrants.

This dialectic relationship is also evident in the legislative process. In Canada, immigration and refugee policy falls under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, which came into force in 2001. The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act broadly outlines policies related to the acceptance and admission of immigrants and refugees, as well as grounds that would render an individual inadmissible to Canada. Since 2001, various legislative changes have been introduced (see Table 1). Some impose restrictions on refugee and asylum claims, such as the Balanced Refugee Reform Act (2010) and the Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act (2012), which restrict the right of appeal for asylum claimants originating from countries that have been designated as "safe." They also allow for mandatory detention of "irregular arrivals," including those who arrive en masse via boat or those suspected of smuggling.

Table 1. Chronology of Key Events, 2001–2014.

Year	Event
2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Termination of Immigrant Investor and Entrepreneur programs – Passage of the Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act, which increased citizenship requirements
2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Release of backgrounder on proposed Express Entry system, which would manage applications for several economic immigration streams
2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Passage of Protecting Canada’s Immigration System Act – Introduction of Parents and Grandparents Super Visa to address backlogs in family stream, but moratorium on new applications – Reduction to federal health benefits for some refugees and refugee claimants
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Introduction of language requirement for lower skilled provincial nominees – Changes to prevent the taking of the citizenship oath with a covered face (later overturned)
2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Arrival of <i>Sun Sea</i> ship carrying Tamil migrants – Passage of Balanced Refugee Reform Act – Caps and some restrictions on Immigrant Investor Program – Caps on Provincial Nominee Program – New citizenship test and increase in required pass mark from 60% to 75% – Policy changes to address allegations of marriage fraud in family stream – Dramatic increase in Temporary Foreign Worker Program, which continued through 2011
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Revamping of <i>Discover Canada</i> study guide for citizenship applicants – Arrival of <i>Ocean Lady</i> ship carrying Tamil migrants
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Creation of the Canadian Experience Class – Authorization of the use of ministerial instructions, which increased ministerial discretion over immigration applications – Limiting federal skilled worker applications to those with existing employment offer in specified occupations
2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – All provinces now have federal–provincial immigration agreements; Provincial Nominee Program expands rapidly
2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Safe Third Country Agreement with the United States comes into effect
2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Passage of Immigration and Refugee Protection Act

Immigration is typically positioned as an economic imperative rather than a humanitarian or social endeavor. This is reflected in the composition of immigration and refugee intake (see Figure 1), and it reflects Canadians's acceptance of immigration, which is fundamentally tied to economic considerations. Public opinion shows that the decline in Canadians saying that immigration levels are too high has roughly coincided with a sharp increase in the number who say that the economic impact of immigration is positive. In 1993, 56% of Canadians agreed that immigration had a positive economic impact; this number rose to 82% by 2015. Even though overall immigration levels have increased since the 1980s, the percentage of newcomers who enter as refugees has declined. As a result, both proportionately and in real numbers, Canada has witnessed a slow increase in skills-based admission of immigrants, with a proportional decrease in the number of refugees admitted.

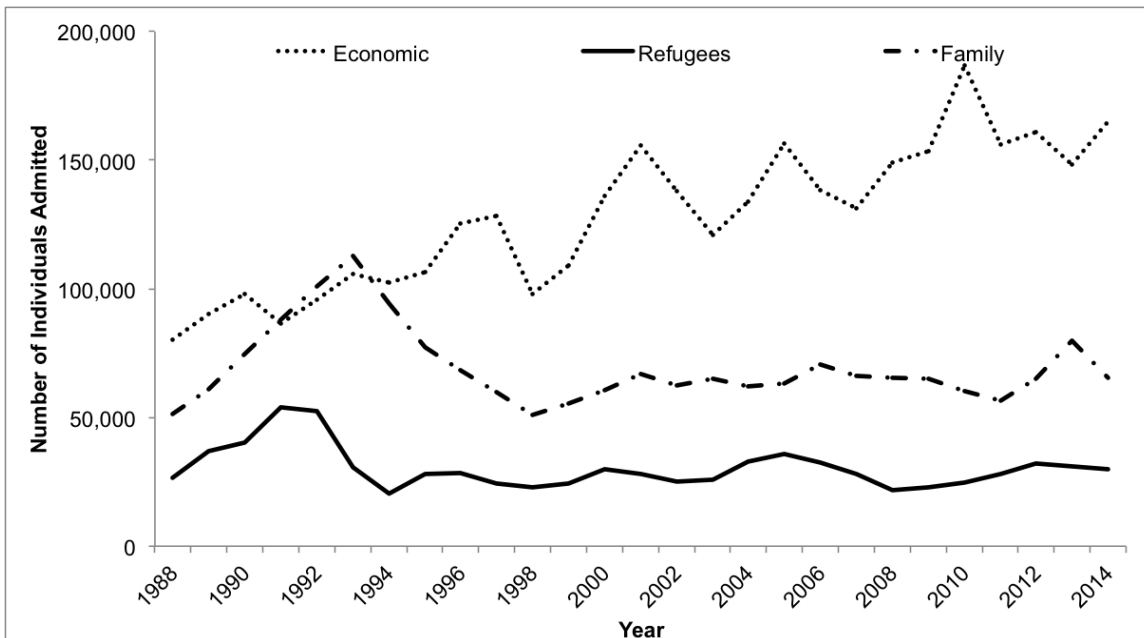


Figure 1. Canadian immigration by policy class (1988–2014). Source: Statistics Canada (2015).

Data from Environics's Focus Canada surveys (2005–2013) show that about one quarter of Canadians believe that immigrants take jobs away from Canadians. This figure is sizable, but lower than one would expect given that economic competition is one of the principal motivators of opposition toward immigration. More numerous are Canadians—more than half—who believe that many refugee claims are false or illegitimate. In other words, although Canadians are open to immigrants as economic contributors, they are much more skeptical about the legitimacy of refugees.

Canadians generally perceive immigrants to be net economic contributors, whereas they see refugees as net beneficiaries. These cues may be accompanied by exaggerated claims, hyperbolic assumptions about the individuals making a refugee claim, and the misrepresentation of fact. Similarly, news reporting has been known to exaggerate undocumented migration, without acknowledging that the majority of refugees and immigrants arrive through legal and lengthy bureaucratic channels (Fleras, 2011). A widely circulated e-mail argued that refugees receive more in benefits than senior citizens, a claim that was false, but was based on information originally published in the *Toronto Star*, one of Canada's largest newspapers (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2009). Despite efforts to dispel this bit of urban mythology, the narrative has stuck, and Canadians routinely frame immigrants as contributors, but think of refugees as a group that benefits from, and may even take advantage of, Canadians's kindness. Although Canadians may not understand the nuances of immigration and refugee policy, they make a distinction between these two groups, and media coverage helps reinforce this hierarchy in at least four ways.

First, the media's coverage of refugees tends to be episodic, with extensive attention devoted to refugees and refugee policy during a time of mass arrivals or international conflicts that contribute to increased asylum claimants (Hier & Greenberg, 2002). To the extent that migration is covered thematically, the focus tends to be on immigrants. The emphasis on particular episodes or flashpoints means that most media attention to refugee issues happens during times of crisis, when the discourse tends to focus on issues of legitimacy and security concerns rather than the longer term contributions that refugees may make to Canada. This reinforces fears about illegality and the abuse of Canada's social programs.

Second, the media's coverage of refugees often focuses on the costs associated with refugee processing, detention, and integration (Hier & Greenberg, 2002). This framing primes the audience to conceive of refugees as "takers" rather than "givers," with an emphasis on their cost to Canadians instead of what they might contribute. Again, this solidifies the hierarchical distinction between immigrants and refugees.

Third, research by Esses, Medianu, and Lawson (2013) suggests that media coverage dehumanizes refugees by highlighting potential threats to the host society (also see Henry & Tator, 2002). Although all migrants are routinely portrayed as outsiders, there is a hierarchy of acceptance with White, Christian, able-bodied immigrants at one end of the spectrum, and racial minority, non-Christian, non-Anglophone/Francophone refugees at the other end of the spectrum (Ford, 2011; Henry & Tator, 2002). The vocabulary used to describe refugees adopts the language of panic and uncertainty, coupled with a sense of invasion by foreign populations (Esses et al., 2013; Fleras, 2011; Hier & Greenberg, 2002). When migrants are perceived as being visibly different, they are also often portrayed as failing to adapt (Fleras, 2011; Henry & Tator, 2002). Therefore, the inclusion of ethnic or country of origin identifiers is of particular interest.

Finally, migrants—refugees and asylum-seekers primarily—who arrive through unsanctioned or atypical means are often depicted as queue jumpers or net drains on the economy (Jackson & Bauder, 2013; Mahtani & Mountz, 2002). Refugee arrivals are often described using terms such as "flood," "flows," or "waves" that suggest that existing policies provide insufficient security at a country's borders and

cannot possibly control the influx of people (Bradimore & Bauder, 2012; Gale, 2004; Greenberg, 2000; Lacroix, 2004; Mountz, 2004; Vukov, 2003). Given that immigrants tend to arrive more incrementally, their entry is often not described in such terms. This contrast is underscored by a vocabulary of deservedness. Where conflict is egregious, known, and salient (for example, in the case of Syria), refugees are viewed as deserving of Canadian assistance, whereas in other cases where conflict is less well known, or ongoing, asylum-seekers may be seen as taking the spots of legitimate refugees who sought to achieve residency through legal means (Krishnamurti, 2013). This individual-level judgment on legitimacy has also been noted to impact public opinion toward migration (Harell, Soroka, & Mahon, 2008; Sides & Citrin, 2007).

The media are not altogether driving the discursive differentiation of immigrants and refugees, but we argue that the framing, tone, and focus of news stories about migration reinforce hierarchical distinctions between immigrants and refugees. These distinctions are evident in government policy and public opinion. By looking at media coverage, we can understand public discourse broadly conceived. This is because media coverage is partly a matter of how journalists choose to portray their subjects but also a reflection of society and institutions. Our analysis shows little in the way of longitudinal change and minimal variation between the coverage of local and national papers. Instead, we provide persuasive evidence of the preference for immigrants over refugees and the deep and durable suspicion that accompanies humanitarian migration.

Data and Method

To observe changes in framing over time and location, we examined coverage from *The Globe and Mail*, the *National Post*, the *Toronto Star*, and the *Vancouver Sun* from January 1, 2005, to December 31, 2014. This time period incorporates several focusing events (e.g., the 2010 arrival of the *MV Sun Sea* cargo ship of Tamil migrants off the coast of British Columbia) and policy changes (e.g., the introduction of the Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act in 2012), although the overall number of immigrants and refugees who were permanently admitted remained relatively stable during this time. We queried the Factiva database for articles that contained the word(s) *immigrant**, *immigrat**, *refugee**, and *asylum* in the headline or lead paragraph. More generic search terms, such as *permanent resident* or *new Canadian*, were not included in the search parameters (although they were kept in the overall analysis) because they are used to describe both immigrants and refugees and thus did not allow us to separate coverage of these two groups. We removed duplicates and articles that included only one mention of immigration or refugee terms, as these articles proved to be largely incidental to the subject matter. The resulting data set included 2,131 stories from national news sources (*The Globe and Post*), 1,567 from the *Toronto Star*, and 1,005 from the *Vancouver Sun*, for a total of 4,703 articles.

Although all four papers are broadsheets, we might expect the local/national dimension and two further interrelated factors—newspaper ideology and ownership—to factor into framing decisions. Interestingly, we did not find substantial significant differences here. National papers tended to have more neutral coverage, presumably owing to more high-level policy orientation and less coverage of the local impact of resettlement, and were focused more on economic and security frames than the local papers (data available from authors). We also hypothesized a difference in coverage, with national papers cueing

issues of a “national focus,” such as immigration levels and the corresponding policymaking that occurs at the federal level, whereas “local issues” might include “on the ground” integration and service delivery challenges faced by newcomers and their host communities. Yet, we found no significant difference in the volume or tone of framing between the two types of news. Similarly, a lack of ideological diversity was somewhat surprising given our inclusion of the *National Post* (a right-of-center paper) and the *Star* (a left-of-center paper). Although the *Post* tended to be more negative in its coverage of immigrants and refugees, the overall differences in tone were small and not statistically significant (t test of tone values, $p > .1$).

In terms of ownership, both the *Sun* and the *National Post* are owned by Postmedia Network Inc., whereas *The Globe* is owned by Woodbridge, and the *Star* by TorStar. Media ownership may impact content in two ways: ideology and editorial discretion. Postmedia is noted for its slightly right-of-center approach, and editorial discretion might be used to advance certain considerations when reporting on immigration and refugee issues. Yet, when we tested for differences in the framing tendencies of Postmedia papers and compared them with those of non-Postmedia papers, ownership did not bear out as an explanatory factor. Only in the case of security framing did we see a slight difference, with Postmedia tending to employ security frames marginally more for immigrants than non-Postmedia papers. However, this finding barely reached conventional levels of significance (t test of mean framing counts, $p = .05$) and stood as the lone difference in coverage by media ownership. Given that there was little variation in framing across along regional/national and ownership lines, we report all further findings in the aggregate.

The dependent variables used in the analysis were volume of framing cues used and tone of framing. Here, we refer to framing cues as words or phrases that unambiguously signaled the use of a thematic frame in the text. To construct our measure for identifying and counting framing cues, we used a two-phase process: (1) building and validating a dictionary that identified framing cues within text and (2) extracting and counting the number of times those framing cues were used in a given time period. The process of building and validating a dictionary itself involved two steps. First, we used WordStat, an automated content analysis program, to query the corpus for the most frequently used substantive words and phrases (i.e., unambiguously related to issues around immigration and refugee admission), then used hierarchical clustering to see whether these words related to one another in a logical way according to an underlying Jaccard coefficient that rated co-occurrence within the same article. In other words, we tested to see whether terms that clustered together formed the basis of an empirically verifiable and logically consistent frame, where the overarching frame (e.g., economy) was made up of clear, logical, and related terms that signaled the frame (e.g., *unemployment* or *transferrable job skills*). Using these steps, we were able to identify six frames of interest for comparison.³ These are outlined in Table 2. In contrast to manual approaches to content analysis, which posit a set of frames a priori and then go about finding those frames, this method identified the words and phrases that were used in a given set of articles and sorted these into logical frames. This helped to mitigate the potential for bias that has been leveled at those who study media coverage (Hier & Lett, 2013).

³ These frames represent not only items of interest, but the six strongest clustered frames as well. Other identified frames were either loosely related to one of the six listed (and incorporated into the appropriate dictionary) or were event-specific, and therefore would not yield longitudinal analysis.

In the second phase of the process, we identified how these frames were used in our population of stories. To do so, we used Lexicoder (Soroka, Daku, & Young, 2012), an automated content analysis program. Using the article as the unit of analysis, Lexicoder conducted a frequency analysis by a simple count of the number of dictionary terms used in each article. The software also measured tone in two ways: first, using the Lexicoder Sentiment Dictionary written by Soroka et al. (2012), Lexicoder registers a tone score for each article, which is calculated as (number of positive words/all words) – (number of negative words/all words). The validity of the automated tone score is discussed in depth in Young and Soroka (2012), who have tested automated tone outputs against human coders and found comparable results. Next, using the same calculation at the sentence level, Lexicoder measured “sentence proximity tone,” which was defined as the tone of each sentence carrying one of the dictionary terms. For example, if a sentence contained a framing cue from a particular frame (e.g., *unemployment* cues the economic frame), the sentence proximity tone module allowed us to measure the tone of that precise sentence and then average out the tone of all sentences in an article that contained an economic framing term. This created an economic frame tone score (and was similarly done for all other frames mentioned in that article), which was used in the analysis below. In this way, we were able to draw conclusions about the extent to which each frame-related sentence contained either positive or negative sentiment.

Although automated techniques allow scholars to extract information in a manner that is low cost and efficient in terms of time and human resources, it is often observed that analysis of text on a word-by-word basis incorrectly assumes the semantic independence of words and, equally, does not appropriately weight the meaning of some words vis-à-vis others (see Pennebaker, Mehl, & Niederhoffer, 2003; Soroka et al., 2012). These critiques are undoubtedly valid, but not completely insurmountable. According to Grimmer and Stewart (2013), to overcome incorrect assumptions about language that are found in automated analyses, researchers must validate the results of the analysis.

In this vein, we conducted a manual check on a random sample of 5% of articles ($n = 205$). To validate the framing analysis, a trained coder read the articles and determined whether the word/phrase captured by the framing dictionary actually corresponded to the theme of the categorical dictionary. For example, a sentence that read “Immigrants are hard-pressed to find employment in many of Canada’s smaller cities” corresponded with the intended frame (economy), whereas a sentence such as “Employing a libertarian rhetoric, he discouraged the imposition of a new policy” did not, although both used a variation of the key term *employ*. From here, exclusion rules were introduced, and the analysis was rerun (see Tolley, 2015, for an explanation of the process used for validating an automated analysis). This iterative process took place until the researcher was satisfied that more than 80% of a random sample of articles produced dictionary-based coding equivalent to that which would be arrived at through a manual approach.

Table 2. Categorical Dictionary Frames and Examples.

Frame	Description	Example from text
Economy	Economic impact of admitting immigrants/refugees	"No other aspect of the temporary foreign worker program carries that benefit for low-skill jobs."
Ethnicity ^a	The ethnoracial, national or religious background of immigrants/refugees	"The Tories have already moved against false refugee claims, by making it easier to remove those whose claims aren't valid and by penalizing mass arrivals such as the boatloads of Sri Lankans who showed up in 2009 and 2010."
Rights	Dialogue around individual rights afforded to immigrants/refugees	"The government refused and she twice appealed the decision, arguing that her rights to life, liberty and security of the person under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms had been violated."
Security	Possible threats to security on account of the admission of immigrants/refugees	"The department's priority at the time was to target unsuccessful refugee claimants who were on the run rather than criminals, because that way the deportation numbers were higher."
Services	Access to and use of state services by immigrants/refugees	"In 2009, about 2,000 investor immigrants and their families were accepted from China, most of them private citizens drawn by the promise of a better environment, education system and health care."
Validity	Discussion around the validity, legitimacy, or deservedness of immigrants/refugees	"The new legislation aims to speed up the determination process, making it easier both to grant asylum to those who deserve it, and to reject and remove those who don't."

^aAll ethnicities were aggregated in the same category of the topic dictionary when ethnicity was treated as a frame. This was to capture how the specification or particularization of ethnicities may change framing when they are cued. That said, we expected that responses to immigration would vary widely depending on which ethnic group was cued; therefore, we disaggregated ethnicities in later stages of the analysis.

Canadian News Media Framing of Immigrants and Refugees

Using the frames listed in Table 2, we queried our text corpus for the volume of framing cues (i.e., the number of times a dictionary term or a derivative of the term was present). Data were aggregated by quarter to smooth out strong punctuations around specific events. Figure 2 illustrates the variation in framing choices made by media (all media sources aggregated).⁴ The most striking differences between the two groups are found in the first and final panels of Figure 2. First, immigration was framed as an economic issue to a far greater extent than refugee coverage. Although there was some variation in the volume with which the media applied economic framing cues to immigration, media relied on economic considerations when discussing immigration to a far greater extent than they did when discussing refugees. This is consistent with the positioning of immigration as an economic program, in contrast to the more humanitarian orientation of the refugee system. Yet, this should be tempered by the associated finding that discussion of the economic impact of migrants appeared to be quite broad, with very few stories ($n = 64$) referring to specific programs such as the Investor Class or Canadian Experience Class.⁵

In contrast, validity framing—that is, stories that cued considerations around deservedness or the legitimacy of claims—was used to a greater extent with respect to refugees than it was with immigrants. Stories with a validity frame often contextualized or raised questions about the refugee determination process. In part, this public discourse was reflective of interventions from political elites who were also more likely to discuss refugee issues in conjunction with ideas about validity, a point we discuss more fully below.

Other frames showed far more variation: Ethnicity frames (i.e., stories that reference individuals in terms of their country of origin or ethnoracial background) were used more frequently with immigrants, but when there were focusing events, such as the arrival of the *MV Sun Sea* to Vancouver's shores, ethnicity framing became a key component of media coverage of refugees. A similar trend was evident around security framing; coverage of immigrant and refugee groups was variable, but the presence of focusing events tended to increase the volume of this type of framing.

⁴ Note that these analyses were also run with three categories: (1) articles that mentioned immigration only ($n = 2,796$), (2) articles that mentioned refugees only ($n = 1,184$), and (3) articles that mentioned both ($n = 1,407$). Results were similar, so we omitted the baseline category (both) and redistributed articles that contained both refugee and immigration terms according to whether the article had a greater number of immigration or refugee mentions (immigration $n = 3,325$; refugee $n = 1,913$).

⁵ We also queried the data to see whether these mentions were strongly associated with a particular ethnic group. Approximately half ($n = 28$) of the stories that mentioned these specific types of programs also cued East Asia, suggesting that migration from China might be more routinely accompanied by considerations of wealth-obtaining citizenship. However, a slightly larger number cued the United Kingdom ($n = 36$) and the United States ($n = 38$), which suggests that reporting on investment was not exclusively related to China, nor was this association entirely driving the ethnicity frames we discuss.

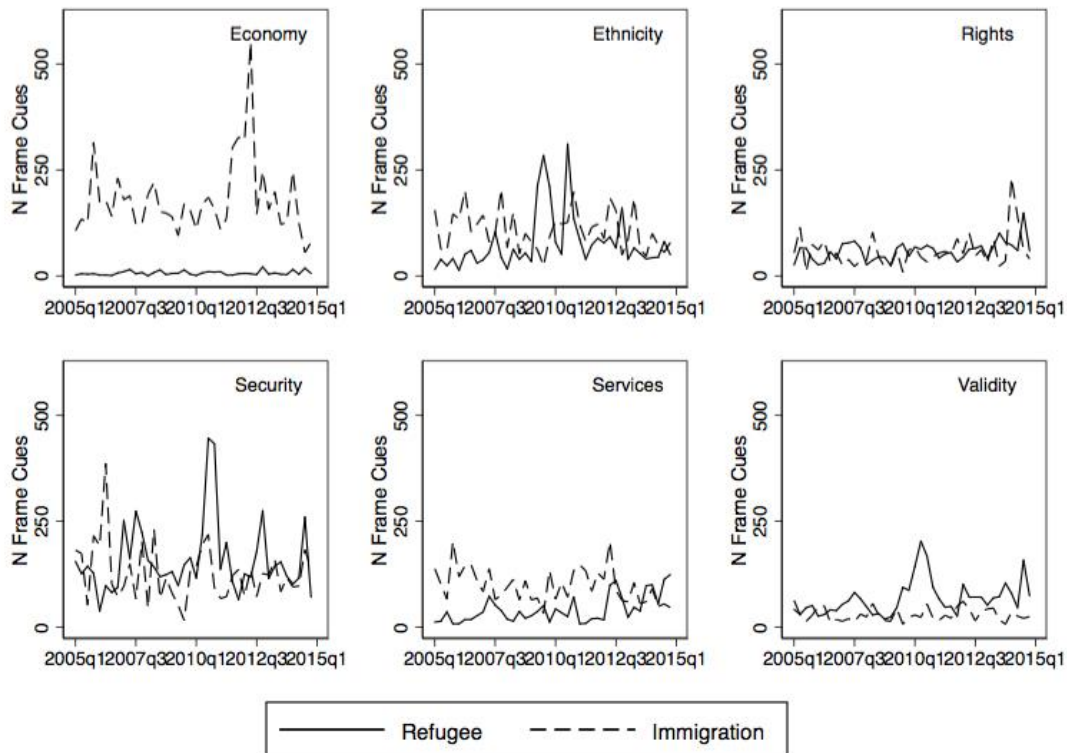


Figure 2. Framing of refugee/immigration coverage in Canadian print news.

Analysis of migrants' access to social programs and state benefits (service use) illustrates how focusing events, which more commonly involve refugees and asylum-seekers, increased the media's attention to a specific frame. Although immigration coverage employed service framing in a relatively routine fashion, it was much more episodic and intense in the coverage of refugees. For example, during the 2010 *Sun Sea* arrival coverage and again in the 2012 coverage of the government's restructuring of the Interim Federal Health Program, which cut health services for some refugees and asylum claimants, media stories increasingly framed refugees along service lines. Such news stories reported on the perceived generosity of the Interim Federal Health Program (often in contrast to benefits received by Canadian citizens); these stories were mildly correlated with those that made use of validity frames (Pearson's r , .16, $p < .001$).

Figure 3 contains the same data presented as a proportion of all framing that took place during a given year. Comparing immigration to refugee coverage illustrates a starkly different set of considerations that were cued when discussing these two groups. The first panel of Figure 3 demonstrates that security was the most predominant frame in refugee coverage; this was reasonably stable over the 10-year period. The second most prominent frame was ethnicity, which ranged from 10% to 39% of framing, accounting for up to 39% of all frames used in 2009 alone, a period that corresponds to the increase in coverage of

boats arriving from Sri Lanka and containing asylum-seekers. Although ethnicity was also a routine form of framing in immigration coverage, it made up around 10% to 20% of all framing from 2005 to 2014. Comparatively, economic and security framing accounted for approximately 50% of all immigration framing during this period.

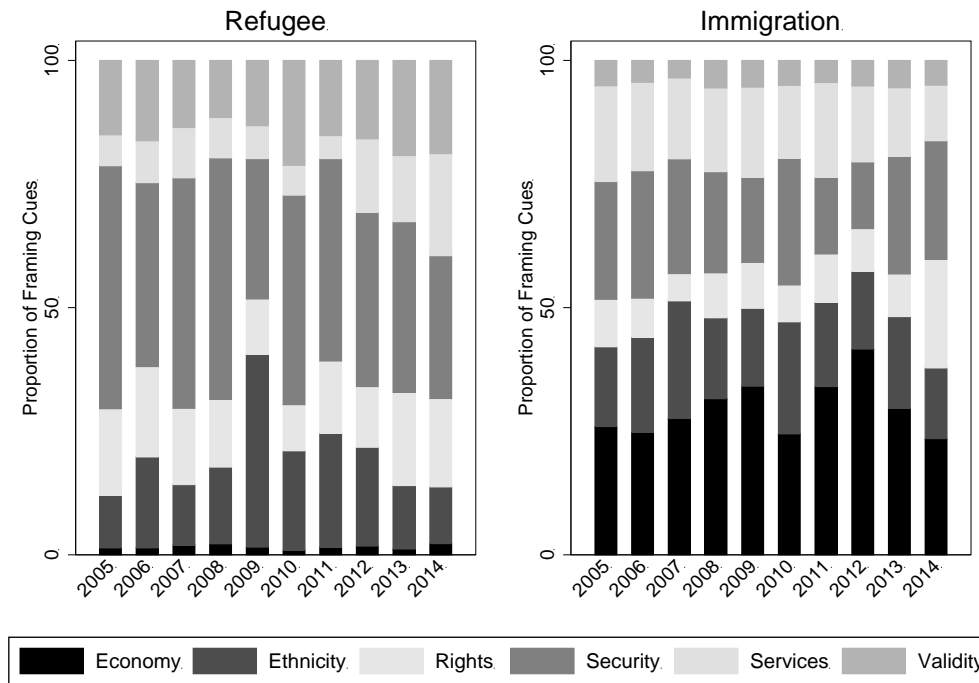


Figure 3. Proportion of framing cues by refugee/immigration coverage in Canadian print news.

There were also consistent differences in the way that the validity of claims was presented around these two groups. Questions about validity and deservedness accounted for about 15% to 20% of refugee framing, but 5% or less of immigrant framing. Furthermore, the context in which issues of validity were brought up for each group varied. Whereas validity frames were modestly correlated with security frames (Pearson's $r = .24, p < .001$) for stories on immigration, they were correlated (significantly) with almost every other type of frame for refugee stories. This suggests that when immigration claims were cast into doubt, this was largely on security grounds or as a result of perceived threats to the Canadian population, whereas refugee claims were called into question on all fronts. This is suggestive of a pervasive negativity toward refugees in public discourse.

The tone of coverage can be further accounted for by the data presented in Figure 4. Recall that tone of frames was calculated at the sentence level, with positivity and negativity measured as it reflected a framing cue. In almost all cases, refugees were framed far more negatively than immigrants. This becomes particularly apparent when ethnicities were cued. Stories that cued the ethnoracial or national background of refugees were routinely more negative than stories about immigrants that cued their

origins (t test, $p < .001$). The dialogue around rights was also steadily more negative for refugees than it was for immigrants (t test, $p < .001$), suggesting that the discourse around the rights afforded to beneficiaries of refugee resettlement were more routinely described using vocabulary that might have called these rights into question.

Security was among the most negatively framed issue related to refugees and immigrants alike. This is not surprising insofar as some of the vocabulary around security issues (e.g., terrorism, threats, militaristic action) is inherently negative. However, when we compared the tone of this framing across immigrant and refugee news, we found that both groups cued roughly the same level of negativity (t -test scores showed no significant differences for immigrants and refugees). We observed far more variation between refugee and immigrant coverage when contrasting the tone of services framing (t test, $p < .005$). Although the proportion of services framing composed a larger portion of immigration coverage than refugee coverage, when stories about refugees cued service considerations, these tended to be reported more negatively than they were for immigrants. Framing in this area became particularly negative around the arrival of boats containing Tamil refugees in 2009 and 2010.

Although the framing of security issues was unsurprisingly among the most negative type of coverage in immigration and refugee reporting, framing of validity was as negative—in some cases more negative—than security framing. Validity, like security, is predisposed to using negative language. After all, most articles would not cue validity concerns by stating that there are none. Thus, it is important to note that although proportionately more refugee articles cued validity framing, the level of negativity for refugee articles was lower than that for immigration articles (t test, $p < .005$). Looking back at the articles that composed the validity frames in these years, these strong negative spikes stemmed from a number of events including the transition in immigration and discourse under a Conservative government elected in 2006 that focused on ridding the country of “bogus refugees,” the 2009 arrival of a boat of Tamil migrants, and changes to government policy including the imposition of visa restrictions on Mexican and Czech nationals. This underscores the contention that negative media coverage was not simply a function of media “choice” but also a reflection of public (and policy) discourse on migration.

Differences in the volume, framing, and tone of media coverage suggest that immigrants and refugees were perceived as substantively different from one another. This is in part a reflection of the different policy frameworks that governed the admission and acceptance of immigrants and refugees. It is also partially reflective of the period of time that we analyzed, which featured a Conservative government that worked to close perceived loopholes in the refugee determination process. Illustratively, when we analyzed stories that included mentions of the minister of immigration, Conservative government, and relevant departments and legislation, we found a strong correlation between validity framing and this government frame ($p < .01$); this was particularly common in stories about refugees.⁶ Such a finding illustrates the importance of the policy context. But institutional explanations tell just a part of the story: The backgrounds of migrants also have clear explanatory value.

⁶ The terms used to denote a government frame are available from the authors.

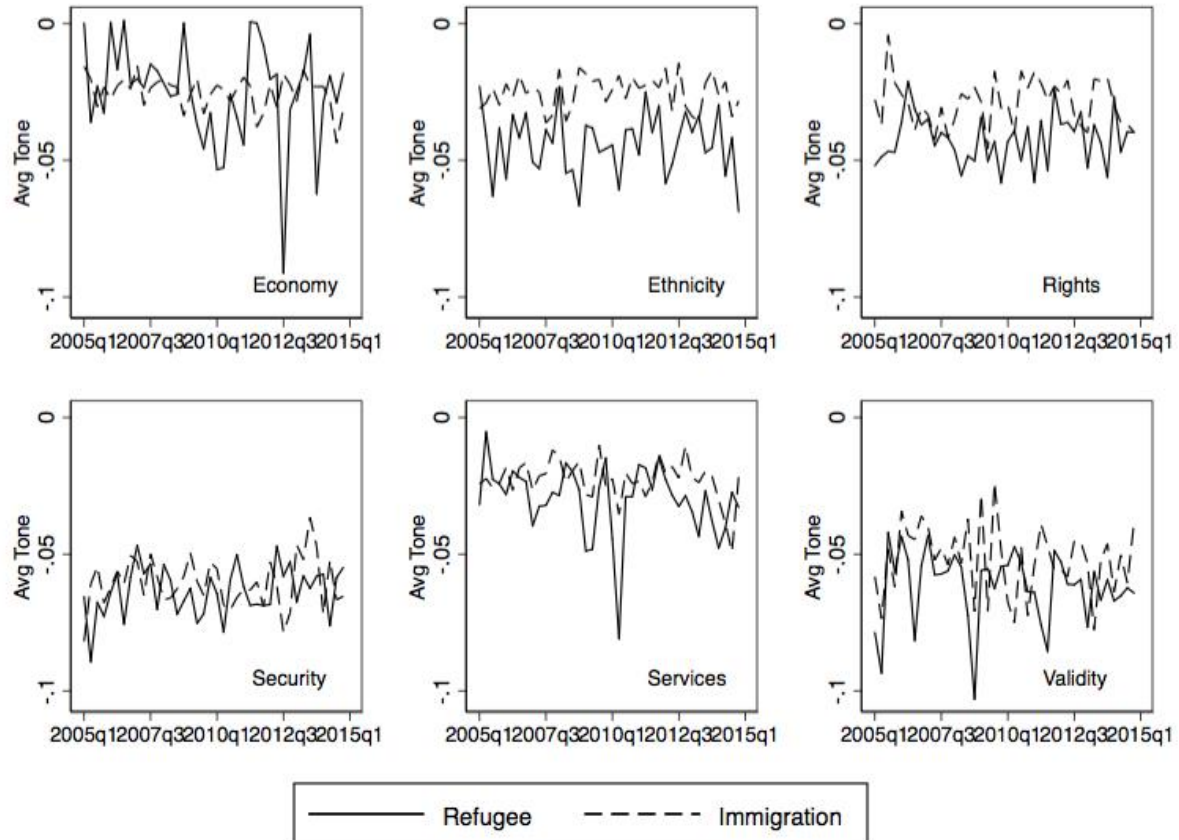


Figure 4. Tone of framing by refugee/immigration coverage in Canadian print news.

Figures 5 and 6 illustrate the number of references made to various ethnicities and national origins across each of the six frames, disaggregated by coverage of refugees and immigrants. These figures focus on the regions that have contributed the largest number of refugees and immigrants to Canada in the past decade (see Table 3 for complete data), in addition to those that have been flagged to the public through various amendments to immigration and refugee policy and the designation of particular countries as “safe” (see Appendix A for regions list and Appendix B for a “safe countries” list as designated by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada).

Table 3. Proportion of Articles Containing Ethnicity Mentions in Immigration and Refugee Coverage.

Year	Africa	South and Central Asia	East and Southeast Asia	Middle East	Eastern Europe	Latin America	Caribbean
Refugee coverage							
2005	21.0	23.0	9.1	37.2	3.0	6.5	0.2
2006	28.6	5.1	10.5	39.7	7.9	8.1	0.1
2007	9.4	12.7	7.4	57.2	4.7	8.3	0.3
2008	19.7	19.0	5.9	24.2	14.2	14.2	2.8
2009	18.1	24.9	8.9	7.1	20.7	20.2	0.1
2010	12.6	24.7	20.0	16.1	9.4	17.1	0.3
2011	44.8	8.4	6.4	23.2	6.8	10.2	0.1
2012	15.9	6.6	9.4	43.8	15.9	8.1	0.3
2013	13.9	4.4	4.1	56.6	9.4	11.3	0.4
2014	13.1	3.8	7.6	64.8	6.4	4.1	0.2
Immigration coverage							
2005	18.7	25.2	25.8	6.7	9.0	12.1	2.4
2006	11.1	25.6	25.7	11.3	11.6	11.0	3.5
2007	10.8	16.8	35.3	12.3	8.6	12.4	3.8
2008	17.0	23.0	27.4	10.5	9.1	9.8	3.2
2009	14.0	29.9	28.3	8.6	9.3	8.5	1.3
2010	11.6	22.2	25.7	11.0	7.7	19.4	2.5
2011	11.7	25.9	37.3	9.0	6.5	6.8	2.7
2012	13.1	25.4	35.2	11.1	4.0	8.9	2.2
2013	16.5	19.8	34.1	10.5	6.3	11.5	1.3
2014	14.6	12.4	34.5	14.9	5.1	15.3	3.3

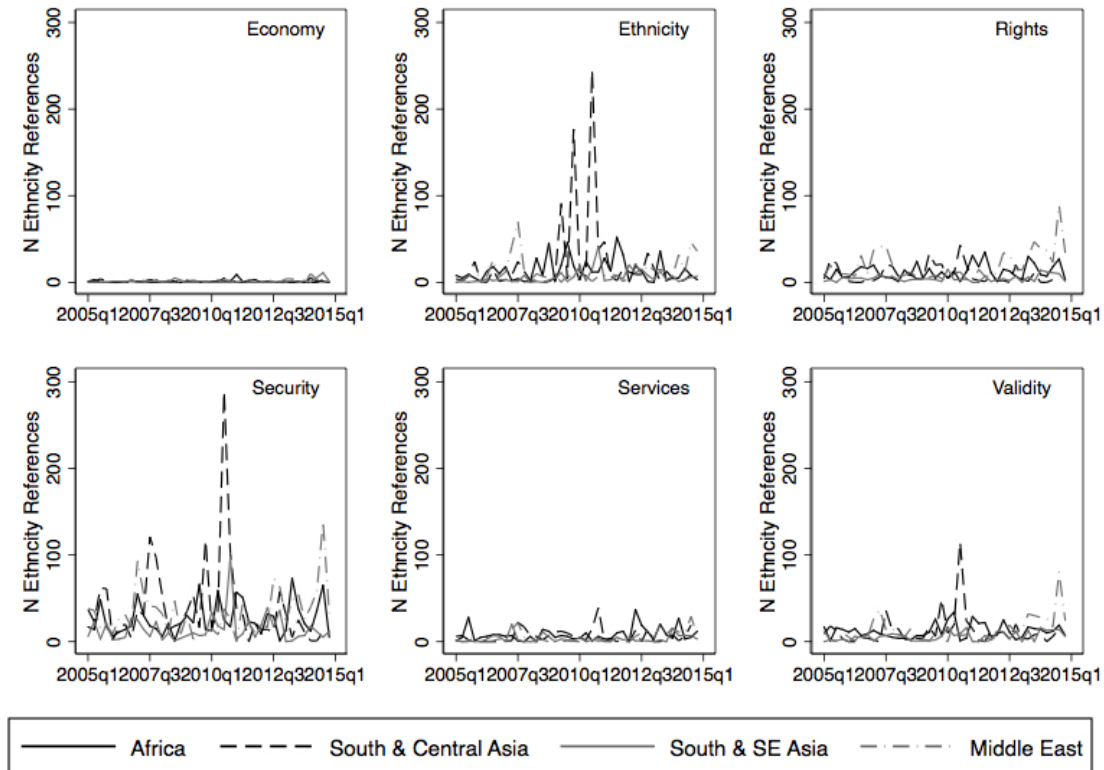


Figure 5. Framing of ethnicity in refugee coverage in Canadian print news.

Ethnicity and national origin entered stories about immigrants and refugees in different ways. Coverage of refugees routinely focused on South and Central Asia (including Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh; see Appendix A for categorization) and, toward 2012–2014, the Middle East (note that the differences between security framing of immigration and refugee coverage was significant for South and Central Asia, $p < .005$, and for the Middle East, $p < .001$). In contrast, there was almost no differentiation by ethnicity or national origin in the coverage of immigration. This is notable because in both categories—immigrant and refugee—migrants had originated from more than 200 countries over the time period in which our analysis was conducted (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2014), and yet discussions of ethnicity and national origin were less common in stories about immigrants.

The sharper focus on refugees' origins was perhaps a reflection of the situations of the countries from which they are coming—and the fact that their exit was dependent on the situations within those countries—but it nonetheless resulted in coverage that positioned refugees in ethnoracial or national terms. However, when we queried the data set for the volume and tone of framing for individuals who came from countries with ongoing civil wars or sectarian violence, we found that these refugees were not framed significantly differently from those who did not come from conflict-prone regions (and therefore

obtained refugee status because of the economic situation or political authoritarianism in the country). One small caveat is that we note that those coming from conflict-ridden areas were marginally more likely to have more validity frames cued than those who did not come from conflict zones, although this result met only the lowest threshold of statistical significance (t test, $p < .1$), suggesting that the relationship is rather weak.

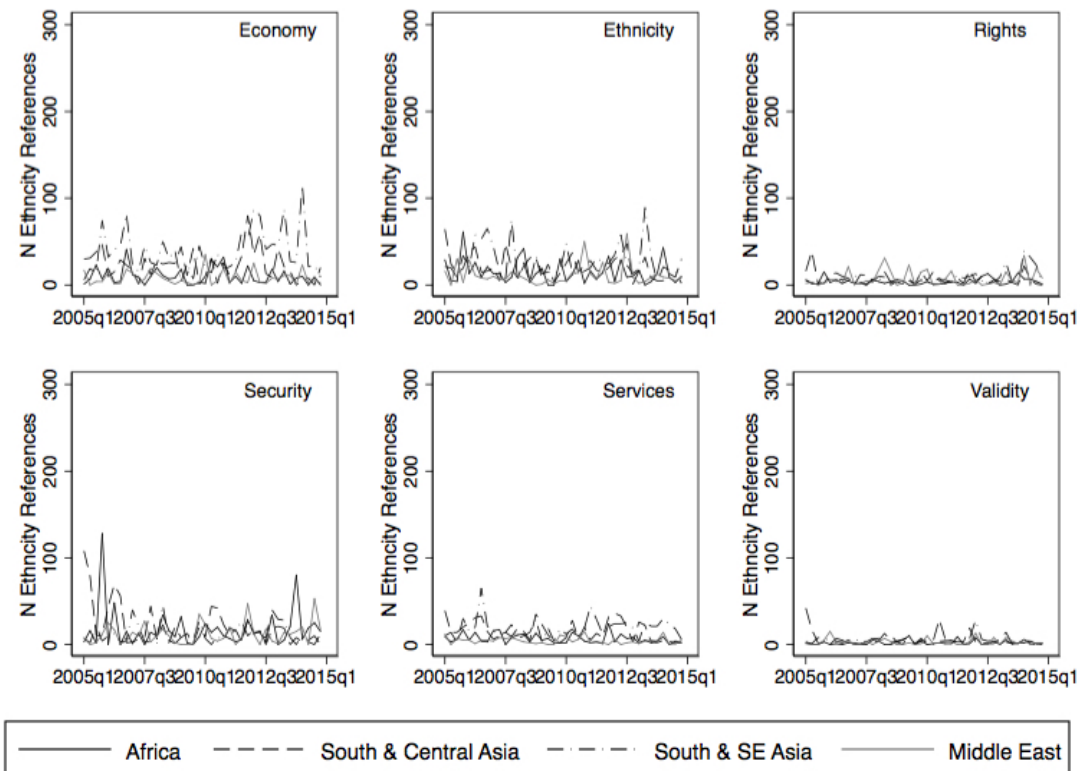


Figure 6. Framing of ethnicity in immigration coverage in Canadian print news.

Even more telling is the relationship between reporting on migrants' ethnicity and tone of framing. To further supplement this finding, ordinary least squares regression models (data not shown; available from authors) demonstrated that in articles about immigration, references to Africa had a negative impact on the tone of ethnicity framing ($p < .01$) and rights framing ($p < .01$), and references to individuals from East Asia positively influenced ethnicity framing ($p < .005$) and validity framing ($p < .01$). This suggests that even for immigrants, the most valued of newcomers, distinctions were made based on ethnicity or country of origin. These results build on Bauder's (2011) discussion of dialectics. They highlight the juxtaposition of foreign, racialized migrants and predominantly White Canadian citizens, as well as the differentiation between mostly Black African immigrants and the more positive portrayal of East Asian immigrants, some of whom arrived via economic immigration programs that privileged wealthier applicants. Although our findings are only suggestive, they do fit with research on so-called

model minorities, a descriptor most commonly applied to those with East Asian backgrounds (Wong, Lai, Nagasawa, & Lin, 1998).

Comparatively, in articles about refugees, only mentions of East Asia positively increased the tone of ethnicity framing ($p < .01$). That is, whereas immigrants from some backgrounds could expect to be framed in positive ways, almost all refugees, regardless of background, were covered negatively. Furthermore, the cueing of a specific ethnicity occurred more reliably in articles about refugees. In other words, refugees were more likely than immigrants to experience an "ethnic penalty" in coverage. This suggests that media were reinforcing a hierarchy of preferences for particular types of migrants.

Discussion

Our comparison of media coverage demonstrates the differences in public discourse surrounding immigrants and refugees. Returning to our research questions, refugees were accorded attention on a more episodic basis, with an emphasis on mass or irregular arrivals, even though such events were in fact quite rare. Moreover, when refugees were the subjects, the tone of coverage was more negative than it was for immigration, although there was some variation when the results were analyzed in terms of specific frames. Although we expected refugee coverage to have become more negative in the past 10 years given a tightening of rules and reduction of rights for refugee claimants, we found no real evidence that this was the case. Although negative tone had not increased, overall, in the past decade, negative coverage of refugee issues was particularly apparent during focusing events.

Extending the research on immigration dialectics (Bauder, 2011; Pottie-Sherman & Wilkes, 2013), our analysis uncovered a discursive hierarchy, with immigrants associated more frequently (and positively) with economic considerations and refugees associated more frequently (and negatively) with validity considerations. Media's tendency to home in on episodic or focusing events, particularly as they relate to refugees, contributed to wide variations in the coverage of refugees, with particularly negative coverage occurring during so-called focusing events. During these events, public discourse, as signified in media coverage, raised questions about the impact of refugee arrivals on Canada's cultural fabric, as well as potential threats to security. The period of our study precedes the 2015 federal election during which the Liberal Party campaigned successfully on a promise to increase the number of Syrian refugees who would be welcomed to Canada. In general, Canadians responded positively to these efforts, with many working to arrange private sponsorships of refugees from Syria, but there was criticism from some corners about the scope and scale of this resettlement effort. Given this reaction as well as the potential for international comparisons, future research should turn its attention to the coverage of this focusing event.

Our results contribute to the literature in a number of ways. First, automated text analysis allowed us to query a large number of media sources over a longer period of time. As a result, we can make claims about event-driven coverage, as well as the volume and tone of framing in periods when less attention was devoted to this policy space. In doing so, we revealed that refugee coverage is episodic and that more thematic and durable coverage is reserved for immigrants. Although intake can spike in response to episodic events, refugees' arrival and integration is ongoing; media coverage does not reflect this. Second, by bringing in a direct comparison with immigration coverage, we situated our findings

longitudinally and measured them against the coverage of refugees. On this basis, we shed light on the dialectical relationship between immigrants and refugees. Finally, we draw some important conclusions about the relationship between refugees' backgrounds and the tone of their coverage. Regardless of their country of origin, refugees' backgrounds were a focus of coverage, and this tended to be negatively framed. The existing literature has demonstrated the distinctions drawn between immigrants and Canadian citizens; we extended this to highlight the juxtaposition between immigrants and refugees and the further distinctions that are drawn on the basis of ethnicity. Although our results only begin to explore the complexities of the relationship between ethnicity and perceptions of immigrants and refugees, they signal a need to further explore the apparent hierarchy of preferences for particular migrants.

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Appendix A: Ethnicity Dictionary

(Diminutives/denonyms of all terms were included in the dictionary.)

Middle East: Middle East, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Iran, Turk, Iraq, Saudi, Yemen, Syria, United Arab Emirates, Emirati, Emirian, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Oman, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Cyprus

Central Asia: Central Asia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Kirghizstan, Tajikistan, Tadjhikistan, Uzbekistan

South Asia: South Asia, Afghan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka

East Asia: East Asia, China, Chinese, Honk Kong, Macau, Korea, Mongolia, Taiwan, Japan

Southeast Asia: Southeast Asia, Cambodia, Myanmar, Burma, Thai, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, East Timor, Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore, Fiji, Vanuatu, Vanuatu, Lao, Tuvalu, Solomon Island, Micronesia, Tonga

Africa: Africa, Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Motswana, Batswana, Burkina Faso, Burkinabe, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Ivorian, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Uganda, Tunisia, Togo, Tanzania, Swazi, Somali, Sierra Leon, Seychelles, Senegal, Sao Tome, Rwanda, Niger, Namibia, Mozambique, Morocco, Mauritania, Mali, Malawi, Madagascar, Libya, Mauritius, South Africa, Sudan, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Basotho, Mosotho

Eastern Europe: Eastern Europe, Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Herzegovina, Croat, Czech, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Polish, Pole, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine

Latin America: Latin America, South America, Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Colombia, Cuba, Dominica, Ecuador, Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela

Caribbean: Caribbean, Antigua, Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Grenada, Grenadian, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Kiribati, Saint Lucia, Trinidad, Tobago

Appendix B: Safe Countries List

Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Chile, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel (excludes Gaza and the West Bank), Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States of America