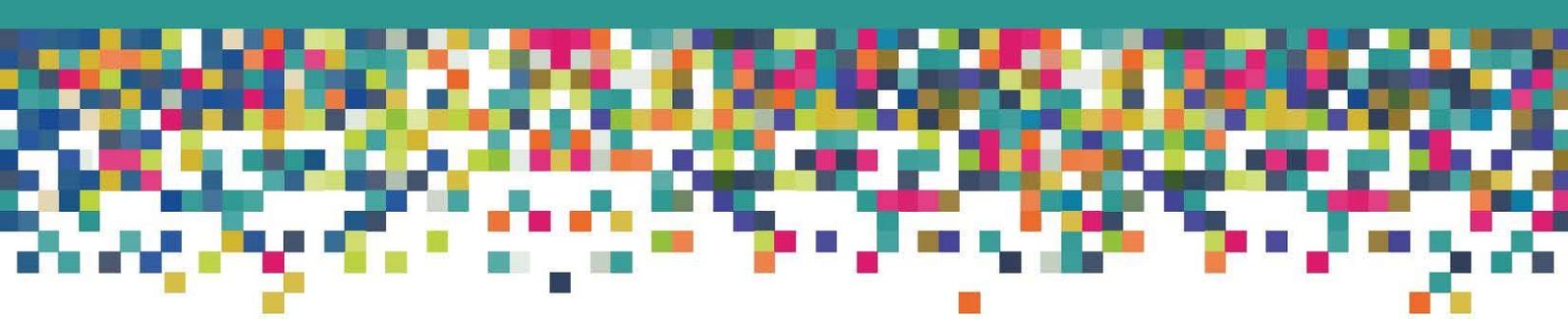




Media and
Communications

Media@LSE MSc Dissertation Series

Editors: Bart Cammaerts and Nick Anstead



WE ARE HUMANS TOO

Refugees' Perceptions of Representations of Migration in
European News

Hannah Traussnigg



“We Are Humans Too”

Refugees’ Perceptions of Representations of Migration in European News

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Published by Media@LSE, London School of Economics and Political Science ("LSE"), Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE. The LSE is a School of the University of London. It is a Charity and is incorporated in England as a company limited by guarantee under the Companies Act (Reg number 70527).

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Abstract

The topic of migration gained much media attention ever since the European refugee crisis in 2015. Press coverage analyses show that migration is usually represented within two frames, humanitarianism and militarisation, and refugees' voices are mostly underrepresented or marginalised. In an attempt to provide space for refugees' voices to be heard, this dissertation examines how refugees see themselves and the topic of migration represented in the news. It explores whether refugees feel recognised by the media and by the society they live in and whether this recognition has any implications on how they feel about themselves. Furthermore, this dissertation examines whether refugees think that media representations of migration have any consequences for their everyday lives.

This study is situated within the field of media and migration as well as audience studies. Through in-depth interviews with nine refugees from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and Syria, all now living in a rural area in Austria, and the use of theoretical concepts such as recognition, voice, cultural identity, and othering, this study found that refugees perceive representations of migration in the news to be negatively framed, generalised, and often exaggerated. Due to mere negative portrayals, participants of this study perceived a dissonance between the 'refugee identity' constructed in the media and their own, self-constructed identity. Representations of migration do not only shape refugees' identity to some extent, they also have consequences for refugees' everyday lives as well as for the general public. Refugees desire more positive portrayals of migration in the news as well as more contact with local people.

INTRODUCTION

Migration – A topic one can hardly miss when reading the news. A topic that has always been more or less present in news stories around the world, because conflicts and wars have continuously forced people to leave their homes and move to countries that are safer than their own. To avoid misunderstandings: In this dissertation, I understand the term migration as people's forced movement from one country to another. It is a topic that gained particularly much media attention ever since the European "refugee crisis" of 2015, as it was widely framed within global news stories. Amidst numerous news content analyses in the fields of media and migration studies, looking at how the topic of migration was represented in the news before, during, and after the European refugee crisis, hardly any study seemed to be interested in asking the people most affected by these representations about their stories regarding the topic. Refugees were and still are not only underrepresented and silenced in the news, their perceptions of, experiences with and opinions about their own representation in the media were apparently of not much academic research interest either. As outlined in the literature review, there are several studies that analysed certain ethnic minorities' perceptions of media representations, however, these were conducted before 2015. The general research interest then shifted towards audience studies that looked at the effects media representations of migration had on a (mostly Western) general public. How come all these different players involved with the topic were provided an opportunity to reflect upon migration and its representation in the news except for those actually at the centre of it all?

It was this question that inspired my interest in researching refugees' perceptions of their own representation in news media. I was curious about this, from my Western perspective, 'different' point of view, about refugees' perceptions of this contemporary social, cultural as well as media issue called migration. It was a perspective, that I admittedly had not yet come across when reading, watching, or listening the news. Though I was and still am eager to learn about refugees' stories – because they matter. Refugees' stories matter, because "many stories matter", as Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie illustrated in her TEDGlobal talk (2009) about „The danger of a single story“. Applying Adichie's words to introduce the context of this dissertation, press coverage reports from the 2015 refugee crisis (a term representative of the single story told in European news) showed that the topic of migration was told and

represented within two frames, or, as Adichie would say, two different versions of a single story; humanitarianism and militarisation (Sanyal, 2017). Refugees are either represented as passive victims in need of humanitarian aid or as an active threat towards Europe.

The consequence of the single story is this: It robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult. It emphasizes how we are different rather than how we are similar (TEDGlobal, 2009, 13:36min).

While providing space for refugees' voices to be heard and hopefully listened to, this dissertation attempts to explore whether refugees feel recognised by the media and by the society they live in and whether this recognition has any implications on how they feel about themselves. It attempts to examine whether refugees think that media representations of migration have consequences for their everyday lives. This dissertation is a contribution to existing literature in the fields of media, audience, and migration studies as it is the first to conduct in-depth interviews with refugees from the Middle East and Afghanistan about their perceptions of representations of migration in the news within the context of Austria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review provides an overview of the existing relevant work that has informed this research. It highlights key findings among scholars that have approached media representations and more particularly audiences' perceptions of these representations in different ways. I, therefore, first review the literature that examines how the topic of migration is portrayed in the media, especially highlighting the results of European press coverage reports published since the refugee crisis of 2015. Secondly, I give an overview of the different approaches towards analysing perceptions of media representations in different countries around the world. This ultimately leads to a justification for the research conducted for this dissertation.

Migration in the Media

In order to understand where refugees' perceptions about their own representation in the media are rooted, it is useful to first familiarise ourselves with the broader field of media and migration studies, which focus on how migration is portrayed in the media and on the effects these representations have (Moore *et al*, 2012; Ruhrmann & Demren, 2000; van Dijk, 1991). Within this broader category, scholars have more particularly researched the representation of migration in different kinds of media, such as social media (Rettberg & Gajjala, 2016), international news media (Alhayek, 2014), national newspapers (Khosravinik, 2010), or national TV (Ruhrmann *et al*, 2006). Not only text, but also imagery used to represent refugees in the media have been at the centre of many studies (Lennette & Miskovic, 2018; Giannakopoulos, 2016; Ibrahim & Howarth, 2016; Wright, 2002).

The European refugee crisis triggered a tremendous amount of news reporting about migration. "The arrival of almost a million refugees and migrants to Europe in 2015 became a top media topic and a controversial issue in the continent's public debates" (Georgiou & Zaborowski, 2017: 2). In 2018, migration and integration were still by far the top two topics most frequently covered in Austrian news (APA-DeFacto GmbH, 2018). The refugee crisis also sparked a great research interest about how the topic of migration and refugees themselves are represented in European news. Most of these studies are based on content or discourse analyses (Onay-Coker, 2019; Abid *et al*, 2017; Parker, 2015) and were often designed as comparative studies between different countries or geographic areas (Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017; Georgiou & Zaborowski, 2017; Berry *et al*, 2015; Ethical Journalism Network, 2015). Even though it is difficult to compare the results of these studies with each other, due to different research objects and samples, they all have identified certain deficiencies in the way migration is represented in the news (Trebbe & Schoenhagen, 2011). In order to better understand refugees' perceptions of their own representation in news media, it is crucial to know the key characteristics of those representations of migration in European news.

Underrepresentation and marginalisation

Given the Eurocentric focus of this dissertation, I here prioritise results from cross-European press coverage analyses. First of all, despite the fact that the topic of migration gained much

media attention since the European refugee crisis, refugees were and still are generally underrepresented or marginalised in European news (Trebbe & Schoenhagen, 2011). Reports show that only 21% of the people speaking in news stories about migration are refugees, compared to the majority of voices of (male) politicians, lawyers and organisational representatives (WACC & CCME, 2017). Not only are refugees not given enough adequate space for their voice in European news, Georgiou and Zaborowski further found that there is only very little information published about „refugees’ individual stories and their cultures; thus, information about who these people actually are was absent or marginal in much of the press coverage in most European countries“ (Georgiou & Zaborowski, 2017: 2), which means that the people most affected by those representations of migration are not included in the debates around this topic. Arguably, this makes it “easier for the public to distance themselves from the issue, and not think about the human beings who are affected by the policies and laws under consideration” (WACC & CCME, 2017: 19).

Stereotyping and negative framing

Consequently, stereotyping is another deficit identified across many European studies. Refugees are often subject to generalisations and are rather recognised as a group than as individual personalities (D’Haenens & Bink, 2007). Labelling often happens through the use of conceptual metaphors, predominantly water metaphors, in news stories to describe the large and ‘overwhelming’ number of refugees coming to Europe (Abid *et al*, 2017). Moreover, refugees are most commonly represented within an either humanitarian or militarisation frame (Sanyal, 2017). Both frames situate the topic of migration in a negative context. Refugees are mostly seen as both “passive object[s] of humanitarian intervention, and as active threat to be policed or pushed out” (Sanyal, 2017: 6). The linguistic practice of framing refugees within this binary opposition contributes to the construction of refugees’ identity in the media. Symbolic bordering, as Chouliaraki (2017) refers to it, “entails the symbolic power to name and authorize who is accepted as one of ‘us’ or shares ‘our’ humanity and who does not” (Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017: 615). In our case here, journalism holds symbolic power over minority groups such as refugees, as the way news stories are framed and written can renegotiate these boundaries of belonging.

[S]ome stories may enable us to recognize those different from 'us' as worthy to be listened to and thus encourage 'us' to stretch the imaginary boundaries of 'our' community in order to include 'them', but other stories may block this potential (Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017: 615).

Berry *et al* found only few news stories that highlighted "the benefits that asylum seekers and migrants could bring to host countries" (2015: 12). With the most common news topics with regard to migration being politics and crime (WACC & CCME, 2017), success stories or positive news about refugees are rather rare. These are the kinds of stories which will mostly likely not stretch the boundaries of belonging in order to include refugees within 'our' community.

Perceptions of Media Representations

Compared to a great existing amount of literature focusing on how the media represent migration and refugees themselves, not nearly as much research has been done that examines how the people most affected by representations of migration, i.e. refugees, perceive these portrayals. In a broader context, scholars in the fields of media audience and migration studies, social psychology, as well as behavioural studies have taken different approaches to research audiences' perceptions of media representation deficits and their impact on different actors.

Public perceptions

Recent studies examine perceptions of media representations of migration from the public's perspective. Debrael *et al* (2019) looked into Flemish citizens' media usage and the public's attitudes towards immigrants as a result of the representations of migration in Flemish news media. They compared two different age groups, young people and adults, with each other in order to explore whether there are separate media worlds existing for people of different ages. The study found that the development of negative attitudes towards migrants and refugees is not only dependent on news consumption, but also dependent on various socio-demographic factors such as age and religion. Hoewe (2018) took a similar stance and looked at the effects of international news portrayals of refugees on news consumers in the United States. Through content analysis, the study first examined ways of labelling refugees as either 'refugees' or 'immigrants' in the American press to subsequently test how news consumers respond to these

different labels. The results of this study suggest that news consumers in the US do not differentiate between these two terms, which further implicates that there is not enough understanding for these minority groups existent among American news consumers (Hoewe, 2018). Moreover, De Poli *et al* (2016) found that “exposure to news describing immigrants as victims (instead of a threat) can significantly affect public opinion and mitigate bias against immigrants” (De Poli *et al*, 2016: 1167). Whereas this is an interesting finding, framing immigrants as victims does not contribute to an accurate representation of minority groups in the media. Coninck *et al* (2018) took this approach one step further and found media literacy to be a key component when analysing the relationship between media use and public opinion on immigrants and refugees in Belgium. These studies were mostly conducted through survey analyses and examined how the public perceives and is influenced by media coverage of migration in different countries.

Ethnic minorities’ perceptions and their struggle for recognition

Whereas analyses of public perceptions of media representations generally did not include ethnic minorities’ perspectives, scholars have taken a more specific approach in focusing particularly on how individual ethnic minorities perceive deficits of their own representation in different kinds of media as well as in different countries around the world. Devroe (2004) looked at responses to and attitudes towards Flemish news media representations of ethnic minorities by members of these minority groups and found “a general feeling of disappointment” among participants “about the way ethnic minorities are portrayed in the media” (Devroe, 2004: 12). D’Haenens *et al* (2002) did a similar piece of research in the Netherlands. Hafez (2002) looked at the Turkish media use in Germany with a special focus on whether those perceptions of media representations facilitate or alleviate social integration. Greenberg *et al* (2002) give an overview of the appearance of minority groups in US television programmes and of these minority groups’ perceptions of these portrayals. Sreberny (2005) found that ethnic minority audiences in the United Kingdom are aware of their own representation in the media and desire more mixed kinds of representation. In her study about news media consumption among immigrants in Europe, Christiansen (2004) found that immigrants tend to have a critical attitude towards news from national TV channels and are seeking more diverse international news. Mahtani (2008) analysed immigrant perceptions of

mainstream Canadian English language TV news and found that even though participants appreciated these news, they desired more representations of their own immigrant identities. Another relevant study is Trebbe and Schoenhagen's work (2011) on how migrants perceive their own representation in Swiss public television. Using focus groups as a research method, results of this study show "a high discrepancy between the desire for more presence and participation on the one hand, and the wish to stand in the spotlight less often, on the other hand" (Trebbe & Schoenhagen, 2011: 411). They further found that media representations are "vitally important for the social integration of ethnic minorities" (Trebbe & Schoenhagen, 2011: 412).

Overall, results of these studies show that participants perceived most of the representation deficits discussed as results of press coverage analyses in section 2.1. Despite a general feeling of being underrepresented or merely negatively represented, most participants did not recognise themselves within news media content (D'Haenens *et al*, 2000). Ethnic minorities' struggle of not feeling recognised by the media (and hence often by society at large) might come from seeing themselves as "victims of moral maltreatment" (Honneth, 1992: 188), which, in the context of this dissertation, could be misrepresentations in the media. Drawing on Hegel's original idea from 1807, this struggle for recognition can be explained as "the struggle of individuals for the recognition of their person by others" (Sembou, 2003: 262). Ethnic minorities, such as refugees, hence struggle for recognition of their (group) identity by the press.

Refugees' perceptions and voice as value

Despite the immense news coverage on migration from 2015 onwards, along with a large amount of literature that examines how the media represent the topic of migration, there is a gap in academic literature of studies that analyse the flipside of particularly this issue. No study could be found that looks at specifically refugees' perceptions of their own representation in news media. It could be argued, that refugees' perceptions do not necessarily differ much from other ethnic minorities' perceptions of their own representation in the media. I, however, argue that it is not only about analysing and highlighting the perceptions of the people most affected by these media representations of migration (or the deficits of such representations), but also about giving marginalised minority groups such as refugees a voice

by doing so. In their research, Chouliaraki and Zaborowski (2017) found that out of 1200 European news articles only 16.6% included quotes from migrants or refugees. Refugees are often portrayed as voiceless victims that do not get the opportunity to speak of their experiences (Georgiou & Zaborowski, 2017), hence refugees' voices have often not been paid attention to (Couldry, 2010). In this context, Georgiou discovered a contradiction "between voice and hypervisibility of refugees and migrants in the media" (2018: 47) and questioned whether hypervisibility would support voice or do the exact opposite. When looking at the results of press coverage reports of European news, the latter seems to be the case. It is therefore important to not only understand voice as a mere process, which Couldry refers to as "giving an account of one's life and its conditions" (2010: 7), but to acknowledge the duality of the concept of voice as both process and value. Couldry illustrates that voice "values all human beings' *ability* to give an account of themselves; it values my and your status as 'narratable' selves" (2010: 13; original emphasis).

By analysing refugees' perceptions, experiences and opinions about the way migration and refugees themselves are represented in news media, this dissertation does not only attempt to fill an existing research gap, but also to value refugees' voice. The special case of interviewing refugees now living in a rather rural area in Austria generates additional perspectives that have not been researched before. Research related to migration in Austria was mostly done from a political or policy perspective. In terms of Austrian media representations of migration, the only study found discusses the construction of spaces of identity in the context of artistic media representations and images of refugees in Austria through analysing press photographs (Drüeke *et al*, 2019). To narrow the focus of this dissertation, this research examines refugees' perceptions of news media representations. In taking an explorative approach, no further specifications were made with regard to the medium used to consume news nor to the kind of news consumed, in order to leave sufficient room for participants to reflect upon their personal experiences.

Conceptual Framework

As outlined in the literature review, scholars have used different approaches and concepts to make sense of how ethnic minorities perceive media representations. This dissertation explores refugees' perceptions of their own representation in the news. I am particularly interested in refugees' personal experiences with and opinions about representations of migration in the news and whether (and why) they perceive a dissonance between their own, self-constructed identity and the 'refugee identity' constructed through media representations. Therefore, four concepts are particularly useful to the conduct of this dissertation: recognition, voice, cultural identity, and othering.

Existing literature about media representations as well as about perceptions of such often raises the question whether refugees' voices form part of the public debate around the topic of migration. Results show that ethnic minorities often do not feel recognised by the media, because they feel like their voices are either underrepresented or marginalised, hence not valued. As Chouliaraki and Zaborowski have argued, voice is

instrumental in endowing the refugee with personhood and historicity – and hence with the potential for recognition. Who speaks and in which capacity, or 'voice as narrative', defines whether and how their words will be listened to in public as the words of an equal (2017: 629).

This struggle for recognition (Honneth, 1992) interplays with the concept of voice as both process and value (Couldry, 2010). Both concepts will be used to examine whether refugees in Austria see themselves recognized by the media and consequently by the society they live in.

This dissertation further attempts to explore whether refugees refer, directly or indirectly, to media representations shaping their identity. While I will not discuss the highly complex concept of culture in any more detail, I will use the two different ways of thinking about cultural identity as, on the one hand, one shared collective identity, and, on the other hand, the recognition of significant differences that constitute individual identities (Hall, 1994) to examine refugees' perceptions of their own self-constructed identity as well as of the symbolically constructed 'refugee identity' through media representations.

Lastly, press coverage reports have shown that refugees are often subject to generalisations and stereotyping, not just in the media, but consequently also in public. Although not taking an effect-oriented approach, this dissertation attempts to explore refugees' opinions on whether media representations have any consequences, such as being subject to stereotyping, for their everyday lives. The concept of othering, which is closely related to stereotyping, but focuses on both the Other as well as the Self (Dervin, 2012), linking back to the question of identity, will be helpful in contextualising possible consequences that refugees might recall experiencing in their everyday lives.

Research Question and Objectives

This study aims at investigating refugees' perceptions of their own representation in the news, with two main research objectives in mind. Firstly, this research attempts to provide better understanding of how the people most affected by media representations of migration feel about these representations and what consequences they think these representations might have for their personal lives. Secondly, through the dialogue with refugees from the Middle East and Afghanistan, who are now living in a rural area in Austria, this dissertation's objective is also to value refugees' voices and to provide space for them, as an underrepresented minority group, to express their perceptions, feelings and concerns towards contemporary representations of migration in the news. This study contributes to an existing body of literature in the fields of media and audience studies as well as ethnic and migration studies and attempts to start filling a rather specific research gap. Whereas quite a lot of research has been done on national ethnic minorities' perceptions of certain media representations, this is the first study to interview refugees from the Middle East and Afghanistan about their perceptions of media representations of migration in Europe. Moreover, this dissertation is the first to analyse perceptions of media representations of migration in the Austrian context. Due to the fact that such research has not been done within these parameters before, I emphasise here that the results of this study cannot be generalised, but serve as first references to a quite specific research gap.

Overall, the main purpose of this dissertation is to answer the following research question:
How do refugees in Austria see themselves, their voice and agency, represented in the news?

Additionally, this research attempts to provide answers to the following sub-questions:

- To what extent do the refugees refer, directly or indirectly, to media representations shaping their identity?
- To what extent do refugees perceive a dissonance between the identity created through media representations and their own, self-constructed identity?
- What consequences, if any, do the refugees think media representations have for their everyday lives?

The central research question specifies on adult refugees now living in Austria. Due to accessibility reasons, no further specifications were made in terms of nationality or ethnic background. To narrow the field of research, this study focuses on representations of migration in the news. However no further specifications were made in terms of what kinds of media are used to consume the news nor did I specify on news from a specific country. This is due to the uncertainty of what kind of news (outlet and country wise) participants of this study are engaging with.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In the following, I describe the design and methodological procedures of this study and reflect upon challenges and limitations that I have come across while conducting this research.

Methodological Rationale

In this dissertation, I used semi-structured in-depth interviews as a qualitative method for data collection. Due to the explorative nature of my central research question, focusing on the how instead of the why, in-depth interviews are the most appropriate method for answering this kind of research question (Johnson & Rowlands, 2012). In-depth interviews provide insights and understanding of the life worlds of participants (Gaskell, 2000) and offer the opportunity of obtaining unexpected information, that might not be discovered through other methods (Berger, 1998). Conducting such interviews helped me explore refugees' individual experiences, views and opinions with and about media representations of migration.

Moreover, in-depths interviews are the qualitative research method recommended for addressing possibly sensitive topics (Gaskell, 2000), as it is the case for this dissertation.

I have decided to take a semi-structured interviewing approach, because it allows for “considerable reciprocity between the participant and the researcher” (Galletta & Cross, 2013: 24). While following a theoretically driven interview protocol, semi-structured interviews leave enough room for participants to reflect upon lived experiences as well as for the researcher to “probe a participant’s responses for clarification, meaning making, and critical reflection” (Galletta & Cross, 2013: 24), which is particularly useful and necessary when conducting interviews with participants in a language that is not their native language (see section 3.4).

Even though I initially considered using focus groups as a qualitative research method, I decided to dismiss this idea due to the following reasons: As already outlined above, the primary reason for using in-depth interviews instead of focus groups was individuality. I wanted to research refugees’ personal experiences, views and opinions with and about media representations of migration, which is best achieved with individual interviews. The second reason for dismissing the use of focus groups was accessibility. Since I was working with a minority group of possibly vulnerable people, getting access to nine participants was already a challenge, especially because the time of conducting these interviews was in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. Far more participants would have been necessary for focus groups. The last reason for using interviews instead of focus groups was originality. A study that interviewed refugees to examine their perception of their own representation in news media has not been done before, compared to a relatively large amount of research that analysed ethnic minorities’ perceptions of certain media representations through focus groups.

Participant Selection

In total, nine people were selected to participate in this study. I used snowball sampling as a method to get access to participants, starting with personal contacts to refugees in Austria, who then helped to “locate others through her or his social networks” (Warren, 2002: 87). To ensure a range of opinions, experiences and different perspectives on the subject matter (Gaskell, 2000), refugees from different countries, who are now all living in roughly the same

area in Austria, were contacted and asked to participate in this study. After sending out a general information leaflet, almost all people asked immediately agreed on participating. As Gaskell explained, “it is generally the case that there are a relatively limited number of views or positions on a topic in a particular social milieu” (2000: 43). Since all interviewees are refugees living in roughly the same area in Austria, they are also exposed to roughly the same kind of representations of migration in the news. This is why, after talking to nine refugees from four different countries, the range of views and perspectives was relatively saturated. Moreover, this sample size

provides scope for developing cross-case generalities, while preventing the researcher being bogged down in data, and permitting individuals within the sample to be given a defined identity, rather than being subsumed into an anonymous part of a larger whole (Robinson, 2014: 29).

Participant profiles

In order to better comprehend participants’ responses later in the analysis section, it is important to know some key characteristics of the sample (see Appendix A – Participant Profiles). Due to the fact that two thirds of refugees in Austria are men (ÖIF & Bundesministerium für Inneres, 2018), I could not get access to an equal amount of men and women to participate in this study. This is why this sample consists of a total of six men and three women. All participants are between 18 and 40 years old and come from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, or Syria. These are among the top six nationalities seeking asylum in Austria (Fonds Soziales Wien, 2020).

Challenges

I experienced some challenges in the participant selection process, due to unforeseen changes that emerged with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Europe in early 2020. This research was originally planned to be conducted in the United Kingdom. Therefore, I had prepared and already initiated action to get access to refugees in the Greater London area. However, due to the rapidly spreading coronavirus, I had to leave the UK in a rather speedy manner and moved back to my home country Austria. For quite a while I was uncertain about whether to proceed with this dissertation in the UK context or change it and conduct the

research in Austria. Luckily, once I decided to conduct this research in Austria, I found participants rather quickly, through personal contacts to refugees and social workers in and around the area of my home town, who then helped locate other participants.

Interview Guide

As already outlined above, all interviews were conducted following a semi-structured approach. The interview guide developed for this research contained both open-ended as well as theoretically driven questions (Galletta & Cross, 2013). After consulting with my supervisor, some minor changes were applied to the interview guide, mainly concerning structure and eliminating redundant questions. After explaining the purpose of this research to the participant, the interview began with introductory questions about the participant's habits of news consumption. I used easy questions for setting the scene and making the participant feel comfortable in the interview situation. Simple planned questions like these are "intended to 'get the ball rolling' but not to move so quickly into the issues of key interview questions as to jeopardize intimate self-disclosure (or trust)" (Johnson & Rowlands, 2012: 104). After asking about the participant's preliminary assumptions of news articles about migration, I then showed an example article to give an idea of how representations of migration often look like in Austrian news. For this purpose, I chose a rather short, politically mid-range article from an Austrian conservative newspaper from March 2020 with the headline "What should Austria do in light of the imminent refugee crisis?" [headline translated]. The article, talking about the possible threat of another refugee crisis, has a rather neutral, slightly negative tone towards refugees. However, it is neither extreme left or right, nor does it feature any dramatic visuals, that could have triggered emotional distress for the participant. The intent behind showing this article was to give an example of how migration is often portrayed in the news and to give an impulse for further thoughts and memorising experiences. Participants were not asked to read the full article, but rather to skim through it. Afterwards, the interview continued with (mostly) indirect questions about the participant's experiences, opinions and views on representations of migration in the news, as well as with questions regarding whether the participant thinks that such representations have any implications for his/her personal life (see Appendix D – Interview Guide).

Conducting the interviews

All interviews were conducted face-to-face in either an office room or the participant's home in Austria over the course of three weeks in June 2020. In light of the ongoing pandemic at the time of planning the interviews, I initially considered conducting online interviews. However, as I was seeking 'deep' information and knowledge about a possibly sensitive topic that people do not usually consciously think or talk about, I needed to create a trusting relationship with and a comfortable and friendly atmosphere for my participants (Gaskell, 2000). This is exactly what makes in-depth interviews most effective (Johnson & Rowlands, 2012), and what online interviews can simply not do as much. Due to this need for building up trust and the fact that the situation in Austria improved a lot, leading to the suspension of most COVID-19 measures in place a couple of weeks before starting to interview, I consulted with my supervisor as well as my participants and they all agreed on doing the interviews face-to-face. Of course, social distancing was maintained to ensure participants' as well as the researcher's safety.

Before starting the interview, each participant was asked to sign a consent form sent out beforehand (see Appendix C – Consent Form). As recommended for in-depth interviews, the conversations started slowly with small talk as well as with thanking the participant for his/her time and willingness to be part of this research (Johnson & Rowlands, 2012). All interviews lasted for about an hour and were conducted in German, which was the language that participants felt most comfortable with aside from their native languages (Arabic, Persian), which I, as the interviewer, could unfortunately not offer. All pre- and post-interview communication was held in German. All materials published in this dissertation were translated from German to English. The interviews were audio-taped using both a recording device as well as an iPhone as backup in case of technical issues. I also used the dictation function in Microsoft Word for on-site transcription, which I had to manually almost completely re-do later, because the programme misunderstood most of the participants' responses, due to them not being German native speakers and speaking with a quite strong accent. This is also the reason why I could not use any transcription software for transcribing the interviews. I therefore carefully transcribed all interviews manually, using word-for-word transcription including word repetitions and hesitations, to keep the written version of the conversations as close to the original as possible.

In two cases, I interviewed two participants at the same time. In the first case, the two participants (friends) asked if they could do the interview together arguing that they would feel more comfortable. After carefully considering what this would mean for my data, I agreed to this idea, because I valued their willingness to participate and wanted to create a relaxed situation. I ended up treating this double-interview as two separate interviews, because both participants' responses were very rich and distinctive from each other. In the second case, the two participants are husband and wife. As their responses were relatively similar to each other, I decided to treat this second double-interview as one interview. Therefore, a total of eight interviews was conducted.

Thematic Analysis

For analysing the interview data, I used Thematic Analysis (TA) as it is flexible and can be used with any theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, TA is particularly useful for research of explorative nature (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). TA is „a method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning ('themes') within qualitative data“ (Clarke & Braun, 2017: 297). After transcribing and familiarising myself with the data, I generated initial codes in a first round of inductive data-driven coding. I here used the interview guide “as a preliminary scheme for the analysis of the transcripts“ (Gaskell, 2000: 42). In a second round of coding, I used a more theory-driven deductive approach and collated codes into bigger themes. I reviewed and refined all themes and codes, giving them clear definitions and labels. Lastly, I selected illustrative quotes for each theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which are partly presented in the analysis section and can be fully viewed in Appendix F. I used NVivo 12 for the entire coding process.

Ethics and Reflexivity

Each participant was given an information leaflet as well as a consent form and was asked to read and sign the form before the start of the interview. Both documents informed about the conditions of participation as well as matters of privacy, data protection, anonymisation and the permission for audio-recordings (see Appendix B and C). Participants' names were changed to pseudonyms throughout this dissertation to ensure anonymity.

During this research, I have come across some unexpected issues, mainly caused by language barriers between the participants and the interviewer, which turned out to be limitations of this research. As my interviewees were all non-German native speakers, they sometimes did not fully understand the questions I asked, which made me re-phrase and explain the questions in a more simple way, which ultimately led to sometimes asking slightly different questions than outlined in the interview guide or even, in one or two cases, leaving out questions completely. However, in some cases, this could have been not an issue of language barriers, but a methodological limitation of in-depth interviews, as

it is not always possible for respondents to give meaningful answers in depth interviews. Moving from discussing what they have done to why they did it is not easy for many people, especially because some people don't always know why they take certain actions (Berger, 1998: 58).

Another issue arose from some participants getting lost in telling very detailed stories including lots of examples, which seemed to be an easier way for them, as non-native speakers, to illustrate their point. While this by itself was not necessarily an issue, but rather favourable, participants sometimes ended up not answering the actual question asked. So, I, as the interviewer, had to listen very carefully and evaluate whether the response given actually answered the question asked, which I admittedly did not always fully succeed at.

“We all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific. What we say is always ‘in context’, *positioned*” (Hall, 1994: 222; original emphasis). I am using this quote to acknowledge the role my position as a white Western woman played in this research. Whereas I, of course, always attempt to act as neutral as I can towards any other person regardless of their background, I have conducted this research and interpreted the results from a Western perspective, which is only one amongst many different ways of viewing the world. I walked into this research project with an open mind and eager to learn about other people’s perspectives of the world we all live in.

RESULTS & INTERPRETATION

In the following, I present and interpret the findings from individual in-depth interviews conducted with nine refugees from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. I divided this section according to the main themes that occurred from the interviews. Each section includes relevant quotes from the interviewees and discusses the findings in view of the relevant literature.

1.1 News Consumption

In the beginning of each interview, participants were asked to reflect upon their news consumption habits. While results varied from news consumption via traditional news media outlets like newspapers, radio, or TV, to solely using social media like Facebook, Instagram, or YouTube for news consumption, all participants consumed news in some kind of way in a more or less frequent manner. It was interesting that some participants stated that their news consumption habits changed ever since they left their home country.

- Back in my home country, I was not interested in the news or anything like that at all. But ever since I am here, I always want to listen to the news or read the newspaper. Especially everything that gets published about refugees. I always do that yes. (Participant 1)

While other participants referred to language issues as a main reason for changing their news consumption habits, one participant responded differently:

- Because back home I had everything and I didn't care about anything really. I had my parents, my family, friends and food, clothes... I had everything and I didn't care about anything else. And ever since I live here, all by myself and kind of independent, I have to know what is going on or what I might need or what I can improve about myself und those kinds of things. That is why I am interested in all those things now. (Participant 1)

In terms of news topics, participants stated to be interested in news stories related to the topic of migration, as well as in news from Austria, from their home country, and international news, but they often read *actually only what I see randomly, while surfing the internet, what I see there that's what I read* (Participant 4). Participants said to not necessarily search for the news, except for *when it is an important topic, then I look it up* (Participant 2). Important topics were also often linked to timeliness.

Concurring with the evidence from previous studies (Christiansen, 2004), when being asked whether consuming the news was important to them, participants were rather sceptical and linked the importance of news consumption to the degree of how much they trust the news.

- It's important and it's also not so important, I'm not so interested in the news because they're not always true. (Participant 4)
- No, I don't always trust the media. Yes, sometimes, when I am sure then yes but... when I know that there is something wrong and I have already read that, no, I don't trust them. (Participant 6)

All participants expressed some lack of trust in the news with one participant mentioning that he would always try to look up the original news source, in order to evaluate the validity of the news story.

Perceptions of Representations of Migration

Showing consistency with the literature, all participants perceived representations of migration in the news to be negatively one-sided, not the full story, or even 'fake news'. This is paired with a desire and hope for more diverse and especially more positive news to be published about refugees (Mahtani, 2008; Sreberny, 2005).

- Well I think mostly it's bad news, every time I talk to someone from Austria or someone else that I meet, this person only tells me bad things, because they know, they notice that when for example you read that in the news all the time or watch it on TV, then you think that all Syrians or all Arabians are bad, just because you see that every day. (Participant 9)
- There are also very good things that could be published but on the other side the Kronen Zeitung [Austrian daily newspaper with highest circulation in the country] always publish really bad news... (Participant 3)

Most participants expected news about migration to be bad news and they often referred to stereotyping on the part of the general public as a consequence of those negative portrayals. Participants perceived the news to be generalised and often felt like being lumped together. These perceptions are confirmed by evidence from European press coverage analyses.

- For example, only one Afghani, an asylum seeker or a refugee, makes a mistake or does something bad, then we all get lumped together and the person or the series or those, I don't

know, people who write the news or who publish this article, they all judge us the same way and think that all refugees are alike. (Participant 1)

In slight contradiction to this, three participants stated that they do not think that something like a typical representation of migration exists. *I have always seen a difference, so, I cannot say that this is typical... I don't know* (Participant 2). However, these responses could also be caused by the participant's misunderstanding of the question. Expecting news about migration to be negative on the one hand resulted in three participants not wanting to read the news at all, *because I would be sad if I read this* (Participant 7). On the other hand, it made three other participants want to read the news even more. Furthermore, almost all participants perceived representations of migration to be exaggerated.

- *There is always something exaggerated, especially when it's about asylum seekers or foreigners, sometimes it's really exaggerated. Sometimes it's true.* (Participant 4)
- *Sometimes yes, but you cannot say everything is true. I feel like sometimes I think the news they make them too big and then you think about it in a really bad way.* (Participant 5)

Despite the feeling that news about refugees are argued differently than news about Austrian or EU citizens, which results in participants not feeling recognised by the media, two participants unexpectedly expressed their understanding of Austrian people's general negative attitude towards refugees.

- To be honest, when reading an article like this one, I also kind of understand the Austrian people. Because there are so many refugees coming from many different countries, no one knows who could be a criminal or who is a good person or who is just a normal person. You never know and you also can't really judge just from the looks. With articles like this one, I, yes, I have to say that I understand the Austrians... I mean not only Austrians, but all of Europe really, those countries that take in refugees. They are right and we can't always judge knowing only one side of the story. When looking at it from the Austrian point of view, it really is a terrible situation, because there are a lot of refugees coming and you can never know who is good, who is bad, who is nice and that's why there are also a lot of bad people coming. (Participant 1)
- I often see these pictures and I say, when these people come here, it's great, they can have a better life, it's great, but when I see that some people come here and they don't do anything, they just sit around and they're just like 'doesn't matter, I'm here, I don't need to do anything', that

makes me sad. I'm always like 'You've come such a long way, why don't you make something out of it?' (Participant 5)

Reasons for such representations

Participants tried to explain why media representations are the way they are (most of them referred to representations in Austrian or German news) and came up with two main reasons: Firstly, *the people always search for bad news. That's why news on TV or in newspapers are always about bad things, so that more people buy or share them...* (Participant 5). Therefore, as it is the media's job to catch as many readers/viewers as possible, negative news stories are more popular. Secondly, participants stated that they think that some news organisations are biased and dependent on the support of political parties.

- I think it depends on what kind of media outlet it is, for example when it's the Kronen Zeitung, I think they are supported by the FPÖ [Austrian right extremist party] or the ÖVP [Austrian conservative party] and they will for sure publish something negative. (Participant 3)

Challenging such representations

Participants explained how they are trying to challenge such representations and thereby sometimes referred to social media's role in facilitating the use of refugees' voice to create change in people's minds through its interactive nature. This coincides with Couldry's argument that new online spaces would establish "new possibilities for voice" (Couldry, 2010: 125). Refugees are using social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, or YouTube as an „online opportunity for giving an account of oneself“, which can "potentially provide important forms of self-validation, public recognition and narrative exchange" (Couldry, 2010: 125).

- When something is not right, I'll say it, yes. If something in the news is wrong I cannot be silent about it. (Participant 8)
- Sometimes I write a comment below a posting. (Participant 3)
- No, I was excited somehow, because I thought I finally have the chance to raise my voice and that the people actually hear my voice and listen. (Participant 1)

Others, however, did not see the point in being another commentator amongst thousands on social media, but would rather speak up in real life.

- I never post comments, but when I see someone face-to-face and this person says something not true about those topics, I tell him my story, what I experienced and explain to him how these things really are. (Participant 2)

Even when being silenced by the media, all participants stated to use their voice in some kind of way in order to reverse the damage such one-sided media representations do to the public's attitude towards refugees in Austria. However, language barriers are sometimes the cause why these attempts are failing. Moreover, language issues were also seen as a key reason for not feeling recognised within Austrian society.

- When I meet with Austrian people, they know from the second word that I am not Austrian and so yeah, that's why I cannot simply feel Austrian. (Participant 4)
- I really wanted to work as a hairdresser, but I couldn't because I didn't speak the Styrian dialect [Styria is a state in the south of Austria], now I need to work at McDonald's... They just have no understanding. (Participant 5)
- I am not good at speaking German, but I try. (Participant 8)

Consequences

When being asked whether participants think that media representations of migration have any consequences for their everyday lives, they referred to both consequences for them as refugees (almost never referring to consequences for them as individuals) as well as to consequences on the part of the general public (references to this sense of collective identity are discussed in section 4.5.2).

Consequences for refugees

Participants stated, mostly indirectly, that they think negative portrayals of migration in the news do have negative consequences for their personal lives, with emotional distress and the loss of motivation mentioned most frequently.

- Well, to be honest... When a refugee watches bad news in a TV show or reads about something bad in the newspaper, it really demotivates them, everything just gets worse for them. They become even more frustrated and sad and they will simply feel bad. (Participant 1)

- I see a lot of news on Facebook for example, in Austria or Germany about my country and it's not true and then I read the comments and then, I don't know, I am stressed and I don't want that. (Participant 9)

Participants also referred to weird looks from local people towards themselves as a consequence of negative representations in the news. Surprisingly, however, participants did not only mention that local people behave differently around them, but also they, as refugees themselves, sometimes behave differently around other refugees. In one case, a Syrian participant reflected upon experiences where he did not want to have contact with Afghan refugees because of their negative portrayal in Austrian news and the wrong assumptions he had as a result of these representations.

- And just like me now, I don't have any contact with Afghani, I mean I am a refugee myself and Afghani are refugees here as well, but when I see an Afghani, I immediately think that they have a knife with them and I wanted to... yeah it's the truth. And that is also because of this and maybe there are one or two people from Afghanistan that do have a knife, but not all of them. But then I, as a refugee myself, believe that... when I see an Afghani I think he has a knife and that I need to be careful and just quickly leave. Because maybe he'll pull out his knife or whatever... but that's the problem and it's really like that, because when you read these things, when you hear Afghani you immediately associate that with a knife and yeah... it's terrible. (Participant 4)

This shows that othering, "a theory of *self and other* in which the juxtaposition towards the other constitutes the self" (Jensen, 2011: 64; original emphasis), originally coined within post-colonial theory by Spivak in 1985, not only occurs between local people and refugees, but also occurs between refugees of different backgrounds. By othering refugees from Afghanistan, the participant differentiated himself from other refugees in Austria, though he still acknowledged the fact that in the Austrian context, both sides of this juxtaposition have a similar social standing.

Another surprise finding was that only one of nine participants could think of positive examples of news media representations of migration. The participant stated that these positive portrayals had a general positive effect on himself. When imagining a better balance

between positive and negative representations of migration in the news, participants claimed that this would be a motivating incentive and would result in better integration, which coincides with Trebbe & Schoenhagen's (2011) findings. Another consequence of more positive representations in the news would be the opportunity of making friends more easily.

Consequences for others

Not only do representations of migration have consequences for refugees, they also have consequences for the general public. Whereas evidence from the literature suggests that negative attitudes towards refugees are not only developed from news consumption, but are also rooted in different socio-demographic factors (Debrael *et al*, 2019), participants in this study listed a couple of negative consequences on the part of the public that they think are caused by negative representations of migration in the news. Besides fear and no desire for having contact with refugees, the major consequences mentioned were generalisations, prejudices, wrong assumptions, and racism towards refugees in Austria.

- If for example, if you have no contact with refugees and then you read this, then you think that all refugees are this bad, then everyone is afraid of us. (Participant 9)
- Because they think that we are exactly like the pictures... but how, those are pictures and we are people, we are living this life and we have to help other people. When they always post these bad things about refugees then the people believe that all refugees are so bad and that we cannot change. (Participant 2)
- Everyone here thinks we are all... for example, now in Iraq or in Syria there is war and then, because we also came here the same way as the others did, everyone thinks that we also came here because of the war and then they have very bad assumptions about our country. (Participant 5)

These assumptions and prejudices suggest that refugees, as the 'non-Austrian' or at least 'non-European' people, are being othered by locals. According to the participants, more positive representations and good examples of refugees in the news could result in people's change of opinion and ultimately in what the participants desire most: Getting in touch with more local people.

- If they would always show that about refugees, their good side, or let's say both sides, not just one, that would make integration much easier, because the people don't want anything to do

with us, because they have this other idea. If they had both ideas about us or at least a normal idea, maybe then we would have more contact to the people and that would be much better, it would be easier for both sides and for integration as well. (Participant 4)

Recognition

As already briefly mentioned before, participants overall do not feel recognised by the media nor by the Austrian society, which is in accordance with findings from other literature (Devroe, 2004; D'Haenens *et al*, 2000). Carleheden *et al* referred to the practice of recognition as a certain way of behaviour towards, in this case, refugees “by way of attitudes, gestures, or actions” (Carleheden *et al*, 2012: 1), which Couldry complements with the act of “listening to others voice, registering them as important” (Couldry, 2010: 131). Both scholars draw on Honneth’s (1992) understanding of recognition. Refugees’ struggle for recognition by the media is based on negative representations of migration in the news, which, by excluding refugees’ voice from the general debate around the topic, suggests that refugees’ voice is not important enough and hence does not receive recognition from neither the media nor the general public (Honneth, 1992). I will discuss the findings in this section using two of Honneth’s three forms of disrespect, which are physical, moral, and social interventions towards a person. These three forms differ from each other “by the degree to which they can upset a person's practical relationship to self by depriving this person of the recognition of certain claims to identity” (Honneth, 1992: 190). Since this dissertation is about disrespect towards refugees generated by media representations, I will only discuss moral and social forms of disrespect in greater detail.

Moral forms of disrespect

Moral forms of disrespect refer to refugees’ struggle for recognition within society in Austria. This is not only caused by negative representations of migration in the news, but also by the Austrian asylum policy.

- I don’t feel as an Austrian person at all. It’s just like as if we refugees were not seen as humans here in Austria, because of, as I said, because of how much restrictions there are and we are not allowed to do anything really... but then everyone keeps saying why we’re not doing anything... but we simply can’t do anything and when a person is so limited in what they’re able to do, then we don’t have the same rights as Austrian people do. (Participant 1)

“[B]eing structurally excluded from the possession of certain rights within a given society” (Honneth, 1992: 190), such as the right to work, leads to a form of social ostracism, which is amplified by negative representations of migration in the news. Whereas it did not seem like participants suffered from a loss of self-respect as a result of this social exclusion, as Honneth suggests, some participants indirectly referred to feeling “deprived of that form of recognition that takes the shape of cognitive respect for moral accountability” (Honneth, 1992: 191).

Social forms of disrespect

Social forms of disrespect refer to refugees’ struggle for recognition in the news as well as within society in Austria. Negative portrayals of migration in the news, often paired with language issues, can lead to a form of social devaluation of and a lack of social acceptance towards refugees.

- Sometimes for example, when I’m speaking slowly or when I use a word differently, people talk to me as if I were stupid, they talk to me as if I were a stupid person and then sometimes I respond and I say, please I am not stupid, I understand very well, but I just cannot explain so well. That makes me a bit sad... (Participant 8)

Language barriers were mentioned to be the cause for social degradation and humiliation, which, according to Honneth, “jeopardizes the identity of human beings to the same degree as the suffering of illnesses jeopardizes their physical well-being” (1992: 192).

- What is actually pretty interesting is that, for example, an Austrian person or a criminal from Austria and this person does something wrong or bad, then the newspapers would write that a man did it and they would not say where this person is from, which village or which country or so. But when a refugee does something wrong, then they’ll exactly say that the person who did it was from Afghanistan or from Iran, from Syria or whatever. (Participant 1)

Here, the participant refers to a form of disrespect expressed through a different way of argumentation and storytelling depending on the news story’s subject’s background. The focus on refugees’ background in, especially negative, news stories contributes to the formation of stereotypes, which, in turn, adds to refugees’ devaluation within society.

To conclude this section on a more positive note, few participants acknowledged that some people do show solidarity with refugees in Austria, which is one of the three patterns of recognition (love, rights, and solidarity) that Honneth (1992) understands as fundamental moral infrastructures for a functioning social world protective of all its members.

Identity

As outlined in the literature review, media representations tend to frame refugees as either passive victims or active threat towards the general public. Despite standing in contrast with each other, this 'refugee identity' constructed through these frames in the news is to some extent influential of refugees' self-constructed identity, because, as Tatum writes, one's own identity "depends in a large part on who the world around me says I am" (2000: 9). This section covers the major aspects with regard to refugees' identities that occurred from the interviews.

Dissonance

Participants do perceive a dissonance between how they see themselves and how refugees in general are portrayed in the news to the extent that 'the media never shows something positive of us, they only show our bad side, but we see our life, how it went and who we are, how we lived. The media doesn't. Maybe they know some positive things but they never show them' (Participant 2). The feeling that only the negative side of refugees' stories is usually portrayed in the news is what this dissonance is mainly about. Refugees do not feel recognised by the media because they feel like all that is published about them is in some way negative.

- Mhm yes, there are differences, as I said, the media only reports about our bad side, even though we are not bad people. There are bad things of course. I'm not saying that refugees are like angels or that we don't make mistakes. Everyone makes mistakes and no one is flawless, everybody needs to know that. But the problem is that only the negative things are reported about us and that's the difference. (Participant 1)

In contrast to this one-sidedness of representations of migration in the news, the participants took on a dual perspective in the way they reflected upon different issues, acknowledging that not every person is the same and that there are bad people and good people everywhere,

regardless of their background. This is suggestive of the existence of what Hall (1994) understands as cultural identity, though it refers to the second way of viewing it, which

recognises that, as well as the many points of similarity, there are also critical points of deep and significant difference which constitute 'what we really are'; or rather - since history has intervened - 'what we have become'. We cannot speak for very long, with any exactness, about 'one experience, one identity', without acknowledging its other side (Hall, 1994: 225).

Even though participants did not directly refer to media representations of migration shaping their identity, in light of the consequences of such representations discussed in section 4.3, and the understanding that we become who we are through the encounter with others (Cavarero, 2000), I conclude that representations of migration do in fact shape refugees' identity to some extent.

Collective identity

As illustrated by the two quotes in the section above as well as by the quote used in the title of this dissertation, most participants expressed a sense of belonging to a greater collective identity by speaking of themselves using plural first-person pronouns such as we, us, or our. Moreover, part of this collective identity seems to be the feeling of belonging to a minority group in Austria. Despite this greater collective identity, some participants perceive their national identity as what really constitutes who they are.

- Even after 100 years I am Syrian, I will always be Syrian. Even after 10 years, when I have the Austrian citizenship, when I meet Austrian people, from the second word I say they know that I am not Austrian, that is why I cannot be Austrian. Only on paper I can become Austrian when having citizenship, but I will always be Syrian. (Participant 4)

This coincides with Hall's second sense of cultural identity as "a matter of ,becoming' as well as of ,being'" (Hall, 1994: 225).

Human is human

Participants repeatedly stated that they do not judge other people upon their nationalities, backgrounds or beliefs, clearly positioning themselves against what they have experienced or what they feel is being done to them.

- Ultimately, we are all humans. Sometimes we're good, sometimes we're in a bad mood, maybe the time was not good or we have a bad day, that's how I see it. Life goes on. I'm not saying that's not good, those people are not good, or European people are not good, no. For example, I'm Muslim and I don't say those Christians are not good, no, they are. Why wouldn't they be. There are Muslim people who are not good. [...] We are humans. Human is human. (Participant 8)

All participants acknowledged that no one is flawless and that people can make mistakes. One participant especially emphasised refugees being self-determined individuals, highlighting refugees' voice and agency as important tools to challenge prejudices and generalisations.

- I explained to him that not everything you see or read you can believe to be true, you have to think for yourself, for example I have my own head to think and not to... but that is my life, you cannot show me the way I am supposed to think or what I am supposed to do. I have my own head and I can think for myself what is true or what is not. (Participant 9)

Appeals and Suggestions

Lastly, participants were asked during the interviews what, if they had the chance, they would suggest news media organisations should do differently in order to facilitate better integration and a general feeling of recognition for refugees. What participants desired most were the truth and for news stories to feature both sides of a story. Moreover, 'I think it would be better if they would interview refugees and ask them and then show that to people' (Participant 9). In addition to that, participants suggested to show more good examples of refugees who could act as role models for others.

- For example there are some people who... who did everything they could, for example an apprenticeship or finished school and they still got a negative asylum decision and were deported... back to such an unsafe country. Social media could show these people and do

interviews with them and inform the public about what they experienced, about their situation and so on. (Participant 3)

Furthermore, participants would like media organisations to ‘invite people to get in touch with refugees or asylum seekers and just talk to them, so that the Austrian people start to understand asylum seekers and refugees better or get to know them’ (Participant 1). Besides the appeal to the general public to do their own research and inform themselves about certain issues that they read about in the news, Participant 1, representing the general attitude amongst all participants, appeals to the Austrian asylum policy makers:

- If the country doesn’t want us then they could have told us in the very first month and be like no we don’t want you here, keep going or go back or whatever. But they also didn’t want to send us back and we live here now in this uncertainty, we don’t know what to do or what not to do and we really lose all our motivation and all those happy feelings that we had, all our goals, what we wanted to achieve and what we achieved so far... it’s so not fair. (Participant 1)

CONCLUSION

The research carried out for this dissertation investigated how refugees in Austria perceive their own representation in the news in order to, first, start filling an existing research gap and, secondly, to provide space for refugees’ voices to be heard and hopefully listened to. This study represents an initial explorative attempt to understand refugees’ first-hand perspectives towards representations of the topic of migration in the news. Findings reveal that refugees do, in large parts, perceive representations of migration in the news similarly to what results of press coverage reports suggest. Participants of this study perceived news about migration to be negatively framed, generalised, often exaggerated, or even to simply not be truthful. Moreover, they perceived refugees’ voices to be underrepresented, if even represented at all. This results in participants overall not feeling recognised by the media and by the society they live in. In terms of what consequences refugees think media representations of migration have for their everyday lives, emotional distress, the loss of motivation, and weird looks from other people were the consequences mentioned most frequently. Surprisingly, negative portrayals

of migration in the news do not only make local people behave differently around refugees, but also make refugees behave differently around refugees of other nationalities. Furthermore, refugees do perceive a dissonance between the identity created through representations of migration in the news and their own, self-constructed identity to the extent that refugees think that news stories only show the negative half of the story, when there is a lot more of a refugee's identity than portrayed in the news. Ultimately, even though participants did not directly refer to media representations of migration shaping their identity, participants' responses throughout the interviews combined with evidence from the literature indicate that representations of migration do in fact shape refugees' identity to some extent.

As this study serves as a first reference to a quite specific research gap, it would be interesting for further research to examine whether refugees' perceptions of representations of migration change depending on different socio-demographic factors, such as living in a big city versus living in a rural area.

Besides the appeal to re-think the Austrian asylum policy, so that asylum seekers no longer need to wait years for a decision on their asylum status, which has negative implications for all parties involved, this dissertation should also be an appeal to the general public to approach and talk to refugees just like they would with any other person, despite the assumptions one might have from negative portrayals of refugees in the news. What I have learned from conducting this research is that once people invest a certain amount of time, even as little as a couple of minutes, to listen to refugees' stories and take on a different perspective than what is usually presented in the news, the general attitude towards refugees in Austria, or anywhere else in the world, would look at lot differently, because *we can't always judge knowing only one side of the story (Participant 1)*.

Ultimately, this dissertation should stimulate a debate of what it is we call newsworthy in today's fast-paced media environment. Why is it that we consider the smallest human failure, especially when committed by non-locals, newsworthy, but not the smallest human achievement? In a society of criticism, negativity and envy, positive contributions are often dismissed as a matter of course. A shift towards a more positivist approach could empower and humanize. Or, as Adichie says: "Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity" (TEDGlobal, 2009, 17:27min).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Nick Couldry, who helped and challenged me to shape this piece of research into something I can now say I am really proud of. I could not have achieved this without Nick's constant support. I also want to thank every other LSE lecturer who I have met over the past year, as well as my LSE friends. My #partofLSE experience was incredible, both academically as well as personally.

I would also like to thank each and every one of my interviewees, who immediately agreed to participate in this study, even though the interviews were conducted in a language other than their native language. I do not take this for granted and I am very thankful for having met them all. This experience really broadened my personal horizon and taught me the necessity of taking on different perspectives in order to be able to form my own opinion.

Finally, I want to thank my family who have always supported me in wherever I go and whatever I want to achieve. I am forever grateful.

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Appendix A – Participant Profiles

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Nationality
Participant 1	Male	18-30	Afghanistan
Participant 2	Male	18-30	Afghanistan
Participant 3	Male	18-30	Afghanistan
Participant 4	Male	18-30	Syria
Participant 5	Female	31-40	Iran
Participant 6	Male	31-40	Iran
Participant 7	Female	18-30	Iran
Participant 8	Female	18-30	Iraq
Participant 9	Male	18-30	Syria

Appendix D – Interview Guide

- How are you today?
- Could you please confirm that it is okay for you that this interview is recorded, audio-only?
- Can you tell me a little bit about yourself? What is your name, how old are you, where are you from?
- How do you usually consume news?
 - o Do you consume news at all? Why?
 - o Is it important to you to consume news? Why?
 - o What news outlets do you use to consume news?
 - o Do you consume news from Austrian news outlets or from somewhere else? Why?
 - o What kind of news do you usually consume?

[In case someone does not consume news at all:]

- Do you really not consume any news at all? Never?
 - o Why not? Is there a specific reason?
 - o Do you maybe only consume news about specific topics?
 - o Did you consume news when you were younger and then stopped doing it? Why?
 - o Is it not important to you to consume the news/to know what is going on around the world?
- What about Social Media? Do you consume news via Social Media?
Or maybe through friends, who share, like or comment news?
- When you think of a news article that focuses on the topic of migration and refugees – Do you have certain expectations or assumptions about this article in advance? Why? What thoughts come to your mind?
 - o Would you want to read the article? Why?
 - o What feelings do you associate with such articles? Why?
 - o Do you believe the article? Or do you question it?
 - o Do you remember a particular article that you had very strong feelings about (positive or negative)? If yes, what was it about and why did it make you feel that way?
- Here is an article that shows how the topic of migration is commonly portrayed in European news media: [show example article](#)
 - o Would you read an article like that? Or do you not want to read it at all? Why?
 - o Do you think this article is about you? Or do you feel like the article is talking about something that doesn't relate to you at all? That doesn't concern you?

- What is your reaction seeing/reading an article like that? How do you feel? What thoughts come to your mind?
- Were you aware that representations like this one are quite common when it comes to migration in news media?
- Are those words and images in some way reflective of your personal experiences? Or not at all? Why?
- Have you ever tried challenge those representations in some kind of way?
- Do you think such a representation is a typical one for refugees in Europe?
How does a typical representation of refugees look like here in Austria/Europe, in your opinion?
 - What are the main topics that those articles focus on?
 - Who speaks in those articles? Who is given a voice? Who is not?
- What do you think are some prejudices (positive and negative) that people in Europe have about refugees?
 - Where do you think those prejudices come from?
- From your experience, do you think those representations have any consequences (positive or negative) for you in your everyday life?
 - In terms of how you feel about yourself
 - In terms of how you feel about the society/country you live in
 - In terms of how others think of you/treat you
- Do you think social media plays a role in all this?
- Do you think news media do a good job in the way they represent minority groups such as refugees? Why?
- What do you think news media could do better to facilitate better integration for refugees? (both on the parts of refugees themselves and local people)
What could the media do differently? What should be improved, in your opinion?
- Have you personally ever been approached by the media to give an interview?
 - If yes: Where was it? What was the interview about? What was the focus of the interview questions? How did you feel before/during/after the interview? How have you been treated by the interviewer/the media organisation?
 - If no: If that were to happen, would you agree to give an interview? Why? Under what conditions/circumstances?
- Do you feel like there is a difference between how the media portrays refugees and how you, as a person concerned, feel about yourself? Why? Why not?
- How did you feel when I approached you because of your history as a refugee? Does it bother you when people, just like I did, contact you because you are/were a refugee? Why? Why not?
- Do you feel as part of a minority group? Why? Why not?

- Do you think that people with similar experiences to yours feel generally recognised by the media? By the society you now live in?
- We live in a globalised world and we receive news from all over the world. Do you think the fact that we are able to consume news from all over the world facilitates or rather alleviates refugees' integration in new cultural surroundings? Do you see a connection there?
 - o Do you think it makes a difference for you?
- Is there anything you might want to add that we haven't yet talked about?

Appendix F – Thematic Analysis Grid

Theme	Main codes	Illustrative quote
<i>News Consumption</i> (NEWS-)	BELIEVING	“Sometimes yes, sometimes yes, but you cannot say that everything is true” (Participant 5)
	CHANNELS	“For me it’s mostly Austrian newspapers like Ö24 and <i>Zeit im Bild</i> and <i>Kleine Zeitung</i> ” (Participant 2)
	DIFFERENCE	„Yes of course, actually since I’m here. Back in my home country, I was not interested in the news or anything like that at all. But ever since I am here, I always want to listen to the news or read the newspaper.” (Participant 1)
	FREQUENCY	“I always do that yes” (Participant 1)
	IMPORTANCE	“Yes if I have time I like to know what is going on” (Participant 8)
	MEDIA	“Mostly Facebook or radio, at work radio, because it’s always on and then I sometimes listen to it” (Participant 4)
	RELUCTANCE	“Maybe skimming through, but I know what’s going on, so I don’t need to read it” (Participant 5)
	SOURCE	“For me it’s really important reading from the main source” (Participant 6)
	TOPICS	“Especially everything that gets published about refugees” (Participant 1)
	UNINTENTIONAL	“I don’t know exactly but sometimes I didn’t even want to see this, but it just popped up, I don’t know how they do it” (Participant 4)
<i>Representations of Migration</i> (REPMIGR-)	ALL-DIFFERENT	“I have always seen a difference. I can’t say there is a typical representation” (Participant 2)
	AWARENESS	“No, no, no, I didn’t know that at all and as I said, I really had no clue at the time when I was still in Afghanistan” (Participant 1)
	BAD-NEWS-ONLY	“When they show something on TV or in the news or in the media it is always bad things and they never show good things” (Participant 9)
	CHALLENGE-THEM	“From time to time at the comments, yes, I have written something” (Participant 3)

<p><i>Representations of Migration</i> (REPMIGR-)</p>	DIFF-ARGUMENT	„an Austrian person or a criminal from Austria and this person does something wrong or bad, then the newspapers would write that a man did it and they would not say where this person is from, which village or which country or so. But when a refugee does something wrong, then they’ll exactly say that the person who did it was from Afghanistan or from Iran, from Syria or whatever“ (Participant 1)
	EXAMPLES	“Yesterday I saw an article on Instagram, and it was about Mr Hofer I think” (Participant 2)
	EXPECTATIONS	“No, because I would be sad if I read this” (Participant 7)
	FAKE-NEWS	“I deleted Facebook about a year ago, because I always saw news on Facebook, from Austria or Germany or from my country, and that was not true” (Participant 9)
	FEELINGS	“It makes me a little sad. There is so much hate online” (Participant 3)
	GENERALISED	„For example, only one Afghani, an asylum seeker or a refugee, makes a mistake or does something bad, then we all get lumped together and the person or the series or those, I don’t know, people who write the news or who publish and forward this article, they all judge us the same way and think that all refugees are alike.“ (Participant 1)
	GOOD-NEWS-SLOW	„negative news are reported and shared everywhere immediately and positive news take some time“ (Participant 1)
	HYPERBOLISM	“A lot of it is true, but the problem is that they exaggerate a lot...” (Participant 4)
	NOT-FULL-STORY	“They didn’t write about the full story” (Participant 9)
	REASONS	“They always write what the people want, that’s how they make money, right?” (Participant 5)
	TRUTH	“Yes it’s true...” (Participant 4)
	TYPICAL	“Typical...maybe...I don’t know, unemployed?” (Participant 3)
UNDERSTAND-AUT	„To be honest, when reading an article like this one, I also kind of understand the Austrian people. Because there are so many refugees coming from many different countries, no one knows who could be a criminal or who is a good	

		person or who is just a normal person." (Participant 1)
	WANNA-READ	"I want to read it" (Participant 7)
<i>Consequences Others</i>	Change-Opinion	„moreover, the Austrian people can get a different opinion on the matter, especially when there is communication and conversations happening between both sides, that is Austrians and refugees.“ (Participant 1)
	Communication-w-Refugees	“if they knew both sides maybe they would have more contact with refugees” (Participant 4)
	Fear	“One of them told me they were afraid of us” (Participant 9)
	Generalisations	“Not all of them. That’s why I said, that’s maybe 5 or 10%, but they only see that... the others don’t see it and they think that all 100% are the same as those 5” (Participant 4)
	No-Contact-w-Refugee	“At first, because the students don’t know us, they don’t have contact with us” (Participant 2)
	Prejudices	“Some think women in Iran are completely restricted and we are really not in Iran. So many say that in Iran women are dependent on men, just like in Saudi-Arabia” (Participant 7)
	Racism	“I’m always thinking why would they be so racist...” (Participant 1)
	Wrong-Assumptions	„But I think that’s all because most people think that we refugees are only here due to financial or economic problems and that that is why we fled our country.“ (Participant 1)
<i>Consequences Refugees</i>	Better-Integration	“With Facebook, it [integration] is easier...” (Participant 8)
	Blaming-Others	„As I said before, there are some parties or groups that always report negatively about us, they just don’t want or just can’t or just have to somehow report in a negative way about us“ (Participant 1)
	Emotional-Distress	“It makes me a little sad... but not everyone does that” (Participant 8)
	Hard-Work	“Yes it had some negative consequences for me because you have to do a lot of difficult things here in Austria and you have try a lot” (Participant 7)

<i>Consequences Refugees</i>	Making-Friends	“journalists always came to cover my exhibitions and they always asked me and I have to admit that through those newspapers and the media, I found a lot of friends” (Participant 1)
	Motivation	“That way the refugees get kind of praised and motivated again” (Participant 1)
	No-Contact-Other-Refugees	“I am an asylum seeker myself... but that’s how it works... not even I have contact with them, that’s the problem” (Participant 4)
	No-Motivation	“we live here now in this uncertainty, we don’t know what to do or what not to do and we really lose all our motivation and all those happy feelings that we had, all our goals, what we wanted to achieve and what we achieved so far... it’s so unfair I think.” (Participant 1)
	Positive-Effect	“That really had a positive impact on me” (Participant 6)
	Weird-Looks	“I heard from others that they get weird looks from people while walking somewhere” (Participant 4)
<i>Identity</i>	Collective-Identity	“I am also just human and we refugees, we are humans” (Participant 1)
	Dislike-Spotlight	“No, I don’t like being in the newspaper or in some kind of video or on Facebook, etc.” (Participant 4)
	Dissonance	“Yes, I’ll tell you, it is completely different, 100% completely different” (Participant 5)
	Dual-Perspective	“As I said, there are bad people and good people, like everywhere” (Participant 2)
	Human-Is-Human	“Those humans are humans” (Participant 8)
	Identify-w-Representation	“Yes because the same happened to me as well and I know how terrible it is” (Participant 9)
	Minority-Group	“I would say minority group” (Participant 3)
	National-Identity	“No, even after 100 years I am Syrian, I will always be Syrian” (Participant 4)
	No-Judging-on-Nationality	“You didn’t choose where you were born, no one chose being born here or in other countries” (Participant 6)
	No-one-Flawless	„I’m not saying that refugees are like angels or that we don’t make mistakes. Everyone makes

<i>Identity</i>		mistakes and no one is flawless, everybody needs to know that.“ (Participant 1)
	Self-Determined	“Not everything you read or see is true, you have to think yourself, I have my own head for thinking” (Participant 9)
	Shaping-Identity	„But I don’t feel as an Austrian person at all. It’s just like as if we refugees were not seen as humans here in Austria, because of, as I said, because of how much restrictions there are and we are not allowed to do anything really...“ (Participant 1)
	Thinking-Positive	“Normally I don’t want to keep negative things in my head, I can talk about positive things” (Participant 6)
<i>Recognition</i>	Negative-Recognition	„the media only show or disadvantages... they never show our advantages, what we can achieve or what how we can be useful here in Austria or things like that... We should be looked at the same way as Austrians... because we are the same humans as Austrians are.“ (Participant 1)
	Positive-Recognition	“Yes some of the things that we experienced was similar...” (Participant 3)
<i>Appeals</i> (APPEAL-) & <i>Suggestions</i> (REPMIGR-SUGGESTIONS)	COMMUNICATION	“it might be better to also invite people to get in touch with refugees or asylum seekers and just talk to them, so that the Austrian people start to understand asylum seekers and refugees better or get to know them.“ (Participant 1)
	HUMAN-RIGHTS	“So many people are talking about human rights, they should also try to actually practice them.“ (Participant 1)
	INFORMING-ONESELF	“The people need to check themselves whether something is true or not” (Participant 6)
	POLICY	“If the country doesn’t want us then they could have told us in the very first month and be like no we don’t want you here, keep going or go back or whatever. But they also didn’t want to send us back and we live here now in this uncertainty, we don’t know what to do or what not to do and we really lose all our motivation and all those happy feelings that we had, all our goals, what we wanted to achieve and what we achieved so far... it’s so unfair I think.“ (Participant 1)
	Be-Truthful	“Truth” (Participant 5)

	Interview-Refugees	"I think it would be better if they would interview refugees and ask them and then show that to the people" (Participant 9)
	More-Good-Examples	"Yes and they also need to show what refugees did good" (Participant 9)
	Show-Both-Sides	"If they look for bad news and want to make an article, they should also look to the other side and show that there are also good people" (Participant 4)
VOICE & AGENCY	Language-Barrier	"I cannot speak German very well, but I try" (Participant 8)
	Speaking-Up	"I never write something in the comments but when I see someone face-to-face and this person says something that is wrong I explain it to him what I experienced and how things went" (Participant 2)
Austria	AUT-EXPECTATION	"I was so motivated in the beginning, I was so happy when I arrived in Austria and I thought, okay, now I'll have a safe life in a safe country and I was really really happy about everything. On my very first day I started learning German." (Participant 1)
	AUT-EXPERIENCE	"There are still some people in this area that are very helpful. I am glad that these people exist and they helped us a lot" (Participant 3)
	ACCLIMATISATION	"Yes, the people get used to it I think" (Participant 3)
	INTEGRATION	"Integration is difficult, it is more difficult at my age, not as easy as coming here at a younger age" (Participant 4)
Reasons for Participating in this Study	Better-Opinion	"at least she would not have any bad thoughts about us anymore" (Participant 1)
	Good-Experience	"Maybe she'll get a good experience out of it and then she might talk about us further..." (Participant 1)
	Helping-Out	"I really just wanted to help" (Participant 8)
	Info-Refugees	"I took the chance so that such topics are better reported about and about the refugees that there is more information for our society" (Participant 3)

<i>Reasons for Participating in this Study</i>	Language-Improv	„But I think that is something positive of course, because I might speak better or I am nice to people... but yeah I think it’s positive, and also positive for my personal experiences.“ (Participant 1)
	Liked-Topic	“Your questions were good, important questions, not normal, that’s good” (Participant 8)
	New-Contact	“And then I thought, okay, I would like to get to know her and do that interview with her.“ (Participant 1)
<i>The Role of Social Media (SOCMED-)</i>	INFO-PLATFORM	“And when something happens in Afghanistan or, I don’t know, somewhere in another country like Iran or Pakistan, today you can immediately see that on Social Media and you don’t need TV or something like that for it.” (Participant 1)
	INTERACTIVITY	“I think it’s better because those who are interested, most of them are informed about migrants and have also gotten to know someone” (Participant 2)
	LANGUAGE	“On Insta, only Insta. Also Facebook. There is a group, for example, for Iranians in Austria. And on Insta as well. Because there are the news in Persian” (Participant 7)
	MORE-BAD-NEWS	“No there are only more bad news and that is why I deleted my Facebook” (Participant 9)
	PUBLIC-OPINION	“When someone states his opinion, that’s really helpful I think, because it is accessible and everyone can publish their opinion” (Participant 6)
	SOCIALISING	“For me it’s great with those apps, Instagram and Facebook, I can contact my friends and also Austrians and for me that’s good” (Participant 7)
	TIMEKILLER	“For me it’s like a game, or I can simply just spend time with it” (Participant 5)
<i>Other</i>	ASSUMP-INTERVIEWER	“So, when Claudia messaged in the group chat that you are a student and that you want to do interviews with migrants, I first thought like okay, she apparently doesn’t know any refugees and has no contact with us, because if she would know some refugees then she would probably not need more of us.“ (Participant 1)
	INTERVIEW-BEFORE-N	“No, no I never did that before. This is the first time” (Participant 8)

	INTERVIEW-BEFORE-Y	"Yes, by newspapers actually quite often, but by the media I've been approached two or three times or something like that." (Participant 1)
	LACK-OF-INTEREST	"The people are not interested in my country" (Participant 5)

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ISSN: 1474-1938/1946