WORLD MIGRATION REPORT 2018:
CHAPTER 8

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All reasonable efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy of the data referred to in this report, including through data verification. We regret, however, any data errors that may remain. Unless otherwise stated, this report does not refer to data or events after June 2017.

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Cover photo: Mark is an electronics technician in Dublin, Ireland. Originally from Poland, he moved to Ireland shortly after his father motivated him to work abroad, arriving in Dublin during the economic boom of 2006. He focuses largely on repairs and is amazed by the little care many people put into their electronics. He compares this to his homeland, where people used to be much more careful with their valuables but today simply choose to replace their electronics with newer ones. © IOM (Photo: Muse Mohammed)

8

MEDIA REPORTING OF MIGRANTS AND MIGRATION[1]

Introduction

Most people reading this will have met migrants in their neighbourhoods, workplaces or social circles, or they themselves will be migrants. Moreover, many people have encountered the subject of migration in the media. Ranging from films and newspapers to tweets, that coverage may have portrayed migration in one way or another, or simply raised it as a topical issue. To a large extent, our perceptions, attitudes or beliefs about migration are based on both direct experiences and those channelled through the lens of the media, although the precise mixture likely depends on our individual situations. Many people, including researchers, journalists, politicians and members of the public, present and debate particular viewpoints about migration while ignoring others. Sometimes, this deliberately encourages us to think in particular ways. Other times, it is unintentional or related to the fact that media content is often produced quickly and tends to be of limited length.

In this chapter, we aim to address four key questions:

- What do media around the world say about migration and migrants?

- What impacts does this coverage have on what members of the public, policymakers and migrants themselves think and do?

- How does the practice of journalism itself contribute to coverage?

- What implications arise from recent experiences of media and migration for future research and practice?

In addressing these questions, we acknowledge how media and migration are contested terms that take different – and changing – forms in different times and places. This chapter recognizes that, while much media research tends to focus on traditional news reporting, usually in high-income democracies typically thought of as destination countries for migrants, this is only part of the picture. This chapter also considers newer ways of communicating through websites and social media that offer different ways of identifying, generating and sharing content with others.[2] Some of this content may be familiar news, but other types may be closer to entertainment and art. Modern media are extraordinarily varied in their content and forms. The chapter also points out that media coverage of migration reflects differences in how countries' media systems operate. The degree of press freedom is an important variable here, but even relatively "free" media may be more or less objective or partisan in their approaches. While we are limited in terms of space as well as the scope of research, wherever possible we have tried to reflect the variety – if not the volume – of media interest in migration, particularly from different geographic perspectives. We examine research published in English, but have included (where possible) studies that considered media content in its original language.

Background and context

Arguably, humans have always communicated about migration in whichever ways were available to them: even petroglyphs in Azerbaijan, some 10,000 years old, depict humans on the move.[3] Fleeing persecution, travelling to improve one's economic situation, talking about homelands, foreigners and exile: these kinds of ideas and stories appear throughout history.[4] But what makes migration – and, particularly, media coverage of the issue – so important now?

One reason might be rising levels of anti-immigration rhetoric and recent gains by anti-immigration political parties in many countries. Across Europe, for example, some voters have moved away from mainstream parties towards "challenger parties" on the basis of their migration policies, especially those who are more politically right-wing.[5] Negative, even hostile, coverage of migration has accompanied similar rises in anti-immigration parties and political rhetoric.[6]

Political debates often scapegoat migrants by reducing the complex causes, impacts and types of migration into easily repeated stories or phrases.[7] But laying blame solely on the media alone for negative attitudes towards migration would oversimplify as well. Other factors, including demographic change, actual or imagined socioeconomic impacts, and wider policies (such as economic austerity) are also likely to play some part.[8]

Changing contexts also influence patterns in coverage. Two important factors include the degree to which media are free, and the ways that media now operate in a digital world. A free media environment is "where coverage of political news is robust, the safety of journalists is guaranteed, state intrusion in media affairs is minimal, and the press is not subject to onerous legal or economic pressures".[9] Freedom of the media is widely considered a necessity for democracy.[10] This is because media can inform voters about current events, scrutinize institutions or hold public servants to account without excessive interference from the very institutions or officials being criticized. Levels of media freedom greatly differ around the world. In 2017, 13 per cent of the world's population lived in countries with a free press, while nearly half (45%) of people lived in countries without a free press.[11]

Even in countries with high levels of media freedom, the news often reflects the language and topics that governments and other powerful groups prefer.[12] This is because reporters often depend on government officials for information, especially about political issues. Media also operate in different ways around the world.[13] They can be highly professionalized and commercial (the "liberal" model), as seen in Anglo-American traditions. Or media can be extensions of political parties (a "polarized pluralist" approach often seen in Southern European countries). A third approach sees media as professional and autonomous yet representing and connecting viewpoints from many distinct social groups including trade unions, voluntary associations and parties (the "democratic corporatist" model seen in Northern European countries). The third model is generally more open to multiple points of view, whereas both the liberal and polarized pluralist systems tend to reflect official political debate, although to different degrees and for different reasons.

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3   Cherry and Leppard, 2015.

4   Anderson, 2013.

5   Hobolt and Tilley, 2016.

6   Wodak, KhosraviNik and Mral, 2013.

7   Greenslade, 2005.

8   For more comprehensive views of immigration attitude formation, see Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014.

9   Freedom House, 2016: 1. Freedom House recently included treatment of digital media and their producers, such as blogs and bloggers, in their rankings.

10 Zielonka, 2015.

11 The remainder (42%) lived in countries with a partly free press. Freedom House, 2017.

12 Entman, 2004.

13 Hallin and Mancini, 2004.

Meanwhile, media coverage differs between democratic and autocratic regimes. Most research focuses on media systems and coverage in democracies. In autocracies, however, media coverage of migration and other issues may tend to reflect State interests.[14] For example, some argue that lower visibility of migration in Russian and Chinese media coverage of Russian Federation–China border relations might indicate declining levels of emphasis among national and regional elites.[15]

The rise of the Internet, and the subsequent prevalence of social media as sources of (or distractions from) news, has also changed the media landscape in several ways. Some argue that digital transformations are threatening traditional newspapers by allowing users to find all kinds of content – news, advertising, sports coverage and lifestyle issues – when and where they want.[16] As a result, there is less need to buy full packages of content bundled into individual papers or subscriptions. Meanwhile, more people get their news from social media: one study showed that nearly half (46%) of US citizens did so.[17] Higher rates, focusing solely on social media use rather than all online sites, were seen in Brazil (70%), Portugal (66%), Ireland (52%) and Canada (48%). However, the two worlds are not entirely separate, as in the case of blogging: research into the relationship between blogs and traditional media tends to find that they influence each other, sometimes sparking follow-up while other times reacting to content.[18]

Social media also connect people in new ways that enable action – sometimes very rapidly. For example, people have used social media to mobilize support for protest movements during the Arab Spring.[19] Non-governmental organizations, as well as local communities, also use social media to rally support for individual migrants facing the threat of deportation.[20]

But changes in media also introduce whole new sets of challenges. "Digital divides" – or inequalities in access to, and use of, information and communication technologies[21] – risk reinforcing gaps, as well as creating new ones. Also, social media may contribute to "echo chambers" or "bubbles", whereby users only encounter news passed along – and approved – by like-minded friends.[22] These media effects reinforce political polarization, challenging efforts to promote consensus or compromise, especially on migration policy.

Media coverage around the world

Immigration sentiment

How positive or negative is media coverage about migration? Much of the research evidence shows media associating bad news[23] with migrants around the world. During 2013–2014, unfavorable print and online coverage of migration in six countries with very high human development levels (such as Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom) was more than twice as visible as favourable content.[24] This gap was particularly pronounced in Australia and the United Kingdom, while less so in Canada

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14 Luo, 2014.
15 Sullivan and Renz, 2010.
16 Starr, 2009.
17 Newman et al., 2016.
18 Meraz, 2009.
19 Khondker, 2011.
20 Patler and Gonzales, 2015.
21 Selwyn, 2004.
22 Sunstein, 2017.
23 Philo, Briant and Donald, 2013.
24 McAuliffe, Weeks and Koser, 2015.

and Switzerland. Meanwhile, media content in sampled countries with lower levels of human development (such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam) also showed significantly more unfavourable content than favourable. Among these countries, Malaysian and Thai media were the most likely to have negative content. Furthermore, media in both sets of countries were most negative towards irregular migration.[25]

More detailed studies of particular national media often confirm this general trend. For example, Danish and, to a more moderate extent, Dutch newspapers published more negative than positive content about migration between 2003 and 2010.[26] Similar analysis of migrants in German news (print and broadcast television) between 1998 and 2005 showed that these media tended to portray these groups negatively, too.[27]

But there are reasons to be cautious about this narrative of negativity. First, negativity is not unique to migration coverage, as journalists generally tend to emphasize problems across most topics. Second, there are exceptions to the bad news trend. There has been some movement towards more positive – or at least more neutral – coverage of migration issues across several destination and origin countries that does not seem to be attributable to any particular event.[28] Media in specific countries, such as Switzerland and Viet Nam, also demonstrated noticeable increases in positive content, even if the overall media landscape appears to be more polarized.[29] Newspapers in New Zealand have also shown "more nuanced and sympathetic reporting after 2000".[30] Furthermore, as explored in greater detail later, changes in traditional media (as well as the proliferation of social media outside of conventional journalism) provide opportunities for migrants to produce and promote their own content highlighting positive aspects of migration.

Framing migration: competing issues, different approaches

Migration coverage is not only positive or negative, but also presents a variety of different issues, narratives and viewpoints. For the purpose of this chapter, these techniques can be broadly thought of as different ways to frame migration, although we recognize that the framing concept is itself not always well defined.[31] Identifying how matters are framed is important because, as explored later, media frames affect how people think about migration.

Traditional media in the United States and Europe often cast migration as an issue of "law and order" or security.[32] For example, this link became more visible in Italian media from the 1970s to the 1990s.[33] British media also have depicted immigrants as "illegal",[34] and asylum seekers and refugees as "bogus" or linked to terrorist threats.[35] Meanwhile, from 1999 to 2014, English-language newspapers in Malaysia and Thailand

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25   McAuliffe, Weeks and Koser, 2015.

26   van Klingeren et al., 2015.

27   Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart, 2009.

28   McAuliffe, Weeks and Koser, 2015.

29   Ibid.

30   Spoonley and Butcher, 2009.

31   Cacciatore, Scheufele and Iyengar, 2016.

32   Suro, 2011.

33   Sciortino and Colombo, 2004.

34   Blinder and Allen, 2016b.

35   Esses, Medianu and Lawson, 2013.

also tended to refer to immigrants as "illegal" – a pattern particularly strong in the Malaysian case.[36] Recent research argues that economic aspects, which emphasize the costs and fiscal impacts of migrants in destination countries, are significant – equalling if not exceeding concern about crime.[37] Generally, these aspects of legal status, criminality and economic impacts mix and interrelate in media content about immigration, as found in Spanish newspaper coverage of Latin American migrants.[38]

Another approach involves dividing migrants from the "native" population, portraying them as threats to national identity, culture or cohesiveness. The Latino Threat Narrative, documented in US media,[39] portrays immigrants from Latin America as incapable of successful integration.[40] Local media in Guangzhou, China, also tend to portray African immigrants as threats to public safety and "racial purity" – a narrative that spills into online domains, too.[41] Meanwhile, media also increasingly link populist rhetoric against Islam with broader questions about culture and immigration, as seen in public debate in Norway related to the July 2011 white supremacist terror attacks in Utøya and Oslo.[42]

Media coverage can also remove migrants metaphorically from the population altogether through dehumanizing language. A notable example of this involves metaphors casting migration as a form of natural disaster (often a flood) or migrants as animals, especially insects ("swarms"). This practice is relatively widespread, appearing in national media such as the United Kingdom,[43] Australia,[44] South Africa,[45] the United States[46] and countries in the Middle East hosting Syrian refugees (see the text box 'How media in host and non-host countries depict Syrian refugees').[47,48] Both economic and sociocultural threats also apply to coverage of "illegal" or "irregular" migration.[49]

How media in host and non-host countries depict Syrian refugees

Media in countries experiencing forced migration flows might be expected to cover the issue differently from the media in countries further removed from the conflict. One study[a] compared Western and Arab online media coverage of Syrian refugees since March 2011 to see whether either group used more "water" or "pressure" metaphors – such as waves of refugees putting a *strain* on services.

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36 Anderson, 2013.

37 Caviedes, 2015.

38 Igartua, Cheng and Muñiz, 2005.

39 Chavez, 2013.

40 In the United States of America, the kind of narrative that divides people by race is not new, as Flores (2003) shows in media coverage about deportation campaigns affecting Mexicans and Mexican–Americans in the 1920s and 1930s.

41 Lan, 2016.

42 Wiggen, 2012.

43 Gabrielatos and Baker, 2008.

44 Pickering, 2000.

45 Banda and Mawadza, 2015.

46 Santa Ana, 1999.

47 Abid, Manan and Rahman, 2017.

48 However, not all uses of metaphors in the context of migration are negative, as Salahshour (2016) explores in the case of New Zealand: they can also communicate positive, economic aspects.

49 Thorbjornsrud, 2015.

Arab, host-country media in the study (which included Lebanese, Jordanian, Egyptian and Turkish news) tended to use more metaphors when referring to Syrian refugees than non-host country media (comprising US, British, Saudi Arabian and United Arab Emirates sources). These choices matter because they tend to portray Syrians as an indistinguishable group, as well as emphasizing the burdens refugees place on host societies. Documenting the visibility of metaphors and what they communicate is an important part of understanding the global significance of media coverage.

a Abid, Manan and Rahman, 2017.

In contrast to narratives of threat, division and inhuman qualities, other studies demonstrate an explicitly humanitarian frame that "portrays immigrants as victims of an unfair system".[50] Several cases demonstrate this way of covering immigration in Western European media, including those in Belgium,[51] France[52] and the Netherlands.[53] Interestingly, this kind of frame actually dominated press coverage in the Republic of Korea over the 1990–2008 period, which reported that "immigrants have mostly been portrayed as vulnerable victims".[54] It also appears in coverage about emigration, too (see the text box 'Emigration in Bangladeshi and Romanian media'). Usually, however, this frame appears with the other approaches mentioned above. For example, Malaysian press outlets cast asylum seekers and refugees as both threats and victims, depending on the publications' ideological leanings.[55]

Emigration in Romanian and Bangladeshi media

While many media studies focus on immigration into traditionally "destination" countries, other research also looks at how "sending" countries' media cover emigration issues. One study focused on Romanian broadsheet newspapers' portrayal of emigrants and their economic remittances back to Romania during 2011–2012.[b] These newspapers tended to view remittances as positive sources of development for Romania – although other, less frequent opinions raised questions about possible losses of skills and disruption to families.

Another study looked at the media in Bangladesh, among other developing countries.[c] Although the media commented on opportunities abroad for Bangladeshi workers, they also mentioned concerns about exploitation and mistreatment, especially affecting female workers. These findings demonstrate how emigration, as one of many types of mobility, also receives different kinds of coverage.

b Mădroane, 2016.
c McAuliffe and Weeks, 2015.

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50   Thorbjornsrud, 2015.
51   Van Gorp, 2005.
52   Benson, 2013.
53   Bos et al., 2016.
54   Park, 2014.
55   Don and Lee, 2014.

Accounting for different scales and media

These trends also have geographic dimensions. Journalists working in regional and local press, for example, may cover immigration differently because of their specific networks and connections to the location, as demonstrated in the contrasting cases of coverage about asylum seekers in Yorkshire and Wales in the United Kingdom.[56] Meanwhile, analysis of Spanish regional newspaper coverage in Castilla and Leon revealed that, while local papers could be just as negative towards immigrants, they "tend to be more community service oriented in contrast with 'bad is good' news" found in national tabloids.[57] This echoed earlier studies in the Netherlands, where regional newspapers tended to emphasize human interest frames regardless of local residents' opinions on asylum.[58] This pattern coincides with divergent perceptions: citizens may perceive immigration as a significant problem nationally while viewing diversity positively or neutrally in their local areas.[59] However, national debates can also catalyse local conflict and negative perceptions.[60]

Other research, comparing local and national newspapers in Canada and the United Kingdom from 2001 to 2012, questions how much these scales actually matter: in those countries, locally felt factors such as unemployment and the actual numbers of migrants did not cause any substantial change in framing.[61] This debate illustrates how media content and effects are often specific to a particular context, making it hard to draw general conclusions.

Scale also moves upwards, as seen in international media coverage of other nations' migration policies. Observing from a distance can change the tone of coverage or the prominence of a given issue. For example, in February 2014, Australian media reported on "riots" occurring in detention centres in Papua New Guinea, operated on behalf of Australia. Although international media used these events "to question the legality of the Australian government's actions"[62] and raise awareness of asylum seekers' plights in detention, they still portrayed these migrants as being somehow different. Later in this chapter, we explore factors specific to the practice of journalism that may help explain the form and content of migration coverage.

Advances in data collection and analysis also facilitate research into online media. Although these techniques are still developing, they are already giving glimpses into the ways that public discussion about migration happens outside of traditional newspapers (see the text box 'Alan Kurdi and images that spread across 20 million screens'). For example, a study of Twitter data revealed peaks and troughs of public attention to immigration – and particular individuals trying to lead the public discussion – as the United States Senate debated immigration reform in 2013.[63] Blogs and online forums may also provide anonymous opportunities for even stronger, more dehumanizing language directed at migrants than might be used in conventional outlets.[64] However, they can also expose people to more diverse viewpoints, as seen in the Republic of Korea online communities that tend to contain more nuanced depictions of migrants than do mainstream online media.[65] Meanwhile, social media forums continue to link male asylum seekers and refugees from Middle Eastern countries with terrorism and sexual deviancy, fuelling perceptions "they do not conform to received visual expectations of what a 'refugee' looks like".[66]

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56 Finney and Robinson, 2008.

57 Cheng et al., 2014.

58 d'Haenens and de Lange, 2001.

59 Blinder and Allen, 2016a.

60 Hopkins, 2010.

61 Lawlor, 2015.

62 Laney et al., 2016.

63 Chung and Zeng, 2016.

64 Musolff, 2015.

65 Yi and Jung, 2015.

66 Rettberg and Gajjala, 2016.

Alan Kurdi and images that spread across 20 million screens

In September 2015, images of the drowned Syrian toddler Alan Kurdi (mistakenly reported as "Aylan") flashed across upwards of 20 million screens around the world, largely thanks to social media. Research into its impacts showed that tweets using the word *refugee* not only spiked immediately afterwards, but also spread rapidly from a limited geographical area, to wider Middle Eastern audiences and to the rest of the world.[d]

While various countries (including Canada, Germany and the United Kingdom) announced steps to increase support for refugees in the immediate aftermath of the picture's publication, there are debates about how, and to what extent, this image has moved public debate in Europe about refugees.[e] But there is no doubt it marked an important moment in wider migration narratives, with the image coming to symbolize the closed border of the European Union and the risks desperate people will take to cross it. It also raises questions about the responsibility of social networks as platforms for many kinds of content, not all of which readers or viewers will agree with or find appropriate.

d Vis and Goriunova, 2015.
e Vollmer and Karakayali, 2017.

Media content also includes many topics and genres. For example, research into Spanish prime-time fictional television programmes (such as sitcoms, series or feature films) found that immigrant characters were not only underrepresented compared to the actual foreign population, they were also portrayed as having less education, intelligence and stable employment, as well as being more violent[67] – a finding echoed in studies of US broadcast media.[68]

Media coverage about athletes who happen to have migrant backgrounds also provide opportunities to highlight – as well as reframe or even set aside – questions about national identity and integration.[69] Examples include reporting about the French national football team,[70] and UK newspaper coverage of British Olympians with migrant backgrounds.[71] Also, Slovenian broadcast coverage of naturalized Olympic athletes (many of whom were African) used terms such as "imported" and "untrue", having the rhetorical effect of emphasizing differences between them and viewers.[72]

Migrant-led media and journalism

In the midst of reporting that emphasizes migrants' differences in relation to the host or native population, it is important to explore how migrants themselves access, produce and share media content. Newsrooms that are now catering to different migrant audiences – as well as digital technologies that disrupt and circumvent traditional media altogether – produce new opportunities and challenges for covering immigration. Research comparing

67 Igartua, Barrios and Ortega, 2012.
68 Mastro and Behm-Morawitz, 2005.
69 Maguire, 2013.
70 Garcia-Arjona, 2012.
71 Allen and Blinder, 2012.
72 Ličen and Billings, 2013.

Spanish- and English-language media in the United States, for example, shows that the former cover immigration issues more positively than the latter – with potential effects on what their audiences subsequently think.[73]

"Immigrant journalism" does not take a single approach. Instead, it varies in style, formality, motivation and degree of ties to the home country.[74] Chinese media in Canada and the United States,[75] Venezuelan journalists in Florida,[76] or historically Black newspapers' coverage of West Indian immigrants to the United States in the early twentieth century[77] all demonstrate how migrants can relate to – and communicate with – host countries in different ways. For example, refugees use Twitter and Facebook to directly communicate their own experiences, indicating that: "a seeming shift towards a self-staged testimony appears to offer a potential autonomous self-management of social media presence by the refugees themselves".[78] This technique can extend to other media and geographic regions. As argued later, however, the extent to which these messages and ways of producing coverage are effective depends on the purpose at hand.

Impacts of media coverage on public perceptions, policymaking and migrants

Media coverage, in all its forms, relates to the wider world. Media provide important sources of information that affect how people act, what people think, how policymakers prioritize agendas, and how migrants make decisions.

Media coverage and public opinion about migration

"The press", we are reminded, "is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about."[79] The previous section showed how media coverage of migration varies around the world – and not just within traditional newspapers, but in other media, too. But what impacts do these various portrayals and approaches have on what people think, on policy developments and on migrants themselves?

In the early twentieth century, Walter Lippmann suggested that what we think about an issue is based on the "pictures in our heads" that we either create ourselves, through direct experience, or receive from other sources.[80] Whether explicitly or not, this idea has formed the basis of much research into how media influence what people think: does changing pictures similarly change perceptions and opinions?[81]

One aspect of these perceptions involves how many migrants there are in the country. People regularly overestimate minority groups' actual numbers.[82] This can occur because people perceive immigrants as threatening (and exaggerate that threat) or because they receive and use incorrect information. The media often promote these feelings and information, especially on symbolic issues such as immigration, where individuals may not have direct experience of all types of migration and refugee issues.[83]

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73 Abrajano and Singh, 2009.

74 Shumow, 2014.

75 Zhou, Chen and Cai, 2006.

76 Shumow, 2012.

77 Tillery and Chresfield, 2012.

78 Rettberg and Gajjala, 2016.

79 Cohen, 1963.

80 Lippmann, 1997.

81 There are differences between perceptions and opinions – notably, that the latter indicate evaluation of an attitude object while the former simply refer to general awareness or to cognitive links between an entity and associated characteristics. For the purpose of this chapter, these terms may be used interchangeably to broadly indicate the idea of "what people think". For more detail, see Fiske and Taylor (2016).

82 Herda, 2010.

83 Vliegenthart et al., 2008.

Changing the information available to people can make a difference in attitudes towards immigration.[84] For example, survey experiments in Europe and the United States found that accurate information about migrant populations influences perceptions. Researchers provided factual information about the number of migrants in their respective countries to a random subset of participants. In most countries, people who were given the accurate information were less likely to say that their country had too many immigrants, compared to those who were not given that information.[85] This difference was particularly pronounced in Greece, Italy and the United Kingdom, but less so in France and the Russian Federation.[86]

Another aspect involves understanding more about the nature of migrant populations: why migrants are arriving, and where they come from. For example, when the British public thought of migrants as asylum seekers or labour migrants, official figures actually showed that students were the largest group at the time – but this group is rarely covered in the media.[87] Meanwhile, in Finland, a substantial minority (22%) of citizens thought that most migrants came not from the Russian Federation (the correct geographic origins of most migrants in the country) but from Somalia or other places.[88] In this case, Finns who relied on print media were more accurate in their perceptions than those who primarily used television sources.

These differences between perceptions and reality are important in shaping public opinion about immigration. Also, different ways of portraying reality may impact perceptions (see the text box 'Are numbers or narratives more convincing among migrants?'). Studies in Europe and the United States have revealed that people tend to be more opposed to migration when they think that their country hosts a large population of migrants.[89] These perceptions, rather than the real size of the foreign-born population, are correlated with anti-immigrant views.[90] Also, citizens who perceive migrants to be from different (and less privileged) groups than the host country also tend to be more negative about migration, as confirmed by studies in Finland,[91] Spain[92] and the United States.[93] It is safe to say that media coverage plays an important role in providing information about the size and nature of migrant populations, which in turn seems likely to have an impact on public opinion.

Are numbers or narratives more convincing among migrants?

Messages about migration and integration take several forms, affecting migrant and host audiences alike. One study[f] presented identical facts about the experiences of young Muslim women in the Netherlands to Muslims living in Amsterdam – some migrants, and some children of migrants born in Amsterdam. The information appeared either as personal testimony involving a specific person, or numerical data reflecting the situation of Muslim women as a whole.

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84 Grigorieff, Roth and Ubfal, 2016.

85 Transatlantic Trends, 2014.

86 Providing information about migrants' share of the population did not change perceptions in Poland, while it actually slightly increased the percentage of people in Sweden who said that there were too many immigrants (Transatlantic Trends, 2014).

87 Blinder, 2015.

88 Herda, 2015.

89 Alba, Rumbaut and Marotz, 2005; Hooghe and de Vroome, 2015.

90 Strabac, 2011.

91 Herda, 2015.

92 Igartua and Cheng, 2009.

93 Brader, Valentino and Suhay, 2008.

Muslims born in Amsterdam (whom the study called "second-generation") responded more strongly to the narrative testimony, becoming more open to gender equality, sexual minorities' rights and secularism in public life. Meanwhile, those born in Muslim-majority countries (whom the study called "first-generation") became more open to these issues when presented with numerical information, though less strongly than the second-generation participants. This pattern held even after considering how comfortable people felt with numbers.

Why did this happen? One possibility the study suggests is that people raised in largely individualistic cultures may connect with personal stories of actual individuals, while those raised in more collective societies may respond more to numbers reflecting opinions or experiences of larger groups. Although research in other countries is needed to confirm this finding, it does suggest that message styles – as well as content – matter for different audiences.

f Wojcieszak et al., 2015.

Emotions, particularly negative ones such as anxiety or fear, also influence how strongly media affect people. This happens because emotions may cause people to interpret information in ways that match their feelings. For example, the combination of feeling anxious and being given negative information about Latinos in the United States resulted in greater levels of hostility,[94] and in a tendency to seek out further negative information.[95] This is especially true for people who use the media more often.[96] Similar results came from a Spanish study that linked crime with migrants of Moroccan – rather than Latin American – origins.[97] Anger is also an important emotion that impacts how people view immigration, as found among Dutch citizens.[98] Less is known about how positive emotions such as amusement, enthusiasm or compassion work in shaping perceptions of migration.[99]

Media and policymaking

In addition to affecting what the public thinks about migration, media can also influence the agendas of policymakers.[100] Studies in this area show that media effects on legislators vary, depending on the issue being covered and on the chosen media (see the text box 'The British press and Brexit').[101] In 1990s Belgium, for example, newspapers seemed to have a greater effect on policymakers' attention than broadcast journalism – particularly on sensational, symbolic issues.[102] Other studies show how the media are less important to policymakers and the public on issues felt more directly, such as inflation.[103]

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94   Brader, Valentino and Suhay, 2008.
95   Albertson and Gadarian, 2015.
96   Seate and Mastro, 2016.
97   Fernandez et al., 2013.
98   Lecheler, Bos and Vliegenthart, 2015.
99   Griskevicius, Shiota and Neufeld, 2010.
100 Baumgartner and Jones, 1993.
101 Walgrave and Van Aelst, 2006.
102 Walgrave, Soroka and Nuytemans, 2007.
103 Soroka, 2002.

The British press and Brexit

In the years leading up to the June 2016 United Kingdom European Union membership referendum (also known as the Brexit referendum), British newspapers focused more on rising "net migration" levels, along with the perceived rate and size of immigration, than on the referendum itself. During 2013–2014, there was a large increase in the coverage of European Union (EU) migration, as well as negative depictions of Romanian migrants, in particular. Some commentators argue that an important factor in the Brexit vote was how the United Kingdom's influential Eurosceptic and anti-immigration newspapers focused on EU migration.[g] Indeed, the detailed picture of British newspaper coverage of migration arguably charts the rise in populist language since 2006.

However, it is difficult to conclusively connect media coverage with political outcomes – especially in complicated events such as Brexit. Public perceptions come from many sources, and other factors, such as recent increases in the United Kingdom's EU migrant population,[h] must be taken into account.

g Cummings, 2017.
h Vargas-Silva and Markaki, 2016.

The impact of media also depends on how politically advantageous media content (or even the lack of media content: see the the text box 'Choosing *not* to report on migration: Australian media and policy change') might be for parties and officials.[104] An experiment involving Swiss members of parliament showed that negative news coverage on issues that a party "owns" elicited a stronger action – although more often among junior members.[105] Further evidence from the Netherlands and Sweden shows that political parties are more likely to respond to media coverage that fits their platforms: "the right framing helps the party attain its policy goals".[106] Also, expanding to other levels of government, such as at the city level, may reveal how the media play stronger roles in shaping policy agendas more locally.[107] In contrast, in China, where central government has greater control over both traditional newspapers and (some) online forums, commercial and non-official media do not appear to impact "official" policy discussion very much.[108]

Choosing *not* to report on migration: Australian media and policy change

Discussing what media report about migration and migrants is only half of the story. The narratives that are not reported are often just as important. Research documenting Australian media coverage and policy developments relating to asylum looks at this question.[i]

In the late 1970s, the Australian Government tried to humanize depictions of asylum seekers. These efforts were broadly ignored by media organizations, however, which preferred to increase the prominence of negative portrayals and their proponents. This unwillingness to report sympathetic

104 Thesen, 2013.
105 Helfer, 2016.
106 van der Pas, 2014.
107 Scholten, 2013.
108 Luo, 2014.

stories arguably helped push policy and public sentiment in more negative directions for decades, eventually leading to Australia's policy of offshore processing of asylum seekers.

i Doherty, 2015.

Impacts on migration and migrants

Confronted with largely negative media portrayals in host countries, migrants can react in several ways. Sometimes, as found among Latin American migrants in the United States, they emphasize themselves as hardworking people who are different from "other" criminal migrants: "[...] these immigrants need to show that they have the traits of productive citizens [...] because this counters the negative images of themselves in the media."[109] Meanwhile, media that reflect discrimination against foreigners can cultivate perceptions among immigrants that public opinion in the host country is similarly biased. South American immigrants in Chile, who typically viewed the Chilean media (which included negative stereotypes about other Latin American people), were more likely to think that Chilean society was more discriminatory, even if they themselves had not personally experienced this.[110]

At a more general level, media in host countries also affect migrants' perceptions, behaviours and attitudes in other ways. Depending on their personal motivations or situations, migrants may selectively use the media to learn more about their new place, as seen among Hazara men in Brisbane, Australia.[111] They may also turn to the media either in home or host countries aimed at migrant audiences like themselves to retain some aspects of their national or ethnic identity; a study of Asian women living in the Republic of Korea showed how some turned to familiar home country media to remember their native language and keep up with news back home.[112] Russian-speaking families from the former USSR living in Germany and Israel also used host, homeland and international media to help them to integrate into their new societies, as well as a way of passing down cultural traditions to their children.[113]

Meanwhile, exposure to Western media can change migrants' perceptions of their home countries, too. For example, Chinese students in the United States became more sceptical and critical of their own government after reading news coverage about censored issues such as ethnic disputes or poor national economic performance.[114] Also, online forums and websites catering to diaspora members can provide venues for discussion about – and with – countries of origin, as seen on Zimbabwean social media, where participants disagree with and contradict one another on issues relating to national identity or historical events.[115]

At one level, the stories told by media may be mostly informative, alerting people to realities, events or opportunities. In a study of forced migration during civil conflict in Nepal from 1996 to 2006, authors suggest (but do not explicitly test) how media reporting on violent clashes and deaths may have raised public awareness

109 Menjivar, 2016.
110 Etchegaray and Correa, 2015.
111 Tudsri and Hebbani, 2015.
112 Yoon, Kim and Eom, 2011.
113 Elias and Lemish, 2011.
114 Tai, 2016.
115 Mpofu, 2013.

of threats that subsequently influenced individuals' decisions to move.[116] Meanwhile, decisions of Lebanese medical students to move and work abroad are partly due to extensive international marketing via online media.[117]

At another level, media can exert an influence in more diffuse ways by shaping expectations and aspirations to move. For example, in-depth research among Mexican and Salvadoran women in the United States shows how images in the media of a "good" childhood impacted them: "[...] mothers' decisions to migrate were strongly influenced by ideals of a childhood free from want, ideals they construed as diametrically opposed to their own experiences of childhood in their countries of origin".[118] Also, media imagery helped build an international image for Badolato – a village in southern Italy – as a hospitable haven for refugees. Migrants and asylum seekers draw upon media, as well as other sources, "to imagine connections between places and people across borders and opportunities that may carry them forward".[119]

Understanding factors that influence media coverage on migration

Why does media reporting on migration vary around the world? This section considers a range of reasons related to journalism practice – from economic and social contexts in which media exist, to everyday decisions made by individual editors and practitioners.

Among media in predominately open or partly open contexts, there are financial reasons for particular kinds of migration coverage. In these cases, most media are largely commercial enterprises, and their primary responsibility is to sell content effectively in order to keep the business functioning.[120] As a result, editors need to understand the people who are buying their products.

If news organizations are selling their products to people who are likely to either be broadly opposed to, or in favor of immigration, they are likely to reinforce and validate rather than challenge their audiences' viewpoints. Building trust is complicated. It requires audiences to see the media outlet as fair and objective,[121] which can involve making some efforts to present counter-arguments and alternative voices, even if in cursory ways.

Social and organizational factors specific to journalism also shape media content. One of these relates to employment. Creative and media industries increasingly rely on freelance workers via the "gig economy".[122] This precarious employment means that journalists may be reluctant to challenge employers on socially controversial issues, or to move away from established ways of communicating about immigration that the organization perceives to be appropriate for their audiences.

The day-to-day work of choosing, selecting and producing stories also can affect migration coverage. Sometimes, the political nature of these choices is implicit or taken for granted rather than explicitly ideological.[123] As seen across several European countries (including Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland and the United Kingdom), several factors interact to produce migration news. These include decisions about the intrinsic value

116 Bohra-Mishra and Massey, 2011.

117 Akl et al., 2007.

118 Horton, 2008.

119 Nikunen, 2016.

120 Croteau and Hoynes, 2006.

121 Tsfati and Cappella, 2003.

122 Markova and McKay, 2011.

123 Schudson, 2011.

of the news item – a decision that is often related to the agendas of policymakers, routines in selecting what eventually gets published, the editorial position of the outlet, and how much journalists trust different sources.[124] Also, "getting the story" in the first place often involves understanding how these sources may use off-the-record information to advance their own agendas.[125]

Journalists' own backgrounds can also influence how they choose to cover migration, within the constraints (real or perceived) imposed by editors, organizations and audiences.[126] For example, research among German journalists working in print and broadcast media[127] revealed how having a migrant background sometimes brings benefits: it can provide valuable access to key groups, or signal expertise in a particular situation. In other cases, however, it can lead to either "tokenism", when staff may feel they are hired solely for their perceived advantages, or outright exclusion, with them being treated as less competent. Some news organizations try to address these problems via diversity training, whereby journalists aim to foster intercultural understanding through intensive engagement. Although these kinds of programmes may confer benefits for individual practitioners – wider interpersonal networks, for example – they may be less effective at challenging deeper, more institutional biases in migration coverage.[128]

Conclusion: implications and future research

We have considered the different ways that media around the world cover migration; how these portrayals affect what people (including migrants and policymakers) think and do; and why this coverage takes the forms it does. Addressing these questions raises further issues – for where we are right now, as well as for the future.

Given the media's largely negative coverage of migration – and the extent of its influence – raises the question of how media should talk about such a complicated, diverse issue. One perspective argues that the ability to try to convince others of our own views and beliefs is a fundamental characteristic of democratic societies: "[…] freedom of speech and its democratic corollary, a free press, have tacitly expanded our Bill of Rights to include the right of persuasion."[129] Therefore, we should acknowledge the media in all of their forms as playing important roles in public debate.

However, in a world of media sources that are often allied with particular political and commercial interests, do we really make our own decisions about issues, including migration? Or are we pushed towards agreeing with conclusions that we might otherwise not have chosen? In a complicated world, individuals cannot be expected to make new and informed political choices every time they are asked. Instead, sources such as media provide the raw materials that help readers use mental short-cuts to make sense of events that occur in a social and political world that extends far beyond any individual's ability to directly perceive it. As shown earlier, media organizations can promote negative perceptions about migrants and migration by using disaster metaphors or by emphasizing the costs or threats that migration might bring. There is a strong case for encouraging media

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124 Gemi, Ulasiuk and Triandafyllidou, 2013.

125 Peterson, 2001.

126 Cottle, 2000.

127 Graf, 2010.

128 O'Boyle et al., 2013.

129 Bernays, 1947.

coverage of migrants that is reasonable, measured and moves away from an assumed position of suspicion, though how to practically do this is less clear (see the text box 'Changing narratives on migration: a commercial path?' for one possibility).[130] There are also legitimate reasons for media to discuss different types of migration and their impacts, trade-offs and consequences by sometimes acknowledging potential costs and threats.[131]

Changing narratives on migration: a commercial path?

One response to anti-migrant coverage in the British press has been the Stop Funding Hate campaign. By targeting companies that advertise with media outlets perceived to be deliberately fuelling negative portrayals of migrants, it aims to create change through an economic path. For example, the campaign claims to have succeeded in persuading Lego® to end a corporate partnership with the *Daily Mail*. However, critics of this tactic consider it a worrying precedent for liberal democracy if large companies are encouraged to use their advertising budget to put pressure on editorial policies of news organizations.[j]

j Ponsford, 2016.

As online and social media rapidly multiply and diversify, they also raise the problem of dealing with misleading or untrue content. For example, the 2016 US Presidential election – and subsequent policy actions involving migration, among other topics – was beset by fake news deliberately generated with little or no concern as to whether it would be exposed for its fraudulence. To a certain extent, migration stories of this type are already part of the repertoire of coverage, as seen in a discredited German article (and its subsequent retraction) reporting on "attacks" in Frankfurt by migrants[132] and the Swan Bake headline in the United Kingdom's *The Sun*, claiming that asylum seekers were poaching the Queen's swans and cooking them in British parks.[133] However, those news items that we see likely represent only the tip of the fake news iceberg. Social media make it easy to approach specific audiences with political messages and materials, in ways that can be hard to detect and scrutinize. Such microtargeting of persuadable audiences, identified and contacted through their social media activity, is a growing phenomenon.[134]

The concept of fake news is not new, however. Producing false – or at least questionable – information for political ends is a standard propaganda technique. Furthermore, it is not a single object, but rather many objects with many purposes – from information that may unintentionally mislead, and material deliberately constructed to deceive, to a label we may attribute (rightly or wrongly) to ideas we strongly disagree with.[135] As a result, fake news may be forcing people to reassess their use of media – possibly by moving back towards respected and trusted media, or using fact-checking organizations and other sources of research evidence.[136]

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130 Triandafyllidou, 2013.
131 Migration Observatory, 2015.
132 Eddy, 2017.
133 Medic, 2004.
134 Bennett, 2016.
135 Beckett, 2017.
136 Graves and Cherubini, 2016.

Yet this possible backlash raises the question of whether the combination of fraudulent news, targeted messaging and the sheer speed of on-demand information is eroding our faith in free media as a means of identifying and working towards more socially constructive goals. The known existence of fake news offers politicians and others an opportunity to use the "fake" label to dismiss accurate reporting that they dislike for political reasons. It is also possible that extreme political ideologies can take root in online communities that act as a kind of echo chamber, in which participants are only exposed to messages and sentiments from one ideological perspective.

The future of media and migration

It is clear that the media contribute to our thinking about migration, but the extent to which they drive actions in any direction depends on many factors that vary in different contexts. Indeed, consensus about the power of the media has shifted over the decades.[137]

Our overview of what the media say about migration, their impacts and some of the journalistic factors that contribute to coverage, presents several implications and areas for future research:

1. More research needs to be done into the role of media in transit and origin countries – and particularly migrants' own use of, and preferences for, different types of media. This is especially important for understanding how and to what extent information sources shape perceptions.

2. Further evidence on whether and how different types of messages and emotions shape public perceptions and policy activity on mobility would be valuable both within and beyond the world of research. Applied studies can help a range of groups develop communication interventions that are more effective for the audiences and topics at hand.

3. There needs to be more attention given to different media systems and how they may (or may not) produce different kinds of content regarding migration.

4. The presence of highly differentiated experiences around the world suggests that greater levels of public debate about the appropriate role of media in specific contexts will move forward the conversations already happening in policy, civil society and research.

These conclusions also raise further ethical and policy questions. What should be done about fake news and propaganda without overly limiting press freedoms? What is the proper balance between economic, partisan and humanitarian motivations in covering migration? In a world where a single image such as Alan Kurdi's can have more influence on public opinion than hundreds of well-researched articles, how should the media balance powerful imagery with substantive reporting in an honest but less sensationalistic way?

Questions such as these will be debated differently across varied local, national and international contexts. As a result, both producers and consumers of research should recognize that there is no single, universal way to sum up the role of the media, or to change media coverage of migration (see the text box 'What is the United Nations doing about migration and media?' for an example of what is already being done). Not only is migration itself a contested, diverse phenomenon that encompasses different types of movement, but media also comprise dynamic, multilayered and multisited forms of communication.

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137 Cacciatore, Scheufele and Iyengar, 2016.

What is the United Nations doing about migration and media?

The TOGETHER initiative (www.together.un.org) is a global effort to mobilize the United Nations, Member States, civil society, the private sector and researchers in community-level activities that promote solidarity towards migrants and refugees. It uses a wide range of media to both showcase the shared benefits of migration and acknowledge legitimate concerns of host communities. TOGETHER aims to speak to – and engage with – communities around the world, particularly through migrants' own stories. Launched in 2016, the initiative has hosted and supported many events internationally, including film festivals, workshops and discussion forums.

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