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Changing Refugee Narratives- through Afro-Indigenous Leadership and Beyond

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**Changing Refugee Narratives-
through Afro-Indigenous Leadership and Beyond**

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Abstract

The helper-victim relationship is often seen in refugee narratives in which international humanitarian organizations are the helpers and refugees are the victims. However, in parallel to this model is the neglected story of refugee leaderships who have mobilized to provide support for their own community. In this research, partnered with Tiyya Foundation, a nonprofit organization for refugees and displaced Americans, we hope to change the existing narrative by shifting the focus from the mainstream model portrayed by western media bias to the often unseen resilient-leadership narrative. We utilized a community-engaged research approach to explore active engagement from the refugee community through secondary ethnographic interviews. We also conducted a newspaper-based content analysis and we found that media, depends on their political leaning, plays a major role in influencing the refugee story by consistently portrays the harmful narratives of refugees as criminals, security threats, or burdens which often translate into a racist immigration agenda and xenophobic behavior against the community. We hope that this research will help, in a small part, shed new light and bring in new positive refugee narratives.

Keywords: refugee, narratives, media, frames, resilience, content analysis

Changing Refugee Narratives - through Afro-Indigenous Leadership and Beyond

In mid-2020, 80 million individuals were forcibly displaced globally as a result of conflict, war, persecution or human rights violation, and 26.3 million of those are refugees (UNHCR, 2020). When individuals flee their home countries, protection and assistance are usually provided by the United Nations and their NGO partners. The dominant humanitarian model inside the camps and beyond is often viewed as a helper-victim relationship narrative. However, in an unseen parallel to this model, is a largely neglected story— refugee leadership. From traditional healers in Rohingya camps to refugee entrepreneurs in California, they have mobilized to provide support and create social protection organizations to help fill the missing gaps. In this study with the help from Tiyya Foundation, a nonprofit organization for refugees and displaced Americans, we hope to change this existing narrative by shifting the focus from the refugee helper-victim story portrayed by western media bias to the often unseen resilient-leadership ones using newspapers-based content analysis and secondary ethnographic interview data of Afro-Indigenous refugees in the United States.

Literature Review

Media Representation of Refugees And Its Impact On Policy

Refugees are often viewed as burdens to society instead of valuable assets. This issue often arises due to the negatively biased media coverage. Greussing and Boomgaarden (2017) explored in-depth the narrative around refugees in Europe using an automated framed analysis, combining inductive and deductive approaches, to study 10,606 Austrian newspaper articles during the 2015 refugee crisis. They found that both tabloid and quality media have employed the consistent stereotyped narratives of security threat, criminality, and economization of asylum seekers and refugees. Apart from administrative aspects of coping with new arrivals,

humanitarianism frames and refugee's current situation which includes background information, journey and experiences are also provided to a lesser degree. According to the authors, the issues of refugees and asylum seekers that are framed in mass media coverage can be grouped into three common types such as refugees and asylum seekers are viewed as passive victims, as dehumanized and anonymous outgroup, or as a threat to the welfare, culture, and security of the host country (Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017). Media plays a vital role in the formation of public and political opinion by employing particularly harmful interpretational frames. While it may serve as a quick cognitive shortcut tool to help audiences make sense of the current refugee crisis, it can be harmful if the public depends entirely on their narrative.

Language can be used as a tool to dehumanize refugees. Oftentimes, we see that negative refugee narrative is embedded in media or political campaigns to serve the interest of politicians, and exploit or instill fear into their citizens (Holmes and Castaneda, 2016). When President Trump took office in 2017, his non-factual, negative narrative on refugees fueled a wave of anti-immigration framing that spread to all news outlets, and this hatred continues to present until today. Grant (2020) examined the state of refugees' resettlement in the U.S. during the Covid-19 pandemic and how the immigration policy under the Trump administration, in response to this crisis, is likely to have long-term negative impacts on refugees and asylum seekers programs. From Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) that required asylum seekers to wait for their case review in Mexico to temporarily halting refugee admission, the administration had left many refugees and asylum seekers in vulnerable, unsafe conditions. Even before the pandemic, the Trump Administration drastically cut the resettlement program capacity by 84 percent compared to the Obama Administration in 2017. From Muslim Travel Ban (Executive order 13760) that suspends travel visa from seven Muslim-majority countries and block refugee

admissions to Zero-Tolerance immigration policy that put children in cages and separated them from their parents, the administration has seen promoting racist and xenophobic agenda. It is rooted in cultural social priorities and emotional narratives as the executive order was a byproduct of President Trump's key campaign promises in 2016 (Hodwitz and Tracy, 2019). He publicly linked Muslims with terrorism, thus in order to curb terrorism, there must be a complete shutdown of Muslim entering the U.S. During the pandemic, the administration detained an average of 37,000 individuals a day causing overcrowding in detention centers and making them more susceptible to viruses due to poor living conditions. Trump also used fear that emerged during this time, fueled by mainstream media, to create cruel immigration policies and procedures that violate human rights.

Refugee's Leadership Roles Within Their Community

Even though the current policy and western media tend to criminalize and dehumanize refugees, Professor Alexander Betts of Oxford University believes that we can work to change this narrative. With more accessible and supportive transitional programs given to refugees, they will be economically self-sufficient and become a resource to the host country, thus helping to eliminate the growing hatred against them ("Changing the narrative", 2019). The crisis that refugees face in host countries such as the lack of employment opportunities and education also needs to be addressed because most refugees are stuck in a bureaucratic limbo which bars them from social and community participation. Betts leads a Refugee Economies Program at Oxford that seeks to create more sustainable refugee policies to improve the welfare of individuals and train refugees with valuable skills such as basic social science research methods. Many trainees then were able to follow their dream careers, and significantly contribute their skills and abilities to the development of their host and home countries.

However, refugees' efforts are often overlooked and not celebrated. Betts, Pincock, and Easton-Calabria (2018) examined over 30 refugee-led community organizations (RCOs) in Kampala city of Uganda, which is home to nearly 100,000 refugees and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)'s partner called Interaid. After implementing a mixed-method approach based on ethnographic research and survey methods, they found that nearly 90% of refugees in the city would rather turn to their communities of RCOs. Refugee organizations step in as a "significant provider of the very global public goods supposedly provided by international organizations" (Betts et al., 2018). RCOs have a cultural advantage when it comes to serving the refugee communities they are embedded in such as shared language and intimate understanding of fleeing violence and persecution. However, the media fail to recognize and cover their important contributions in the news. Thus, without media exposure, many of them struggle to access international fundings, and only a small number of the RCOs are able to thrive because of their "individual leadership" and transnational networking. They often share local agendas with potential donors overseas even if it bypasses the traditional humanitarian system in which funding usually comes from UNHCR or other NGOs.

Traditional spirit healers in refugee camps also help fill the missing gap where doctors and western medicine could not reach. Aid agencies and grassroots groups in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh mentioned that more than 900,000 Rohingya refugees are living in the camps but only half of those are able to access counseling and other mental health services (Chen, 2018). Most of their trauma emerged while fleeing violence and persecution from their home country so it is important for UNHCR doctors and mental health volunteers to address this critical issue once they arrive at the camps. However, the lack of understanding and little research of

Rohingya culture may have pushed the medical personnel away and drawn the victims closer to their own spiritual leaders who have shared the same journey and traditions.

Methodology

As described, this topic is looking at the Afro-Indigenous refugees' resilient-leadership. This research project utilizes the community-based participatory approach to call for active participation of representatives of the larger refugee community (Israel, Eng, et al., 2005) as the discussion around this topic tends to be culturally, politically, and ideologically challenging. A community-engaged approach facilitates a co-productive process so that their voice can be part of the research. Thus, the overall methods in this study will include newspaper-based content analysis and secondary ethnographic interview data in order to share, in a small part, a new perspective on refugee narratives.

Background and Acknowledgement

[Tiyya foundation](#) is a nonprofit organization established in 2010 that provides support and educational opportunities for refugee families, immigrants, and displaced Americans. They hope to create a community that fosters the development of self-sufficiency, helps participants to overcome obstacles, and smoothens their transitioning process in a new country.

Since I did not have any previous relationships with Tiyya, it is necessary for me as a new research partner to build trust with the organization and the community that I am working with by maintaining professionalism at all times. When it comes to a community-engaged approach, it is very important to be authentic, open-minded when encountering differences, and ensure that the relationship is reciprocal (Donahue & Plaxton-Moore, 2018). Thus, throughout this research, I will inform my partner of every step that I take, and the interviews conducted with the Afro-Indigenous community will not be published or shared without their consent.

As a student, it is also important to deliver quality and meaningful outcomes to maintain a long-lasting relationship with the community partner. While I do acknowledge that my background as an immigrant student may shape the way I conduct research and influences my own understanding or interpretation of the data, I will ensure that my research is unbiased by seeking “feedback among all stakeholders in the partnership” (CCPH Board of Directors, 2013) from my community partner to my classmates and professor, in order to deliver precise and trusted results.

Data Collection

We separated the research method into two parts. The newspaper-based content analysis helps us gain a better understanding of how media tend to portray refugee stories based on their ideological and political leaning. Content analysis is defined as the “systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics” (Neuendorf, 2002). It is often used by researchers to analyze the media’s influence on certain issues and how individuals’ perceptions may have been affected by it. Thus, this will inform us that we should not depend completely on one news outlet because it may “portray in ways that deviate from the whole truth” (Campanella, 2017). In this study, we gathered fifty newspaper articles from three different outlets: *LA Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Wall Street Journal (WSJ)* that were published between 2017-2021 because it allows us to see the theme variation during different presidential terms and different political orientations (see Appendix Table A1). All articles were downloaded from ProQuest database, applying a key sentence search *refugee in the US,* adding the filters ‘Newspaper’ and ‘English’ language only from the year 2017-2021. A total of 3528 articles came up but we randomly selected the first three to four articles from each news outlet of each year to ensure diversification.

Second, we used secondary ethnographic data from refugees' "Success Stories" series of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) and a conversational interview with my partner, Tiyya Foundation as part of the community engagement approach. It helps showcase the refugees' contributions to the development of the host community and brings awareness around the topic of refugee leadership and resiliency. In this context, the term "resilient-leader" is defined broadly as an Afro-Indigenous refugee who has transitioned to a self-sufficient and fulfilling career in the United States and has made an impact or contribution to host communities, e.g., entrepreneurs, doctors, artists, or politicians.

The conversational interview was conducted live on Zoom consisting of six questions that took approximately 25 minutes. The art of unstructured interviews is essential to this research because it "provides insights and truths surrounding [this] phenomenon" (Quinney et al., 2016). It allows us to traverse deeply through their personal experiences and life stories. The questions that were asked during the interview were (1) Can you please share with me your story as a refugee? (2) What inspired you to pursue your career path? (3) What do you wish people understood about being a refugee? (4) What do you see as the greatest obstacles for new refugees? (5) What do you think about the portrayal of refugees in the media? (6) Do you have any last-minute advice or anything that we have not covered in this conversation that you wanted to share? Answers from the participant were recorded through note-taking and on Zoom with their consent. The individual was given a one-page information sheet 48 hours before the interview that details a brief description of the research, including data confidentiality, privacy protection, and ethical community-engaged practice.

We also realized that retelling the stories of past events can exacerbate the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and potentially re-traumatize the person. This is usually

caused by stressors such as a situation or an environment that are similar to the original trauma such as “smell, physical space, lighting, imagery, a memory that mimics a previously traumatic one” (Alexander, 2012). Thus, we incorporated three secondary ethnographic interview data from the refugees’ “Success Stories” series of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in order to showcase the contributions of Afro-Indigenous refugees in the United States.

Data Analysis

We analyzed the newspaper articles in order to provide a solid foundation as a guide for readers to better understand the context of the issue on refugee media bias. We used a programming software called Dedoose to help identify significant patterns, frames, and themes that show up within the coverage to see if media has contributed to a negative bias through the indirect perpetuation of threats and victim-blaming (Greussing and Boomgaarden, 2017). To identify the difference in themes used by the media, seven frequent frames were used. Five of them were identified by Greussing and Boomgaarden (2017), while the other two “Refugee’s voice” and “Refugee’s journey” were included to measure refugee representation in the media. The seven frames used were:

Table 1

Codebook framing categories for refugee narratives (First step)

Dominant Frame	Description	Words to look out for when reading the articles
Criminality	Associates refugees with illegal motives, create and fuel a hatred atmosphere.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Criminal ● Illegal ● Terrorist ● Human trafficking

Economization	Perpetuates the image of refugees as economic burdens and threats to the host country causing them a large amount of money.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Costs ● Money ● Expensive ● Dollars ● Million
Securitization	Includes border crossing issues and the negative portrayal of refugees as a threat to the security of the host country.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Border ● Border crossing ● ICE ● Travel Ban ● Security ● Threat
Humanitarianism	Highlights the host country's contribution and welcoming attitude toward refugees and their willingness to help, portraying them as heroes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Helper ● Victim ● Volunteer ● Support ● Aid
Labor Market & Social Integration	Focuses on refugee's contribution to the labor market and integration into the host country including community engagement, leadership, and civic participation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Integration ● Positive ● Leadership ● Employment ● Community ● Participation ● Resilience
Refugee's Journey	Mentions about refugee's journeys before arriving in America.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Difficulty ● Migrant ● Journey
Refugee's Voice	Includes Refugee's own voice in the coverage instead of using third-person pronouns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Refugee's names

After arranging data into the seven dominant frames mentioned above, we reorganized them again to two different themes “Contribution Narratives” and “Threat Narratives” to see if media outlets use positive or negative narratives in refugee coverages (see Appendix Figure A1).

The secondary ethnographic data and the semi-conversational interview were used to raise awareness around refugee narratives and showcase resilience leadership roles that Afro-Indigenous refugees have taken in the host country. While conversational interview comes with the enriching benefit of an in depth-exchange between interviewer and participants, it also has its own limitations (Given, 2008). Data generated via conversation is subjected to researchers' misinterpretation to support their argument. Therefore, in order to ensure an ethical and fair result, we guaranteed that there were no leading questions to any particular topics, and participants were allowed to give a brief or no response if they felt uncomfortable. Interview questions went through field-testing in close discussion with our partner, classmates, and professor for input and feedback before administering them.

Findings

News Outlets

From our research, we saw certain themes that are consistent with anti-immigration sentiments used in both conservative and non-conservative media outlets. In general, we saw that more subtle themes were used in moderate and liberal sources compared to blatantly negative themes used in conservative media. Although the data shows that all news sources include "contribution narratives" in their published articles, the moderate newspaper, *Chicago Tribunes*, seems to allow refugee's voices to be heard the most. In addition, there is a use of harmful language in both moderate and liberal news sources that contribute to divisive framing around immigration. The use of possessive pronouns such as "us" as "Americans" versus "them" as "refugees" and the frequent use of the words "illegal" and "terrorists" all fall under the theme "securitization," points to nationalism and reinforces the "othering" of refugees by making them feel as if they do not belong and label them as a threat to the safety of the American people

(Chiumbu & Moyo, 2018). Perhaps possessive pronouns are used frequently in both liberal and moderate news outlets to promote exclusivity in hidden and subtle ways.

Table 2 shows how often the themes emerged in three media outlets between 2017-2021. We saw that *Chicago Tribune* used the most “Contribution Narratives” in their news articles at 50.1%, while *LA Times* and *WSJ* are at 27.7% and 22.2%, respectively. On the other hand, *WSJ* articles have “Threat Narratives” of 47.3% while *LA Times* only has 27.6%. However, it is still slightly higher than the *Chicago Tribune* at only 25.1%. In addition, other frames such as “economization” and “securitization” that blatantly connect with “racism” have a high percentage as well. The frame “economization” that labels refugees as burdens to society showed up at 65.3% in *WSJ* articles and 34.7% in *Chicago Tribune*. While *WSJ* places a stronger emphasis on the economization of the country, *LA Times* seems more focused on national security. The table shows that the frame “securitization” showed up at 21.3% which is the highest percentage compared to other frames under Threat Narratives.

Table 2

Themes Seen in Three News Outlets on the Coverage of Refugees

	Chicago Tribune	LA Times	WSJ	Total
Contribution Narratives	50.1%	27.7%	22.2%	100%
Humanitarianism	27.5%	20.7%	51.8%	100%
Labor Market & Social Integration	63.9%	24.1%	12.0%	100%
Refugee's Journey	39.9%	45.1%	15.0%	100%
Refugee's Voice	59.8%	28.1%	12.1%	100%
Threat Narratives	25.1%	27.6%	47.3%	100%
Criminality	41.5%	9.8%	48.8%	100%
Economization	34.7%	0.0%	65.3%	100%
Securitization	22.7%	21.3%	56.0%	100%

LA Times is usually viewed as an “unbiased liberal” news outlet may have intentionally or unintentionally perpetuated the negative myths on refugees, and it can be harmful to people who usually turn to the media for quick information. The article, “Fewer refugees arriving in the

U.S.; The number falls by nearly half under Trump compared with the late Obama era” from *LA Times* is a prime example of this issue (Wilkinson, 2017). Within the article, the theme “securitization” showed up three times. We also noticed that this may subtly connect to the systemic racism in the U.S. by using national security as a mask to restrict immigration entries. However, they did not particularly mention whether or not this proposal is harmful to refugees or those who are awaiting asylum. Moreover, it also portrays the U.S. to be the hero and refugees as those who needed help which plays into the helper-victim narratives that we have seen in the past between international humanitarian organizations and refugees inside the camps.

LA Times may unknowingly use possessive pronouns and/or the “securitization” theme that creates an exclusionary dialogue regarding refugees and allows for hidden anti-immigration sentiments to grow within the community. Another example, with the headline “A family left in limbo by U.S. ban; Iranian refugees were slated for resettlement in the U.S. Then came Trump’s travel order” seen in the *LA Times*, showcases how immigrants are impacted by the Travel Ban (Kaleem & Melissa, 2017). In this scenario, the author has talked about the refugee family’s journey fleeing their country due to religious persecution, which supposedly falls under the “contribution narratives.” However, he actually mentioned their financial problems of being unemployed and living on welfare in Turkey as refugees awaiting visa approval to the U.S.

From 2017 to 2021, we have seen that the contribution and threat narratives are gradually eliminated (see Appendix Figure A2). One of the things that we found interesting is that the use of “Contribution Narrative” and the “Threat Narrative” is also similar in 2017, at 26.2% and 27.5%, respectively (see Table 3). However, when we look at the themes, we actually see that “Humanitarianism” appears at 44.5%, compared to “Refugee’s Journey” and “Refugee’s voice,” which only has a percentage of 27.8% and 11.3%. As mentioned in the methodology section, the

theme “Humanitarianism” highlights the host country’s contribution to the vulnerable population such as a welcoming attitude toward refugees or their willingness to help through aid and donations. Thus, if we look at the “Contribution Narratives” data only, we would assume that the news outlets did a great job positively portraying refugees by incorporating their stories, but in fact, the data shows they seemed to promote more of the U.S. heroic acts.

Table 3

Themes Seen in Three News Outlets on the Coverage of Refugees

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
Contribution Narratives	26.20%	14.40%	15.80%	19.20%	24.50%	100%
Humanitarianism	44.50%	10.90%	0.00%	12.10%	32.60%	100%
Labor Market & Social Integration	28.80%	19.00%	19.00%	14.10%	19.00%	100%
Refugee's Journey	27.80%	15.30%	15.30%	34.00%	7.80%	100%
Refugee's Voice	11.30%	12.40%	24.80%	18.40%	33.10%	100%
Threat Narratives	27.50%	24.20%	22.20%	20.10%	6.00%	100%
Criminality	18.30%	30.20%	40.30%	11.20%	0.00%	100%
Economization	31.30%	0.00%	34.40%	0.00%	34.40%	100%
Securitization	29.90%	27.40%	21.90%	15.20%	5.50%	100%

Refugee “Success Stories” and a Conversational Interview with Tiyya

It is important to bring in positive narratives to the story of refugees by focusing on their resilient leadership and contributions to the host country instead of their traumatic journey. The stories that were shared from the ORR only focused on the positive narratives by highlighting refugees’ contributions, resiliency, and leadership roles. During a conversation with Meymuna Hussein-Cattan, an entrepreneur, world traveler, and CEO of Tiyya Foundation has shown concern on this issue as well. She mentioned that “there is a lack of autonomy of immigrants and there is a lot of generalizing and stereotyping.” Meymuna believes that it is important to change the narrative of refugees from being society’s burdens to society’s contributors. Another story from a Sudanese Woman named Manal Elzeen has shared with ORR the story of hard work and determination. She was an economic and accounting teacher in her home country but she had to

restart her life again when arriving in the U.S. as an asylee. She started teaching at a nearby Mosque in Fort Wayne, IN, and is currently studying to get a Child Development Associate license. She says, “If you want to get anywhere in this life you need to work hard and learn more” (ORR, 2019). Violette Kalambayi, a refugee from Congo who became a certified nursing assistant in Bowling Green, KY. She was able to care for three Sudanese refugee children from nearby neighborhoods, helped two single mothers to secure full-time work, and provided a stable income for her large household of seven (ORR, 2019). A 23-year-old Eritrean asylee, Kaleb Tadele, was able to start TEAM Café in Silver Spring with a friend after settling in the U.S. They named their café “TEAM” because they believe that is what was needed to survive conditions back home as well as succeeding in the United States and hope that their story can inspire other young asylees and refugees that anything is possible; “you just have to be resilient” said Tadele, (ORR, 2019). These stories showcase refugees’ resilience and leadership. Many of them have worked to improve themselves and support the community they live in.

Discussion

This study sought to examine the media’s negative influence on refugee narratives and shed new light on this issue by bringing in the success story of Afro-Indigenous refugees. We conducted a content analysis of three media outlets: *LA Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *Wall Street Journal (WSJ)* by coding the articles using two main themes: “Contribution narratives” and “Threat narratives.” Then we used secondary ethnographic data from refugees’ “Success Stories” series from the Office of Refugee Resettlement and a conversational interview with my community partner, Tiyya Foundation.

Media representation of refugees has primarily focused on the negative factors (Berry et al., 2015). A common assumption and our working theory are that the frames used for refugee

coverage would vary depending on their ideological and political beliefs. When we compared our frames between all of the three news outlets, the results showed that *WSJ* incorporates “contribution narratives” less than liberal and moderate outlets, *LA Times*, and *Chicago Tribune*. The result is similar to the findings of previous studies that examined the refugee narratives during the 2015 European Refugee Crisis. Greussing and Boomgaarden, 2017 found that conservative outlets in Europe disregarded refugee’s voices in their coverage, and tended to use threat narratives to negatively convey refugees’ stories. However, in contrast, in our study, we have not found a significant difference between *WSJ* and *LA Times* in their usage of threat narratives. Table 2 points out a potential pattern that exists within the frames of the narratives when going from a conservative to a liberal. *LA Times* talked more about the “securitization” of the nation when it comes to the refugee influx, while *WSJ* used the “criminality” code, labeling refugees as terrorists and criminals. Both codes fall under a bigger theme of “Threat Narratives.”

Different administrations also have an impact on the use of the contribution and threat narratives within media outlets. When President Trump first took office in 2017, he temporarily halted refugee admission for 120 days and set a cap at 50,000 in the name of national security by passing Executive Order 13780 (Arafa, 2018). He continued to lower the refugee admission every year while he was in office and the cap set for 15,000 when he left office in 2021, which is the lowest to ever set since the U.S. Refugee admission program was created in 1980. During this year, we noticed that the themes such as “securitization” and “criminality” have very high percentages. However, the contribution and threat narratives are gradually eliminated from 2017 to 2021, as we shift from one administration to another. The use of contribution narratives fell by 1.9%, while threat narratives plummeted by 21.4%. This can partly explain that both sides of the

news outlets are responsible for refugee bias because they tend to publish articles that fit their political agenda.

In our interview and secondary ethnographic data collected from the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) allow for refugees' voices to be heard. They highlighted the leadership roles that Afro-Indigenous refugees have taken and their contributions in the United States, not just their difficult journey. The emphasis on distinct identities from being a certified nurse assistant to an entrepreneur and an intellect helps push back against the negative mass identity that is so often attributed to them in the western media. According to the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), a study on new refugees conducted by Evans and Fitzgerald (2017) found that in their first 20 years in the United States, a refugee who entered as an adult will have paid an average of \$21,000 more in taxes than they receive in benefits including relocation costs and social programs given by the government. Thus, drawing attention to the contribution and benefits that refugees could bring to a country helps eliminate the negative rhetoric around refugees who are often viewed as threats or burdens to society. We hope that this study can shed new light on the refugee narratives, inform the community and policymakers about the positive economic impacts that refugees bring to American society.

Limitations

While our study provides a unique insight into media bias and contributes, in a small part, to new refugee narratives, it still has its limitations. Only three news outlets were used, which can reduce external validity. While we were able to see how refugees are framed differently in *LA Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *WSJ*, more news outlets are needed to accurately generalize the findings. However, the use of news outlets with different political ideologies has helped identify an unexpected potential pattern of themes that were used in refugee articles. It would also be

beneficial to include all media platforms such as prints and social media posts from each outlet instead of using only the online articles. This will allow for a more robust result.

In addition, while all of the *Chicago Tribune* articles contain images, none of the *WSJ* articles included them and *LA Times* is a mixture of both. Even though the written content may have shown a positive portrayal of refugee narratives in each article, the images on those same articles may contain dehumanizing and deceptive content attacking refugees. This discrepancy in reporting could have had an impact on our data that was not included in our coding process.

Finally, the initial goal of this research was to record the voices of refugees' resiliency—those who have contributed to the development of the host countries. However, since many refugees have experienced an extremely stressful event while fleeing, conducting an interview with them can trigger their past trauma. Therefore, given a short time span for this research, we had to use secondary interview data (that was already translated into article series) instead. While this data is rich and has contributed significantly to positive refugee narratives, we were not able to gather insight from a first-hand interviewing process, including the types of questions asked and whether there was a need for interpretation for their interview because these small details could influence the storyteller.

Future Research

However, since we only compared three media outlets, future research should aim to include more news outlets from both sides of the political spectrum in order to establish a more generalizable and precise finding. We encourage scholars to continue conducting the study by inviting more refugees' voices in order to showcase their resilience story coming to a new country. It will inspire others who have been through the same difficult journey and encourage society to think differently about displacement. Rather than focusing on the economic and

political impacts of refugees, host countries should focus on the positive narratives of how refugees are big contributors to the labor market and the development of their communities.

Conclusions

Conservative news outlets place a strong emphasis on threat narratives when reporting on refugees compared to liberals and moderate outlets. Refugee voices and journeys are rarely highlighted in the coverage. Using a quantitative method that compares the refugee narratives across news outlets, we were able to see that *LA Times* and *WSJ* are almost similar when it comes to using the contribution narratives theme in their coverage, while *Chicago Tribune* and *LA Times* share the same concerns regarding the securitization of the country. Media has the potential and power to influence audiences about their own opinion towards the issue of refugees so it is important to incorporate the positive narratives by highlighting refugees' stories including their contributions, resiliency, and leadership roles.

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Appendix A

Table A1

Media Sources Overview

Source	Publication frequency	Political Orientation	Reliability rate*	Audience Size*
LA Times	Daily	Left-center: moderately liberal	47.45	15,765,000
Chicago Tribune	Daily	Center	46.86	5,600,000
WSJ	Daily	Right-center: moderately conservative	47.08	39,430,000

*Reliability rate and Audience size data acquired from Ad Fontes Media, Inc.

Table A2

Codebook Categories for Article Descriptions

News Outlet	<input type="checkbox"/> LA Times <input type="checkbox"/> WSJ <input type="checkbox"/> Chicago Tribune
Publication date (MM/DD/YY)	
Author's name	
Headlines/subheading	
Source type	<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Feature <input type="checkbox"/> Editorial <input type="checkbox"/> Op-ed <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Visuals (Photograph)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

Figure A1

Frames and Themes

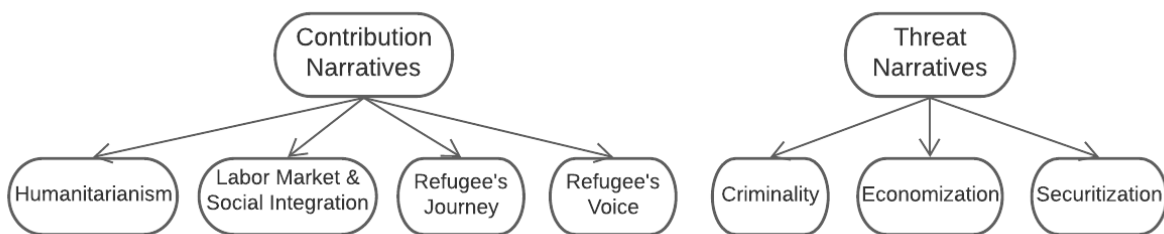
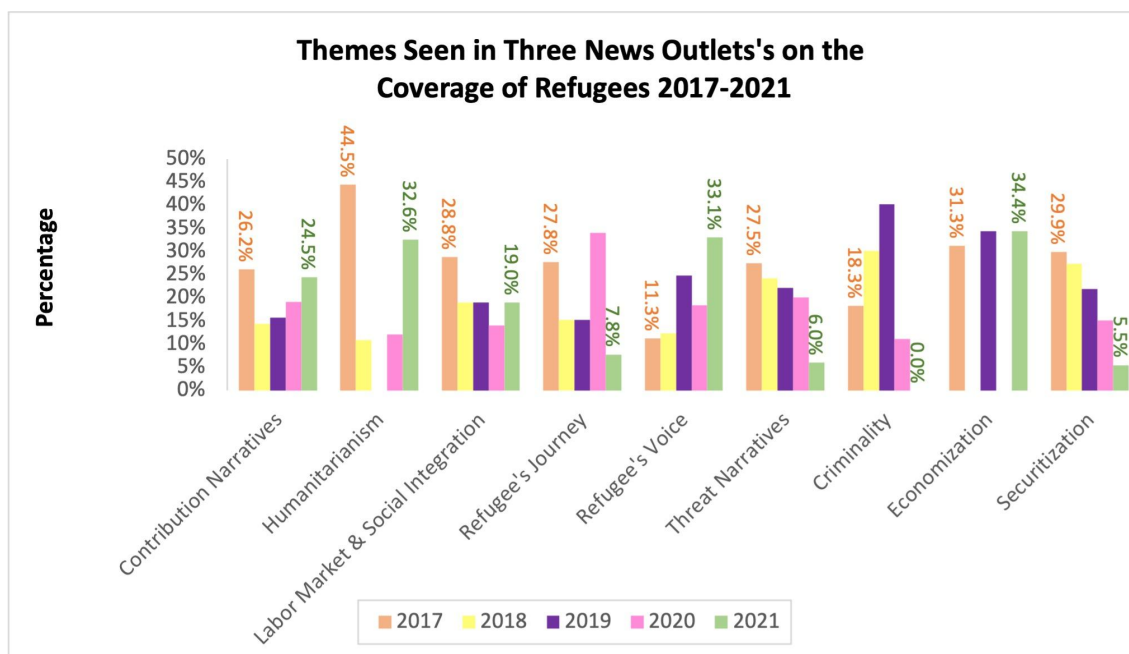


Figure A2

Themes seen in Refugee's Coverage



Appendix B

Study Information Sheet

Community-Engaged Research Topic and Partner Summary

When refugees flee war and persecution, protection and assistance are usually provided by the United Nations and their NGO partners. The dominant humanitarian model inside the refugee camps and beyond is often viewed as a helper-victim relationship narrative. However, in an unseen parallel to this model, is a largely neglected story - refugee leadership. From traditional healers in Rohingya camps to refugee entrepreneurs in California, they have mobilized to provide support and create social protection organizations to help fill the missing gaps. In this study with the help from Tiyya Foundation, a nonprofit organization for refugees and displaced Americans, we hope to change this existing narrative by shifting the focus from the refugee helper-victim narrative portrayed by western media bias to the often unseen resilient-leadership narrative using literature review, newspaper based content analysis and semi-structural conversational interviews with the Afro-Indigenous refugee community in California.

Community-Engaged Research Methods

This research project utilizes a community-engaged research approach to explore active engagement from the refugee community, as the discussion around this topic tends to be culturally, politically, and ideologically challenging. The literature review and newspaper analysis provide a solid foundation as a guide for readers to better understand the context of this issue. The live semi-conversational interviews facilitate a co-productive process so that participants' voices can be part of the research in order to shed a new perspective on refugee narratives. The interview will be conducted on Zoom, consisting of 3-5 questions that will take around 20 to 30 minutes.

In partnership with Tiyya foundation, answers from participants are recorded through note-taking and filmed with their consent. All the data will be protected and kept securely. Taking part in this study is voluntary. Participants are free to not answer any questions or withdraw at any time. Participants may choose not to take part in this study, or if they decide to take part, they can change their minds later and withdraw from the study.

Appendix C

Newspapers Data

Title on Dedoose	Original Title	News Outlet	Authors	ArticleType	Publication Date	Language Of Sum	DocumentURL	Visuals
	Chicago Tribune							
Chicago_2017_1.p	Trump to refugees	Chicago Tribune	Bennett, Brian;Bierman,	Newspapers	Jan 28, 2017	English	https://search.	Yes
Chicago_2017_2.p	U.S. reviewing refu	Chicago Tribune	Wilber, Del Quentin;B	Newspapers	Jan 26, 2017	English	https://search.	Yes
Chicago_2017_3.p	Study: Refugees' t	Chicago Tribune	Jan, Tracy	Newspapers	Jun 15, 2017	English	https://search.	Yes
Chicago_2017_4.p	Syrian refugee fam	Chicago Tribune	Vikki Ortiz Healy;repo	Newspapers	Apr 17, 2017	English	https://search.	Yes
Chicago_2018_1.p	U.S. refugee cap pi	Chicago Tribune	Elejalde-Ruiz, Alexia	Newspapers	Nov 4, 2018	English	https://search.	Yes
Chicago_2018_2.p	U.S. reopens door to	Chicago Tribune	Tanfani, Joseph	Newspapers	Jan 30, 2018	English	https://search.	Yes
Chicago_2018_3.p	Reunited Syrian fa	Chicago Tribune	Vikki Ortiz Healy	Newspapers	Jan 16, 2018	English	https://search.	Yes
Chicago_2019_1.p	From refugee cam	Chicago Tribune	Keilman, John	Newspapers	Oct 29, 2019	English	https://search.	Yes
Chicago_2019_2.p	I helped refugees i	Chicago Tribune	Taif Alshakir	Newspapers	Jun 20, 2019	English	https://search.	Yes
Chicago_2019_3.p	Let the ISIS bride r	Chicago Tribune	Chapman, Steve	Newspapers	Feb 24, 2019	English	https://search.	Yes
Chicago_2020_1.p	Music became a pi	Chicago Tribune	Leazenby, Lauren	Newspapers	Sep 6, 2020	English	https://search.	Yes
Chicago_2020_2.p	Refugee camps br	Chicago Tribune	Beech, Hannah;Hubb	Newspapers	Mar 31, 2020	English	https://search.	Yes
Chicago_2020_3.p	We are all a multi	Chicago Tribune	Rockett, Darcel	Newspapers	Feb 2, 2020	English	https://search.	Yes
Chicago_2021_1.p	After outcry, Bider	Chicago Tribune		Newspapers	Apr 17, 2021	English	https://search.	Yes
Chicago_2021_2.p	It's a project of a li	Chicago Tribune	Schoenberg, Nara	Newspapers	Mar 26, 2021	English	https://search.	Yes
Chicago_2021_3.p	Immigrants see ug	Chicago Tribune	Robertson, Campbell;	Newspapers	Jan 11, 2021	English	https://search.	Yes
	LA TIMES							
LATimes_2017_1.p	THE WORLD; A fan	Los Angeles Tirr	Kaleem, Jaweed;Eteh	Newspapers	Sep 4, 2017	English	https://search.	Yes
LATimes_2017_2.p	In a sudden revers	Los Angeles Tirr	Etehad, Melissa	Newspapers	May 28, 2017	English	https://search.	Yes
LATimes_2017_3.p	THE NATION; Few	Los Angeles Tirr	Wilkinson, Tracy	Newspapers	Jun 25, 2017	English	https://search.	No
LATimes_2018_1.p	THE WORLD; Trum	Los Angeles Tirr	Wilkinson, Tracy	Newspapers	Sep 23, 2018	English	https://search.	Yes
LATimes_2018_2.p	Shutting the door	Los Angeles Tirr	N/A	Newspapers	Sep 19, 2018	English	https://search.	No
LATimes_2018_3.p	A brutal U.S. refug	Los Angeles Tirr	Frelick, Bill;Root, Bri	Newspapers	Jun 7, 2018	English	https://search.	Yes
LATimes_2018_4.p	How America bene	Los Angeles Tirr	Thorpe, Helen	Newspapers	Jan 26, 2018	English	https://search.	No
LATimes_2019_1.p	DU TU LE, 1942 - 2	Los Angeles Tirr	Do, Anh	Newspapers	Oct 20, 2019	English	https://search.	Yes
LATimes_2019_2.p	From distant shore	Los Angeles Tirr	O'Toole, Molly;Cole, C	Newspapers	Jul 8, 2019	English	https://search.	Yes
LATimes_2019_3.p	THE NATION; U.S.	Los Angeles Tirr	O'Toole, Molly	Newspapers	Mar 13, 2019	English	https://search.	No
LATimes_2020_1.p	A child refugee's 7	Los Angeles Tirr	Bogado, Aura;Lewis, M	Newspapers	Nov 1, 2020	English	https://search.	Yes
LATimes_2020_2.p	U.S. has secretly di	Los Angeles Tirr	Wilkinson, Tracy;O'To	Newspapers	Oct 17, 2020	English	https://search.	No
LATimes_2020_3.p	Quarantine? They	Los Angeles Tirr	Bulos, Nabih	Newspapers	May 18, 2020	English	https://search.	No
LATimes_2021_1.p	Reclaim America's	Los Angeles Tirr	Minerva Garza Carcar	Newspapers	Apr 17, 2021	English	https://search.	Yes
LATimes_2021_2.p	Deportation is a fo	Los Angeles Tirr	Phan, Thai Viet	Newspapers	Apr 7, 2021	English	https://search.	Yes
LATimes_2021_3.p	THE WORLD; Refu	Los Angeles Tirr	McDonnell, Patrick J.;	Newspapers	Mar 30, 2021	English	https://search.	No
LATimes_2021_4.p	CITY & amp; S	Los Angeles Tirr	Morrissey, Kate	Newspapers	Apr 5, 2021	English	https://search.	Yes
	WSJ							
WSJ_2017_1.pdf	What About the Re	Wall Street Joui	Haley, Nikki	Newspapers	May 18, 2017	English	https://search.	No
WSJ_2017_2.pdf	U.S. News: Refuge	Wall Street Joui	Frosch, Dan;King, Kate	Newspapers	Feb 3, 2017	English	https://search.	No
WSJ_2017_3.pdf	U.S. News: U.S. to	Wall Street Joui	Meckler, Laura;Harris,	Newspapers	Oct 25, 2017	English	https://search.	No
WSJ_2017_4.pdf	The Town That Car	Wall Street Joui	Miriam Jordan ; Phot	Newspapers	Feb 28, 2017	English	https://search.	No
WSJ_2018_1.pdf	U.S. News: U.S. to	Wall Street Joui	Donati, Jessica	Newspapers	Sep 18, 2018	English	https://search.	No
WSJ_2018_2.pdf	U.S. News: Refuge	Wall Street Joui	Meckler, Laura	Newspapers	Jan 30, 2018	English	https://search.	No
WSJ_2018_3.pdf	U.S. News: Refuge	Wall Street Joui	Meckler, Laura	Newspapers	Jan 8, 2018	English	https://search.	No
WSJ_2019_1.pdf	U.S. News: Trump	Wall Street Joui	Radnofsky, Louise;An	Newspapers	May 16, 2019	English	https://search.	No
WSJ_2019_2.pdf	U.S. News: Refuge	Wall Street Joui	Hackman, Michelle	Newspapers	Oct 21, 2019	English	https://search.	No
WSJ_2019_3.pdf	U.S. News: Trump	Wall Street Joui	Hackman, Michelle;R	Newspapers	Sep 27, 2019	English	https://search.	No
WSJ_2019_4.pdf	U.S. News: U.S. W	Wall Street Joui	Caldwell, Alicia A	Newspapers	Sep 4, 2019	English	https://search.	No
WSJ_2020_1.pdf	U.S. News: U.S. Ad	Wall Street Joui	Hackman, Michelle	Newspapers	Oct 1, 2020	English	https://search.	No
WSJ_2020_2.pdf	The U.S. Admits To	Wall Street Joui	Ribble, Reid	Newspapers	Aug 25, 2020	English	https://search.	No
WSJ_2020_3.pdf	U.S. News: Judge C	Wall Street Joui	Kendall, Brent;Hackm	Newspapers	Jan 9, 2020	English	https://search.	No
WSJ_2021_1.pdf	Biden's Refugee D	Wall Street Joui	Rehman, Sabeeha;Ru	Newspapers	Apr 23, 2021	English	https://search.	No
WSJ_2021_2.pdf	Biden to Increase I	Wall Street Joui	Hackman, Michelle;T	Newspapers	Apr 17, 2021	English	https://search.	No
WSJ_2021_3.pdf	U.S. News: Refuge	Wall Street Joui	Hackman, Michelle	Newspapers	Mar 5, 2021	English	https://search.	No