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Spanish News Framing of the Syrian Refugee Crisis

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Introduction:

During 2015 and 2016, Europe dealt with the largest migratory crisis since WWII due to the escalation of the Syrian civil war and ongoing conflict and violence. When an issue as significant as the Syrian refugee crisis occurs, it is crucial to carefully examine the news framing of the issue due to its strong power to influence public discourse. This influence can originate from many different aspects of framing, but one of the most influential is word choice. The word choices used to refer to groups of people can change the feelings of identification or "otherness" among readers. This paper explores the influence of these choices on the framing of Syrian refugees within Spanish news media in November and December of 2015. The use of terms such as "refugiados" (refugees), "demandantes de asilo" (asylum-seekers) and "migrantes" (migrants) to refer to Syrian refugees within Spanish newspapers creates a sense of division between refugees and the host society, while the use of terms such as "personas" (people) and the use of names creates a sense of identification between readers and refugees. The classification of refugees in these different manners can have a humanizing or otherizing effect, which contributes to the greater news framing of the issue. These word choices can have a strong influence on public opinion and how these refugees are treated both when considering whether to accept them into Spain and once they have arrived.

Before examining news framing, it is important to understand the cultural context, in order to recognize the ways in which the news articles reflect existing attitudes and perceptions. Many of these attitudes and perceptions originate from the historical context within Spain. The history of Spain has been full of tension and competing power between Catholicism, Judaism and Islam. The region of Spain was entirely under Muslim control from the 8th-12th century,

with the final Arab-ruled region, Granada, not falling until 1492 (Cesari, 2006, p. 67). This, in turn, coincided with the inquisition, during which any individual who identified as any religion other than Catholicism were expelled from Spain or persecuted (Martínez-Torrón, 2006, p. 780). Since the late 15th century, the peak of the inquisition, Spain's national identity has been tied closely with its religious unity, especially due to the religious power of the monarchy (Martínez-Torrón, 2006, p. 780). Spain was ruled by a religious monarchy until the several failed attempts at democracy, a civil war from 1936-1939, and following dictatorship of Francisco Franco, from 1939-1975 (Calavita, 1998, p. 537). Democracy did not effectively become established in Spain until the 1980s, during a period of significant economic development as they tried to catch up to modern European ideals (Calavita, 1998, p. 537). This transition from dictatorship to democracy led to a large economic recession, from which Spain is still trying to recover, while suffering from the highest unemployment rates in the European Union (Harrison, Corkill, & Aldcroft, 2013, p, 148, 144). These peaked in 2013 with a 26.9% unemployment rate. The current unemployment levels in Spain are 20.9% (INE, 2016). These economic woes have a direct impact on Spanish attitudes towards outsiders, especially immigrants, whom natives sometimes fear are stealing their potential jobs (Sides & Citrin, 2007, p. 478).

Spain has a long history of Muslim influence, which in some parts of Spain, such as Andalusia, continues to greatly impact the culture and identity even today. However, the vast majority of Spain's population traditionally, and especially in the last five centuries since the inquisition, is Catholic (Martínez-Torrón, 2006, p. 779). As such, most of the estimated 300,000-500,000 Muslims in Spain today are immigrants, while only 3,000-5,000 of them are converts (Cesari, 2006, p. 10). The return of Islam to Spain began with the waves of refugees in the 1980s and the influx of undocumented immigrants from North and Sub-Saharan Africa (Cesari, 2006,

p. 15). As such, Spanish public opinion identifies Islam as a religion of foreigners and connects the Muslim presence with immigration, particularly from Morocco (Moreras, 2002, p. 53-54). Though legislatively Islam is recognized and respected, through the 1980 Ley Orgánica de Libertad Religiosa (Organic Law of Religious Freedom) and later 1992 concordats (Martínez-Torrón, 2006, p. 778, 795), there is a moderately negative public opinion with regards to Muslims, especially immigrants (Zapata-Barrero, 2006, p. 143). This public opinion is based on negative opinions of immigration, a perceived threat to the nation-state's cultural identity, and reaction to terrorism, such as the 2004 11-M train bombings in Madrid (Sides, 2007, p. 478, 501). Though Islam played a crucial role in the development of Spain, Spanish public discourse and identity has been created in opposition to Muslims in general and Moroccan immigrants in particular. Spanish and Islam are viewed as two distinctly separate traditions, representing Muslims as "the other" and a threat to Spanish identity (Zapata-Barrero, 2006, p. 144). Another significant source of negative attitude towards Muslims is referred to as the "Bin Laden Effect," where all Muslims are categorized as "the enemy" because of perceived threat based on previous terrorist action, like 11-M (Wike & Grim, 2010, p. 6-7). In Spain especially, attitudes towards Muslims are directly intertwined with attitudes towards immigration since the majority of Muslims are immigrants from Morocco.

Immigration first became a significant Spanish national issue in 2000 and was considered one of the most important problems in the country from then on, along with employment, civil insecurity, terrorism, and housing, economic and political problems (Zapata-Barrero, 2009, p. 1106). Though there is a large amount of concern about immigration and its inherent problems, most of the negative attitudes towards immigration are directed more toward policies and government rather than toward immigrants themselves (Zapata-Barrero, 2010, p. 179). Concerns

are more directly related to how many immigrants enter, rather than who those immigrants are (Zapata-Barrero, 2009, p. 1110). Spain's first legislation with regard to immigration, the Ley Orgánica sobre Derechos y Libertades de los Extranjeros en España (Organic Law Regarding Rights and Liberties of Foreigners in Spain), did not exist until Spain joined the European Community in June of 1985, ten years after the end of the Franco regime (Calavita, 1998, p. 543). Spain's immigration legislation systematically marginalizes Third World immigrants and makes it difficult to legally and permanently immigrate, and, once settled in Spain, it is nearly impossible for immigrants to find secure employment (Calavita, 1998, p. 538). Immigration continues to be a major concern and issue in Spain and the rest of the European Union. This is especially relevant recently with individuals seeking asylum in the EU from the Syrian refugee crisis.

The Syrian conflict has been ensuing for nearly five years, beginning with anti-government protests in 2011 and now a full-scale civil war (Rodgers, Gritten, Offer, & Asare, 2016). More than 240,000 Syrians have been killed, with one million more wounded or permanently disabled (WorldVision, 2016). Twelve million Syrians have fled their homes because of the conflict, and nearly 5 million are refugees. More than 4.5 million Syrian refugees risked their lives in 2015 trying to travel to Europe in search of asylum (UNHCR, 2016). The majority of these refugees are currently in Turkey, Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan, but the EU has pledged to resettle 38,000 refugees thus far, with Germany accepting the most (UNHCR, 2016). As part of the EU, Spain is required to accept a certain number of Syrian refugees, many of whom are in camps on islands in the Mediterranean at the moment. Though most of the immigrants to Spain are from Morocco, Spain agreed to accept nearly 15,000 Syrian asylum

seekers (Casqueiro, 2015). As of December, they received roughly 13,000 requests for asylum, predominantly from Syrian refugees (Europa Press, 2015).

The increase in immigration and large arrivals of Syrian refugees has been reported extensively throughout Spanish news. Though much debate has occurred around how English-language news has covered refugee crises, little attention has been given to the Spanish context. This context is significant given the history of Spain and the potential for this moment to significantly implicate debates over refugees in the region. This thesis analyzes Spanish news coverage of the Syrian refugee crisis within the context of news media framing. The importance of news coverage of current events on shaping public opinion has long been acknowledged (Hightower 336). News framing is the way in which journalists shape and contextualize events within a familiar frame of reference, following some latent structure of meaning. Audiences are thought to adopt these frames of reference, which leads to the adoption of certain inferences, ideas, judgments and contrasts about issues (McQuail, 1987, p. 495, 454). Studying news framing of contemporary issues is important because of the significant role media, especially news, plays in the development of societal conceptions of issues and policies. Media framing research acknowledges the impact of word choice within news reports on public opinion. This has an even stronger impact on society when the word choice is related to various groups within society, as these word choices and framing impact social hierarchies. Kenneth Burke's theory of identification and division reflects this, as the words chosen to identify social groups create a form of identification, joining similar people together. This process of identification with others leads to eventual societal division because as similarities are identified, differences are also identified, and groups are formed (Steimel, 2009, p. 59).

This study will examine this process of identification and differentiation in Spanish news media by using Burke's principles of identification and division to explore the news framing of Syrian refugees. The words chosen to describe the refugees have the potential to have a significant impact on readers' feelings of identification with or division from refugees, which can lead to shifts within public attitude and discourse surrounding the issue. As the first major migratory crisis democratic Spain has been faced with, close examination of the coverage of the Syrian refugee crisis is crucial to the future representation of refugees and other at-risk groups in Spanish news media. This thesis will explore the effects of the word choice and will fill a gap in existing research, which has frequently ignored Spain's role in the refugee crisis and Spanish media coverage of the issues at hand. The concepts explored within this thesis are timely and relevant as the European Union and Spain continue to address the humanitarian crisis they are faced with, and can help to provide future guidance to news media faced with covering such a crisis.

Literature Review

Media framing of refugees has been explored with relation to numerous refugee situations in various countries, but the results of these studies have been mostly negative. In many cases, the word choice and framing of refugees in news media portrays refugees as criminals (Leudar, Hayes, Nekvapil, & Baker, 2008, p. 195, Bradimore & Bauder, 2011, p. 647, Greenberg & Hier, 2001, p. 571, and Steimel, 2009, p. 58). Refugees and asylum seekers are frequently portrayed through hostility themes, described as potential lawbreakers, bad parents, and a "scrounge" on the host community (Leudar et al., 2008, p. 195). Often, media from the host community reflects concerns about the economic and health risk posed by accepting refugees and migrants, due to the possibility of demands for long-term welfare and health care

from an already overburdened state (Greenberg & Hier, 2001, p. 571). These representations

express host community concerns about the potentially negative impacts of receiving refugees,

rather than expressing concern for the plight of the refugees. Previous research shows there

seems to be a basic question in the media about whether refugees are victims in need of asylum

or migrants that should be characterized by the hostility themes as criminals and burdens on

society (Leudar et al., 2008, p. 199). In particular, Bradimore and Bauder (2011) found that

headlines about Canadian news coverage of Tamil refugees in British Columbia in 2009 tended

to be related to the refugee ship's possible criminal connections, rather than on the plight of the

refugees on board the ship (p. 649). Part of this negative discourse can be accounted for by the

fear and racism prevalent within some media, especially when the government's perspective is

more predominantly portrayed by terms like "queue jumpers" and "illegal entrants,"

dehumanizing refugees as a deviant or undeserving group (Hightower, 2015, p. 337).

Historically, discourse surrounding refugees and migrants is associated with border protection,

security and terrorism, especially after 9/11 and other similar terrorist attacks (Hightower, 2015,

p. 337). These negative associations tend to lead towards negative framing ruled by hostility

themes.

The identification and division of refugees and migrants as culturally different and the

"other" further perpetrates the negative associations with these individuals and hinders their

ability to integrate into the host society (Mihelj, 2004, p. 178). This process of "othering" was

created through the use of divisive word choice such as "illegals" and through the objectification

of refugees (Bradimore & Bauder, 2011, p. 641). News framing in this way created division

pairs, such as "outsiders" versus members of the host community, or in some cases division

between Christian and Muslim refugees (Steimel, 2009, p. 67). This objectification and

"othering" of refugees legitimized interventionist actions by the state (Bradimore & Bauder, 2011, p. 641). This "othering" also occurred as a result of whose voices were presented in news coverage. Newsmakers have privileged positions in public discourse as they structure the points of access that enable readers and viewers to articulate viewpoints and realities by choosing which voices are presented and how positions are framed (Greenberg & Hier, 2001, p. 565). Studies showed very little representation of refugee/asylum seeker perspectives in news coverage, rather they were presented as objects of the legislature and government reaction (Leudar et al., 2008, p. 200). The predominant sources in news coverage of these issues were from government sources and migrant and NGO perspectives were nearly absent, especially in the coverage of Chinese migrants in Canadian news (Greenberg & Hier, 2001, p. 568). Through the lack of representation of migrant perspective, refugees and migrants were shown less as people and more as the object of contemporary issues. This was seen throughout many studies, but specifically Bradimore and Bauder's study of Tamil refugees in Canadian news coverage where "ironically, the people most in need of humanitarian compassion and protection are dehumanized and framed as a risk to be managed" (Bradimore & Bauder, 2011, p. 656). In that study and others, dehumanization and objectification of refugees occurred through use of terms such as "alien," "illegal," and "boat people," which left readers with a distorted understanding of who migrants were (Bradimore & Bauder, 2011, p. 640). The common negative frames created by the media discourse throughout multiple countries played a role in shaping political processes, especially because they legitimized xenophobic policies and attitudes toward refugees and migrants (Mihelj, 2004, p. 184).

This overwhelmingly negative portrayal of refugees, migrants and asylum-seekers is concerning not only because of the negative impact these portrayals have on refugees and

migrants themselves, but because of the potential of media framing to shape public discourse and opinion surrounding these groups of people. Many of the previous studies on news framing of refugees have been focused on English-language newspapers in Canada, the United States, Australia and Britain. With the current Syrian refugee humanitarian crisis, exploration of news framing of refugees is once again important. There is little research into media framing of refugees in Spain, largely due to the lack of migrants and refugees to Spain until after the Franco regime ended, only 38 years ago (Cesari, 2006, p. 15). Spain is experiencing an unprecedented level of migrants and refugees with the Syrian conflict and is struggling to provide resources for these refugees when their own economy is struggling. Due to the unique economic situation in Spain and historical cultural attitudes towards Muslims, the Spanish news coverage of the Syrian refugee crisis is important to analyze.

Methods

In this paper, I explore the framing of Syrian refugees in the three most circulated Spanish newspapers: the center-right leaning *El Mundo,* the progressive center-left leaning *El País* and the right-wing *ABC.* These newspapers were chosen because of their popularity and influence, and to represent a variety of perspectives within Spanish media. The focus of the analysis is on hard news stories published between October and December 2015 that directly connect the crisis to Spain in some manner, either by discussing the refugees coming to Spain or European Union actions and legislation that impacts Spain. The United Nations received the most refugees in October (221,374), with 154,975 refugees in November and 118,687 in December (UNHCR, 2016). News about refugees in other countries was excluded, as the goal is to determine the media framing of this issue in terms of reflecting public Spanish opinion about refugees in Spain. To determine this, I examine the word choice used to describe the refugees

and the sources presented within the articles. Previous literature on media framing of refugees found the importance of language used to identify and distinguish this group of individuals, as such identification further increases the difference in society and "otherizes" the refugees as outsiders. I examine which words are chosen to represent those fleeing from Syria, as well as the words surrounding and describing these depictions. I specifically examine the frequency of terms such as "refugiado" (refugee), "solicitante de asilo" (asylum-seeker), "desplazado" (displaced person), and "migrante" (migrant) as well as nearby terms and phrases such as "ilegal" (illegal), "en busca de ayuda" (in search of aid), and "que huyen" (fleeing), which can frame the refugees in a positive or negative light.

It is important to note that though some news outlets use terms such as "refugee" and "migrant" interchangeably, they have distinct meanings. The United Nations defines refugees as individuals who have crossed national borders due to a "well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion" (Steimel, 2009, p. 57). Asylum-seekers are people who move across borders in search of protection but who have not yet been granted that protection (UNESCO, 2016). If asylum-seekers are granted protection, they can become refugees. In contrast, migrants are defined as people who have chosen to move across borders either temporarily or permanently, without intervention of an external compelling factor (UNESCO, 2016). Using migrant to describe refugees creates a news frame that is inaccurate and creates a different attitude towards these individuals, as it demonstrates they have chosen to move and removes the fear and threat of violence from the equation.

Typical media framing of refugees excludes the voices of the refugees themselves, relying instead predominantly on the perspective of the government (Greenberg & Hier, 2001, p.

568). This impacts framing because it limits the opinions represented, since different sources have different concerns and agendas. For example, governmental sources may be more concerned with border security and economic consequences of accepting refugees, while non-governmental organizations may be more focused on the humanitarian needs of the refugee crisis. The lack of refugee voices eliminates the agency of these individuals, as they are represented less as subjects within the narrative, but as objects. This objectification in turn influences the readers' perception of refugees. As such, I focus on the different sources and perspectives represented within the news articles, in order to analyze the impact of these representations on the overall framing of the news media.

To analyze the word choice, I use Burke's theory of identification and division in order to contextualize the representations of refugees within Spanish newspaper coverage of the ongoing crisis. Burke's theory of identification and division claims that as we make sense of the social world, we create identifications and divisions of different social actors, which defines and positions these actors within the given social hierarchy (Steimel, 2009, p. 59). These processes of identification and division are apparent in any system of classification, including news framing and public discourse (Burke, 1945, p. 417). Identification is a fundamental human process by which humans are guided by their need for order and hierarchy to look for similarities and differences amongst themselves and others to form groups and separate themselves by class and position (Steimel, 2009, p. 59). This process of identification arises from social interaction and may be understood as the process by which individuals find similarities among others to identify with another and potentially overcome division by converging their identities with the identities of others (Watson, 1970, p. 27, 29). This process of identification is inextricably linked with division because as people go through the process of identifying similarities, groups are formed
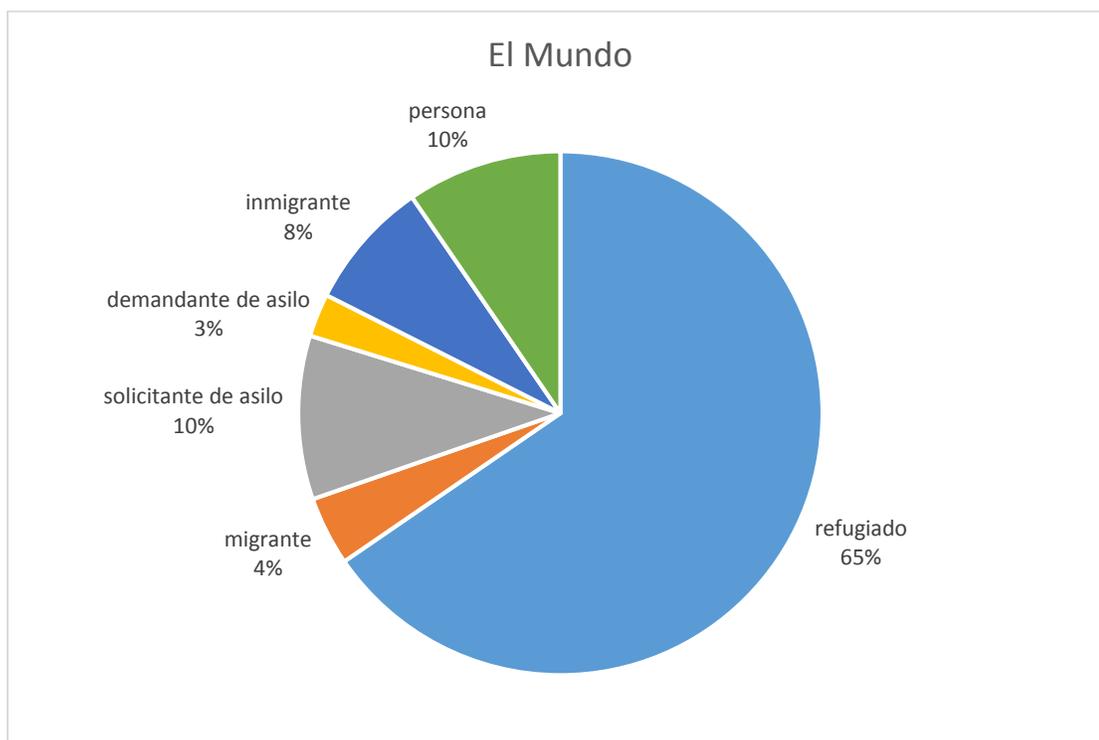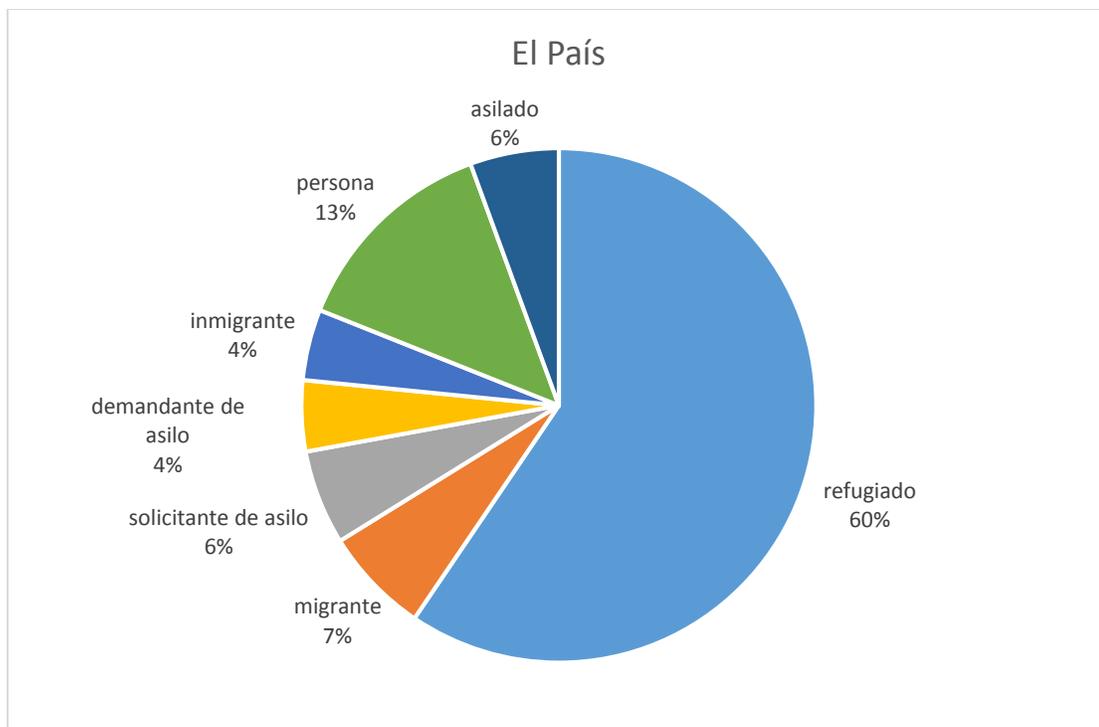
and differences are likewise identified (Burke, 1950, p. 22). Individuals may identify with one another when their interests are joined, or they are persuaded to believe that their interests align (Burke, 1950, p. 20). News framing has the power to persuade people to believe that their interests are aligned with certain groups in opposition of others, which contributes to the hierarchical nature of society by creating systems of identification and division. Previous studies have shown that the ways in which refugees are identified and differentiated from other immigrants and citizens puts them in ideologically laden social hierarchies (Steimel, 2009, p. 59).
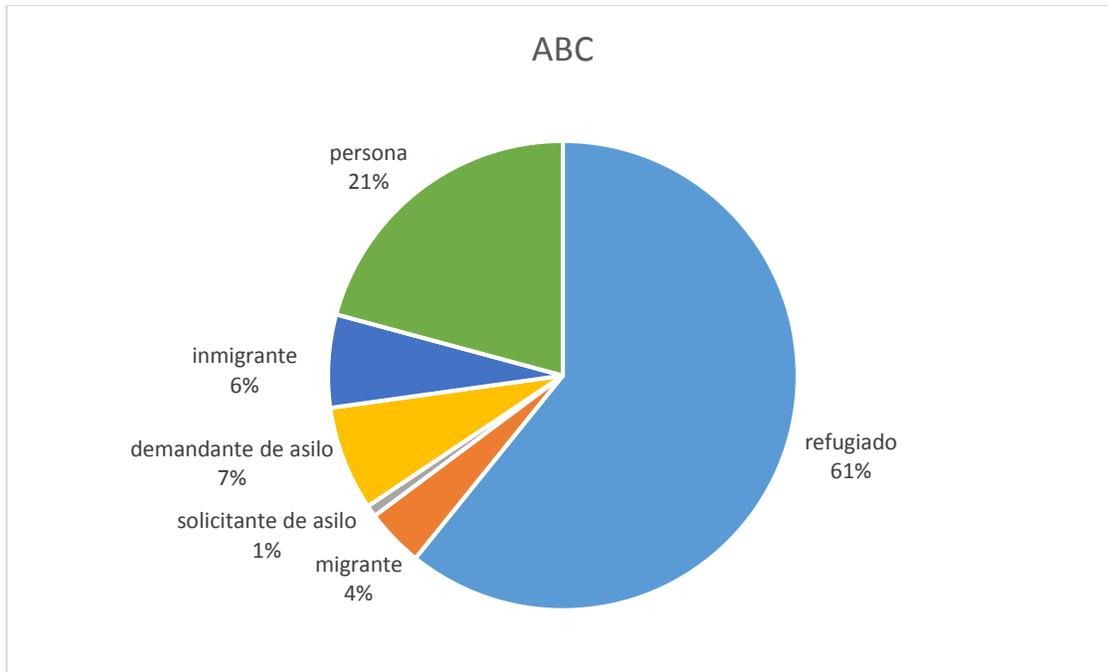
Drawing on this theory of identification and division, as I track these specific language choices, I analyze them in terms of how word choices help to evoke either processes of identification, which encourage creating common ground and connection between the reader and the refugees, or division, which otherize the refugees, showing them as outsiders to the host community. The focus of this research is on Spanish news coverage of the Syrian refugee crisis, with only articles directly related to Spain or European Union news that would influence Spain. Articles about general refugee flow to the European Union were included, for example, but articles about refugee camps in Turkey were excluded. Though these articles certainly contribute to the media framing of the issue, they were excluded in order to specifically focus on how the refugee crisis is impacting Spain. Articles from November and December 2015 were examined, with 24 articles from *El Mundo*, 29 articles from *El País* and 22 articles from *ABC*.

Results

In all three newspapers, "refugiado" (refugee) was the term most commonly used to describe those coming from Syria to Europe. In *El Mundo*, "refugiado" was used 123 times in the 24 articles examined, which accounted for 65% of references within the timeframe. *ABC* had a

slightly lower percentage of the word "refugiado," with 160 uses in 29 articles accounting for 55% of references to refugees. In *El País*, the prevalence of the term was similar, with 76 uses accounting for 58% of references to refugees in 22 articles in the timeframe. Often, all three newspapers would refer to "refugiados y migrantes" (refugees and migrants) or "refugiados y inmigrantes" (refugees and immigrants), to include incoming people who may not have refugee status. "Migrantes" (migrants) seems to be used a catch-all for those coming from other countries to Europe, and specifically Spain. It was uncommon for "migrante" to be used alone to describe refugees, though there were a few rare instances of this. Though the vast majority of incoming people to Europe are Syrian refugees, there are also migrants and refugees from other countries like Afghanistan and Iran, which contribute to the migration crisis. All three newspapers used the terms "migrantes" and "inmigrantes" similarly and roughly the same amount. *El Mundo* used the term "migrante" eight times, and "inmigrante" 15 times, consisting of 4% and 8% of references, respectively. "Migrante" was used 18 times in *El País*, accounting for 6% of references, and "inmigrante" was used 12 times, or 4% of references. *ABC* used "migrante" five times, or 4% of references, and "inmigrante" eight times, for 6% of references.

El País

asilado
6%

persona
13%

inmigrante
4%

demandante de
asilo
4%

solicitante de asilo
6%

migrante
7%

refugiado
60%

El Mundo

persona
10%

inmigrante
8%

demandante de asilo
3%

solicitante de asilo
10%

migrante
4%

refugiado
65%

"Asylum-seekers" was the second most common term used in both *El Mundo* and *El País*. There were three phrases used to identify those seeking asylum: "solicitantes de asilo," "demandantes de asilo," and "asilados." These phrases are used interchangeably, but have slight differences. "Solicitantes de asilo" and "demandantes de asilo" both translate to asylum-seekers, but the choice of "solicitante" (applicant, candidate) or "demandante" (plaintiff, petitioner) seems significant. There were 19 uses of "solicitantes" and five uses of "demandantes de asilo" in *El Mundo*. This means 10% of references used "solicitantes" and 3% used "demandantes in the sampled articles. *El País* uses "solicitante," "demandante," and "asilado" (person receiving political asylum) similar amounts, with a slight preference for "asilado," a term which does not appear in other examined newspaper articles. There are fewer uses of this percentage-wise in *El País*, with 16 uses of "solicitante" accounting for 5% of mentions of refugees and 12 uses of "demandantes" accounting for 4%. *El País* also uses the term "asilado" 15 times, or 5% of references. *ABC* uses "demandante de asilo" nine times or 7% of references, with one use of

"solicitante" accounting for less than one percent of references. Instead, *ABC* tends to use "solicitudes de asilo," which means "asylum applications."

All three newspapers also frequently refer to the refugees and asylum-seekers as "personas" (people) or "ciudadanos" (citizens). "Personas" was used more frequently than "ciudadanos," but their usage was similar. *El Mundo* uses these terms 18 times, about 10% of the total references. *El País* uses them a similar amount, with 36 references consisting of 12% of total references. *ABC* uses "personas" about twice as frequently as the other two newspapers, with 26 references making up 20% of all references to refugees. In many cases, the word "personas" was followed by qualifiers to explain more about the people in question. These phrases usually referenced either the fact that these people were fleeing war, arriving to the European Union or crossing borders. For example, one article from *El Mundo* referred to the refugee crisis as a crisis of "personas indefensas huyendo de la guerra, del terrorismo, de las bombas y de la muerte" (defenseless people fleeing from war, terrorism, bombs and death) (Useros 2015). All three newspapers frequently used the phrase "personas que huyen" (people who are fleeing), or simply "personas" on second reference. The phrase "personas llegando" (people arriving) or a variation was also frequently used by all newspapers examined to describe arrivals of refugees to the European Union. There were many variations of qualifiers for "personas" but they often referred to the trek from Syria to the European Union, the circumstances they were leaving, or the fact they were requesting asylum or refuge. Both *El Mundo* and *ABC* published at least one article in the examined timeframe specifically discussing the rates of children arriving, and as such referred to refugees as "niños" (children) or "menores" (minors).

All three newspapers used a mix of sources from the government, United Nations and non-governmental organizations. Some of the most common sources were the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Frontex (a European Union border management agency), the European Commission and a variety of professors or other notable individuals. Most of the sources for all three papers were government officials. The preference for conservative or liberal government officials tended to coincide with the general political inclination of each publication. *El Mundo*, the center-right leaning newspaper, had an almost equal amount, with eight liberal and five conservative sources. *ABC*, which is right-leaning, had a preference for conservative government sources, with 12 conservative sources and seven liberal sources. *El País*, the center-left leaning publication, had a strong preference for conservative sources, with 17 conservative government officials referenced, and only seven liberal sources mentioned. These usages may not be indicative of actual preferences, as all three publications referenced the same politicians. The Spanish minister of defense, the president of Madrid and many important players in the European Union, such as Angela Merkel, the chancellor of Germany, are all considered conservative. Since many of the important government players have certain leanings, it is difficult to tell what is coincidence and what is intentional on the part of the newspapers. One notable issue is that through all the articles about the refugee crisis, each newspaper only uses refugees as a source twice. In reality, this refugee source is really only one refugee: Osama Abdul Mohsen. Mohsen made headlines when he was tripped by a Hungarian camerawoman. Cenafe, a soccer school, worked to bring Mohsen and two of his sons to Spain, where he now works and lives. All three newspapers published articles about his efforts to encourage the Spanish government to work to bring the rest of his family to Spain, as they are currently living in Turkey. In these articles, he was often referred to as "el refugiado zancadilleado" (the tripped

refugee), referencing his experiences in Hungary. Though that event was before the examined articles, the story of Mohsen had been covered from the beginning in Hungary, in Spanish and other world media. He is almost exclusively the refugee voice in the heart of this crisis, in the articles examined. The voices of the refugees actually involved in this crisis are notably absent. Refugees are represented by the way others, like politicians or NGO representatives, talk about them, and by the photos included with the articles, but rarely are they represented by themselves. This makes the ways in which refugees are represented, especially through word choice, even more important.

Discussion

Refugiado y migrante

As mentioned, the term "refugiado," or refugee, was the most common term used to describe Syrians, but it was often grouped with the term "migrantes," or migrants. The inclusion of refugees and migrants in the discussion of the refugee crisis shows these groups of people are similar but distinct, though it easily leads to confusion because the meanings of the terms are so similar. Immigration to Spain primarily consists of migrants from North and Sub-Saharan Africa, and many of the issues arising from Syrian refugees are also influenced by these migrants. It is important for the coverage to acknowledge that not all of these incoming people are Syrian refugees. However, grouping refugees and migrants together can be problematic because refugees are often fleeing from harsher conditions of violence and war and have less mobility and resources. In fact, there were some articles at the end of December that discussed Fundéu BBVA's choice of "refugiado" as word of the year, and clarified the difference between migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers. The use of both "refugiado" and "migrante" creates division between the two groups of incoming people, by classifying them differently. The

distinction between refugee and migrant often is that refugees have less of a choice to leave their home countries, because they are fleeing from violence, whereas migrants are portrayed has having the option to stay at home. In reality, migrants can also be fleeing violence, but the further classification between refugee and migrants creates a perception of difference. The connotations of the term "migrantes," especially in the articles examined, were less sympathetic than those of "refugiados," because it was assumed that migrants were just searching for a better life rather than being forced out of their homes. Because of this distinction, it is important that refugees not be referred to as migrants, and doing so sends a different message than using the term refugees. In most cases, "migrantes" was just used as an addition to "refugiados," not interchangeably, as "migrantes" and "refugiados" have slight, yet important differences.

Demandante vs solicitante vs solicitudes

Just as using "refugiado" and "migrante" create different connotations among readers, the phrases "demandante de asilo" and "solicitante de asilo" have different connotations. As previously mentioned, though "demandante de asilo" and "solicitante de asilo" both translate to "asylum-seeker," "demandante" is a more aggressive term than "solicitante." The word "demandante" derives from the verb demandar, which means to demand or to insist on, while "solicitante" is from the verb solicitar, which means to request, to ask for, or to seek. As such, "demandante de asilo" portrays the asylum seekers as more demanding and entitled, whereas "solicitante de asilo" portrays them more as asking for a favor and aid. *ABC*, the right-leaning newspaper, had a clear preference for "demandantes" than "solicitantes," as they only used "solicitantes" once in all 22 examined articles. Of the three newspapers, *El Mundo*, the center-right-leaning newspaper, had the strongest tendency towards the term "solicitantes de asilo," which made up 10% of all references to refugees in the 24 examined articles. *El País*, the center-

left newspaper, used "demandante," "solicitante," and "asilado" at nearly equal levels, though they were the only newspaper to use the term "asilado." This is perhaps because "asilado" refers to those refugees who have already been granted asylum, rather than asylum-seekers. Though the differences between these terms may seem slight, the use of these phrases has a potentially large impact on readers' perception of refugees. The aggressive connotation of "demandantes" frames refugees as demanding, which primes readers to oppose accepting refugees into Spain. This impact aligns to some extent with the more conservative perspectives towards the refugee crisis, and thus it is unsurprising that *ABC* had such a clear preference for that term. Since *El País* used all three phrases, the impact on readers' perception was dependent upon the specific article, as each article used a different combination of phrases. In contrast, the use of "solicitante" by the more center newspapers, such as *El Mundo*, leans to a more sympathetic response among readers towards refugees as it is a less aggressive term. This word choice may lead to a stronger inclination towards welcoming refugees to Spain, which aligns with the less conservative perspective.

Though all three newspapers discussed the strain on Europe of the refugee crisis and discussed the large number of refugees, *ABC* had slightly fewer total uses of either of the "asylum-seeker" terms and more often referred to the applications. This was shown through a strong tendency to using "peticiones" (request or petition) or "solicitudes de asilo" (application or request) instead of asylum-seekers. Referencing the applications rather than those applying is dehumanizing and draws attention from the plight of the refugees to the number of refugees. This makes these individuals seem like little more than numbers to reflect strain on the host community, and takes away the agency and voice of the refugees. In contrast, the use of the term

"personas," or people, to refer to the refugees portrays them as individuals rather than just numbers.

Personas

All the examined newspapers used "personas" to refer to refugees, often qualified by phrases to remind readers that these people are fleeing violence, arriving to a European country, or seeking refuge. Following Burke's theory of identification and division, the use of a term like "personas" creates identification between readers and the refugees, because it is a term that readers will identify with. Terms like "refugiado" or "solicitante de asilo" otherize the refugees and define them as separate from the average citizen reading the newspapers. In contrast, the use of "personas" is humanizing because it draws attention away from their status as refugees and towards their status as humans. Some articles even explicitly referred to the refugees as "gente como nosotros" (people like us). For example, *El Mundo* published an article which quoted a representative from Planet Syria, an NGO, as saying "recordar que estamos hablando de gente como nosotros, que tiene de huir de sus casas y dejar atrás su vidas" (remember that we are talking about people like us, who have to flee from their homes and leave their lives behind) (Fresneda, 2015). This explicit connection of "people like us" further creates the sense of identification between refugees and Spanish readers and encouraged sympathy towards the refugees. Using "personas" can also invite empathy in readers, though this is dependent on the qualifiers that follow "personas." Qualifiers that remind readers that these individuals and fleeing violence, for example, are more likely to induce reader empathy than qualifiers which describe border crossing, or arrivals. Regardless of the qualifiers involved, the use of the term "personas" instead of a more specific classification such as "refugiado" reduces the amount of division between readers and refugees, as it is a term which applies to both groups of people.

Focus on Numbers

As these articles were from the end of the year with a record-breaking number of refugees, many of the articles focused on number of refugees and the difficulties of accommodating so many incoming people. All newspapers described the influx of refugees as a great humanitarian crisis and consistently mentioned how many refugees had left Syria or arrived in the European Union in the past month or year. *El País* and *ABC* referred to the refugee crisis as the worst migratory crisis since World War Two. All three newspapers used terms like "oleada" (flood or wave), "masa" (mass), and "avalancha" (avalanche) to describe the large number of Syrian refugees. It is important to report that there are record-breaking numbers of refugees to demonstrate the extent and significance of the refugee crisis. However, the focus on the sheer number of incoming refugees, paired with the general lack of refugee voices, leads to a focus more on numbers than on individual struggles. In some cases, the articles used the large numbers of refugees, the "avalanche" of incoming refugees, to support arguments to stop accepting refugees into the European Union.

However, the focus fairly often is on how many people have died. One article in *El Mundo* pointed out that over 300,000 people in Syria have died in the conflict, about half as many as in the Spanish civil war. This comparison to a historical Spanish conflict that happened fairly recently (1936-1939) helps to connect the readers to the conflict currently in Syria. Spain is still recovering from the repercussions of the civil war and subsequent dictatorship. Reporting on it in this manner encourages readers to identify with the plight of the refugees and frames it in a more sympathetic manner.

Paris Attacks

Just as the focus on numbers reflected concerns about economic abilities to support the incoming refugees, the response to the November 13th Paris attacks reflected fears about terrorism. The refugee crisis and the Paris attacks in November have caused increased concern about border security, calling into question the policies of open borders and necessary anti-terrorist action. This is reflected in the news coverage, as coverage in the second half of November was focused on the fight against jihadism, in reaction to the Paris attacks, and how to strengthen border security. Both *El País* and *El Mundo* published articles criticizing Schengen, directly related to migration flows and refugees. Many politicians are reported urging increased border control and security, turning away from the open-border policies of Schengen. In many of the articles about terrorism, the refugee crisis was only barely mentioned, so for the most part, those articles are not included. When refugees were mentioned, it was to question whether terrorists were sneaking into Europe with refugees, or to mention that the refugees are fleeing from the same terrorist groups that Europe is trying to stop. The connection between the refugee crisis and the Paris attacks was strengthened when one of the suspects of the Paris attacks was found with a Syrian passport. All three news organizations reported this, creating a tie between the refugee crisis and the Paris attacks. There were many reports on reactions to concerns about terrorists travelling among refugees to arrive to the European Union.

After the passport connection was made, however, all three news organizations published articles criticizing making the explicit correlation between the Syrian refugees and the Paris attacks. They each published at least one article focused explicitly on the dangers of associating to two, reminding readers that the terrorists everyone is scared of are the same terrorists the refugees are fleeing. Many articles from all publications after the Paris attacks countered the potential connection between refugees and terrorists, while expressing general public concerns

about security and safety with the arrivals of large numbers of refugees. News reports mentioned that other countries such as Hungary and Slovakia are trying to connect the refugees with terrorists, but they urged the European Union and readers to not make that connection. Spanish politicians and non-governmental organizations reminded readers that "los que llegan están sufriendo un París diario" (those who are arriving are suffering like Paris daily) (*El País*) (Baquero, 2015) and that linking refugees with terrorist acts is "unjust, unreal and particularly cruel" because they are fleeing the same terrorists (*El Mundo*) (Sanmartín, 2015). These and other statements about the importance of not connecting terrorists and refugees portray refugees as victims and encourage sympathy in readers for their plight. Reminding readers that the refugees are fleeing from the same violence that they themselves are afraid of creates a sense of identification between the refugees and the readers and as such creates an emotional response.

Religious Tension

Though there has been a history of religious tension between Muslims and Catholics in Spain, that tension was not apparent within the examined articles. The lack of tension reflects previous research about Spanish attitudes towards immigration, which suggests that though there is concern about immigration, most negative attitudes related to immigration are directed towards how many immigrants are entering, rather than the religious identities of the immigrants or refugees (Zapata-Barrero, 2009, p. 1110). The concern about numbers of refugees and migrants entering was expressed throughout the articles, as shown by the focus on the European Union's ability to accept more refugees, the record-breaking number of refugees and on reports of refugee camps. This focus was represented throughout all three newspapers, as the concern

was on the number of refugees and the humanitarian need rather than on the identities of the

refugees. This contrasts with media discourse in the United States, which frequently focuses on

and discusses the religion of refugees when considering whether they should be accepted

(Steimel 2009, pg. 69). This ties into the discussion of terrorism and refugees, because, as

exemplified by the United States' media coverage, there is an inordinate amount of Islamophobia

included in the discourse about refugees. This sort of Islamophobia was less noticeable in the

Spanish news articles examined, especially with all of the emphasis on not associating terrorism

with the refugee crisis. There was, however, a significant amount of discussion on the ability of

the European Union and Spain to be able to economically support refugees. This is in part why

Spain had not accepted refugees until early November. This reflects the idea that Spaniards are

more concerned about the economic strains of refugees than on the religious threats. Overall,

though many news stories focused on the difficulties of accommodating so many refugees, the

framing of refugees seemed to be that refugees are just people, who are going through very

difficult life experiences.

Limitations

One of the most significant limitations of this project is that, as a non-native Spanish

speaker and American, I am observing this from an outsider's perspective. Though I have some

experience with Spanish media and culture from my 2015 summer internship there, as well as

courses within my Spanish major, my experience and understanding is limited. Someone with a

more comprehensive understanding of the media culture and language in Spain would likely

notice subtle nuances in the research that I may have missed. It is important to acknowledge my

own biases in approaching this research. Though I am nearly fluent, there are words and

colloquial phrases that may have contributed to the potential framing of the issues, which I may

have not totally understood. For any instances where I was uncertain, I consulted a Spanish

dictionary and professor to clarify. In addition, further research is necessary to strengthen the

analysis of the news framing. This research should include a larger sample size, including a

larger time span of articles, and include initial and continued responses to the refugee crisis. My

research only focused on articles specifically about Spain or European Union decisions. A more

comprehensive understanding of the framing could be developed by including a wider collection

of articles, including those about the crisis that is not as directly impacting Spain. It also would

be interesting to examine the opinion articles published by each newspaper, to better understand

the framing of the issues within each newspaper. Further research should also include headlines,

images, and captions, as they contribute greatly to the framing and perception of readers. A

closer inspection of the words surrounding the terms referring to refugees would also strengthen

further research. To develop a more comprehensive understanding of the media atmosphere and

framing in Spain, further research should include radio, television and video media as well as

exploring the independent media that has recently been gaining popularity in Spain. Many of the

articles published by the top three newspapers in Spain also included videos to supplement the

coverage and it would be beneficial to further explore the effects of those videos. Ultimately,

further research should be done to continue the exploration of how this issue is framed by news

media more broadly.

Conclusion

Journalists and news organizations have an ethical responsibility to report fairly on issues

such as the refugee crisis, as the word choice and framing within these articles have a significant

impact on public perception of these issues, and in this case, attitude towards refugees.

Especially because there is a lack of refugee voices and agency in the articles examined, the

ways these individuals are represented, especially through word choice, can shape public opinion, especially with regard to attitudes towards accepting refugees. The word choices made by the top three Spanish newspapers, *El Mundo*, *El País*, and *ABC* when referring to Syrian refugees influence the overall media framing and public perception of refugees. While, for the most part, refugees are referred to as "refugiados," the variation in other term usages such as "demandantes de asilo" and "personas" contributes to the identification and division felt by readers towards the refugees. The use of terms like "personas" creates a stronger sense of identification and sympathy from readers, while terms like "solicitudes de asilo" create a sense of division and dehumanization of the refugees. This sense of identification and division not only impacts attitudes towards accepting refugees but also the way these refugees are treated once they arrive in Spain or other countries. The sources that are represented within the articles change the perspectives that are shown within the news coverage. Therefore, it is important for there to be a variety of sources to show a variety of perspectives and experiences. In this instance, the lack of refugee voices objectifies the refugees who are directly impacted by the Syrian crisis. The general themes that arose in the articles were that there were more refugees than Europe could handle and that these refugees were fleeing from intense warfare and violence. Overall, the word choice and news framing used created a sense of identification with refugees and their struggles, though some terms reinforced systems of division between readers and refugees. Understanding the ways in which word choice and representation can influence public opinion is important for more ethical journalism, so writers can be intentional about the ways in which they represent at-risk individuals like refugees. Words have immense power to influence perception and opinion and it is important that they are used carefully in news media.

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