



## REFUGEE RECEPTION AND PERCEPTION IN GERMANY AND CANADA

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**KEYWORDS:** Canada, Germany, refugees, asylum, Syrians, media analysis, newspapers, discourse, representations, nationalism, national identity, integration

### WHAT THE RESEARCH IS ABOUT

**OBJECTIVE:** This multi-year study explores media representations of refugees and refugee-related issues in Canada and Germany, from the initial arrival of Syrian refugees in 2015/2016 to concerns about long-term integration in 2020.

**RESEARCH JUSTIFICATION:** Both Canada and Germany welcomed large numbers of Syrian refugees during 2015/2016; while the initial reception has been sympathetic, concerns about integration are growing. Issues of identity and integration are heavily shaped and communicated through mainstream media.

**PRACTICAL GOAL:** To understand how refugees are perceived in the media and public opinion, and how this influences refugee integration into the host community.

**PRIMARY AUDIENCE:** Academics, service providers, policy makers, and the public.

### HOW THE DATA WAS OBTAINED

This study compared representations of Syrian refugees in the German *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and the Canadian *Globe and Mail* between September 2015 and January 2016. The research uses Bauder's (2011) Hegelian framework of sublation and negation to analyse the inclusion and exclusion of migrants to the national community. Newspaper articles were examined using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which assumes that discourses reflect and reproduce concrete social realities and power inequalities.

### CALL TO ACTION

- Civil society activism, such as civil society networks that support the integration of refugees, can influence public debates and create momentum toward sublation of immigrants into the national imagination.

- ▶ Planned integration of refugees/asylum seekers is crucial for positive public perceptions. One issue that emerged within the German public discourse is the perception that there was a breakdown in government control over migration, and that civil society actors were left alone with the task of managing integration.

## WHAT THE STUDY FOUND

**Germany: While inconsistent and often contested, there are instances where refugees are represented as a part of German society.**

- ▶ Articles in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* reveal stark divisions within German society regarding “the refugee question” (supporters versus opponents).
- ▶ Articles constructed refugee “otherness” along two axes: (1) the language of risk, such that the perceived security of the nation is threatened, and (2) social values, where refugees must learn German values to integrate.
- ▶ Most articles focus on the need to help refugees, portraying refugees as victims escaping the violence of the Syrian civil war, and portraying Germans as activists assisting refugees.
- ▶ Some articles gave refugees an active voice and represented them as agents willing and able to integrate.

**Canada: Positive representation of refugees in the media highlights the generosity and benevolence of Canada and Canadians toward minority groups. Articles in *The Globe and Mail* suggest that the media coverage of Syrian refugees is less negative compared to other refugee groups.**

- ▶ The discourse implies that it is Canadian citizens who facilitate integration, whereas refugees are not given agency in this process.
- ▶ Several articles demonstrate that the question of security and otherness in Canada is gendered, with male refugees represented as a threat to Canadians.

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## ABOUT CYRRC

The Child and Youth Refugee Research Coalition (CYRRC) is a network of researchers, service providers, and government partners working together to produce and share research that facilitates the integration of young refugees and their families in Canada and beyond.

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Child and Youth Refugee Research Coalition.

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