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**Citation:** Blumell, L. & Cooper, G. (2019). Measuring Gender in News Representations of Refugees and Asylum Seekers. *International Journal of Communication*, 13, pp. 4444-4464.

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## Measuring Gender in News Representations of Refugees and Asylum Seekers

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This study examines the influence of gender in asylum news coverage. Through a content analysis of UK print and online news media ( $N = 2,018$ ), we examine the gender of the reporter and the gender of the refugee or asylum seeker. The individual and routines levels of gatekeeping are used to show how both impact news coverage. All reporters used a similar story format, but women reporters focused significantly more on women, health and social issues, and culture and sports. Women reporters also used more nongovernment sources. Men reporters covered terrorism and violence committed by refugees and asylum seekers significantly more. Reporting by men receives greater prominence as men reporters had twice as many bylines as women reporters. Furthermore, men refugees and asylum seekers were identified eight times more than women—but mostly in connection to crime, terrorism, and violence. Women refugees and asylum seekers were usually connected to health and social issues.

*Keywords: refugees, asylum seekers, gender, news topics, source use, gatekeeping*

Gender inequality in journalism influences the news industry in multiple ways, including the production process and its output. This inequality gives men higher status (Armstrong, 2004)—both within the newsroom and in news content—and places women in supporting positions (Armstrong, Boyle, & McLeod, 2012). News organizations are disproportionately owned and managed by men (Byerly, 2011), and men have higher prominence with more bylines than women (Zoch & VanSlyke Turk, 1998). Not surprisingly, the gendered norms found in newsrooms translate to biased news content that tends to use men as sources (Ross, 2007) and story topics (Armstrong et al., 2012) more than women.

One such newsworthy story topic is asylum (e.g., Banks, 2012; Bates, 2017; Philo, Briant, & Donald, 2013). Some studies on the news coverage of asylum have identified important external factors to such coverage (e.g., Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017; KhosravNik, 2009; Moore & Ramsay, 2017), but, to our knowledge, the reporter's gender has not been studied. Yet gender is likely to influence how asylum is

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Date submitted: 2019–02–04

<sup>1</sup> We would like to acknowledge with thanks the contribution of Mel Bunce, PhD, to this study.

covered in the news, particularly when reporting on women refugees and asylum seekers. As a side note, although there are several categories of migration, and they certainly overlap, this study focuses specifically on refugees and asylum seekers.

Research on how gender manifests in the news coverage of asylum is limited (Gedalof, 2007)—both in terms of news production and the extent of coverage devoted to women refugees and asylum seekers. In a multi-country analysis by Chouliaraki and Zaborowski (2017), only 24% of news coverage identified refugees and asylum seekers by gender. When gender is identified, news coverage tends to focus on men, but often as economic threats (Chouliaraki & Stolic, 2017) or criminals (Rettberg & Gajjala, 2016). Women, on the other hand, are shown in the roles of mother and nurturer (Briggs, 2003; Campbell, 2007; del Zotto, 2002) but are not often used as news sources (e.g., Sarwono, 2014; Uzun & Asrak Hasdemir, 2017).

This study contributes to this limited literature by categorizing refugees and asylum seekers by gender in a content analysis of asylum news coverage by major UK print and online news media ( $N = 2,018$ ). Specifically, we explore associated story topics, source use, and the salience of women and men refugees and asylum seekers. We compare how these elements manifest according to the reporter's gender, since gendered norms influence the news process within the newsroom, how news is produced, and the content of coverage (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). To make this comparison, we use the levels of gatekeeping described by Shoemaker (1991) and Shoemaker and Vos (2009).

In the process of whittling down possible news stories to pass through the so-called gate to the audience, various factors influence gatekeepers. Shoemaker (1991), and later Shoemaker and Vos (2009), organized these factors into five levels of analysis: individual, routines, organizational, social institution, and social system. Shoemaker and Reese (1996, 2014) identified these five levels as a hierarchy of influences, where the outer influences are more powerful. This study analyzes the individual and routines levels; however, it acknowledges that gendered norms cultivated through news organizations, social institutions, and, ultimately, society at large impact journalism. We agree with Vos and Heinderyckx (2015) that the gatekeeping of news comprises "interrelated factors" (p. 5) and consequently posit the importance of examining the reporter's gender when investigating how women and men refugees and asylum seekers are portrayed in news coverage.

An examination of gender begins at the individual level of the gatekeeper. The individual level refers to journalists' personal characteristics, work experience, beliefs, education, and even role conception (Shoemaker, 1991; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). Measuring the influence of the individual level is complex, and findings about the extent to which it influences the gatekeeping process are contradictory. In the liberal news model (found in the United Kingdom and the United States), objectivity is fundamental to journalism, which in principle means gatekeepers put aside personal ideologies when they are on the job (e.g., Hallin & Mancini, 2004). And Shoemaker, Eichholz, Kim, and Wrigley (2001) found individual characteristics of reporters, including gender, did not influence political news coverage in a study on the passing of congressional bills. On the other hand, some scholars argue for the importance of journalists' individual judgments and characteristics (e.g., Kim, 2010; 2012; Tanikawa, 2016). The reporter's gender has been shown to influence source use (E. Freedman & Fico, 2005; Zeldes, Fico, & Diddi, 2007) and story content (Len-Rios, Hinnant, & Jeong, 2012). News organizations assign reporters story beats according to gender:

women are generally assigned human interest or soft news stories, and men are assigned hard news stories (Craft & Wanta, 2004; Ross & Carter, 2011).

The routines level comprises the professional norms that guide gatekeepers, such as writing styles, newsworthiness, newsroom milieus, information gathering, source use, and news beats (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). Shoemaker (1991) differentiates the individual and routines as follows: "Routines seem to dictate the overall pattern of stories, and individual gatekeepers decide which particular stories will be used within that standard framework" (p. 50). It is thus critical to the aims of this study to examine the patterns of news coverage and the substance of those patterns to understand whether individual gatekeepers differ in how they cover asylum.

This study investigates story topic, source use, and prominence at the routines level. More research is needed to understand the topics that women and men refugees and asylum seekers are associated with and how they are used as sources in news coverage. Saliency is also assessed to find where in the specific articles refugees and asylum seekers first appear, whether they are the main topic in the article, and whether the refugee or asylum seeker is named.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Background: Women Refugees and Asylum Seekers***

Before explicating scholarship on the role of gender in news production, it is important to understand women refugees and asylum seekers' unique experiences and circumstances. Women and girls make up 50% of the world's refugees, yet only a small portion of interagency funding from the United Nations is designated specifically for women and girls (UN Women, n.d.). In the United Kingdom, only 28% of asylum applications are from women (Gov.UK, 2018b).

Women refugees and asylum seekers face several heightened challenges, including restricted access to education, inadequate health care, and enduring all forms of abuse (Women's Refugee Commission, 2019). According to UN Women (n.d.), "At least 1 of 5 refugee or displaced women have experienced sexual violence" (para. 10). Indeed, abuse is common in refugee camps and in transit (J. Freedman, 2016). For example, in a survey of Sudanese refugees in Uganda, women and men participants experienced all forms of violence, but women experienced significantly more (Nagai, Karunakara, Rowley, & Burnham, 2008). Through in-depth interviews of Somali women refugees who sought asylum in Southern Europe via land travel in Northern Africa, participants reported that sexual violence was a common threat (Gerard & Pickering, 2014).

Through qualitative inquiry, scholars have revealed details of the experiences of women refugees and asylum seekers. Colvin (2018) found women refugees from various countries were highly centered on their families. Similarly, Clayton (2005) noted that, because family responsibilities fall primarily on refugee women, finding outside employment is challenging. Also, children often adapt more quickly to the new country than their parents. As a result, both parents rely heavily on their children for language translation and even economic support (Martin, 2004). Overall, refugee women face many challenges in the process of

resettlement and after, but their contributions and stories are often ignored in their new countries, particularly by news media.

### ***The Levels of Gatekeeping***

To analyze how women refugees and asylum seekers are represented in UK news coverage, this study uses the levels of gatekeeping—specifically focusing on how a reporter’s gender may result in differences in the coverage of asylum. The five levels of gatekeeping start with the individual and routines levels. Even though the sample is concentrated in the United Kingdom, it is useful to draw on scholarship from other countries, especially those that have a similar media system, such as the United States (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). As noted earlier, gatekeeping forces can be multidirectional (Chin-Fook & Simmonds, 2011). To focus on a reporter’s gender and her or his accompanying routines, it is important to acknowledge gendered patterns observed in newsrooms. The presence of women in news production has increased in terms of bylines and status in newsrooms (Zoch & VanSlyke Turk, 1998; Willnat & Weaver, 2014)—yet women are still less visible and less valued than men. In the United States, women have consistently composed only one-third of full-time reporters since the 1980s (Willnat & Weaver, 2014). Women hold few media ownership or higher management positions in most countries (Byerly, 2011). Research by the International Women’s Media Foundation (n.d.) reveals global patterns of unequal pay, newsroom harassment, and fewer opportunities for promotion for women. These factors are present when breaking down the individual and routines levels.

### ***The Individual Level***

Measuring gatekeepers’ individual characteristics is common in journalism research (e.g., Beam, Weaver, & Brownlee, 2009; Cuillier, 2012; Hanitzsch, 2011; Shoemaker, Vos, & Reese, 2009). In gatekeeping, the significance of the individual level has been questioned, especially compared with the routines level (Cassidy, 2006; Shoemaker et al., 2001). Certainly, routines in news production such as newsworthiness, how a story is reported (writing style, inverted pyramid, etc.), and the process of information gathering (research, source use, etc.) are consistent in the UK and in other liberal models of journalism (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Nevertheless, some scholars argue that journalists’ individual characteristics are important to the substance of news coverage (Tanikawa, 2016), and reporters continue to make personal judgments in their work (Kim, 2010, 2012). In particular, extensive research (outlined below) explores how women and men utilize sources differently and cover story topics from varying perspectives.

### ***The Routines Level***

The many aspects of the routines levels guide gatekeepers like a set of rules (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). Individual gatekeepers may differ greatly in terms of personal characteristics; nevertheless, research has found that routines are enacted rather uniformly (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). This study examines the interaction between the individual and routines levels in asylum news coverage. We specifically investigate source use, story topic, and prominence.

### ***Women as Sources in the News***

News coverage historically neglects women as news sources and story topics (Zoch & VanSlyke Turk, 1998), and women are infrequent issue experts in news debates (E. Freedman, Fico, & Durisin, 2010; E. Freedman, Fico, & Love, 2007). Even when the issue debated primarily affects women, such as sexual assault (Blumell, 2019), men are still used significantly more as sources. Reporters overlooking women's voices alienate women from public life, especially in politics (E. Freedman et al., 2007). Through source use, news media also reinforce gender role stereotypes (Armstrong & Nelson, 2005). Overlooking women's voices extends beyond the gendered disparities of politics and business (where there are more men in these positions than women). First, women are not used as sources proportionally to their population (E. Freedman & Fico, 2005). Second, when women are used as sources, they are more likely to appear later in the story, be quoted less often, and have shorter quotes (Armstrong, 2004; E. Freedman et al., 2010; Howell & Singer, 2016; Zoch & VanSlyke Turk, 1998).

### ***Source Use by Reporters***

Women reporters are more likely to use women than men as sources (E. Freedman & Fico, 2005; Zeldes et al., 2007). Furthermore, Rodgers and Thorson (2003) found that women reporters tend to include a larger variety of sources, use fewer stereotypes in their stories, and write more positive stories than men reporters. Nevertheless, privileging men is so entrenched in newsrooms that having more women in the newsroom does not necessarily increase the variety of sources in news coverage (E. Freedman et al., 2010; Ross, 2007). Some researchers have explained this imbalance as women adapting to the patriarchal status quo (Correa & Harp, 2011; Len-Rios et al., 2012; Rodgers & Thorson, 2003). Indeed, journalistic practices are informed by gendered norms, but they are often not challenged (Ross & Comrie, 2011). This study explores the variety of sources used by women and men reporters and whether the reporters' gender impacts the use of women and men refugees and asylum seekers as sources.

### ***Story Topics***

As women have entered the newsroom, they have mostly been relegated to write about what is called "soft" news or lifestyle-related news articles, which are given less prominence (Franks, 2013). As the newsroom has evolved, more women have started to cover hard news, but gendered patterns persist. Craft and Wanta (2004), for example, note that women reporters in the United States at the turn of the 21st century were still more likely to be assigned soft news stories than hard news like politics. Nilsson (2010) found women in Swedish newsrooms felt stereotyped as passive and therefore not assigned to cover harder news stories. In an analysis of UK news media, Ross and Carter (2011) found that women reporters were more than three times less likely than men to cover hard news stories such as politics and government-related topics. Furthermore, women were half as likely to cover the economy, crime, and violence but equally as likely to cover soft news such as entertainment, health, and social and legal topics (Ross & Carter, 2011).

In addition to the overall patterns of assigning topics to reporters according to gender, research has found that women and men reporters approach news topics differently. In health news, women tend to advocate for the importance of good health more than men covering the same topics (Len-Rios et al., 2012).

Nevertheless, when asked specifically about story topics, women and men reporters in Hong Kong did not have notable differences (Liao & Lee, 2014). Consequently, whether women and men reporters approach the same topics in similar ways is still debatable.

### ***Prominence of Women Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the News***

As noted earlier, research on how women refugees and asylum seekers are represented in news coverage is scarce. To cast a wide net, we draw on the existing literature from various geographical locations. In a content analysis of how refugee women in Kosovo were portrayed in international news coverage, del Zotto (2002) found most coverage concentrated on women in passive roles of eagerly waiting for food aid or being reunited with family, but few stories mentioned personal difficulties such as experienced gender-based violence or women taking initiatives in the conflict. Briggs (2003) notes that iconic imagery of refugee and asylum-seeking women predominantly focuses on motherhood and nurturing children in extreme conditions such as famine. Campbell (2007) found similar results in news coverage of Darfur in the early 2000s—most images were of women and children.

In more recent studies, Sarwono (2014) found women's perspectives are missing from news coverage of asylum in the Indonesian press. In a content analysis of the Turkish press, Uzun and Asrak Hasdemir (2017) state Syrian asylum-seeking women were portrayed as victims and perpetrators of violence; however, little background information on their hardships was given. The advancement of digital media technologies, which were influential in news coverage of such events as the Arab Spring, can be spaces to empower women refugees and asylum seekers, but Alhayek (2014) notes that economic and educational factors still limit their access to digital spaces.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

The purpose of this study is to analyze gender in UK news coverage of asylum in terms of the reporter's gender and the gender of the subject. The individual and routines levels of gatekeeping (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009) are used to measure how the individual character trait of the reporter's gender interacts with the routines level—namely, story topics, source use, and salience. Accordingly, the first four hypotheses address the reporter's gender and how the reporter covers asylum. The final three hypotheses address how women and men refugees and asylum seekers are covered in the news.

The first hypothesis predicts that women and men reporters will cover topics traditionally assigned by gender (Craft & Wanta, 2004; Ross & Carter, 2011):

*H1a: Men reporters will cover hard news topics more than women reporters.*

*H1b: Women reporters will cover soft news topics more than men reporters.*

Related to gendered topic assignment, the next hypothesis predicts:

*H2: Women reporters will cover women refugees and asylum seekers more than men reporters.*

The next hypothesis focuses on source use. Based on previous literature that finds women use more source types than men (Rodgers & Thorson, 2003), H3 predicts that women reporters will use a greater variety of nonofficial sources than men reporters:

*H3a: Men reporters will use government-related sources more than women reporters.*

*H3b: Women reporters will use nongovernment sources more than men reporters.*

Because women reporters tend to advocate for issues more than men reporters (Len-Rios et al., 2012), it is expected that women reporters will place more salience on refugees and asylum seekers than men reporters:

*H4: Women reporters will give higher salience to refugees and asylum seekers than men reporters.*

The next hypotheses concentrate on the representation of women and men refugees and asylum seekers in news coverage. Previous research finds a marginal impact of refugees and asylum seekers on the UK crime rate, but only for men (Bell, Fasani, & Machin, 2013). Moreover, recent terrorist-related crimes involving refugees and asylum seekers were primarily perpetrated by men, such as the Tunisian truck driver who crashed into a Berlin Christmas market and killed 12 people in 2016 (Mischke, 2017). It is thus reasonable to expect hard news topics such as crime and terrorism to be associated more with men refugees and asylum seekers than with women refugees and asylum seekers. Conversely, due to the lack of news coverage on women refugees and asylum seekers (Gedalof, 2007), we expect the pattern of associating women with soft news topics (Franks, 2013) will continue. Therefore, it is hypothesized:

*H5a: Hard news topics will be associated more with men refugees and asylum seekers than with women refugees and asylum seekers.*

*H5b: Soft news topics will be associated more with women refugees and asylum seekers than men refugees and asylum seekers.*

Since it is predicted that men refugees and asylum seekers will be associated more with hard news and women refugees and asylum seekers more with soft news, it is also expected for source use to differ between the two groups in terms of official and nonofficial sources:

*H6a: Government-related sources will be used significantly more for coverage of men refugees and asylum seekers than for women refugees and asylum seekers.*

*H6b: Nongovernment sources will be used more for coverage of women refugees and asylum seekers than for men refugees and asylum seekers.*

In the United Kingdom, women make up 25% of asylum applications (Gov.UK, 2018b), but men refugees and asylum seekers tend to receive more news attention. Accordingly, the final hypothesis predicts:

*H7: Men refugees and asylum seekers will have more salience in news coverage than women refugees and asylum seekers.*



### Method

This study involves a content analysis ( $N = 2,018$ ) of news articles from 15 major UK national newspapers ( $n = 974$ ): *Daily Mail*, *Daily Mirror*, *The Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, *Metro*, *The Sun*, *The i*, *Daily Express*, *London Evening Standard*, *The Times*, *Financial Times*, *The Observer*, *Daily Star*, *The Sunday Telegraph*, and *The Sunday Times*. Also analyzed were eight popular UK news websites ( $n = 1,044$ ): *BBC.com*, *HuffPost UK*, *Mail Online*, *The Independent*, *The Telegraph* online, *Mirror Online*, *The Sun* online, and *Daily Express* online. Website selection was based on archive availability and page view rankings (Schwartz, 2016). The sample includes articles from the entire year of 2017 gathered from the LexisNexis "major mentions" option and website archives. The search term "asylum" was used to filter the articles. Even though the search specifically targeted asylum seekers, refugees appeared in 52.1% of the sample and therefore are included by the specific term in the analysis. This study used SPSS to test the hypotheses.

### Code Development

This study uses the three-part codebook as suggested by Riffe, Lacy, and Fico (2014). Specifically, each variable comprised a definition and instructions for coding along with an introduction to the codebook. First, a nominal variable was used to code for the reporter's gender. There were four categories for the variable: no byline (18.5%,  $n = 374$ ), women (27.6%,  $n = 557$ ), men (50.8%,  $n = 1025$ ), and both women and men (3.1%,  $n = 64$ ). Gender was verified by reporters' personal bios and Google searches. Next, we developed two dichotomous variables to identify men refugees and asylum seekers (42.1%,  $n = 850$ ) and women refugees and asylum seekers (5.2%,  $n = 105$ ). These variables were later combined into an additional category (6.3%,  $n = 127$ ). In 46.4% ( $n = 936$ ) of the sample, there was no specific mention of a refugee or asylum seeker. Gender was identified by nouns and pronouns used in the article. Articles with no specific mention of a refugee or asylum seeker were still included in the analysis to understand overall coverage compared with the specific refugee and asylum seeker named variable.

Ten dichotomous variables were used to code for topics (see Table 1). The topic variables were coded by specific mention in the article, and more than one topic could be coded per article. Some of the hypotheses predicted differences between hard and soft news. This study uses the common classification (Reinemann, Stanyer, Scherr, & Legnante, 2012) of hard news as police/crime, terrorism, violence, economy, and government relations and soft news as culture and sport and health and social issues. The variable of women-specific topics can classify as both hard and soft news, though women-related issues are often considered soft news (North, 2016).

Nine different sources were used in dichotomous variables: UK Conservative politician, UK Labour politician, international politician, public sector UK (any government employee), public sector international, civil society, other media (specific mention of another news organization), the refugee or asylum seeker, and ordinary citizen. Source use was coded by direct quote or direct reference to the source—for example, "According to Theresa May . . ."

Three variables were used for salience. First, an ordinal variable was developed for salience of the asylum seeker or refugee according to where he or she first appears in the article: headline, lead paragraph,

second to fourth paragraph, and fifth paragraph or later. Second, a dichotomous variable was developed to indicate whether the refugee or asylum seeker was the most salient topic of the article. The number of sentences specifically devoted to the refugee or asylum seeker determined the most salient topic. Third, a dichotomous variable indicated whether the refugee or asylum seeker was referred to by name in the article.

### ***Coding and Intercoder Reliability***

The first researcher and two postgraduate students conducted the coding for this study. The first researcher provided training for the coders, explaining each variable with an article example. Once confident, each coder coded 140 articles from the sample. Recal2 (dfreelon.org) was used to calculate Krippendorff's alpha. The threshold of acceptability was  $\alpha \geq .80$ . It took three rounds of coding to achieve acceptable results for all the variables. Tables 1 and 2 list the reliability coefficients for topics and sources. The reliability coefficients for the remaining variables are as follows: gender of the reporter ( $\alpha = 1.0$ ), first appearance ( $\alpha = .80$ ), most salient topic ( $\alpha = .85$ ), and named refugee ( $\alpha = .85$ ).

### **Results**

H1a and H1b predict that men reporters cover more hard news topics and women reporters cover more soft news topics. To test this hypothesis, a chi-square independence test was run for the 10 possible topics and the reporter's gender. The chi-square independence test "compares frequencies of nominal data for a single population/sample (two variables at the same time)" (Bolboacă, Jäntschi, Sestras, Sestras, & Pamfil, 2011, p. 532). The categories within one nominal variable are compared individually with the categories of the second nominal variable. In this case, the four categories for the reporter's gender variable (no byline, women, men, and both) are individually calculated with the 10 topic categories. Standardized residuals are additionally used to understand whether the number of observed cases between the compared variables is significantly higher or lower than expected—2.0 or higher indicates the observed cases are significantly higher than expected, and -2.0 or lower indicates the observed cases are significantly lower than expected (Agresti, 2013).

Table 1 displays the results along with standardized residuals (+/-2.0 or higher) and percentages. Percentages were recorded by total use of the specific topic within each variable. For instance, as shown in Table 1, 45% of the stories that had no named byline included police/crime topics.

Results indicate no significant difference between women and men for police/crime topics, but men did cover terrorism and violence by the refugee or asylum seeker significantly more and violence to the refugee or asylum seeker significantly less. On the other hand, women covered violence to the refugee or asylum seeker, culture and sport, and health and social issues significantly more. Overall, H1a is supported for terrorism and violence by the refugee or asylum seeker. H1b is supported since women reporters covered all soft news topics significantly more. This includes women-specific topics and case studies of women refugees and asylum seekers. The same calculations were used to explore H2, which predicts that women reporters are more likely than men reporters to cover women refugees and asylum seekers. H2 is supported; women reporters cover women refugees and asylum seekers significantly more, while men reporters cover women refugees significantly less (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Story Topic Use of Reporters by Gender (df = 3).  
Percentages Reported by Total Story Topic Use Within the Variable (N = 2,018).**

%	No	Women	Men	Both	$\chi^2$	$p$
	Byline					
Police/Crime ( $\alpha = .81$ )	45**	67	66	83.1*	73.20	< .001
Terrorism ( $\alpha = .88$ )	12.7**	18.3	22.4*	38.5*	31.84	< .001
Violence to refugee/asylum seeker ( $\alpha = .85$ )	15**	34.3*	20.4**	32.3	61.23	< .001
Violence by refugee/asylum seeker ( $\alpha = .82$ )	12.7**	15.9**	22.1*	33.8*	29.56	< .001
Economy ( $\alpha = .80$ )	6.7**	18.9	18.7	23.1	34.68	< .001
UK government ( $\alpha = .80$ )	36.7**	46.2	44.8	49.2	10.49	< .05
International government ( $\alpha = .89$ )	26.4	32.2	29	29.2	3.96	> .05
Women specific ( $\alpha = .83$ )	5.2**	16.6*	13.9	6.2	31.45	< .001
Culture and sport ( $\alpha = .85$ )	4.1**	15.2*	7.1	7.7	43.86	< .001
Health and social issues ( $\alpha = .82$ )	27.9**	56.7*	40.2	43.1	83.94	< .001
Refugee/asylum seeker male+ ( $\alpha = .80$ )	46.8	48.8	47.3	69.2*	12.23	< .01
Refugee/asylum seeker female+ ( $\alpha = .97$ )	6.7**	18.5*	9.8**	3.1**	44.54	< .001

<sup>a</sup> Article included a specific case study.

\* Significant standardized residual of +2.0 or higher.

\*\* Significant standardized residual of -2.0 or lower.

H3a predicts that men reporters use more government-related sources, and H3b predicts that women reporters use more nongovernment sources. Table 2 displays the results for chi-square statistics between reporters and the nine possible variables.

**Table 2. Source Use of Reporters by Gender (df = 3).  
Percentages Reported by Source Topic Use Within the Variable (N = 2,018).**

%	No Byline	Women	Men	Both	$\chi^2$	<i>p</i>
UK Conservative politician ( $\alpha = 1.0$ )	6.5**	10.4	11.2	24.6*	21.02	< .001
UK Labour politician ( $\alpha = 1.0$ )	2.8**	6.7*	4.2	10.8*	13.63	< .01
International politician ( $\alpha = .89$ )	8.3	8.8	10.5	15.4	4.57	> .05
Public sector UK ( $\alpha = .86$ )	18.9**	31.3	31.2	38.5	26.03	< .001
Public sector international ( $\alpha = 1.0$ )	25.1**	44.2	44.6	53.8	53.11	< .001
Civil society ( $\alpha = .80$ )	18.6**	55.2*	39.1	41.5	130.02	< .001
Other media ( $\alpha = .80$ )	12.7**	41.7*	34.7	52.3*	104.31	< .001
Refugee/asylum seeker ( $\alpha = .86$ )	19.1	31.7*	19.4**	16.9	37.34	< .001
Ordinary citizen ( $\alpha = 1.0$ )	9**	17.5	16.5	30.8*	25.80	< .001

\* Significant standardized residual of +2.0 or higher.

\*\* Significant standardized residual of -2.0 or lower.

Women reporters did indeed use more nongovernment sources and more refugees or asylum seekers as sources. Women reporters also used more UK Labour politicians as sources and other media sources. However, the remaining sources had no significant differences. Therefore, H3a is not supported, but H3b is supported. Men reporters did not use government-related sources significantly more than women reporters, but women reporters used nongovernment sources more than men reporters.

H4 predicts that women reporters give more salience than men reporters to refugees and asylum seekers. As mentioned above, three variables were used for salience: where the refugee or asylum seeker first appears (ordinal), whether the refugee or asylum seeker is the most salient topic (dichotomous), and whether the refugee's or asylum seeker's name is given (dichotomous). The first statistic run was a Kruskal-Wallis H test between salience and the reporter's gender, with no significance,  $\chi^2(3) = 6.01$ ,  $p > .05$ . Next, a chi-square test was run for most salient topic, with significance,  $\chi^2(3) = 10.70$ ,  $p < .01$ . However, the standardized residuals reveal no significance for women (89.6%) and men (84.5%) reporters. Finally, a chi-square test was run for the named variable with significance,  $\chi^2(3) = 16.32$ ,  $p < .001$ . But once again the standardized residuals show no difference for women (35.5%) and men (34.7%) reporters. H4 is not supported.

H5a predicts that hard news topics will be associated more with men refugees and asylum seekers, and H5b predicts that soft news topics will be associated more with women refugees and asylum seekers. Table 3 shows chi-square test results between the gender of the refugee or asylum seeker and story topics. Men were significantly associated with police/crime, terrorism, and violence by the asylum seeker. Conversely, women were more associated with topics that were government-related, women-specific, and addressed culture and sport, health and social issues, and violence to the asylum seeker. While being significantly more associated with violence *by* the refugee or asylum seeker, men were also significantly associated with violence *to* the refugee or asylum seeker. Interestingly, women were more associated with government topics than men. H5a is partially supported since men were more associated with security-related topics (police/crime, terrorism, and violence by) but not government or economic topics. H5b is supported, because women were associated with all soft news topics more than men.

**Table 3. Story Topic Use by Gender of Refugee and Asylum Seeker (df = 3).  
Percentages Reported by Total Story Topic Use by Variable (N = 2,018).**

%	No Name	Women	Men	Both	X <sup>2</sup>	p
Police/Crime	49.2**	63	77.1*	69.5	156.33	< .001
Terrorism	13.2**	8.3**	30.3*	10.7**	102.70	< .001
Violence to refugee/ asylum seeker	14.3**	38*	29.4*	42*	100.61	< .001
Violence by refugee/ asylum seeker	5.3**	4.6**	37.1*	10.7*	326.29	< .001
Economy	23.2*	13	9.8**	17.6	61.03	< .001
UK government	38.3**	63*	47.2	46.6	32.87	< .001
International government	27.7	39.8*	29.3	34.4	8.57	< .05
Women specific	5.5**	54.6*	14	24.4*	232.42	< .001
Culture and sport	6.6**	17.6*	8.3	22.1*	45.66	< .001
Health and social issues	33.1**	73.1*	46.1	61.1*	101.66	< .001

\* Significant standardized residual of +2.0 or higher.

\*\* Significant standardized residual of -2.0 or lower.

The last chi-square table was used to explore H6, which predicts that government-related sources will be associated more with men refugees and asylum seekers (H6b) and nongovernment sources will be associated more with women refugees and asylum seekers (H6b). As shown in Table 4, H6a is not supported since government sources were used similarly for women and men, and even more for women with UK public sector sources (see Table 4). H6b is partially supported since civil society and refugee and asylum seeker variables are used more for women, but ordinary citizens were more associated with men. Table 4 also shows that when women and men are specified in the article, they have a much higher chance of being used as a source.

**Table 4. Source Use by Gender of Refugee and Asylum Seeker (df = 3).  
Percentages Reported by Total Source Use by Variable (N = 2018).**

%	No Name	Women	Men	Both	$\chi^2$	P
UK conservative politician	11.6	6.5	10.4	6.1	5.78	> .05
UK Labour politician	4.7	8.3	4.4	6.1	3.65	> .05
International politician	11.3	5.6	8.6	9.9	6.01	> .05
Public sector UK	24.7**	42.6*	32.5	29	23.49	< .001
Public sector international	45.3*	29.6**	38.8	35.1	16.53	< .001
Civil society	36.3	64.8*	37	64.1*	68.38	< .001
Other media	33.3	31.5	34.5	23.7	6.16	> .05
Refugee/ Asylum seeker	2.4**	50*	35.3*	65.6*	493.89	< .001
Ordinary citizen	5.7**	15.7	27.5*	13	164.67	< .001

\* Significant standardized residual of +2.0 or higher.

\*\* Significant standardized residual of -2.0 or lower.

Finally, H7 predicts that men refugees and asylum seekers have more salience than women refugees and asylum seekers. The Kruskal-Wallis H test found no significance,  $\chi^2(3) = 4.91$ ,  $p > .05$ . This means that women and men were similarly likely to appear in the article at the same place. The chi-square test for most salient topic was significant,  $\chi^2(3) = 130.08$ ,  $p < .001$ . The standardized residuals indicate no significance for men (93.3%) or for women (93.5%). Once again, women and men were similarly likely to be the most salient topic in the article. The chi-square test for asylum seeker named was also significant,  $\chi^2(3) = 902.15$ ,  $p < .001$ . Men were named significantly more (65.8%) than women (53.3%). H7 is not supported, with the exception of men being named more than women.

## Discussion

This study builds on research about asylum in news coverage by examining how a reporter's gender and the gender of a refugee or asylum seeker manifests via story topics, source use, and salience. The findings from our sample of UK print and online news media ( $N = 2,018$ ) contribute to the existing literature of gendered norms in the news industry (Armstrong, 2004; Zoch & VanSlyke Turk, 1998) identified in the levels of gatekeeping (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009).

This study finds patterns similar to those discovered in previous research: The experiences of women and men refugees differ (Martin, 2004); the exploration of media representations of refugees and asylum seekers by gender is limited; and the gender of refugees and asylum seekers is not usually identified in news coverage (Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017; Gedalof, 2007). We found that women refugees and asylum seekers are identified in only 5.2% of the total coverage, and in combination with men, in 6.3% of the total coverage. This percentage is much lower than the general population of women refugees in the United Kingdom, which is 25% (Gov.UK, 2018b). This finding supports previous research, which shows a lack of attention to women in proportion to their population (E. Freedman & Fico, 2005). Within the small

proportion of coverage of women, the focus tends to be on violence experienced by the women and health and social issues.

It is noteworthy that refugees and asylum seekers are used more as sources when stories are about women than when they are about men. Not surprisingly, refugees and asylum seekers were mostly identified by their gender if used as a source. One explanation for this is the use of case studies that focus on a specific refugee or asylum seeker, which is a common practice in journalism. Case studies usually identify the subject by her or his gender. The findings show that men were highly associated with police/crime and terrorism and consequently were more likely to be named as a suspect or arrestee; in such stories, though, the men were not often used as sources. Still, this explains why men refugees and asylum seekers were named more than women.

These findings are both positive and negative. On one hand, unlike previous research, which finds media portrayals of women refugees and asylum seekers as passive (del Zotto, 2002), these findings show women speaking for themselves in half of the coverage about them. Unfortunately, like previous research (Sarwono, 2014), this type of coverage does not account for much of the overall news coverage of asylum. It is reasonable that men are more associated with crime and terrorism since they are responsible for most crime committed by refugees and asylum seekers in the United Kingdom (Bell et al., 2013). However, it is also reasonable to expect news coverage of men refugees and asylum seekers to extend beyond crime and terrorism. Overall, women refugees and asylum seekers, though subjects of a small proportion of the coverage, are covered in a wider variety of story topics than men. Men are primarily reported on as economic and security threats (Chouliaraki & Stolic, 2017; Rettberg & Gajjala, 2016), while women, conversely, are represented in the roles of nurturer, mother, and/or victim (Briggs, 2003; Campbell, 2007; del Zotto, 2002)—roles that touch on more story topics.

Turning to the levels of gatekeeping (Shoemaker, 1991; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009), the findings show the importance of considering multiple interrelated factors (Vos & Heinderyckx, 2015), which ultimately reaffirms the hegemonic status quo in journalism (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014).

Even though examining specific organizations was beyond the scope of this study, organizational influences can be observed, which continue to privilege men reporters over women. First, there were almost twice as many bylines by men as there were by women. This again is not indicative of the greater UK population, which is 51% female (Gov.UK, 2018a). It also differs from the UK journalism industry, which, in 2013, was reported to be made up of 52% men and 48% women (National Council for the Training of Journalists, 2013). We also discovered that women and men reporters continue to be assigned story topics by gender, but with some advancements. There were patterns of women reporters covering more human interest or soft news stories than men reporters (Craft & Wanta, 2004; Nilsson, 2010), but women reporters covered hard news topics of crime/politics (though not terrorism) similarly to men reporters. These results are an improvement over Ross and Carter's (2011) findings, which show that in general, women reporters in the UK are much less likely to cover politics and government. These findings add to Shoemaker's (1991) observation about routines dictating the framework of professional practices in journalism, in that gendered norms also seem to create patterns in which organizations function—patterns that are often overlooked.

Addressing the debate as to whether individual characteristics (Kim, 2010, 2012) or routines (Shoemaker et al., 2001) are more powerful in gatekeeping, the results in this study indicate that both levels make a difference—and focusing on other factors such as the organizational level are also important. Future research should include analysis of specific news organizations as well as explore the social institutional and social system levels.

Moving beyond story topic alone, women and men reporters focused on refugees and asylum seekers differently. For instance, there was a substantive difference in that men reporters covered violence *by* a refugee or asylum seeker more than women reporters, and women reporters covered violence *to* a refugee or asylum seeker more than men reporters. Men reporters are also less likely to include a case study of a women refugee or asylum seeker, but there is no difference between women and men reporters and case studies of men. As Len-Rios et al. (2012) found differences in how women and men reporters approach the health beat, it appears women and men have varying aims in their coverage of asylum. One explanation for these different approaches is that refugees and asylum seekers tend to be covered on beats that are traditionally assigned to men, such as crime and politics. Nevertheless, within that coverage, men are using different sources and fewer women refugees and asylum seekers as sources.

Another difference we found related to source use. Women reporters averaged slightly more sources than men reporters, and women used a greater variety of sources (Rodgers & Thorson, 2003). Overall, women included more nongovernment sources and sources from other media and from the refugees and asylum seekers. Importantly, women reporters focused more on women refugees and asylum seekers, which reaffirms the importance of examining the gender of the gatekeeper when trying to understand the visibility of the subject.

Where women and men reporters did not differ was salience. In the three tests of placement, most salient topic, and naming the refugee or asylum seeker, women and men reporters made similar judgment calls. The routines of evaluating newsworthiness and story construction appear to be similar for all reporters.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

This study is not without limitations. First, as noted in the literature review, asylum is a global issue and therefore much of the scholarship focuses on multiple countries. This study concentrates on the United Kingdom, which we believe is justified given the depth of analysis and sample size. However, future research would benefit by expanding to other countries. Second, research in this area would also benefit from other methodological approaches, especially qualitative inquiry. Textual analysis, for example, could uncover some nuances of the statistical patterns found in this content analysis. Interviewing reporters and conducting newsroom observations might uncover motivations behind some of the journalistic choices, why women reporters have fewer bylines, and why women refugees and asylum seekers do not receive more coverage. This study examined only online and print media, and more broadcast media research is needed. This relates to another limitation of the study, which is the focus on only the individual and routines levels of gatekeeping. Future research should investigate the organizational, social institution, and social system levels.



### Conclusion

Notwithstanding these limitations, this study does demonstrate the importance of understanding how external factors—in this case, the reporter's gender—can impact asylum news coverage. Overall, men reporters cover asylum disproportionately more than women reporters. Second, women reporters cover (or are assigned) more diverse topics and use more diverse sources. This finding adds to the gatekeeping literature in showing that journalists may generally enact similar routines, but news content differs because of individual judgments such as what sources to use and angles to emphasize. This study highlights the need for news gatekeepers to value not only established routines of journalism but also to ask who in the public sphere is contributing to those routines. In other words, more attention is needed to identify who is included in news coverage and who is excluded. What is clear from this study is the lack of news coverage on women refugees and asylum seekers and the lack of diverse topic coverage of men refugees and asylum seekers.

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