Framing Refugees: A Mixed Quantitative Approach to Understanding Racial Hierarchies in Refugee Portrayals, using Big Data

Summary

As notions of self-reliance, entrepreneurship, and productivity have gained prominence in the portrayal of 'the refugee', a small body of critical literature has explored the effects of such narratives, including the potential establishment of racial hierarchies. Using a large-scale dataset of press articles from different Western countries; official reports by actors in the international refugee regime; and diverse behavioural traces of public interaction with these sources on social media platforms, this research project proposes to conduct a comparative multi-method analysis to examine how racialised hierarchies are (re-)produced in the framing of 'the refugee'. The project will seek to analyse whether the reliance on, and the reproduction of, globally circulating hierarchies of race in the framing of refugees may mediate interactions with and understandings of problem definitions, causal definitions, moral evaluations, and/or treatment recommendations for the 'problem' of 'the refugee'. To better understand potential mechanisms behind the (re-)establishment of racial hierarchies, the project will consider whether the racialised refugee frames may promote the neoliberal political interests of central actors in the refugee regime; for example, proposing development aid to as a 'solution' for 'African' migrants, when framed as illiterate, impoverished masses, or liberating the Western nation-state from its responsibility towards the 'Syrian' refugee when portrayed as resilient, independent individual.

1. *Problématique* and context of the research

The refugee system, laid out by the 1951 Geneva Convention, was established to provide a legal remedy for individuals who have been deprived of the protection of their State of origin or regular domicile by re-establishment of protection. However, in the decades since 1951, despite numerous refugee regime[1] initiatives, many refugees are left in situations of prolonged displacement with no realistic access to durable solutions of repatriation, integration, or resettlement (Easton-Calabria & Omata, 2018; UNHCR, 2017). In this context in which global forced displacement has been rising steadily,[2] gaining a particularly high public visibility in many Western countries since the 2015 Mediterranean crisis (Eberl et al., 2019), different narratives of 'the refugee'[3] have emerged in the Western world as means by which to describe and define the experience and intrinsic nature of the refugee.

In recent years, there have been efforts by academic and non-academic actors to re-imagine refugees—*i.e.,* develop a new narrative framing—as 'palatable' and 'productive' potential members of societies and especially workforces.[4] For example, Syrian refugees in the Za'atari camp in Jordan have been repeatedly described with regards to their 'entrepreneurial' skills (e.g. Betts & Collier, 2015; Gatter, 2018; Guttman, 2016; Tran, 2013; UNHCR, 2013). The depiction of the 'refugee entrepreneur', while framed as a positive progression from the image of the destitute and suffering refugee, may arguably reinforce racial hierarchies between different refugee populations: Syrians are able to be perceived as being closer to whiteness, as the abstract ideal of 'entrepreneurship' is, for many people,

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[1] Note: This research adopted Inhetveen's (2006, p. 1) definition of the '(international) refugee regime' as "an institutionalized system comprising, firstly, rules and norms referring to refugee-related actions of organizational, individual and state actors, secondly, organizations specifically engaged in these refugee-related actions, and thirdly, operational practices of dealing with refugees." This definition is a modified version of the one used by Laura Barnett (2002, p. 1).

[2] In 2019, according to UN Secretary-General António Guterres, more than 70 million people are forcibly displaced -- double the level of 20 years ago (UN, 2019).

[3] Note: This research draws on the work of various scholars, notably and Glasman (2017) and Scalettaris (2007), in considering "the refugee" as a legal and bureaucratic category. The term "the refugee" will be used to refer to the concept and category of refugee as by the Geneva Convention and UNHCR, while "refugee" refers to persons who can be broadly considered to fall within the UNHCR mandate.

[4] These efforts are demonstrated, for example, by the following statement of Alexander Betts, Director of the University of Oxford's Humanitarian Innovation Project: "The existing paradigm fails to adequately recognise that refugees and other displaced persons have talents, skills, and aspirations. A rethink is urgently needed." (Betts et al., 2014)

associated with whiteness (as well as masculinity, mobility, class privilege, abstract thinking, and bodily ability). In contrast to Syrian and other Middle Eastern refugees, as Turner (2020) argues, refugees from sub-Saharan Africa are often depicted as an object of pity, containing racial positionings in which the refugee is in an inferior societal position. The ways and extent to which racialisations[5] are part of the (explicit and implicit) framing of 'the refugee' is a subject that merits further investigation in order to better understand how strong the links between framing and race are, and how they might reaffirm biases that have real-world impacts on refugees.

This research project's interest in studying how Western States'[6] and international institutions' framing of refugees (re-)produces racialised hierarchies stems from their implications for the creation of durable inequalities. Racial positionings represent what Therborn (2006, p. 7) describes as "unequal recognition of human individuals as persons". The inequality deriving from such "institutionalized ranking of social actors, some high, others low, from some super- and subordination", in his definition, is "inequality by *hierarchization*" (Therborn, 2006, p. 13). Following Therborn's explanation, racism—as "existential inequality"—"allocates freedom and unfreedom in the pursuit of personal life projects, rights, and prohibitions to act, and distributes affirmations and denials of recognition and respect" (Therborn, 2006, p. 7). Recognition and respect can also be defined as 'status'. Status, as described by Ridgeway (2014, p. 3), "is based on widely shared beliefs about the social categories or 'types' of people that are ranked by society as more esteemed and competent and respected compared to others". This is particularly important since status is a central mechanism in creating 'durable inequality' (Tilly, 2009) based on social differences. As Ridgeway argues, cultural beliefs about which groups are 'better' (esteemed and competent) constitute group differences as *independent* dimensions of inequality that generate material advantages due to group membership itself, by writing group differences such as race into organizational structures of resources and power. [7] However, as Maneri (2020, p. 2) highlights, "despite these old and new social and symbolic stratifications based on origin, contemporary scholarship on migration and asylum-seeking, especially studies on media and political discourse, has not paid sufficient attention to questions of race" (Lentin, 2014).

To better understand the "collective process" through which racialised refugee hierarchies are (re-)produced in the Western world, this research wants to study media and political discourse around refugees. According to the group position model of racial prejudice (Blumer, 1958; Bobo, 1999), "it is the *sense of social position* emerging from this collective process of characterization which provides the basis of race prejudice" (Blumer, 1958, p. 4). This sense of group position is a normative construct, as Blumer explained: "Sociologically it is not a mere reflection of the objective relations between racial groups. Rather it stands for "what ought to be" rather than for "what is." It is a sense of where the two racial groups belong" (Blumer, 1958, p. 5). While Blumer has focussed on the dynamics between one dominant and one subordinate racial group, Bobo (1999) argued these ideas may also be usefully applied to relations among and between racial minority groups in a multiethnic social setting. According to the model, the collective process by which racial groups form images of themselves and of others operates chiefly through the public media and in the "public arena"[8]. As often argued, a constant process of 'othering' in the news can promote and consolidate "a racist 'commonsense' which serves to justify and help maintain racial inequalities" (Gordon & Rosenberg, 1989, p. 38).

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[5] Note: This research adopts Alana Lentin's (2011) definition of 'racialization': "Racialization involves endowing the characteristics, appearances, traditions, and lifestyles attributed to groups of different 'others' with negative signifiers that are deemed to be natural and insurmountable".

[6] Note: in this research, the term "Western State" is used to describe the governmental institutions of Western nation-states at the core of the development of international institutions, including the U.N. and UNHCR. These include, but are not limited to, the United States of America, Canada, Great Britain, and France, and, following more modern interpretations, they are considered to include Japan and Australia. In addition, this research includes Germany in this description, given its high current contribution, for example, to the UNHCR's budget and central role in receiving refugees in recent years.

[7] As Bobo (1999, pp. 455–456) describes, pointing to the research of (Blauner, 1972; L. Bobo & Kluegel, 1993; Dawson, 1995): "Once a *set of racial inequalities has been institutionalized there are meaningful interests that attach to such group positions in a hierarchical and racially stratified social order*."

[8] The "extended public arena", according to Blumer (1958, p. 6), "is constituted by such things as legislatives assemblies, public meetings, conventions, the press, and the printed word."

Although this does not imply that the audience necessarily accepts such representation, there is "enough support to claim that dominant representations play a significant role in influencing people's perceptions of minority groups and that dominant news frameworks in particular help to structure perception of the key issues in race relations" (Pilkington, 2003, p. 185).

For Omi and Winant, representations are never simply representations. In order to point to the ways that particular understandings of race can be mobilized for political purposes, Omi and Winant have coined the term "racial project," which they define as "simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 56), which is particularly important since inequalities are produced, reproduced, and dismantled by social interaction (Therborn, 2006). Although many other factors motivate the actions of the refugee regime this research project will thus look specifically at the racialised framing of refugees in order to further understanding of how the refugee regime (re-)produces 'the global idea of race' (Thompson, 2015, p. 50)

This research proposes to conduct the above-mentioned investigation through framing analysis. 'Framing analysis' is based on the premise that the "selection, emphasis, exclusion of news frames that furnish a coherent interpretation and evaluation of events" (Goffman, 1974, p. 4) can be seen as instrumental in shaping how individuals think about specific issues, since frames make some values and arguments more accessible at the expense of others (Entman, 1993; Lahav, 2013). The question of the framing of 'the refugee' is urgent, not only because we still see this type of framing today. For example, on May 18, Al Jazeera titled "The Syrian refugee on the UK's coronavirus front lines: Hassan Akkad, a BAFTA-winning filmmaker who was tortured in Syria, now cleans COVID-19 wards in a busy London hospital" (Safdar, 2020). Here, Hassan, 'the Syrian refugee', becomes exceptional in his ability to supersede the subaltern status of other, invisible refugees; again, reinforcing racial hierarchies when the same framing is repeatedly applied to certain 'kinds' of refugees. The issue is also particularly relevant as scholars expect a large dropdown in regular migration and a restoration of national borders as a consequence of the current global pandemic (Favell & Recchi, 2020), maybe leaving 'the refugee' as one of few crossing national borders in coming years.

For the context of this research, two perspectives on racism in the Western world are particularly important to highlight, as outlined by Maneri (2020): The first, particularly popular in continental Europe in the wake of the well-known "new racism" thesis (Barker, 1982), addresses noncolour-coded racism, "a racism that is not just directed at those with darker skins, from the former colonial territories, but at the newer categories of the displaced, the dispossessed and the uprooted, who are beating at western Europe's doors" (Sivanandan, 2001, p. 2; see also Fekete, 2009). The second perspective, influenced by American scholarship and critical race/whiteness studies, sees the colonial experience, the history of enslavement of people of African ancestry, and the ideological heritage of eighteenth-century racial theories as foundational in establishing race, and especially skin colour, as the privileged code of racism. These authors stress how the erasure of the "r" word in continental Europe, its "political racelessness" (Goldberg, 2006, p. 336), is complicit with its post-colonial amnesia, producing an "anaemic anti-racism that reverts to the purest liberalism: a mere politics of anti-discrimination, which [refuses] to interrogate the sociopolitical production of racialized distinctions" (De Genova, 2018, p. 1770).

While, for the Za'tari camp in Jordan, Turner (2020) convincingly shows that racialised hierarchies become part of an imagined, reported, and discussed notion of a refugee reality, this research proposes to examine in a systemic large-scale way broader patterns and trends in which race is operationalised in the framing of refugees, to see how much Turner's point can be upheld across time and in a broader scale.

2. Research objectives and hypotheses

According to Entman's definition, to frame is to

> "select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal definition, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the problem and how various interests aim to solve the problem." (Entman, 1993, p. 52)

Based on this definition, racial hierarchies in refugee framing shape the 'problem' definition, moral evaluations, and/or treatment recommendations for the 'problem' and how various interests aim to solve the problem. As such, media representations are seen as significant in the cultural (and therefore political) sphere precisely because they actively *construct* meaning, and do not merely *reflect* social reality (Guedes Bailey & Harindranath, 2005). As highlighted by Guedes Bailey and Harindranath (2005),"representations of refugees are not 'fixed'; they can and are being contested." Following the approach of framing analysis, the project wants to first analyse the *existence* of racial hierarchies in refugee framing by institutional powers and the media in Western countries, how they change over time, whether they differ between different interest groups, and how they may be used to promote certain problem definitions and solutions to the 'problem' of the refugee. Second, it wants to analyse *public interaction* of different audiences with racialised refugee frames to better understand the collective process of racial hierarchisation.

First, regarding the *existence* of racialised hierarchies in Western States' and the international refugee regime's framing of 'the refugee', given the wealth of multi-disciplinary scholarship demonstrating how slavery, colonialism, and capitalism created the racial structures that underpin today's international order (see e.g. Bhattacharyya, 2018; Davis, 1983; DuBois, 1925; Jones, 2008; Robinson, 2000; Rutazibwa, 2016; Sajed, 2013; Wekker, 2016), this project expects that refugee framing reflects 'overlapping racial and geopolitical hierarchies' (**H1**: Racialised hierarchies exist in the framing of 'the refugee'). However, as Miles insists, racial categories do not simply exist:

> "There are no 'races' and therefore no 'race relations.' There is only a belief that there are such things, a belief which is used by some social groups to construct an Other (and therefore the Self) in thought as a prelude to exclusion and domination, and by other social groups to define Self (and so to construct an Other) as a means of resisting that exclusion." (Miles, 1993, p. 42).

Based on this belief, the idea that the meanings of racialized refugee frames can shift over time, and can vary according to context, is central to this study. As highlighted by Blumer (1958, p. 6), "the definitions that are forged in the public arena center, obviously, about matters that are felt to be of major importance. Thus, we are led to recognize the crucial role of the "big event" in developing a conception of the subordinate racial group. The happening that seems momentous, that touches deep sentiments, that seems to raise fundamental questions about relations, and that awakens strong feelings of identification with one's racial group is the kind of event that is central in the formation of the racial image". This focus on 'big events' is in line with news value theory (Galtung & Ruge, 1965, pp. 64–91), which lists the following news values: frequency, threshold, meaningfulness, consonance, unexpectedness, continuity, composition, reference to elite nations, elite people, reference to persons, and reference to something negative. Moreover, with regards to the manufacturing of such events, Blumer highlights the role of strong interest groups: "they [strong interest groups] may be vigorous in seeking to manufacture events to attract public attention and to set lines of issue in such a way as to predetermine interpretations favorable to their interests. The role of strongly organized groups seeking to further special interest is usually central in the formation of collective images of abstract groups" (Blumer, 1958, p. 6). Regarding the existence of racialised refugee hierarchies, this leads to two hypotheses: racialised hierarchies may change or gain and lose salience over time (**H1.A**) and different racialisations may be promoted by different interest groups (**H1.B**). Here, the question

asked by Maneri (2020, p. 6) in his study of photographs of migrants will be of central interest: "In the time of a unified European immigration regime, are we witnessing a sort of pan-European (racialized) otherization, one that uses similar codes of difference? Or, on the contrary, do idiosyncratic national policies, histories, and debates provide for different representations that reflect each country's national essentializing lenses?"

In studying any situation of racial group relations, scholars called for careful analysis of the configuration of interests and organized power (Blumer, 1958; Bobo, 1999; Markovitz, 2011; Morning, 2011). Analysis of refugee framing cannot look to representations alone, but must instead consider the ways that imagery is linked to social structures and political power. Attention to matters of interests and power would serve, Blumer argued, to better identify the sustaining conditions of racial group relations. "A study of the sustaining conditions in terms of how they function," he wrote, "must necessarily deal with such matters as vested interests, entrenched power, the inertia of institutions, the use of social codes, devices of intimidation, an established opportunity structure, and the responsiveness of office-holders and decision-makers" (1958b, p. 437).

Directing attention to social structures and political power, this research considers whether racialised frames may be used by Western States and actors in the refugee regime to distance themselves from their legal and moral responsibility to protect refugees. Critical migration scholars argue that in recent decades, the shifting political interests of the powers at the mantle of the international refugee regime have endeavoured to shift the concept of protection steadily further away from its legal foundation and, consequently, from the responsibility and role of the nation-state (Chimni, 1999; FitzGerald, 2019; Loescher, 1993). As Suhrke and Zolberg (1999, p. 151) argue, Western States long "lacked a compelling political rationale to receive [refugees]" who, rather than affirming the liberal nation-state, were perceived a threat to that same global order. In this environment, government and media depictions of refugees as a "problem" and "crisis" situation gained prevalence, accompanied by new policies that pushed the limits of refugee law to formulate "solutions" (Gammeltoft-Hansen & Tan, 2017; Malkki, 1995; Weiner, 1995). UNHCR policies, such as an increased focus on repatriation and establishment of development aid, developed during the early 1990's—when Western States dramatically increased UNHCR's budget and mandate (Loescher, 1993; Malkki, 1995)—indicate that UNHCR's expansion came with an expectation to participate in its Western funders' efforts to distance refugees. As Bardelli (2018, pp. 54–55) argues, the 'solution' to displacement is increasingly defined in developmental terms and has become 'a matter of access to the job market rather than a political question about inequalities, exclusion, conflict, exploitation, asymmetrical power relations, and so on'. As scholars have long noted, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as the primary agency charged with protecting refugees, is highly dependent on voluntary donations from States, which can influence its portrayal of refugees (Loescher, 2001). Since wealthy Western States provide the vast majority of UNHCR's funding[9] (Agier, 2011; FitzGerald, 2019; Lippert, 1999), this research expects the racialized framing of refugees to reflect their interests. The hypothesis is that there is a link between racialisation and the proposed solutions to displacement (**H1.C**).

Second, the research wants to better understand the *public interaction* of different *audiences* with racialised narratives of 'the refugee'. [10] The research recognizes that a particular framing of a public issue is not only determined by the media or the political realm, and thus puts forward a model of the public space—linking media, political, and public with press, official reports, and social media—which requires that citizens make sense of the issue and connect it with other objects. While previous studies have regarded the framing of 'the refugee' and the promotion of racialised refugee portrayals as a 'production' (L. Turner, 2020, p. 139) of the international refugee regime and humanitarian actors within it (e.g. Inhetveen, 2006; L. Turner, 2020), this research follows Dewey's (2012) more collaborative conception of the public space. Rather than conceiving publics in a democracy as a static object waiting for actors, such as politicians or the media, to shape their perception of issues, this

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[9] In 2019, the U.S. ($1.7 billion), EU ($473 million), and Germany ($390 million) together contributed 61% of UNHCR's $4.2 billion budget.(*see: UNHCR Donor Profiles*. http://reporting.unhcr.org/donor-profiles. Retrieved 20 May 2020.)
[10] Note: Interaction, in this research, encompasses the commenting, sharing, and liking of social media posts.

research regards the public space as a complex ecosystem, in which different actors are inextricably linked and influence each other. This conception of racial hierarchisation as a collaborative process recognises the social phenomenon of racial prejudice as described by Bobo (1999, p. 468), as "a story of self as positioned in a racialized and stratified social world".

Following Forcier (2019), this research recognises the active role of "ordinary" citizens in shaping racialised hierarchies in the public discourse on refugees, as expressed through their online comments and likes on social media platforms. As noted by Titley (2014: p.42), "online communications and networked social media interactions provide key sites for the delineation of hierarchies of belonging, and the expansive rehearsal and contestation of racializing discourses, tropes and rationalities". Social media are seen as new sites of power where discourse is influenced by racialized inequalities and also participates in their reproduction (Forcier, 2019). Like the top-down discourses generally studied, those that are constructed from below can also promote stigma and discrimination. The hypothesis is that ordinary citizens play an active role in shaping racialised hierarchies (*H2.A*). This project therefore wants to analyse the *public interaction* with racialised refugee hierarchies; are racialised framings linked to other issues by the public; refuted; or confirmed?

The idea that different groups interact differently with racialised refugee frames stems from Bobo's (1999) attempt to articulate the group position framework with the line of research on social identity processes (Tajfel, 1982; J. C. Turner et al., 1987). Social identity theory states the natural need felt by people to be part of a larger entity or group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The creation of group identities involves both the categorization of one's "in-group" with regard to an "out-group" and the tendency to view one's own group with a positive bias vis-a-vis the out-group. Social identity theory's emphasis on process of categorization, social comparison, and self-esteem motives will inform this research's investigation of how divergent social groups interact with different (racialised) refugee frames. The research expects different racialised frames to be popular among divergent audiences (*H2.B*). For example, 'lower-class' readership may be more receptive to racialised 'threat' frames, while 'upper-class' audiences may be more engaged with frames that suppose patriarch empathy by highlighting the refugee's human characteristics, such as their resilience and vulnerability.[11]

Finally, the research project wants to go beyond the direct interaction of different audiences with different racialised refugee frames to better understand which other sources of information may shape problem definitions, moral evaluations, and/or treatment recommendations, controlling for confounding factors such as people's location, age, or political orientation. This level of analysis serves the *contextualisation* of the previous findings.

3. Intended data and methodology

This project uses as its main data for the analysis of the *existence* and potential instrumentalization of racialised refugee frames by Western States and the international refugee regime (1) press articles published in Western States on the issue of immigration, [12] and (2) official reports and social media

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[11] This example was chosen because the literature shows a relationship between the type of opinion on immigration and the preferred source of journalistic information, with tabloid readers being more likely to express hostile opinions. (see McLaren & Johnson, 2007; Sides & Citrin, 2007).

[12] I have already collected and labelled a large dataset of 544,303 migration-related news articles, representing all migration-related discourse by the 43 highest circulating newspapers in France, Germany and the UK from 2004 to 2019. Each article is labelled with 40 topic-specific "frames", and the nationaliti(es) of migrant(s) mentioned in each article. Frames were identified using an automated Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) topic modelling approach (on a machine-translated version of the German and French corpus). Previous research has confirmed the suitability of this approach (Vries et al., 2018), and previous studies have used LDA topic modelling to study the framing of migration in the press (e.g. Yazdiha, 2020). The migrants' nationality has been identified using a half-automated approach, for which the Recall and Precision scores were $R = 0.85$ and $P = 0.76$. The same approach will be followed to collect migration-related press articles in Australia, USA, and Canada, using the search engine Factiva.

posts of important actors in the international refugee regime. [13] For the analysis of the *public interaction* with their refugee framing, the project wants to use an API to retrieve the number of shares, likes, and the comments on each of these articles and reports on the social media platforms Twitter and Facebook.[14]

As a method to understand the (textual) production of racialised hierarchies in the problem definitions, moral evaluations, and/or treatment recommendations for 'the problem' of 'the refugee', this research will draw upon different Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques. This approach is based on the understanding that analysing the politics of journalistic representation involves examining language. As Shapiro (1989) has observed: "given that our understanding of (…) the space within which international politics is deployed is always mediated by modes of representation and thus by all the various mechanisms involved in text construction—grammars, rhetorics, and narrativity—we must operate with a view of politics that is sensitive to textuality." (Shapiro, 1989, p. 319). As Guedes Bailey and Harindranath (2005, p. 276) explained with reference to both domestic and international politics–and, in the case of refugees the combination of the two–"the fact that policies are mediated required us to pay close attention to aspects of linguistic representation, and the ways in which uncritical use of available terms can reproduce and sustain naturalized forms of racism and through that the politics of exclusion".

The linguistic approach intended to be used in this research is inspired by critical discourse analysis (CDA) (see Van Dijk, 2015; Reisigl & Wodak, 2015). This implies a particular epistemological positioning: "CDA may be defined as fundamentally interested in analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control, as they are manifested in language" (Wodak, 2007). This approach has mainly been used to analyse the discourse of elites, but it can also be used to study the discourse of "ordinary" people on new discursive platforms that allow a better understanding of their active role within the unequal social order (see Beer & Burrows, 2017; KhosraviNik, 2014; KhosraviNik & Unger, 2016).

The central challenge is to systematically identify and operationalise the textual representation of racializing processes. First, "racialisation" is a highly complex concept, and in the last 50 years, there was a repudiation of overt forms of prejudice and discrimination (Schuman, 1997). "Unlike in the pre-civil rights era, when racial prejudice and discrimination were overt and widespread, today discrimination is less readily identifiable, posing problems for social scientific conceptualization and measurement" (Pager & Shepherd, 2008, p. 181). In this context, not only is explicit racist language publicly denounced, but race is invalidated to explain the unequal distribution of social positions and privileges (see Augoustinos & Every, 2007; Goodman, 2014; Lentin, 2016; Van Dijk, 1999). This research therefore needs to take into account more subtle forms of discrimination. For example, following Forcier (2019), the data will be analysed with attention to the denial of racism through what Van Dijk (2000) calls the ideological square through which the We/Them polarisation is operated, i.e., on the one hand, the accentuation of the positive traits and the decrease of the negative points of the We and, on the other hand, the accentuation of the negative traits and the decrease of the positive points of the Other. Second, race inequalities are often inextricably intertwined with other existing inequalities, such as access to resources, status, and power (Ridgeway, 2014).[15] This research will thus focus on the status beliefs conveyed in the textual production of 'the refugee', which go beyond simply reflecting existing material differences between certain 'groups' of refugees.

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[13] While official reports are available on the organisations' websites, this research will collect social media posts of relevant actors in the refugee regime using the Twitter API. For each user, it will collect up to 3,200 of a user's most recent Tweets (Developer Twitter, 2020)

[14] For the (labelled) dataset of press articles, I already collected the web-addresses of the online accessible articles.

[15] In statistical models, racial discrimination is often measured as the residual race gap in any outcome that remains after controlling for all other race-related influences (Pager & Shepherd, 2008, p. 184). However, as pointed out in Bertrand and Duflo (2016), the variables the researcher controls for might themselves be affected by discrimination. As highlighted by Pager and Shepherd (2008), models estimating credit discrimination, for example, typically include controls for asset accumulation and credit history, which may themselves be in part the Byproduct of discrimination (Yinger, 1998, pp. 26–27).

Previous research has used, for example, lexical concepts, such as the "refugee entrepreneur", or 'masses' of "Africans" versus the individual "Syrian" to demonstrate racialised hierarchies between different 'groups' of refugees (e.g. L. Turner, 2020). Others have analysed certain keywords, such as 'arrested', 'jailed', 'guilty', 'failed', 'rejected' and conflation of forced and economic migration, to better understand refugee framing (Philo et al., 2013), and analysed their framing with regards to numbers, financial burden, national responsibility, culture, and security, arguing how this may contribute to a racialisation (Forcier, 2019).[16] In this context, refugee 'labels' (Zetter, 1991; 2007), such as 'cladestine' or, worse still, 'illegal' or 'bogus' asylum seekers, will be used to inform the framing analysis as "tangible representation of policies and programmes, in which labels are not only formed but are then also transformed by bureaucratic processes which institutionalize and differentiate categories of eligibility and entitlements" (Zetter, 2007, p. 180). Asides from using similar lexical approaches, this research aims to also capture more complex unfoldings of arguments which have been argued to reinforce racialized hierarchies in the framing of migrants. For example, Guedes Bailey and Harindranath (2005) argued that a "lack of engagement with the experiences of refugees and other communities of exile, that is, the consistent absence of reports presenting the refugees' case" can also contribute to a dehumanization of refugees and thus to their racialisation. This project therefore wants to combine lexical analysis using NLP and existing lexical databases[17], with other existing quantitative approaches that aid to analyse large textual data and take the contextual meaning of words into account, such as word2vec,[18] and Bayesian classifiers.[19]

To better understand the *audience* of different racialised refugee frames and their interaction with these frames, this research wants to identify socio-demographic and individual characteristics of social media users. To this end, this research wants to use diverse behavioural traces, such as geolocalisation information and network characteristics. Beyond information directly available on the platforms, this research wants to combine traces with existing external data sources, such as survey or residential data. For example, as a proxy for the socioeconomic status, the research may rely on data collection and combination methods, such as Levy Abitbol et al.'s (2019) method to first estimate and, in turn, infer the socioeconomic status of Twitter users from their online semantics. As a proxy for political orientation, this research will rely on approaches of previous studies that quantitatively described users' political interests, using information on the accounts of important political figures or media accounts they follow on Twitter (see Cardon et al., 2019). For different "categories" of users, this research wants to retrieve the entire Twitter timeline to better understand which other sources (e.g. posts by other users; politicians; media; YouTube;[20] NGOs and other organisations); and which other issues, apart from immigration, the users interact with on social media.

Finally, to ensure the robustness of the quantitative findings, to put them into perspective and to augment them with qualitative examples, this research wants to follow a multidisciplinary approach. It wants to draw on a diversity of methods (qualitative, quantitative, experimental, etc.),[21] and on literature and expertise from different disciplinary backgrounds. Importantly, when putting racialised refugee into perspective, the project will recognise the ethnicity and whiteness of the majority in the Western media and institutions. Obviously, whiteness does not refer to the existence of a white race, but rather to a social construction (see Garner, 2015; Hall, 1993; Hesse, 2007; Moreton-Robinson,

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[16] Notably, Forcier (2019) only focused on the racialization of Syrian refugees in Canada in comparison to their (White) 'host' society, and has not established a ranking of different racial hierarchisations.

[17] For example, the Hatebase database has been used by previous research to study hate speech in different online communities, including Twitter (Hine et al., 2017; Silva et al., 2016; Zannettou et al., 2018). Ross et al. (2016) provide a German hate speech corpus for the refugee crisis, which may be used for German posts.

[18] word2vec is a two-layer neural network that generate word representations as embedded vectors (Mikolov et al., 2013). Zannettou et al. (2019), e.g., perform a text-based analysis that leverages word2vec embeddings to study online antisemitism.

[19] Kwok and Wang (2013), e.g., use a Naive Bayes classifier on tweets to classify them as racist against blacks or non-racist. Their classifier achieves an accuracy of 76%, highlighting the challenges in discerning racist content using machine learning.

[20] For instance, Hine et al. (2017) find that YouTube links and hate speech are predominant on the discussion-board site 4chan. In case of a similar observation, this research would want to analyse the content of linked YouTube videos.

[21] For example, to better understand the attitudes of certain users, the project wants to contact samples of users directly on the social media platform to conduct interviews and surveys which can then be linked to their behavioural data. Furthermore, highly circulating social media posts will be manually investigated.

2015). In this context, this research draws on Frankenberg's (1993) classic definition: "First, whiteness is a position of structural advantage, of race privilege. Second, it is a "standpoint," a place from which people look at ourselves, at others, and at society. Third, whiteness refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed".

4. Expected results

This research expects to find empirical evidence for what Hesse (1997) calls "white governmentalities," and how the governmentality of the Western States and the refugee regime ensures that "the policing of … borders" coincides with the "production of racialised boundaries" (Fassin, 2011, p. 215). This research intends to go beyond existing studies that analysed the racialisation of refugees either on the basis of specific case studies or theoretical examinations in two important ways. First, it will analyse the production of racialised hierarchies in refugee framing at a large scale across a long time period, across several media outlets in multiple countries and including relevant institutions of the international refugee regime, and will take into account hierarchisations of all different 'races' covered in the discourse. [22] It is thus expected to reveal an empirically constructed, nuanced and comprehensive picture of racialised refugee hierarchies. Second, it will examine public interactions with racialised refugee frames on different social media platforms. This large-scale analysis of different audiences' online interactions with racialised content is expected to advance our sociological understanding of collective processes that (re-)produce racial inequalities in the Western world. Overall, the project is expected to enhance understanding of the link between framing, power, group interests, and racial inequalities.

Word count: 4998

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[22] For example, when "'Africa' and 'Africans' are homogenised and constructed as passive, dependent, backward, and impoverished mass" (as described by Turner, 2020), such framing is not only reinforcing well-established racialised humanitarian and development discourses (e.g. Gahutu, 2016; Grovogui, 2001; Heron, 2007; Wilson, 2012). It also suggests that development aid may be a solution to the 'problem'. Similarly, in the context of widespread demonization of refugees, particularly from predominantly Arab and Muslim contexts (Pruitt et al., 2018), frames of the 'resilient' refugee both make the individual the central actor in the path to independent prosperity (Bracke, 2016; Carpi, 2020; Krause & Schmidt, 2020), but also distance the heroized individual from the silent masses. By highlighting certain characteristics of 'the refugee', such as their vulnerability/resilience, individuality/commonality, economic status, educational attainment, skills, bodily ability, etc., while side-lining others, framing of 'the refugee' may implicitly and explicitly reinforce racial hierarchies.

5. Provisional calendar

10 - 12/20	Literature review 1: Better understanding the international refugee regime (IRR); International Relations Theory, Governmentality, Sociological neo-institutionalism, Issues in contemporary refugee policies, Relationship between Development and Migration	Data Collection 1: Official reports and social media posts of important actors in the IRR
01 - 03/21	Literature review 2: What constitutes racialised hierarchies/frames?; Broader literature on social inequalities; Race and Racism in International Relations and in the ontology of the international order, Ethnic and Racial Studies, Geopolitics of refugee studies, neoliberal humanitarianism, Anthropology of humanitarianism	Data Collection 2: Press articles on the issue of immigration (Factiva) and their html addresses for the United States of America (USA), Canada, and Australia
04 - 06/21	Literature review 3: Aesthetic Production, Cultural Form, Labelling Refugees, Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices

Begin to conceptualise racialised refugee frames & how to automatically measure them | Data Collection 3: Social media posts on Press articles from the UK, France, Germany, USA, Canada, Australia |
07 - 09/21	Conceptualisation of racialised refugee frames and how to automatically measure them: Combining, testing, and iterating on different computational approaches	Data Collection 4: User timelines on Social media
10 - 12/21	Analysis of existence of racialised refugee frames in IRR's (a) Official Reports, and (b) Social Media posts	
01 - 03/22	Analysis of existence of racialised refugee frames in the Western press	
04 - 06/22	Analysis different audiences of racialised refugee framings on Social Media	
07 - 09/22	Analysis different audiences' interaction with racialised refugee framings, and other sources of information they interact with	
10 - 12/22	Verification and augmentation of previous results using mixed methods approach
Final write up begins	
01 - 09/23	Final write up	

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