The Refugee Crisis:
Reporting and Response

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INTRODUCTION

On September 1st, 2015, Turkish newspapers published images of Alan Kurdi, a drowned two-year-old Syrian boy who had been discovered face down on a Turkish beach. The image was soon picked up by national media organizations around the world and went viral on social media.

On August 18th, 2016, the Aleppo Media Center released a video of Omran Daqneesh, a five-year-old Syrian boy who had been rescued from the rubble of the latest bombing in Aleppo. In the video, Omran, covered in a mixture of dust and blood, sat dazed and silent in the back of an ambulance.

These two instances soon became iconic. These young boys became the "face of the crisis," though they were photographed nearly a full year apart. Some viewers were out-raged, others were shocked, and others were sympathetic. Whatever the reaction, there was one common element; the image ignited a response. Often, that response consisted of engagement on social media. Hashtags such as #refugeeswelcome and shared articles and footage ran rampant on various social media platforms. People around the world were en-gaging with the crisis— but were they responding to it?

Response is not merely a reaction; it is action. While reaction is common amongst the general public, is it possible to utilize news content and social media to increase awareness that results in action? The crisis in Syria marks the first global humanitarian crisis that was broadcasted on social media platforms. Both social and mass media have changed the nature of the international community, specifically in regards to including the general public in the conversation. The public is now more knowledgeable about and more connected to global issues than ever before. But does this knowledge result in a tighter knit and more responsive international community, or a global network of passive observers? The purpose of this study is to evaluate the question: How does media cover-age of the Syrian refugee crisis affect humanitarian response?

The scope of this research is broad. News coverage expands across a wide range of media outlets and methods, from traditional reporting to social media to interactive blogs. For the purpose of this research project, the scope of media response is narrowed to social media, and specifically Twitter. By evaluating four respected inter-national news organizations—The New York Times, Reuters, The Economist, and the BBC—it is possible to ob-serve trends of when coverage of the crisis has increased or decreased. Simultaneously, it is also possible to observe what type of coverage is most likely to be met with audience response.

Determining the response to media coverage determines how to effectively present issues, such as the ref-ugee crisis, in the mainstream news. If there are certain types of mediums that produce more response than others, news organizations can then utilize them to ignite response to help those in serious need. In a big picture perspec-tive, this allows for news organizations to be a catalyst for international coordinated assistance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Because of the timeliness of the Syrian refugee crisis, there is not a large amount of literature based on trends between media coverage and humanitarian aid, largely be-cause those trends are currently being developed. However, by evaluating literature concerning similar events in the past, it is possible to evaluate the relationship between the media and response.

REPORTING THE CRISIS

The country of Syria and the surrounding areas have been in turmoil since the beginning of the conflict. The sheer mass of the conflict and the resulting chaos, the danger of on-site reporting, the regulatory protections within refugee camps, and the Assad regime's tight grip on media access have made it exceedingly difficult for journalists to report from a first-hand account. Gaining access to information is an issue that journalists have long faced in attempting to cover areas of conflict.

For example, when governmental actors increased the amount of aid given to North Korea in emergency assis-tance between 1997-2001, the "real nature of the humanitarian crisis was never named" because of blocked access and

because "Korean authorities never allowed UN agencies and international NGOs to under-take proper needs assessments," which in turn, gave journalists little to no information on the crisis (Olsen 120). This prevented any sort of non-public-sector response. In order for the media to report on an issue, they must first be made aware of the issue. Many places where aid is being given are shut off to outside media and therefore journalists must rely on information relayed to them by the aid organizations themselves. This requires a bilateral relationship between news outlets and aid organizations to best produce truthful dissemination of information.

Social and mass media platforms allow for more comprehensive and widespread reporting. The relationship between democratization and new media has long been debated (Gilmore 5). For example, during the Arab Spring there were several cases in which the media helped shape international public opinion. Social media "circulated evidence that there are large numbers of people calling for reform," such as in Tunisia where "shocking mobile phone images of repression in rural towns helped to convince the urban population that the pro-democracy cause was worth supporting," (Gilmore 6). In Syria, civilians recorded the shooting of unarmed civilians in hopes that "they could smuggle these images out to be transmitted in new media channels" (Gilmore 8). While social media engagement may not classify as humanitarian aid on all occasions, it is true that "mass media share[s] one obvious but crucial characteristic: what we read, hear or watch is decided by others; we are all passive consumers" (Gilmore 6). Therefore, the public is at the mercy of those pushing content out on media platforms.

Gilmore's evaluation of the relationship between the media and public response is well supported through the use of varied examples. He is able to show that the media played a part in many social movements. However, while there is proof of correlation, it is necessary to examine the presence of causation.

A more direct connection is established in Kathryn Libal and Scott Harding's article in the Middle East Report. Libal and Scott studied the Iraq refugee crisis and found that until 2006, refugees had attracted little attention in the media that had emerged about the war. They hypothesized that the lack of coverage led to the "belated response and limited role of the UN and the US government and its coalition partners in developing policies to relieve refugees" (Libal and Scott 18). Libal and Scott noted, however, that cooperation between news and aid organizations was necessary. In fact, they altered their hypotheses to suggest "the oversight seemed due in part to the fact that prior to the upsurge in dis-placement in 2006, few organizations were actually tracking IDP and refugee flows" (Libal and Scott 19). This finding suggests that the media is not always the instigator of in-creased aid; if aid organizations have not reported on refugees in the first place, the media may lack access to information that would be necessary to raise public support or aid response.

Often, it is not the humanitarian crisis that makes its way to news headlines, but rather Western military response. In the case of the Somalia food shortage crisis of 1992, research has shown that "only marginal amounts of media coverage (of the crisis) could be found prior to President Bush's decision to intervene" (Robinson 407). Coverage in-creased by over 3000% after Bush's decision to intervene was announced (Robinson 408). After the announcement, media coverage played a large role in continuing a humanitarian aid presence throughout the country.

Aside from the mere accessibility of information and the likelihood to disseminate that in-formation, journalists are often faced with the ethical dilemma of whether or not to publish. For example, in the case of Alan Kurdi, the boy photographed face down on a Turkish beach, Nilufer Demir was faced with a decision as she looked out on the beach sprinkled with bodies. Her decision to capture the image and her editor's decision to publish it changed the perspective through which the world viewed the refugee crisis. This example highlights the malleable nature of public opinion.

FRAMING THE ISSUE

To best apply context to the scope of the refugee crisis and response, it is imperative to define a few key terms. To begin, it is important to define what we mean by "media". While Webster's Dictionary provides a broad definition of media as "the main means of mass communication, especially television, radio, newspaper, and the Internet, regarded collectively." For the scope of this paper, I am defining media to focus on newer platforms, specifically social media.

Secondly, the United Nations defines a refugee as one who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country." This is different from an internally displaced person or an asylum-seeker. Thirdly, according to Global Humanitarian Assistance, "humanitarian aid response" is generally accepted to mean the aid and action designed to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain and protect human dignity during and in the aftermath of man-made crises and natural disasters, as well as to prevent and strengthen preparedness for the occurrence of such situations." This paper will focus on direct intervention and, specifically, the funding behind that intervention and the response to social media campaigns and awareness.

The role of social media in the content-based agenda setting theory is evident in a study of social media trends in the refugee coverage that found that sympathy towards the refugee population increased when social media began showing pictures of women and children (Rettberg and Gajjala 178). The study draws the distinction between how different segments of population are represented in the media and how that affects response. For example, "a photograph of an African child is familiar to Western eyes from charity campaigns and calls for compassion. A photograph of men on a boat, on the other hand, who are dressed as Europeans, tells us they aren't truly in need" (Rettberg and Gajjala 179). This sentiment speaks to the theory that images shape what traits in other people the public deemsathy and empathy, as well as fear" (Holmes and Castaneda 5).

This sympathy carries over into action. In Jordan, when local news organizations began reporting on refugees' stories rather than just on facts and statistics, "hosts collect-ed donations to assist over 70 Syrian families living there" and on another occasion "listeners organized to rescue 800 refugees who'd been left destitute to the desert" (Su 16). This goes to show the importance of framing the issue of coverage to appeal to both logic and emotion. The reporting of the refugee crisis must be complex, while also being simple and holistic.

While an appeal to logos can be an effective content perspective, it is often at the expense of relevant stakeholders and public actors, and it turns into political news rather than humanitarian coverage. For example, in the case of US intervention in Bosnia for the purpose of defending certain 'safe areas,' media coverage hinged on the failed action by the United States rather than on the annihilation of these safe areas. In the weeks following the attempted rescue, the New York Times "ran over eight articles per day" and in terms of framing, while the "media coverage empathized with the refugees," the main focus was on criticizing Western policy (Robinson 635).

RAISING AWARENESS

The adoption of social media as a method of amplifying oppressed voices has brought a new dimension to humanitarian crises. Grassroots campaigns, budding nonprofits, local start-ups, and a new and younger demographic of compassionate sympathizers are all effects of an increase of awareness through new age media. This media has provided a sense of new infrastructure for dissemination, "just as the expansion of the railway network in Russia at the turn of the twentieth century facilitated the spread of revolutionary ideas, the Internet is a catalyst, but not the motivation, for political change. The motivation for these monumental changes was the undemocratic and often brutal nature of the regimes themselves" (Gilmore 10).

As the media began pushing out more stories covering the crisis, the public began responding. In a study conducted by Pulsar Audience Intelligence, researchers found that after the photo of Alan Kurdi was published, there was a "397% increase on the number of tweets" talking about migrants and refugees, partnered with a "294% increase in the volumes of Google searches about the issue" (D'Orazio). As media coverage increased, it was met with a similar trend in audience curiosity.

The shift toward a stronger public voice has significantly influenced agenda setting in the public and civil sectors. The spontaneity of media coverage has caused Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to "re-examine their strategies and the ways in which they interact with policy-makers and the public [due to the] blurring

distinction between the creators and consumers of news content" (Gilmore 11). Instead of using news organizations as a middleman, many NGOs and civil sector actors now find it more effective to directly communicate with the public through social media. Direct communication has led to direct partnership, which has then led to the formation of new grassroots movements.

IGNITING ACTION

While increasing awareness is a desirable consequence of media coverage, it is more useful as a means of achieving action. The relationship between coverage and active response, while complex and multidimensional, can be seen through several different case studies.

For example, in the study of Kosovo in 1999, researchers found that "extensive media coverage was unable to force policy-makers to intervene directly to alleviate a humanitarian crisis" (Robinson 405). While the media coverage sympathized with the Kosovars and took an anecdotal approach, there was a larger factor at play: intervention would require a ground war, something that the United States was firmly set against. This was despite the "two months of coverage with over 1000 articles in the New York Times" (Robinson 405).

In similar studies in Angola and Sudan which compared coverage in these two states within Western newspapers with the coverage during the Kosovo crisis, studies found that the decision of government or foreign aid actors to intervene was largely based on the factors the led to media coverage rather than on the coverage itself. For example, "a remarkable disproportion in availability of emergency assistance in relation to the acute needs" served as a driving factor in decisions of intervention. In Angola, from 1997 to 1998, coverage jumped from 69 to 277 articles in 23 western newspapers (Olsen 116). However, donations only rose from 100 million to 150 million in assistance, as opposed to the 178 million in 1997.

Again, these numbers largely reflect foreign policy objectives of the aid countries. In these cases, all of which occurred within the same time frame, the talk of "competition for aid" buzzed around the international community. When government reputation is on the line, even the most intense amount of media coverage is unlikely to sway action. The public sector, being largely dictated by possible outcomes and implications, is often the slowest to act in regards to relief, though they may be the most equipped (Olsen 118).

This phenomenon is explained through the lens of the policy-media-interaction model (Robinson 613). Piers Robinson builds on the idea of truthful dissemination of in-formation through constructing the "Policy-Media Interaction Model." Robinson's contention is two-pronged; holding that media influence occurs when 1) policy is uncertain and 2) when coverage is critically framed and empathizes with suffering people (Robinson 614). He conducted a comparative case study using Bosnia in 1995 and Kosovo in 1999 as his subjects. He found that in the air campaign against Syria in Bosnia, critical media coverage "came head to head with policy certainty in the United States executive" and there-fore the media had no influence (Robinson 624). Similarly, with the situation in Kosovo, aggressive coverage of the crisis led to more public awareness and more intervention by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and other humanitarian aid organizations. Robinson credits this to the fact that "for two months, over 1000 articles in the New York Times and Washington Post made reference to Kosovo" (Robinson 630).

This idea of agenda setting is the driving subject of Renita Coleman and Denis Wu's book Image and Emotion in Voter Decision. They write that "the main idea behind agenda setting theory is that what people perceive as most important are the same things that the media selects to report on the most, and the public uses media coverage to describe issues and character traits about people such as politicians, especially when they do not have first-hand knowledge of the situation" (Coleman 79).

The amount of effective coverage is also discussed in Phillip Brown and Jessica Minty's article about the 2004 Tsunami in the Southern Economic Journal. Brown and Minty found that there is a "high correlation between the total number of relevant articles in western newspapers and the total amount of humanitarian assistance allocated to pre-vious natural disasters" (Brown 10). To determine this, they considered the effects of re-porting

on three nightly network news broadcasts and two prominent newspapers. They then ob-served trends of private donations to seven US relief agencies. Their studies showed them that "one additional minute of nightly news or one additional 700-word story increased that day's donations by about 2.5%" (Brown 12). They also studied com-mon themes in stories that got the most response and found that "stories that focused on human suffering— such as the coverage of the large number of parents who came forward to blame "Baby 81" in Sri Lanka of the publica-tion of photographs of Canadian vacationers who drowned on a beach in Thailand— may be particularly compel-ling to donors" (Brown 12). The stories that gained the most attention and most humanitarian response, however, were stories that visually showed that the relief that was being sent was being put to good use (Brown 12). This included photos of UN officials, volunteers, camps and disaster relief teams.

This leaves an interesting predicament. While policymakers are influenced by the agenda set by the public, which is influenced by media coverage, policymakers ultimately act in national interest, even if that means abandoning the proposed public agenda (Rob-inson 617). However, with the expansion of social media and the civil sector, the role of response is now more often met by NGOs and nonprofits. Nonetheless, in certain cases poli-cies are malleable to fit public demand.

This is illustrated through the example of the photo of Alan Kurdi. Coverage from The New York Times, The Economist, Reuters, and the BBC all point out the increase in grassroots movements in the weeks and months following the publishing of the photo. Two days after the photo was published, the international community responded: Germany opened gates to refugees caught in Hungary, there was increase in coordination in Central and Eastern Europe, Canada agreed to resettle 25,000 refugees, and European leaders agreed to resettlement ini-tiatives to relieve Italy and Greece (The Guardian). While the policy changes were announced and covered by the media, the follow up mechanisms concerning policy implementation were often left out of mainstream media. Nonetheless, the grassroots campaigns often took the implementation role. For ex-ample, The Guardian high-lights the group known simply as Help Refugees, a grassroots campaign that now spans over 68 cities throughout Europe to provide immediate relief. The group was formed in the month following the photo of Alan Kurdi and has continued to lead resettlement efforts since.

EVALUATING: THE DUAL PROCESS THEORY

These case studies illuminate an important phenomenon: certain types of media produce more response than others. This idea can be evaluated under the dual process theory, which acknowledges the different levels of information processing and responding in individuals. This relies on techniques such as issue framing and agenda setting in order to change opinions among citizens concerning political messages. In the context of issue framing, the "Importance Change Model" becomes specifically useful, as it "stresses specific values, factors or other consid-erations, endowing them with greater apparent relevance to the issue than they might appear under an alterna-tive frame" (Slothuus 5). In light of gauging audience response, it gives the media the ability to emphasize certain characteristics, such as focusing on children and families or focusing on hard statistics. The issue is then framed to appeal to a certain demographic and to ignite a certain response. In contrast, the dual process theory would also allow for a "content change model," which allows the reporter to change what is being reported on, such as the government action or the humanitarian aid action (Slothuus 7). The study was conducted through an experiment to test which issue framing effects manipulated audience engagement and response, and ran basic regression to determine variance. The study determined that audience response is significantly affected through issue framing when it comes to issues that affect the perception of basic human needs.

In the context of this specific research, this finding provides basis for the theory that emphasizing certain parts of news stories results in more effect on the audience than on approach addresses the subconscious and im-mediate response, as well as the conscious and deliberate response. The way that audience reacts to news sources and stories incorporates both levels of information processing.

Further, it has been found that in addition to two stages of processing information and news, individu-als also use "two criteria to evaluate the suggested response: feasibility, or whether it is possible to carry out the action, and effectiveness, determining whether or not the solution actually solves the problem" (Cryderman 5).

This theory is especially relevant to the refugee crisis and the response to the coverage of it because the theory determined that "if the proposal fails to meet the two criteria, individuals are expected to engage in a process of fear control, in which individuals choose to deal with only their feelings of fear by engaging in some form of denial" (Cryderman 9). This explains the lack of action by the majority of news consumers after reading news about the refugee crisis.

Applying this trend to this study, the dual process theory in practice allows for the evaluation two factors that produce differing levels of response: factually driven re-porting and emotionally driven, story-telling type reporting. In news coverage that is strongly fact-based, the study examined the presence of statistics and hyperlinks to more information on social media platforms such as Twitter. Stories that were more of an emotional appeal, on the other hand, were evaluated through presence of visuals. By operationalizing this theory of evaluation, it assists researchers in determining any sort of correlation between social media engagement and direct aid.

Based on previous literature, there is an expected relationship between the media and aid organizations as a multi-level relationship. By analyzing the type of media used in the coverage of the crisis, it is possible to evaluate how different strategies produce different outcomes. It is necessary to evaluate the effectiveness and the reach of the media coverage by analyzing the interaction on social media– specifically, on how many retweets stories get that focus on the crisis. The study employs four news organizations and four aid organizations to evaluate. After studying the social media reaction to coverage, it is then possible to determine how much financial aid was given to organizations around the time of the coverage. The chart below demonstrates the relationship:
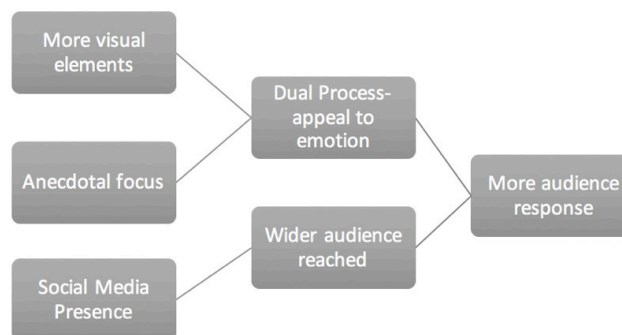
After examining past literature on media coverage of crises, the potential responses by relevant actors including the general public, aid organizations, and policymakers, it has become apparent that media coverage largely influences agenda setting in both the social and political sectors. It is vital to examine the most effective methods of reaching the desired outcomes of both increased awareness and increased response. Considering these relationships, it is imperative to ask the following research questions:

Research Question 1:
What kinds of messages generate the most audience response and interaction?
Research Question 2:
What kind of news content results in amplified media coverage?

METHODOLOGY

When evaluating the relationship between media coverage and public reaction, there are many factors to consider, such as the type of media platform, the response re-sulting from media consumption and the subject of the media stories. By studying these factors, it becomes possible to determine the most effective means of coverage of humani-tarian crises to ignite the largest amount of response. Previous research in this area has shown strong correlation between interactive media and response. Because media cover-age is an ongoing process, this study evaluates specific time frames to study. This will give snapshots of media coverage during times of large

humanitarian crisis. The content and quantity of media coverage will then be compared to the level of aid given.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE

The independent variable is the media coverage of the refugee crisis. When evaluating the broad topic of "media," this research will focus on the new media platforms, specifically interaction with audience on the social media site Twitter. By studying the media that is easily accessible to a large amount of the population, and the way that the public in turn interacts with this media, effectiveness levels can be easily determined.

In order for this to be achieved, however, it is important to address what the objectives of media organizations are and what they are not. It is not necessarily the goal of media platforms to incite action. The study analyzes the coverage of the crisis by the New York Times, Reuters, The Economist, and BBC. In all four organizations' mission statements, nowhere does it list igniting advocacy or reform. Rather, the mission statements focus on distributing truthful, relevant information. It is then up to the public to decide how to re-act and how to proceed.

DEPENDENT VARIABLE

The dependent variable in the study is the amount of response generated by the media and by the audience. The research will be measuring audience response through two different ways: engagement on social media platforms, specifically on Twitter, and the degree of engagement generated by advertisements. The response of the audience indicates a level of public interest. It also implies that public interest can set the agenda of not only government involvement, but also nonprofit an NGO involvement. While it is easy to reach a large audience through mass media, the simple communication does not always result in action. Therefore, the dependent variable in this research project addresses the amount and type of action that results from media coverage.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This research design is broken down into two segments; first, the study uses a qualitative analysis of the four news organizations' twitter accounts during two separate one-week time spans. It evaluates how many retweets certain posts get and if there are trends of certain types of posts (i.e. more visual or more text-driven) that get more reaction from audience. Retweeting is considered a form of response and reaction to the media itself. It is also further disseminating information to a larger audience, which is in line with the objectives of the news organizations. Therefore, each social media user, in a sense, has the power to become both a consumer and producer of news.

When studying these Twitter accounts, the study keeps note of the following characteristics: 1) the source of the news,i.e. more anecdotal, more fact based, etc), 3) the number of retweets, 4) the type of media most prominent (i.e. photos, videos, text), and 5) the reason for the article (new event, response to external factor, etc). These five characteristics will provide the basis for an analysis of what type of media stories have the most impact and reach to the widest audience.

Using a code sheet, collected data will be compared using basic t-test regressions to examine variance and relationships of information categories.

This methodology is most appropriate for the qualitative analysis as it gives a holistic and tangible outcome. Said method shows that the independent variable—the media itself—produces some sort of reaction that does not necessarily result in the dependent variable, which leads to the second part of my methodology. In addition to the qualitative analysis, an experimental design will also be em-ployed. By using an advertisement-generating program on Facebook, the study creates two advertisements for refugee organizations: one heavy on visuals with a focus on one subject, and one with more factual information. The ads link clicks that the pages get. To begin the experiment, the researcher in this study met with World Relief Fort Worth, a local nonprofit that focuses on refugee resettlement. Throughout the preliminary interview process, the World Relief

representative explained the makeup of the organization, its current social media strategies of the organization in terms of fundraising, types of storytelling initiatives, community outreach, its relationship with external news organizations, and responses to political climate. World Relief Fort Worth, as a branch of the national organization focuses on more community outreach rather than fundraising across social media. To do so, they often tell the stories of volunteers, the refugees they work with, and the organization as a whole. They strive to holistically represent their process of refugee resettlement online to encourage the community to join in efforts to welcome the stranger.

By working as an independent consultant to World Relief Fort Worth, for this study, the researcher met with the social media director and conducted two series of interviews; the first serving as a preliminary interview to gain a broader   understanding of the organization's current presence on social media and their goals and strategies for disseminating information and generating a response. The researcher then presented the organization with the original qualitative research on the four national news organizations and the basic t-tables and relationships found between certain types of coverage and response.
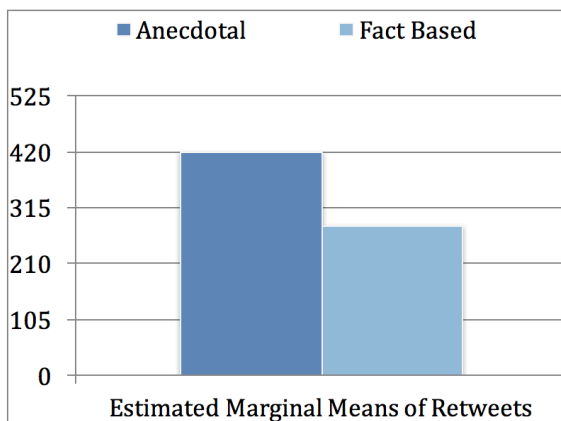
By combining the experimental design with the qualitative analysis, it will best show the results of this hypothesis both in theory and in practice.

RESULTS

Qualitative Analysis

After collecting the data from the news sources' twitter accounts and running basic univariate analysis of variance through a t-test, it was found that there was a significant correlation between stories that had a more anecdotal focus and an increase in audience engagement as opposed to stories that were more driven by concrete data. These anecdotal stories focus on humanizing the issue. While there was a larger quantity of fact-based tweets, they received less audience response than those based in narrative. The analysis broke the tests into categories for number of favorites and number of retweets. An analysis variance test for the relationship between anecdotes and number of favorites showed a mean of 287 favorites, whereas fact based stories had a mean of 198, a significant difference ($F=7.344$, $p \leq .01$). The test for the relationship between anecdotal stories and number of retweets followed a similar pattern, retweets for anecdotal stories and a mean of 279 retweets for fact based stories, a significant difference. ($F=10.186$, $p \leq .01$).

While a similar pattern was expected with stories that contained a visual element versus that lacked visuals, the data showed no significant similarity.

Estimated Marginal Means of Retweets

Experimental Design

The experimental design employed qualitative research. After the preliminary interview with World Relief and after running the original content analysis on tweets, the next step of the experimental design involved creating two advertisements for World Relief Fort Worth. One of these advertisements featured a young girl and the other featured a graph of the numbers of refugees. These two advertisements were then run on Facebook. The advertisement featuring the young girl received over 4.5 times the amount of impressions--times Facebook users viewed the advertisement few several seconds. The advertisement with the young girl also received significantly more clicks and comments than the other ad.
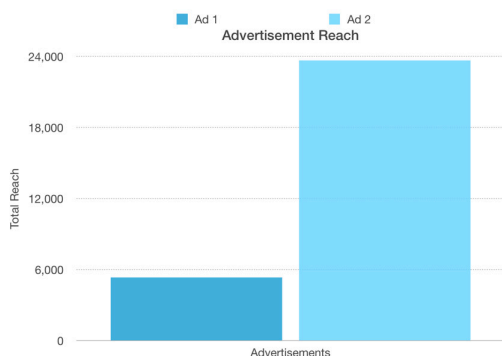
After considering the impact of the two advertisements, the second round of interviews with World Relief Fort Worth were conducted. While the goal of the second interview was to present advertisement findings and propose an altered media strategy, those plans shifted after the issuance of the January 2017 travel ban, issued by the Trump Administration according to the researcher's contact at World Relief.

This unexpected change led to an additional conversation. As a result of the ban and the consequential budget cut, World Relief launched a national campaign to ignite policy change. This real-world, unplanned example modeled the Policy-Media Inter-action Model (Robinson) described by previous studies. The national campaign started on social media and soon turned into the cooperation of evangelical leaders across the country to organize and lobby to the national government. Staying true to World Relief's standards, the media coverage sympathized with those who were suffering, or in this case, the refugees from the countries on the travel ban. The content of coverage met the second prong of Robinsons' model, which concerns the subject of media stories. However, the first prong of the model, or "uncertain policy," was not as easily identifiable. The current ad-ministration's adamancy on the ban prevailed.

Since the ban, World Relief's strategies have changed more toward storytelling of the refugees that were currently in the United States that needed resettling. Instead of seeking audience engagement that ignited policy response, World Relief instead focused their media campaigns to seek engagement through volunteerism. Because of this switch in intentionality, the organization was more interested in forming sustainable public interaction rather than aid assistance through the form of one-time financial donations. The impact on their media strategy was significant.

After presenting World Relief Fort Worth with that data findings from both the content analysis and the experimental design, the social media director agreed that the organization still saw the most audience interaction when outreach materials were heavily visual and anecdotal, remaining consistent with the findings from both research designs.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study was based around the two research questions of 1) what type of media cover-age generates audience response? and 2) what type of media content results in more news coverage? The research design found answers to both questions. In regards to audience response, news coverage that was anecdotal and visual ignited a more robust response. Secondly, though amplified news coverage often generated a startling or gripping visual, the majority of news coverage generally centered on concrete facts, statistics, and numbers. The two research questions this study began with are more inherently linked than initially expected. While extensive news coverage can assist in directing aid organizations to the conflict and setting the public agenda in a way that increases support for aid organizations, aid organizations often have exclusive access to the conflict and therefore can better gather information and participate in storytelling.

Since March 15, 2011, Syria has been a nation marked by civil war, civilian casual-ties, and an oppressive regime, in addition to being viewed as a battleground for foreign superpowers. More than 4.8 million Syrians have fled their country, and over 6 million are internally displaced peoples inside Syrian borders. The international community has test-ed both the roles of nonintervention and humanitarian aid, yet rarely through a coordinated effort. The continent of Europe, especially the central and eastern areas, has been forced to accommodate those fleeing the crisis, often leading to policy debates and harsh political climates. Aid organizations have set up refu-gee camps, provided emergency goods and services, lobbied to public officials and worked with local resettlement programs. In the meantime, media organizations rode the ebb and flow of importance and urgency with regards to covering the crisis, at times covering it extensively from a multitude of angles, and at others, symbolically annihi-

lating the 10.8 million Syrians displaced because of the conflict.

Over six years since the start of the conflict, the international response continues to hold vital importance. There is a need for collaborative intervention of the world super-powers in accordance with the United Nation's "Right to Protect" doctrine, stating that in cases when countries fail to protect their own citizens, it is the role of the international community to intervene to do so.

Media coverage plays a vital role. First, international news organizations serve as both a disseminator of information and a check on the international community and the national governing bodies of which comprise it. In several of the case studies cited in this study, media coverage led to accountability in governance and reform in policy, specifically in the instance of the photo with Alan Kurdi. One image, an image captured over four years after the crisis started, launched an international social media campaign. #refugeeswelcome led to the formation of grassroots interest groups and campaigns and influenced countries in Europe and throughout the world to reevaluate their stance on borders.

In other words, one image changed the face of the refugee crisis, at least for a short amount of time. Now, a year and a half since the photo of Alan Kurdi appeared on news-stands around the globe, news outlets and media organizations are left begging the question: did the photo actually change anything? Is there more sympathy from the international community now than there was prior to the photo occupying the front page of newspapers around the world?

Some would answer yes; the photo did change the face and discussion surrounding the crisis. It ignited a desire amongst the world community to know more about the back-ground of the crisis and drove millions of individuals to ask questions about immigration. It led to sustainable change with regards to framing the conversation and defining the difference between migrants and refugees. It gave a face to the crisis, and the international community was forced to make eye contact.

The photo exhibited the potential that media content and coverage possess to set the political agenda. Now, in a time where globalization appears to be retreating into nationalism and populism, the international policy agenda appears to be exceptionally malleable. Western media may be the most influential in shaping it, as seen through case studies such as Angola and Somalia.

Now the study arrives at the most important question: now what? The international community is facing conflicts around the globe that are multilateral, multifaceted, and multi-plying. The conflict over the South China Sea, the potential evolution of a genocide in South Sudan, the threat of nuclear action by North Korea, drug trafficking in Latin America—these conflicts, while extremely diverse in nature, carry one common trend: there is a need for the international recognition and protection of human rights. In the United States, the issuance of the travel ban and freeze on refugee resettlement, issued in the duration of this study, can potentially deter international coordination in addressing the crisis. Extensive media coverage, and specifically in a way that humanizes the crisis, can prove to be vital in continuing American support of international human rights.

The research in this study found a significant correlation between visual news coverage and levels of audience engagement. Future research should examine whether this audience engagement leads to an increase in monetary donations to aid organizations and whether monetary donations assist in aiding the crisis. While this study was able to determine the most effective means for advertising platforms for nonprofits, there is much to be researched about the materialization of audience engagement.

Throughout this research, one concept continued to reappear: news organizations and re-lief organizations have a bilateral, mutually beneficial relationship when utilized correctly. There needs to be a strong relationship between the two entities to best develop awareness and fundraising campaigns.

The Syrian refugee crisis, now over six years old, has caused the largest influx in migrants and refugees since World War II. The international news organizations must continue to cover the crisis, to tell the stories of

refugees, and engage with the general public to ignite response. The photo of Alan Kurdi and the video of Omran Daqneesh have become two recognizable faces of the 10.8 million directly affected by this conflict. By utilizing social media to disseminate information, aid organizations have the opportunity to brand the crisis in a way that enhances the "human" side of the issue. And to do so, they must work hand in hand with aid organizations to shape the international response to the crisis.

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