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# IDENTITY, EMPATHY AND ARGUMENT: IMMIGRANTS IN CULTURE AND ENTERTAINMENT JOURNALISM IN THE SCANDINAVIAN PRESS

**Kristina Riegert and Jan Fredrik Hovden**

*Cultural and entertainment journalism deals with aesthetic experiences, advice on cultural consumption, as well as reflection and debate on ethical and moral humanistic issues. Does this sub-field of journalism systematically represent immigrants and integration differently than the other news and commentary articles? Comparing immigration discourse in a representative sample of six Scandinavian newspapers between 1970 and 2016 using content analysis we find that cultural journalism, while clearly reverbing with the dominant national issues at the time, did provide alternative perspectives. It not only brought up themes like racism, multiculturalism, national identity and religion more often, but was also more positive, more gender-balanced and more often gave a voice to immigrants than other news did. A closer qualitative reading further suggests a typology of ten main story-types, varying relatively little over time and across national borders. Cultural journalism in this case illustrates how the cultural public sphere can positively contribute to the debate of complicated issues in the public sphere by offering resources for identification, empathy and arguments for specific points of view.*

**KEYWORDS** immigration discourse; media coverage; Scandinavia; cultural journalism

## Introduction

In the 1980s and 1990s, increasing globalisation, deregulation and migration led to an identity politics that promoted the increased awareness of cultural and religious diversity in Europe's increasingly multicultural societies. In the 2000s, however, cultural, racial and religious differences have become key sources of national and transnational conflict in Europe. This fuels the political fortunes of populist nationalist parties that put the migration issue at the forefront of the election agenda in many European states. While the United Nations reports that global migration has been steadily on the rise, immigration is a particularly thorny public issue for democracies (Gripsrud 2016; UN 2017). In Europe, immigration and the problems related to integration have become more complicated by changes in the larger media landscape: the mediatization of different sectors of society and the fragmentation of mediated national public spheres, the politicisation of intercultural conflicts, and securitisation and surveillance in everyday life.

Nordic and European media studies on the representation of immigration in the news show a predominantly negative image of immigrants. The focus is often on refugees rather

than other types of immigration, and they are depicted most often as problems for society: as victims or perpetrators of crimes or as exotic others (Benson 2013; Brune 2002; Ström-bäck, Andersson, and Nedlund 2017).<sup>1</sup> That said, comparative studies often show national as well as media-specific differences in representation. Yilmaz (2016) has, for example, argued forcefully for a “culturalized” Danish media discourse about immigration, where religious and cultural differences are mobilised to explain almost any immigration-related problem. In a European national comparative perspective, Swedish news discourse on immigration tends to be considered less negative and more positive towards immigration (Hovden and Mjelde, 2019; Askanius and Linné 2016). However, the vast majority of media studies are based on studies of general or political news, editorials or debate genres. If a “culturalization” is taking place, where problems related to immigration are set up as religious or ethnic conflicts, or zero-sum games between “our culture” and “their culture,” then surely cultural journalism on the immigration issue is an interesting object for study.

In the Nordic countries, cultural journalism provides information, guidance, and societal and aesthetic criticism of people, institutions and events, as well as giving space to intellectuals, artists and journalists to reflect and debate on important issues of the day. Whereas cultural journalism is defined in different ways in the research literature,<sup>2</sup> it is a hybrid sub-field containing both objective and subjective genres: from news, to reportage, columns, debate, interviews, and not least, reviews. It is typically more individually focused, more evaluative, and more commercially oriented than general news journalism (Kristensen and Riegert 2017). Thus, one might expect cultural and entertainment articles on immigrants to provide an alternative—and perhaps more positive—portrayal of immigrants and the immigration issue than other kinds of news and views. This question is also important in light of the idea of the cultural public sphere as a vital part of the democratic discourse by providing citizens with critical resources for identity-building, experiential stories that can create empathy, and argumentation for different points of view (Gripsrud 2017; McGuigan 2005). Does cultural journalism contribute some of these functions to the Scandinavian immigration debate?

In this article, we compare the results of a content analysis of Scandinavian cultural journalism contra other news and views in six newspapers in the period 1970–2016. This is followed by a qualitative reading, suggesting what kinds of narrative story-types dominated in cultural journalism’s stories about immigrants. For both readings, we look at how these differences vary by period and country.

### **The Public Sphere and the Cultural Public Sphere**

The concept of the public sphere is intimately related to a democratic vision: As spaces where different opinions held by actors in civil society can be discussed freely, and communicated to power holders; fora where demands, grievances or problems are debated, discussed and a consensus based on the best argument reached. This coincides with how the institution of news journalism sees its roles: as mediators of information, facilitators and drivers of debate between different interests, and watchdogs of governments and other powerful interests. Whether or not journalists actually fulfil these roles properly according to public sphere theory is an empirical question. However, it is clear that they are central actors in what is today thoroughly mediated public spheres. The agenda-setting power of the mainstream media to “intervene in both the formation of public opinions and the distribution of influential interests” (Habermas 2006, 419), puts them on

par with other organisations in the public sphere (e.g. arts and cultural organisations, religious organisations, voluntary organisations, and higher education organisations, cf. Engestad et al. [2017, 14]). That said, new social media power brokers, citizens and interest groups compete with mainstream media institutions and public relations actors for legitimacy regarding what issues are important, what should be done about it, and who should be scrutinised in the public sphere. The political public sphere in its turn is informed by the broader context of cultural production which “take on supportive roles in society-wide discussion” (Wessler 2018, 113). Among the roles these “non-deliberative” forms of media discourse take are: drawing attention and enhancing interest, adding perspectives and increasing inclusiveness, strengthening social bonds and showing solidarity, highlighting values and facilitating normative problematisation, providing arguments and justifications, and offering solutions and imagining alternatives (Wessler 2018, 112–113).

Here, we are interested in what Habermas ([1962] 1989) called the “literary” or the cultural public sphere. As, McGuigan (2005, 430) describes it: “/ ... /according to Habermas, disquisition on the social role of literature and philosophical reflection in the broadest sense prepared the ground for legitimate public controversy over current events. The very practice of criticism was literary before it was directly political (Eagleton 1983).” Although we focus here on cultural journalism in the mainstream media, it should be said that there are numerous cultural publics around multiple specialty outlets devoted to various art forms and popular culture. The genres of cultural journalism in the mainstream media—subjective ones like criticism, reportage, essays, columns and cultural debate, as well as the more objective genres of news reporting and interviews—are all potentially important for the cultural public sphere, but cultural debates are specifically oriented to it. Examples of this could be cultural debates such as the #Metoo movement, the role of cultural institutions, freedom of speech (the Mohammed cartoons, Charlie Hebdo), or racism, religion, or norm criticism addressed by artists and authors in artworks, fiction and popular culture.

Gripsrud (2017, 184) says the cultural public sphere accomplishes three functions: *identity, empathy and argumentation*. *Identity* refers to building a set of shared experiences which establishes belonging (in sub-cultures or national identity). *Empathy* since it nourishes an understanding of different human experiences, which develops a person’s ability to put oneself in another’s shoes. *Argumentation* points to the fact that literature or artworks give voice to certain experiences, or a specific view of the world, that can be debated and perhaps used in the political domain. Thus, the cultural public sphere may not only deal with the arts and culture, but also with cultural perspectives on political, economic and social domains (cf. Knapskog and Larsen 2008, 26–27). The boundary between the cultural and political public spheres can become blurred when culture is utilised as a tool of politics or when art becomes explicitly critical to social and political life (Gripsrud 2017).

However, there are clear differences between journalism’s roles in the political public sphere and the cultural public spheres: those in the former emphasise immediacy, impartiality, independence from sources, and scrutiny, whereas the journalistic roles in the cultural public sphere emphasise cultural field expertise and *folkbildung*, and include “/ ... /complex reflection upon the chronic and persistent problems of life, meaning and representation, which is characteristic of art, works on a different timescale” (McGuigan 2005, 430). Further, in contrast to the critical-rational debate envisioned in the political public sphere:

The concept of a cultural public sphere refers to the articulation of politics, public and personal, as a contested terrain through affective (aesthetic and emotional) modes of

communication/ ... / Images of the good life and expectations of what can be got out of this life are mediated mundanely through entertainment and popular media discourses. (McGuigan 2005, 435)

Cultural journalism can, as Gripsrud (2017, 182) says, at its best contribute to “sustained argumentation and critical reflection on the subject matter in question,” at its worst “it takes on a language close to or identical with that of advertising and uncritically serves” e.g. the interests of major cultural institutions or powerful entertainment producers.

From the above we can glean several important differences between the political and cultural public spheres regarding their functions time-sensitivity (event-orientation vs. system-orientation), and forms of communication (rational-critical vs affective and aesthetic), even the goal of the public debate may differ with a consensus being prioritised, while confrontation and pluralistic agonism may be the goal in the latter (Kristensen and Roosvall 2017; Mouffe 2005).

### European and Scandinavian News Coverage of Immigration

Overall, the volume of media coverage on immigration reflects the actual peaks and troughs of migration in the last decades. Hovden and Mjelde (2019) find not only that the volume and intensity of Scandinavian media coverage from 1970 and forward has steadily increased with rising immigration, but also that an increasing proportion of this coverage is in the debate genres, reflecting the increasing salience of the issue of immigration (Demker 2016). Bennett et al. (2013), citing mainly single country studies of press and television from six countries (UK, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Ireland, Greece), find in an overview of European media studies of immigration in the last two decades to be:

(1) fuzzy group designations and negative labelling, (2) the dominant portrayal of migrants as victims or other negative representations, (3) the over-representation of officials and the under-representation of migrants in quotations, and, finally, (4) the relative absence of a European context in the media discourse on migrants. (Bennett et al. 2013, 249–250)

Although cross-national similar studies including Scandinavian media have previously found them less negative than other European countries (Askanius and Linné 2016; Hovden, Mjelde, and Gripsrud 2018), the same basic patterns seem to hold. Media studies of news content find immigrants connected with negative situations (criminality and violence), or as problems for society (victims or threats), and often they are reported from the point of view of officials, with government sources dominating, and immigrants and minority groups quoted less often than majority groups (Asp 2002; Eide and Simonsen 2007; Figeneschou 2015; Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup 2008; Hagelund 2003; Horsti 2008; Hultén 2006). Often researchers relate the findings to an “us and them” frame reinforcing the ethnic “we” in the nation state, “othering” minorities and immigrants (Hall 1997; Said 1978; SOU 2006, 21). To a large extent this is due to journalistic news values, routines and practices (Brune 2004; Hedman 1985; Hvitfelt 1998) such as event focus, highlighting conflict situations, lack of time, expertise or the media organisation in question (see also Bennett et al. 2013).

Hovden and Mjelde (2019) indicate that since the 2000s, Scandinavian countries’ media coverage are increasingly representing immigrants as threats to social cohesion and public order. This trend is especially clear in Danish media, with Swedish media the

least negative of the Scandinavian countries. However, even Swedish media studies show that between 2009 and 2016, threat framing has increased in news (Norström 2017) and in Swedish editorials on immigration (Bolin, Hinnfors, and Strömbäck 2016). Defining frames differently than in the aforementioned two studies, Strömbäck, Andersson, and Nedlund (2017) also found more negative than positive frames of immigrants in news coverage between 2010 and 2015. The Nordic studies have all found that the media focus is disproportionately (compared to statistics) on refugees rather than other types of immigration (students, reunited families), with threat frames relating to social cohesion, crime and economic cost to society being the most dominant.

Regarding more positive news and views related to refugees, European studies find that these are more likely in public service broadcasting and local metropolitan outlets than in national tabloids (Bennett et al. 2013, 259). Positive stories are common when reporting single cases of immigrants unfairly threatened by deportation (often related to the victim frame), or a stereotyped female “hero” immigrant who is depicted as having overcome the burden of her traditional background and succeeded in the new society (Brune 2002, 2004). Other positive stories can be related to successful integration, examples of functioning multicultural workplaces or cultural enrichment, in what Benson (2013) termed the “hero frame.” Hultén (2006) argues in a Swedish context that both negative and positive stories about immigrants have in common the construction of Sweden as a “good” country—as righteous, generous, humanitarian, doing their “duty” for equality and cultural pluralism. This appears to apply to other Scandinavian studies of immigration as well, where the safe, dutiful, egalitarian and superior is contrasted to immigrants’ patriarchal, oppressive, violent or primitive cultures (Hultén 2006, 53 cites Brune 2004; Eide 2002).

How is immigration portrayed in the aesthetic realm and cultural industries, here represented by cultural journalism? In comparison to editorials, cultural debates in the 2000s regarding incidents relating to freedom of expression (the Mohammed cartoons, terrorist attacks on cultural targets) display a less polarising, and more nuanced debate which draws on multiple reference points (Kristensen and Roosvall 2017; Wallentin and Ekecrantz 2007). Gunilla Hultén’s study on immigration and integration in four Swedish newspapers between 1945 and 2000 showed that from 1985 onwards, “stories on immigration and integration focus on a more cultural understanding of citizenship such that the focus is on cultural differences and descent” (2006, 222). One of the reasons for this has to do with the increase in cultural and sports articles:

The cultural articles lift up the cultural as a contact space and uniting factor. In 1995 and 2000 there is a clear increase in these articles, partly because so many in the cultural and entertainment field have immigrant backgrounds. At the same time culture is described as something that separates us, some related to traditions, peoples and nations. (p. 182)

This is interesting because it means that culture itself, while still positioning immigrants as “not us” may have more complicated connotations, if we consider immigration news over time.

## Data and Method

The data used in this study are taken from the SCANPUB project, which studies the immigration debate in Scandinavia after 1970, which marks the start of modern work

immigration and immigration policies (Brochmann and Hagelund 2012). As part of his project, six Scandinavian newspapers were subjected to content analysis ( $N = 4329$ ): The broadsheets *Aftenposten* (NO), *Dagens Nyheter* (SE) and *Jyllandsposten* (DK), and the tabloids *VG* (NO), *Aftonbladet* (SE) and *Expressen* (DK).

In the codebook, coders were asked to note the presence of 26 subjects in the articles. One of these were “Culture, arts and entertainment,” which was specified as “Mentions or discussions of arts and entertainment within all genres, immigrant artists and their art, premieres, culture news, etc. that address immigration and integration.”<sup>3</sup> 236 articles were identified with this theme (often in combination with other themes). After a closer reading, 27 letters to the editor and 31 articles which were not be considered to strictly be cultural journalism were removed.<sup>4</sup> In the end, 5 per cent of the immigration articles ( $N = 178$ ) were classified as cultural journalism. This proportion corresponds well with previous studies of arts journalism as a proportion of total news output in an organisation (Szánto, Levy, and Tyndall 2004; Jaakkola 2015).

In the statistical analysis, the articles classified as cultural journalism are compared to all other articles on immigration debate (minus letters to the editor) in the same newspapers and same period (for an overview of the general patterns, as well as more details on the method and sampling, see Hovden and Mjelde 2019). We will focus on first on the historical differences in how cultural journalism depict, thematise and frame immigration stories, and then move on to national differences.<sup>5</sup> Afterwards, we will, using a qualitative reading, look closer at what kind of stories dominate in the cultural journalism on the immigration issue.

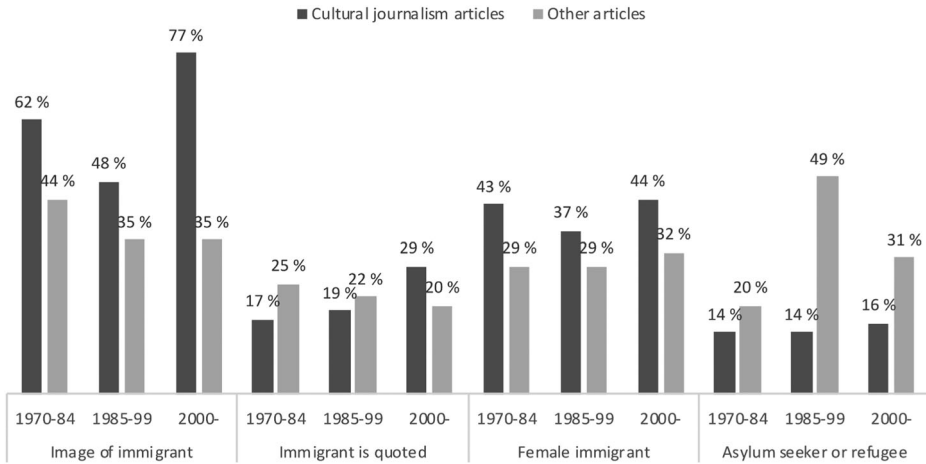
### Immigration in Cultural Journalism vis-à-vis Other Forms of Journalism

Cultural journalism in many Western countries has steadily increased, especially since the 1990s (Heikkilä, Lauronen, and Purhonen 2017; Verboord and Janssen 2015). This is also true for our sample of cultural and entertainment articles dealing with immigration, which increase especially after 2000. The increase is however minor compared with non-cultural news and views. Cultural journalism articles consistently account for 8 per cent of the articles on immigration in the Swedish newspapers, and less in the other Scandinavian countries (Norway 4 per cent, Denmark 3 per cent), suggesting that this is a persistently more important in the Swedish press coverage of the issue—perhaps not surprising due to the larger immigrant population in Sweden.

Figure 1 shows that cultural and entertainment stories focus on different immigrants than other news and views do. In cultural journalism, photos of immigrants are much more common (66 per cent, compared to 40 per cent in other journalism), and female immigrants are more likely to appear in cultural journalism in all the years. Further, for all the years, cultural journalism is less likely to call them refugees (12 per cent versus 26 per cent) and asylum seekers (3 per cent versus 15 per cent), probably suggesting that cultural journalism is less concerned with such groups than with the established immigrant populations, and that these are less often used as an identity marker.

It is only in the period from 2000s onwards that we find that immigrants and people with immigrant backgrounds quoted more often in cultural journalism articles than in regular journalism. Stories with cultural themes are furthermore less likely than other types of journalism to feature “hard” themes like integration, political regulation and





**FIGURE 1** Depiction of immigrants in cultural journalism versus regular journalism on the migration issue in the six newspapers, 1970–2016. Percentages (margins)

crime, etc. Racism and religion have become more common over time in all kinds of journalism—but with important national differences. Racism is an increasingly important theme in Swedish cultural journalism—being present in almost half of the articles after 2000—whereas in Danish cultural journalism from the second time period 1985–1999, religion is much more important than in the other countries (See Table 1 for national differences). While reflecting dominant discursive tropes in each country and general trends in the coverage of immigration, these issues are clearly more dominant in cultural journalism than in other news and views. Also notable, shown in Figure 2, is the fact that the immigration debate itself has, after 2000, become even more common in cultural journalism than in other forms of journalism. This is in line with the self-described task of cultural journalists to attempt to provide alternative, more in-depth perspectives to everyday news (Riegert, Roosvall, and Widholm 2015). Figure 2 also shows that multiculturalism and national identity are mentioned more often in cultural stories than in other news and views on immigration. Further, our results point to cultural journalism themes discussing cultural and social customs, although the differences between these and other news and views are very slight. However, together with the increase in religion these increases suggest that Yilmaz (2016) work on the “culturalization” of the immigration discourse has some bearing on both fields of Scandinavian journalism.

Perhaps the most important difference between cultural articles and other news and views when it comes to immigration is their overall framing. Cultural journalism has a much smaller proportion of threat-framed articles, and a much larger proportion of hero-framed articles than regular news and views. The victim frame has also decreased in the 2000s in cultural journalism, but not in other journalism.<sup>6</sup> These differences hold true for each of the three time periods and for each Scandinavian country. Cultural articles are much more likely to use hero frames like cultural diversity (positive aspects of difference), integration (fitting into host society) and “the good worker” frames, than threat frames such as job problems (immigrants taking jobs from domestic workers), fiscal problems (due to



**TABLE 1**

Some characteristics of cultural journalism on immigration compared to other kinds of journalism

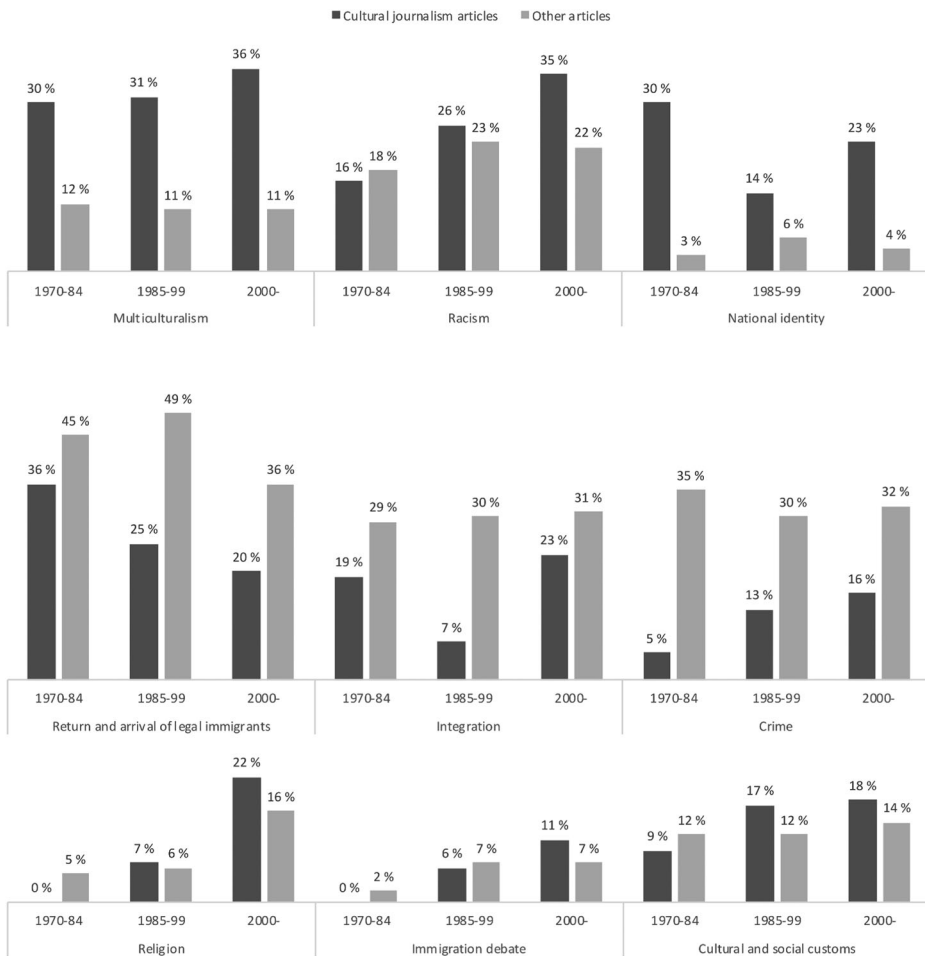
N=	By year														By country					
	TOTAL		1970–84		1985–1999		2000–2016		Sweden		Norway		Denmark							
	Other 3153	Cult 178	Other 477	Cult 42	Other 1076	Cult 43	Other 1600	Cult 93	Other 1265	Cult 114	Other 955	Cult 37	Other 870	Cult 27						
Social category																				
Immigrant	28	31	22	34	28	18	28	31	29	30	22	32	31	27						
Asylum seeker	15	3	5	0	19	0	18	5	12	2	24	9	16	0						
Refugee	26	12	18	11	41	16	20	9	25	10	23	14	34	17						
Specific ethnicity	50	50	70	62	50	52	49	49	53	44	50	60	56	73						
Male	45	49	62	53	48	47	49	61	56	56	52	57	41	61						
Female	27	36	29	43	29	37	32	44	34	45	31	48	24	24						
Has image of immigrant	34	56	44	62	35	48	44	77	43	63	42	73	37	61						
Frame																				
Threat	33	20	24	10	28	12	31	19	23	9	19	6	50	41						
Victim	52	41	57	55	58	51	56	40	72	60	40	32	52	48						
Hero	16	53	21	68	17	60	17	51	18	57	14	67	21	39						
Voice																				
National politician	16	3	3	0	18	0	24	8	18	2	13	5	7	4						
Immigrant	18	17	27	15	22	17	20	27	26	17	17	35	21	33						
Ordinary non-immigr. person	21	21	8	7	8	4	9	12	8	9	9	6	9	10						
National civil servant	10	1	15	2	10	0	10	1	13	1	13	3	11	0						
Theme																				
Social/Welfare	18	5	16	6	18	3	16	4	11	2	9	3	32	15						
Education	11	9	12	11	10	7	12	11	11	11	9	3	14	15						
Work	19	21	30	42	18	21	19	18	22	27	19	15	20	22						
Integration	30	18	25	19	30	7	31	23	30	15	16	19	45	23						
Family and social customs	13	16	12	9	12	17	14	18	11	11	12	10	16	38						
Attitudes to immigrants	8	18	7	17	9	18	7	15	11	24	3	3	7	26						
Racism	22	29	18	16	23	26	22	35	32	41	16	22	12	22						

(Continued)

**TABLE 1**  
(Continued)

	TOTAL		By year						By country					
			1970–84		1985–1999		2000–2016		Sweden		Norway		Denmark	
	Other	Cult	Other	Cult	Other	Cult	Other	Cult	Other	Cult	Other	Cult	Other	Cult
N=	3153	178	477	42	1076	43	1600	93	1265	114	955	37	870	27
Religion	13	16	5	0	6	7	16	22	10	7	10	11	15	35
Crime	29	12	35	5	30	13	32	16	34	12	31	16	29	12
Economy	11	6	9	12	12	5	8	3	11	7	4	0	13	11
As a political issue	17	3	6	0	18	3	18	3	17	1	12	3	20	5
Multiculturalism	11	34	12	30	11	31	11	36	13	37	10	31	9	35
National identity	6	26	3	30	6	14	4	23	5	29	2	7	7	28
Immigration debate	8	9	2	0	7	6	7	11	6	5	2	0	13	23
Womans supression	5	7	2	6	3	8	7	7	4	7	6	12	5	0
Civil rights	15	5	22	11	17	7	14	4	17	7	9	3	22	5

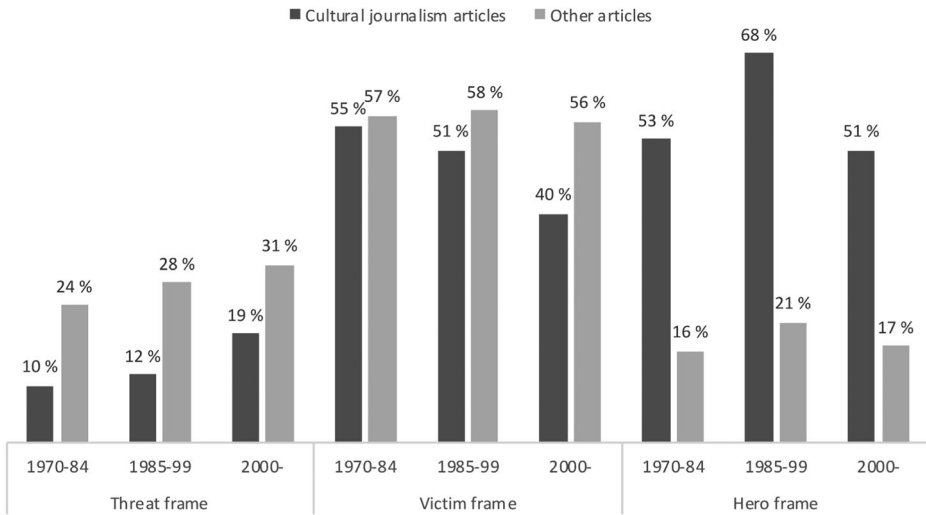
Note: Total, by country and by time period. The percentages are predicted margins following logistic regression controlling for year, newspaper and genre. Letters to the editor are not included in the comparison.



**FIGURE 2**  
 Selected themes in cultural journalism versus regular journalism on the migration issue in the six newspapers, 1970–2016. Percentages (margins)

their use of public services), disturbances in public order (crime), and (lack of) social cohesion. Norwegian and Swedish cultural journalism have less threat-framed and more hero-framed articles overall than Danish cultural journalism, which shows the reverse pattern (Figure 3). This is in line with Denmark’s generally harder line on immigration and its reflection in news journalism (Brochmann and Hagelund 2012, Hovden and Mjelde 2019).

Some more details on the differences between cultural journalism and other articles in the Scandinavian newspapers by country and period are given in Table 1. From this we can see that in regard to racism, this theme is twice as common in the Swedish cultural articles (44 per cent) as in the Danish or Norwegian cultural articles (22 per cent respectively). The Swedish preoccupation with this theme could be related to the history of parliamentary committee studies and academic research on racism and discrimination that goes back to the 1980s.<sup>7</sup>



**FIGURE 3** Main framing in cultural journalism versus regular journalism on the migration issue in the six newspapers, 1970–2016. Percentages (margins)

Regarding the way immigrants are described, Table 1 shows that over time, explicit mention of their ethnicity has diminished somewhat, whereas describing them in terms of their religion has gone up. While ethnicity is still more common in half the articles during the 2000s, the latter went up to every fifth article. This connects to research demonstrating that role of religion in general is increasing in news coverage in Scandinavia (Hjarvard and Lövheim 2012; Niemelä and Christensen 2013). However, if looked at by country, it is clear that cultural journalism in Denmark stands out from the other countries with almost twice as many times immigrants are described with reference to their religion. This difference between Danish and the other Scandinavian countries applies also to other news and views. Lundby et al. (2018) note that the Danish media focus clearly more on Islam as a religion than the other Nordic countries. In another article, he argues that there is a greater sense of threat from Islam in Denmark compared to Sweden and Norway (Lundby et al. 2017). Relevant in this context is not only Yilmaz’s (2016) work on the shift in Danish immigration discourse towards Islam in the 1980s and 90s, but the fact that it was the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* that instigated the world-wide Muhammad cartoon debates (2005), and that Copenhagen was the site of a terrorist attack in 2015, not long after the attacks on the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris.

Regarding the theme of multiculturalism, there is virtually no difference between the countries: all the cultural articles contain three times as many articles mentioning multiculturalism compared to immigration news and views. While it is not surprising that cultural articles in particular would point to multiculturalism, national identity is also an important theme in Sweden and Norway, but not in Denmark. It is possible that national identity is connected to certain signifiers in the Swedish and Norwegian case that are different than in the Danish case. One study cited by Lundby et al. (2017, 453) claims that Danish national identity is more closely connected to its Christian identity, which in turn can be one explanation for the greater sense of an Islamic threat.

## The Narrative Story-Types in Racism, Multiculturalism and National Identity Themes

In order to dig deeper into the cultural articles that had racism, multiculturalism and national identity as themes, we looked at these stories in order to ascertain more precisely what they were *about*. Altogether 113 articles were coded for one or more of these three themes, so this covers more than half of the cultural articles. An inductive approach was used to characterise the story-types. This was inspired by Hayden White's concept of the importance of stories as "emplotted narratives" (in Czarniawska 2004, 23). One way to analyse emplotment, says Czarniawska, is to see how the characters are constructed, what function an event fulfils, and what type of interpretive theme subsumes events and links them in a meaningful way (Czarniawska 2004, 23). In our case, we were interested in whether the themes of racism, multiculturalism and national identity were linked any pattern of story-types told between countries and over time. Having read through them several times, the recurring patterns found could be loosely classified according into these somewhat overlapping story-types:

Story-types for racism, multiculturalism and national identity themes.

1. A story about artists or works of art that confirms or questions stereotypes of Swedishness/Danishness/Norwegian identity, or of immigrants' identities.
2. Stories about ethnic Scandinavian values. This could be by describing, criticising them or describing them as including multiculturalism, or it could be about right-wing attacks on multiculturalism.
3. Stories about works of art, festivals or other activities that a) show a broad spectrum of various cultures, or that we are all somehow immigrants, b) fruitful meetings between cultures, c) or fighting together against racism.
4. Stories about artists/works of art that demonstrate conscious or unconscious racism/colonialism.
5. Stories that show different cultures in conflict or that highlight the problems of co-existence, racist/extremist attacks on people, or the poor conditions people live in.
6. Stories about being caught between cultures, life in the segregated suburbs, stories that give voice to those who are seldom heard, i.e. "Integration literature."
7. Stories about how it feels to be a refugee -both what they fled from and what they have in Scandinavia.
8. Stories about immigrants who are in the arts or entertainment (for example, that shows they are typecast, or their success, or talks about why there are so few immigrants. About a specific immigrant artist.
9. Stories about Nazis, neo-Nazis or those who do/threaten racist crimes
10. Other

There was no clear temporal pattern whereby a certain story-type was associated with a certain period of time, except for those that could not be categorised—nine articles which tended to fall in the earliest period. Secondly, there were two categories with mainly Swedish articles, otherwise all the countries are represented in the various story-types. The Swedish categories were: "*Stories about strengthening ethnic Scandinavian values*" and "*Stories about Nazi/Neo-Nazis or those who threaten with racist crimes.*" The former was a catch-all category for those criticising Swedish national culture, and/or its component of multiculturalism. These range from the 1983 review of a book by Finnish-Swedish author Marianne Alopæus, which attacks Sweden's "undemocratic," collectivist tendencies, saying it is

in “deep cultural crisis” (DN, 1983-11-17) to columnist Maja Hagman’s article on the Sweden Democratic Party’s attempts to influence state-financed culture by removing references to multiculturalism from government documents, and establishing a national cultural canon where their version of Swedish cultural heritage gets priority (DN, 2013-11-21). Stories about Nazis or Neo-Nazis dealt with, for example, how White Supremacist music is allowed on Google, a documentary about neo-Nazis, a TV series about a person who grew up with a Nazi father, and the death threats to the black Swedish music personality Timbuktu.<sup>8</sup>

“*Stories or works that confirm or question stereotypes*” and “*Stories about how it feels to be a refugee*” contained the most articles from the 1970s and 80s, however the former was a much larger category. It had stories about projects started by immigrants which joke about the majority cultures and their own cultures (DN, 2005-08-03, JP, 2012-10-16). Another story that plays on prejudice is author Roy Jacobsen’s book which challenges reader’s preconceptions about Pakistani Norwegians (Aftenposten, 2007-10-01). A final example is a story about a play using a Ugandan-born rapper to play a Danish priest on Greenland, in order to discuss the Danish relationship to foreigners and Greenlanders (Extrabladet, 1998-03-06). This type of story is found in most of the time periods, suggesting that it is considered important that cultural actors and cultural expression try to expose stereotyping.

The category “*Stories about how it feels to be a refugee,*” with relatively few articles, and “*Stories about being caught between cultures, life in the suburbs, stories from voices seldom heard, or ‘integration literature’*” are closely related. Both are also related to the function of empathy (Gripsrud 2017) by adding the perspectives of minority voices, but the stories of how it feels to be a refugee tended to be more distanced and especially from the earlier periods. They described the artists’ or events in the countries of origin, or how they came to Scandinavia. The stories about being caught between cultures tended to be about the new generation. They were reviews of books by “new” Scandinavians who wrote about navigating between cultures (there was never a bad review), living in the segregated suburbs, documentaries or artists that describe the nature of dual identity, or a debate article that describes the existence of satellite TV “cities” and lack of language skills as key problems of integration in Norway. Related both to empathy and identity is the story-type: “*Stories about individual artists with immigrant backgrounds who talk about how it feels and what challenges they faced.*” These describe successful artists or works from the first person perspective, and include what it feels like to be treated differently due to one’s appearance (AB, 1995-01-17), how a child refugee became the head of a dance company (Aftenposten, 2014-01-21), or the author of books about immigrant children who claims that Danish film companies do not want to hire “brown” actors (Extrabladet, 2012-01-17). Regarding the story-type highlighting “*Cultures in conflict, or problems of co-existence,*” there were only Swedish and Danish articles included here.

The largest story-type over time and across countries was “*Works or activities presenting a broad spectrum of cultures, fruitful meetings between cultures, multiculturalism or against racism.*” These could be news stories from “*Rock against racism*” or cultural festivals to museum exhibits about immigration, or theatre with multicultural themes. This, if anything demonstrates the affirmative nature of “*fruitful meetings*” in cultural and entertainment journalism with regard to multiculturalism. From the story-types we conclude that the greater number of Swedish articles on racism in cultural journalism consist mainly of: testimonies by artists as to discrimination, stories works of art relating to colonialism, various artistic treatments about Nazis or neo-Nazis or extremist threats against artists. Danish cultural articles did not dominate in the story-type highlighting cultural conflicts and the problems of co-existence.

## Conclusion

Cultural and entertainment articles dealing with immigration differ systematically from news and views about immigration in the same newspapers. They differ quantitatively: cultural articles have more photos of immigrants, they have a greater likelihood of female representation, and since 2000, there are more immigrants quoted in cultural journalism than in other types of journalism. The main frames for cultural journalism also differ from other news and views: The hero frames are substantially more common than threat frames for all the years in all the countries, and more common than the victim frames. In other news and views, the victim frames are most common followed by threat frames. One change over time is that the hero frame has decreased by 17 per cent after 2000 in cultural journalism, and the threat frame has slightly increased during this time. Themes such as racism, multiculturalism and national identity have become increasing common over the years in cultural journalism—but not in non-cultural journalism, which appears to prioritise the themes of integration and crime. Religion has increased in both types of journalism—but is more common in cultural journalism. There are marked national differences: There are twice as many immigration-related articles in Swedish cultural journalism than in the Danish and Norwegian papers. Furthermore, Danish cultural journalism is more threat-framed and less hero-framed than Swedish and Norwegian, and Swedish cultural journalism's coverage of racism is far more common than in its neighbouring countries.

A closer narrative reading of the racism, multiculturalism and national identity-themed articles found recurring story-types. Many of these describe how immigrants or second-generation immigrants feel or experience their existence. One typical story-type iconizes cultural workers that have “succeeded despite the odds”; they may show dual identity, discrimination, their struggle and their life paths. In this, they create empathy in readers who do not have this background. Other story-types provide information on various activities that show a spectrum of different “fruitful encounters” between the different cultures, as well as giving examples of the problems of culture clashes and conflict. Another story-type pokes at common preconceptions or stereotypes of national or immigrant identities. These can also provide resources for understanding identities and sub-cultures. Finally, there is fodder for debate in ongoing issues of racism, discrimination (lack of inclusion in artistic institutions), white power music, or documentaries about Nazis and Neo-Nazis primarily in the Swedish material. There were fewer differences in story-types over time than expected, with the primary difference being that story-types in the older period are more distanced towards the subjects.

These narratives fit well into what Gripsrud (2017, 184) has described as three functions of the cultural public sphere: *identity, empathy and argumentation*. While cultural journalism to some extent follows the themes in different national news and views on immigration, it provides alternative perspectives on immigration and integration, and as contributor and contextual backdrop to political imagination and cultural citizens' engagement, it contributes to discussions in the public sphere.

## DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.



## NOTES

1. See also Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart 2009; Lubbers, Scheepers, and Wester 1998; Jacobs, Meeusen, and d'Haenens 2016; Schlueter, Meuleman, and Davidov 2013; ter Wal, d'Haenens, and Koeman 2005; van Klingeren et al. 2015.
2. In cultural journalism research, there are three main ways cultural journalism has been defined : (a) as that which is produced by the cultural desks of the media studied, (b) as journalistic content about culture, even if it is not labelled culture by the medium in question, and (c) focusing on arts journalism, a sub-field of cultural journalism (Riegert, Roosvall, and Widholm 2018).
3. Note that this operational definition matches most closely the second definition of cultural journalism listed in footnote 2.
4. Examples of articles excluded were news articles about night clubs, feature articles about food or which simply mentioned a person who happened to have a creative job.
5. Note that for discussions of general differences by year or by country, we use predicted values—the margins after logistic regression controlling for year, newspaper type and genre, in effect providing more comparable national estimates than regular percentages.
6. The use of hero, victim and threat frames are inspired by the work of Benson (2013).
7. SOU 1989: 13. See also the series of official Swedish Government Reports related to Power, Integration and Structural Discrimination. SOU 2005: 112; SOU 2005: 56; SOU 2006: 21; SOU 2006: 79.
8. These articles are from DN, 2014-11-20, DN, 1994-04-19, AB, 1985-03-08, AB, 2011-08-03, in that order.

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