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CONSTRUCTIONS OF SYMPATHY: A MEDIA DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF DETAINED
CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN CANADA

by

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Master of Arts, Wilfrid Laurier University, 2020

THESIS

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Abstract

Over the last few years, there has been an abundance of media articles published on irregular migrants (Msefer, 2017). While there is much research attention on media discourse on individual adult asylum seekers and refugee claimants, there is little research attention on how media portrays detained children and youth affected by immigration detention. A deductive content analysis of 35 Canadian newspaper articles published between January 1, 2013 and December 31, 2019 was conducted to explore the media discourse of youth held in immigration detention. Social construction of social problems (SCSP, Best, 2017) theory focuses on the way people create an understanding of what occurs around them in relation to world issues. SCSP was used as a framework to guide analysis and interpret findings related to the claim that the detention of youth in Canada is a social problem. A broad range of claimsmakers contributed to various media sources to construct youth as deserving of sympathy. They are predominantly academics, safety ministers, and advocates. Results support that the media constructs migrant youth affected by detention as deserving of public sympathy through the following claimsmaking strategies: (1) victims suffering horribly, (2) victim purity, (3) cultural biases in sympathy evaluation, and (4) personalizing victims. The strategy of presenting the social problem as potentially occurring to anyone was not found. One counterclaim identified in the media portrayed youth as undeserving of sympathy by highlighting an instance involving a lack of innocence and the assertion that youth are used to take advantage of lenient immigration policies in Canada. Implications of these findings are considered in light of the broader research literature addressing media representations of children and youth affected by immigration detention.

Keywords: children, youth, immigration detention, media, Canada, social construction of social problems, content analysis

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Canadian newspapers, over recent years, have frequently published articles detailing the difficulties irregular migrant youth face while being held in detention facilities. Typically, media sources describe evocative experiences endured by children, such as the following story published in 2016 by the Global News of a young boy, Alpha Ochigbo. Alpha was held in a Canadian medium-security immigration detention facility for the first two and a half years of his life. The author lamented that ways of life inside the facility's prison-like setting, "were the only ones [Alpha] knew: locked doors, body searched, boredom and short periods outside in a tiny playground boxed in by two towering fences topped with glittering coils of razor wire" (Cain, 2016, p. 1). While this news story reflects only one example of a young person being held in immigration detention by default along with his mother, it brings to light the question of the nature and impact of the Canadian media's rhetoric toward detained youth.

Previous literature focusing on Canadian media covering irregular migrant's activities often present one of two views: (1) citizens are welcoming and accepting of irregular migrants in Canada, and are supportive of increased immigration (Tyyskä, Blower, DeBoer, Kawai, Walcott, 2017), or (2) citizens are intolerant of irregular migrants and are against increased immigration (Esses, Medianu, & Lawson, 2013; Tyyskä et al., 2017). While there is much research attention on media discourse concerning individual asylum seekers or refugee claimants, this study addresses a gap in the literature and contributes to the field by focusing on media coverage of detained children and youth using a social construction of social problems (SCSP) lens (Best, 2017). Media depictions of how youth are treated during detention and how this group is described in the news is the focus of the current study. For the purpose of this study, a "minor" or "child" will be defined as any individual aged 17 or below who is dependent on their guardian

(Gros & Song, 2016), and “youth” are considered anyone between 15 and 24 years of age (United Nations, 2013). This topic is interesting because Canada is a country to which many families immigrate due to its reputation of being a benevolent and inclusive country (Gormley, 2016; Maynard, 2017). The following will provide some context about immigration detention and the purpose of the study.

Given the common mislabelling of refugees and irregular migrants in media and public discourse, it is essential to clarify definitions relevant to this study. According to the Refugee Convention (1951), a refugee is a person who,

owing to 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 [their] nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail [themselves] of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of [their] former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. (as cited in OHCHR, 2020, p. 2, article 1)

Generally, there are two types of people who end up in immigration detention: irregular migrants and refugee claimants or asylum seekers. Regular migrants are people who “choose to move not because of a direct threat of persecution or death, but mainly to improve their lives by finding work, or in some cases for education, family reunion, or other reasons” (UNHCR, 2016, p. 1).

Furthermore, irregular migrants are similar to regular migrants however they do not fit within the narrow laws states acknowledge pertaining to immigration classifications (IOM, 2011).

Nonetheless many are unable to return home and therefore seek asylum, though they do not fall within refugee regulations (Collyer, 2010). To expand, Fleras (2015), defines the term irregular migrants as “an umbrella term cover[ing] those who illegally cross borders, legal entrants who

overstay their entry visas or work without permission, family members of migrant workers who enter illegally, and asylum seekers who fail to qualify as refugees” (p. 39). In comparison, refugee claimants or asylum seekers are people who have arrived in a country in hopes of gaining protection after fleeing from another country (UNHCR, 2005). Therefore, for the purposes of this study, these terms are important to understand given their frequent use in media covering immigration detention. Further, it is notable that the term “irregular migrant” and associated variations are problematic, invoke different reactions from readers, and are often used imprecisely in public discourse. As such, research that focuses on portrayals of this group requires a critical perspective and attention to the details of the circumstances of the individuals described in media or unofficial reports.

Immigration Detention Context

When some irregular migrants travel to Canada, they come in contact with the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA), which at times results in their detention (Global Detention Project, 2018). Oftentimes, detention occurs because the irregular migrant has improper identification, is deemed a possible flight risk, or is believed to be a security threat (Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations, 2002). On average, from 2005 to 2015, immigration detention affected approximately 11,000 people migrating to Canada each year (Global Detention Project, 2018), out of about 55,000 refugees and other individuals hoping to enter through Canadian borders yearly (Government of Canada, 2019). The immigration detention centres in which irregular migrants are held are known as Immigration Holding Centres or IHCs (Gros & van Groll, 2015). These IHCs are described as “medium-security facilities in which children and families are subject to constant surveillance, frequent searches, and restricted mobility within the facility” (Gros & Song, 2016, p. 5). Within IHCs, the length of time for

maximum detention is undetermined and individuals can be held for long periods (Amnesty International Canada, 2017; Global Detention Project, 2018). There are three main immigration detention centres in Canada, located in Toronto, Ontario; Laval, Quebec; and Vancouver, British Columbia (Government of Canada, 2017).

Since 2015, the number of people affected by immigration detention has declined. Between 2016 and 2017, 6,251 irregular migrants (approximately 2%) were detained in immigration detention in Canada (Global Detention Project, 2018). Among those detained, 162 were under the age of 18. While most of these children (93%) were detained along with a guardian, 7% were unaccompanied (Global Detention Project, 2018). The estimated number of detained minors has decreased since 2012 when there were 281 accompanied youth and 13 unaccompanied youth. These statistics are only estimates and they are likely an underestimate of youth held in detention given that reported official counts are based only on adult immigration detainees. Detailed information regarding youth irregular migrants to Canada is rarely available due to the lack of research attention on this topic. Although some of the youth detained are Canadian-born, they are held because other members of their families, usually their guardians, are detained (Kronick, Rousseau, & Cleveland, 2018). Therefore, youth are most often held in detention as a result of their parents' or guardians' detainments and policies that required the child and parent be kept together (Canadian Council for Refugees, n.d.).

IHCs are known to “severely constrain detainees’ liberty and privacy, leading to particularly detrimental effects on children in detention” (Gros & Song, 2016, p. 5). Even with the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 2009) having strict guidelines to follow with regard to youth detention, youth are still detained in holding centres for various reasons (as cited in United Nations, 2019). According to the CRC (1989), “the arrest, detention

or imprisonment of a child shall be in conformity with the law and shall be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time” (as cited in United Nations, 2019, p. 10, article 37). Even if the laws above are followed, detainment is still detrimental for children. As Gros and Song (2016), Martin and Curran (2007), and Wood (2018) explain, children should only be separated from their family if no other options are available. However, family separation is a common occurrence in detention and is harmful to children’s mental health (Cleveland & Rousseau, 2012; Gros & Song, 2016; Wood, 2018). Given the number of irregular migrant children subjected to detention, as well as the influential media gaze on this issue shaping public opinion, it is important to examine to gain further insights into the media portrayal of this vulnerable population.

To outline the structure of this thesis, Chapter 2 is the literature review and provides the ways media is used as a tool of persuasion. The media discourse of irregular migrants, specifically descriptions of common themes around the portrayal of irregular migrants in the media is provided, and then ends with a concluding section. Chapter 3 consists of the theoretical approach of social construction of social problems (Best, 2017) as well as Loseke’s (2003) five claimsmaking strategies used as a conceptual framework to interpret the results of the study. Chapter 4 outlines the methods used to collect and analyze the study data. Chapter 5 describes the results of the study and begins with a description of the claimsmakers, followed by themes found pertaining to Loseke’s (2003) claimsmaking strategies. Chapter 6 is the discussion section, which explores cultural feeling rules regarding the importance of protecting children and family unity in Canadian society, as well the pattern of relatability among Canadians and irregular migrants. This section ends with the implications, limitations, and future directions of the study. Finally, Chapter 7 concludes the thesis with a brief synopsis of the most common claimsmakers

and claimsmaking strategies used in the media to portray irregular migrant youth and children as deserving of sympathy.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review is divided into two sections focusing on: media as a tool of persuasion and media discourse centered on irregular migrants. Furthermore, strategies used by the media to make their claims more persuasive will be described. Then, an explanation regarding details surrounding the importance of differentiating in media portrayals the reasoning behind people's immigration and common themes portrayed in the media pertaining to the ways irregular migrants are framed.

Media as a Tool of Persuasion

The current study focuses on the various strategies used by the media to understand how audiences are persuaded on the topic of youth held in immigration detention. The media often uses the tactic of framing, and therefore, it has increasingly become an influential way of socializing people through ensuring Canadians are informed about different global events such as immigration detention (Fry, 2017; Romer, 2008). For example, De Waal and Schoenbach (2008) studied the ways print and online news were presented in the Netherlands, and Romer (2008) studied the portrayal of youth in the media post World War II in the United States. These researchers found that while media publications allow for individuals to deliberate about various societal issues, they are also used by writers, such as reporters or journalists, as a source of persuasion to gain followers of particular social problems (De Waal & Schoenbach, 2008; Romer, 2008).

Collins, Abelson, Pyman, and Lavis (2006) conducted a study on Canadian newspaper reports in 2002 and described that in order for a social problem to become well known in society, media reports set an agenda to publish on a certain topic. This topic will usually stay prominent as an issue until the problem has been resolved or the media stops publishing on the topic,

resulting in public inattention to the issue. Soroka (2002) studied agenda-setting in Canadian news and found that reporting on a social problem has the greatest impact on readers when there is a high frequency of reports in a short timeframe, concrete evidence is cited, and stories are dramatically presented.

The media can often persuade the audience when it relates to Canadian National Identity and “cultural feeling rules.” Canadian National Identity includes the compassionate, moral, and humanitarian nature of Canadians (Bauder, 2008). Similarly, cultural feeling rules are “widely shared beliefs about how we should feel about particular types of people (Loseke, 2003, p. 30). For example, people usually have more sympathy or compassion for children because they are portrayed as innocent (Arora, Shah, Chaturvedi, & Gupta, 2015; Gordon, 2008); these cultural feeling rules will be further explored in a later section of the literature review. Therefore, when certain groups, such as children, are portrayed in the media in stories that highlight the hardship they faced, the audience’s preexisting view of children as small and innocent will heighten feelings of sympathy among readers (Loseke, 2003).

Media Discourse Centered on Irregular Migrants

In the literature review, specifications regarding definitions of different terms such as refugee, regular migrant, irregular migrant, and asylum seeker or refugee claimant were provided. Collyer (2010) describes that there are very different experiences among people who choose to immigrate to another country compared to people who are forced to leave their country of origin. As such, some people have many physical obstacles to overcome while immigrating such as traversing across deserts, mountains, or seas, which could make their travels perilous and more traumatic (Collyer, 2013). Other individuals who immigrate may not have to face these dangers in their journey; therefore, it is important to differentiate between the specified terms in

order to ensure the ways these individuals are portrayed is consistent with their experiences. Oftentimes in the media, the terms are blended together and the portrayals are combined. For example, Crawley and Skleparis (2017) conducted a study based on the portrayals of irregular migrants and refugees in European media and politics, and found blending of the terms in the results of their study. It was established that even though the importance of ensuring terms are not blended, newspapers like to make use of the term “refugee” more frequently than “irregular migrant” because it may draw more on the emotions of the audience. Consistent with Collyer (2010), Crawley and Skleparis (2017) found that terms should not be blended together because it makes it difficult to differentiate people’s lived experiences. Moreover, it may make it difficult for policy-makers to fully understand the media publications as they might be uncertain which group of travelers are in need of help and policy changes (Collyer, 2010; Crawley & Skleparis, 2017). Similar to the findings of Collyer (2010) and Crawley and Skleparis (2017), Becker (2014) studied the protection of refugees and the importance of categorizing these individuals in proper ways. Therefore, when policy-makers take claims, potentially from media sources, they may then use the claim to alter policies (Becker, 2014). Ultimately, if there are no differentiations between terms such as refugee, regular migrant, irregular migrant, and asylum seeker or refugee claimant in media publications, people may be portrayed incorrectly and the audience and policy-makers may be wrongly interpreting the frames (Becker, 2014; Collyer, 2010; Crawley & Skleparis, 2017).

With knowledge of the importance of term differentiation in framing people in the media who immigrate, it is important to understand the portrayals of irregular migrants in newspapers. Readers’ beliefs may be modified depending on how reporters frame their media representation of specific groups (Bauder, 2008; De Waal & Schoenbach, 2008; Fry, 2017; Romer, 2008). For

example, Chan (2013) conducted a study on the way irregular migrants are presented in Canadian newspapers in relation to crime, and Estrada, Ebert, and Lore (2016) studied the framing of irregular migrants in United States newspapers. Both studies found that when right-wing news reports published about immigration, irregular migrants were often framed negatively through suggesting that they were engaging in terrorist acts and criminal behaviours. Similarly, Gonick and Levy's (2017) study found that right-wing news sources blamed irregular migrants for taking jobs from native born Canadians. Interestingly, there are more papers sold and an associated increase in attention from new readers when negative headlines are cast in the news because the controversy of the topic is found to be intriguing (Eberl et al., 2018; Esses et al., 2013; Estrada et al., 2016; Chan, 2013). Because right-wing extremist newspapers are rare in Canada (Scrivens, Davies, and Frank, 2018), this study may not find a large distinction between right- and left-wing news sources pertaining to the framing of irregular migrants.

Prevailing research on media and immigration in Canada and the United States has identified the existence of frames that either positively or negatively represent irregular migrants (Bauer, Barberá, Ackermann, & Venetz, 2016; Estrada et al., 2016). Different characterizations of irregular migrants are portrayed in the media depending on where that specific newspaper leans: either left, centre, or right (Bauer et al., 2016; Estrada et al., 2016). Bauer and colleagues (2016), and Taras (1996), who conducted studies on Canadian newspaper articles explain that the Liberal government is considered left-leaning and the Conservative government is right-leaning. According to Bauer and colleagues (2016), whereas left-wing newspapers often support individual freedoms within countries, the needs of children and their education, and peace and security, right-wing newspapers often present information emphasizing enforcing a more critical

system, illegality, war, brutality, and foreigners. Taras (1996) similarly found that right-wing newspapers focus more on order within society and stricter law.

Xenophobia is a concept present in news source publications. Miller (2018) defines xenophobia as “attitudes, prejudices and behavior that reject, exclude and often vilify persons, based on the perception that they are outsiders or foreigners to the community, society or national identity” (p. 20). Bauer and colleagues (2016) found that people who are more aware of xenophobia and acknowledge the occurrence of xenophobia tend to identify as being more left-leaning. However, Bauer and colleagues (2016), Perry and Scrivens (2016), and Gonick and Levy (2017) found that when people hear the concept xenophobia, they often associate it with right-wing newspapers because it is an idea often initiated by right-wing extremism. As Bauer and colleagues (2016) note, when people read right-wing news sources, they are frequently right-leaning themselves, and therefore, the news report presents arguments that often support the audience’s existing views. This pattern is also true of left-leaning outlets for left-leaning readers (Bauer et al., 2016).

Common Themes around the Portrayal of Irregular Migrants in the Media

The research literature describes many prominent themes when the media creates portrayals of irregular migrant groups. For example, a study with a similar focus to the current research was conducted by Medianu, Sutter, and Esses (2015). This study focused on the ways refugees were portrayed in English Canadian newspaper articles six months prior to the arrival of a boat of asylum seekers from Sri Lanka (many without proof of identity) compared to six months after this boat arrived in Canada (Medianu et al., 2015). Four major themes that were identified in this analysis were refugee as victim (30.4% articles), refugee as bogus (45.7%), legal debate of Canadian immigration policy (15.2%), and refugee as criminal/terrorist (8.7%)

(Medianu et al., 2015). Key themes such as these, as well as additional ones identified by other scholars, are further discussed in detail below.

Victim Portrayal. When refugees were viewed as victims, they were portrayed as helpless and there were accompanying recommendations made of Canada needing to be more accepting of refugees (Medianu et al., 2015). Medianu and colleagues (2015) found that six months after the boat from Sri Lanka arrived on Canadian shores, the victim theme in media increased from 45.7% to 49% prevalence. Other researchers such as Chovanec and Molek-Kozakowska (2010), and Eberl and colleagues (2018) found similar victimization themes in their studies. For example, Chovanec and Molek-Kozakowska (2010) completed a media study in Europe on the othering of refugees, and Eberl and colleagues (2018) studied the media coverage in Europe on refugees. Both studies found a portrayal of refugees emphasizing victimization, describing how the refugees were attempting to make a better life for themselves, which was theorized by researchers as a method to garner empathy from the audience. Moreover, in Eberl and colleagues' (2018) study, refugees were viewed as victims as they were portrayed as being helpless. Therefore, it was found that Canada should be more accepting of refugees.

Bogus Portrayal. Another prominent theme in Medianu and colleagues' (2015) article was refugees being described as bogus due to being depicted as taking advantage of the relatively lenient policies Canada holds for irregular migrants. After a six-month period of when the boat arrived, the bogus theme decreased from 45.7% to 14.3% (Medianu et al., 2015). Similarly, a study conducted by Henry and Tator (2002) regarding immigration as presented in Canadian media found themes concerning fear of refugees as they were framed as taking advantage of Canada's lenient refugee policies, a theme consistent with Medianu and colleagues' (2015) findings.

Criminal/Terrorist Portrayal. The criminal/terrorist theme in Medianu and colleagues' (2015) study referred to the representation of refugees as partaking in illegal behaviours such as human smuggling. In their study, the criminal/terrorist theme increased from 8.7% to 30.6% six months after the boat arrival to Canada (Medianu et al., 2015). This theme was a similar finding of Chovanec and Molek-Kozakowska's (2010) study of European media sources, as they further found that a criminal portrayal of irregular migrants reduces empathy from the audience and produces a sense of fear. Ultimately, it was found that the criminal depiction may result in irregular migrants being rejected by the audience (Chovanec & Molek-Kozakowska, 2017).

Maynard (2017) studied the racialization of Black people in Canada and previous notions relating people of colour to criminality. Maynard (2017) found that race has frequently been an unspoken topic in Canada (Maynard, 2017). Furthermore, Maynard (2017) explains, "Black persons are represented not only as other-than-national subjects, but are constituted historically and presently as a threat to "real" Canadians" (p. 11). She further argues that people of colour make up a large portion of detained irregular migrants and they are found to face stricter border control because they are still seen as a threat (Maynard, 2017). Further to the criminal theme, in studying the representations of refugees in Canadian media sources, Lawlor and Tolley (2017) found that terms such as "threat" and "terrorism" are used to negatively depict refugees. Esses and colleagues (2013) found in their study on the implications of negative portrayals of refugees that refugee groups were often depicted in Canadian news as being "enemies at the gate" (p. 519). Similarly, these negative portrayals were found earlier in Greenberg's (2000) study on the arrival of Chinese irregular migrants to Canada, in which this immigration pattern was depicted in Canadian news as a "flood of illegal immigrants," (p. 8) making it seem as though all irregular migrants were illegally crossing the border and that there was a growing social problem that

needed to be addressed.

In the studies discussed above, the theme of criminal or terrorist were present in media portrayals of refugees and irregular migrants. More recently, the use of the term “illegal” to describe immigration has fallen out of favour with international organizations. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) discourage the use of the term illegal due to the negative influence it has on migrants for the following three reasons: (1) it contradicts their rights and takes away their humanity, (2) it implies a right and wrong way to enter a country, and (3) people intuitively think of criminal even though many of them are just lacking proper identification documents (Sajjad, 2018).

Economic Threat Portrayal. Researchers such as Esses, Brochu, and Dickson (2012), Esses and colleagues (2013), and Baker, Khosravini, Krzyżanowski, McEnery, and Wodak (2008) studied negative attitudes present in the news centered around irregular migrants being an economic threat. In particular, Esses and colleagues (2012) described that domestic residents’ concerns started to heighten, fearing job competition with irregular migrants due to the negative attitudes presented on immigration. Baker and colleagues (2008) specified more of the types of irregular migrants in explaining that immigrants were often perceived to be an economic threat in creating increased job competition, whereas asylum seekers and refugees were viewed as an economic burden for the welfare system. Ibrahim (2005) also studied economic fear of domestic residents in Canada, however she focused more on the topic of needed services - specifically, that Canadian taxes are paying for the health services used by irregular migrants (Ibrahim, 2005). When a negative portrayal of irregular migrants is present in the media, fear is incited in Canadians, resulting in the adoption of negative beliefs and stigma towards irregular migrants and international immigration (Esses et al. 2012; Lawlor & Tolley, 2017). Negative depictions of

irregular migrants cause some individuals living in developed countries to fear the loss of their stable economy, unwanted cultural changes and violence (Esses et al., 2013; Hier & Greenberg, 2002).

“Us Versus Them” Portrayal. Due to potential fear created about irregular migrants among domestic residents based on difference in values, different cultures and religions, and stereotypes, there has been discussion in the literature about an “us versus them” pattern (Chan, 2013; Ibrahim, 2005). Ibrahim (2005) describes, “the notion of “us” as implying homogenous values, traditions, and beliefs within society” (p. 170). Chan (2013) later went on to study media portrayals of irregular migrants. She found that the Canadian news presents irregular migrants as outsiders, which has fuelled an opposing mentality by emphasizing cultural differences. Furthermore, this frame was found to occur due to the racial, religious, and fear constructions of irregular migrants. For example, media representations of some racialized people participating in violent acts leads to public fear (Chan, 2013). Ultimately, irregular migrants have been found to be suffering as they are stripped of their humanity and dignity due to these “othering” portrayals.

Portrayal of Children and Youth. Much of the research conducted on the portrayal of irregular migrants in the media is focused on adults, however there are often two reoccurring themes used to frame children and youth in the media. These two frames include depicting children through innocence and vulnerability (Gordon, 2008; Arora et al., 2015). Youth are often portrayed as innocent in the media, and are thought to be harmless because they have not been exposed to or have the capacity of understanding social labels (Gordon, 2008). As explained by Gordon (2008) “childhood innocence, the idea that children should not have to bear the burdens of their parents’ poverty; that children deserve opportunity precisely because of their youth” (p. 335-336), describes that children should not be punished for their parent’s decisions. This is a

similar finding from research conducted by di Tomasso (2012) who studied the various media narratives after a boat arrival from Tamil to Canada. Di Tomasso (2012) focused on the benevolence of children and described that even though irregular migrant children are not Canadians, they still deserve basic services and education. Furthermore, one of the study's narratives stated, "The children still are not responsible, nor should they be punished for the actions of their parents" (di Tomasso, 2012, p. 343). Ultimately, these portrayals of children and youth as innocent resulted in blame and hatred being directed toward parents largely due to the perception that these adults brought their families to Canada illegitimately (di Tomasso, 2012). Furthermore, UNICEF (2007) described the vital importance of benevolence towards children in constructing them as being innocent because it may help prevent injustice and harm inflicted on children.

Vulnerability is another frame often used to construct children in the media as children tend to be physically, psychologically and economically dependent, and do not have the ability to protect themselves (Arora et al., 2015). Refugee youth in particular are found to be some of the most vulnerable people in society because they have been exposed to previous dangers such as war (Arora et al., 2015). Furthermore, previous literature described the importance for news authors and journalists to respect the vulnerability of children and ensure they are not being exploited in media representations given their vulnerable nature (UNICEF, 2007). As explained by Arora and colleagues (2015), describing children through their innocence and vulnerability, and the horrible treatment they face such as being locked up in detention may help readers empathize with the children. Di Tomasso (2012) argues that it is important to present the children in a positive way to ensure they are not being dehumanized in media discourse.

Coverage of Alan Kurdi, a three-year-old Syrian child who drowned in the Mediterranean Sea during his family's attempt to seek refuge in Europe is an example of how the media uses certain strategies to persuade individuals with the use of framing an innocent and vulnerable child. Reporting the death of Alan Kurdi had a significant international impact in refocusing the discourse around immigration to garner global support for the refugee crisis. Once the photograph of Kurdi was originally published, it only took a few hours for it to be highly publicized (Demir, 2015). People widely shared the photograph on social media and many newspapers published it along with a sorrowful narrative that detailed the difficulties faced by the Kurdi family (Demir, 2015). The explicit images the media displayed of Kurdi's body washed up on a Turkish beach gained readers' attention (Adler-Nissen, Andersen, & Hansen, 2020). Ultimately, this account enticed people's interest and changed their perceptions of immigration, especially making them sympathetic toward the vulnerable and innocent children being harmed. Using powerful images and vivid descriptions similar to what was used in the media focusing on the Kurdi family may influence individual's beliefs about immigration policies, including detention (Adler-Nissen et al., 2020).

Conclusion

This section provided an overview of extant research on the topic of media portrayal of irregular migrants held in immigration detention. Descriptions of the ways media is used as a tool of persuasion and how media discourse has been centered around irregular migrants was stated. This previous research was used to inform an analysis and interpret findings of the current study.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Approach

The present study used the theory of social construction of social problems (SCSP, Best, 2017) to inform and interpret results of the media analysis. Over the past six decades, numerous researchers have contributed to the development of this theory. This section provides an explanation of social constructionism and social construction of social problems, and then details the theoretically associated media claimsmaking strategies as they formed the key analytical framework for the data.

Social constructionism is the principal theory for the analysis in this study. It is “the process by which people jointly-constructed understandings of the world that form the basis for shared assumptions about reality. Advocates assume that meanings are developed in coordination with others rather than separately within each individual” (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009, p. 891). Galbin (2014) had a similar description of social constructionism as Leeds-Hurwitz; though he noticed the importance of genetic factors, he nonetheless agreed that social influences are the main factor that shape an individual’s concept of the world. Social construction of social problems (SCSP) is an extension of the original theory of social constructionism. Schneider (1985) explained that the “social constructionist perspective offers a way to define, understand, and study social problems” (p. 209). He further asserted that social problems are understood to be created through social interaction between people. Spector and Kitsuse (1987) described social problems as “the activities of individuals or groups making assertions of grievances and claims with respect to some putative conditions” (p. 75). Furthermore, a social problem will become a known issue if something either needs to be eliminated or improved in order for society to function properly (Spector & Kitsuse, 1987). Therefore, the theory of SCSP can be understood as a way of viewing how people create meaning and make sense of societal challenges (Best, 2017).

People's objective and subjective thoughts are often present in this theory (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Galbin, 2014; Loseke, 2003; Segre, 2016). Objective thoughts, according to Berger and Luckman (1966), Galbin (2014), and Segre (2016), are based more on factual information, whereas subjective thoughts are the ways people understand the world through social interaction. Furthermore, Loseke (2003) explained the objective perspective is used to describe the extent of a problem and how it may be harmful, whereas the subjective perspective refers to how people are aware that a social problem exists as a result of social interaction. Brown (1995) and Zetter (1991) found that subjective thoughts are often better understood by members of the public when labels are attached to the frame, which according to Goffman (1974) are ways people understand concepts through social interactions. Furthermore, the use of stereotypes to explain a problem is more easily comprehended and readily adopted by public audiences as opposed to the presentation of objective facts (Brown, 1995).

The Claimsmaking Process

Some common questions researchers ask when using SCSP theory include “What sorts of claims get made? When do claims get made, and what sorts of people make them? What sorts of responses do claims receive, and under what conditions?” (Best, 2009, p. 5). Best (2017) described that, based on SCSP theory, there is a 6-stage process that underlies making a claim: (1) claimsmaking, (2) media coverage, (3) public reaction, (4) policymaking, (5) social problems work, and (6) policy outcomes (p. 19). For the purpose of the current study, only the first two stages of the theory were considered: (1) claimsmaking, and (2) media coverage.

Claimsmaking Stage

Lindekilde (2013) studied social movements with the use of claimsmaking and described that the two main components of making claims are the claimsmaker and the addressee. Along

with this, some form of oration or act such as a request, criticism, or protest is needed to make a claim about the social problem (Lindekilde, 2013). Best (2017) found similar elements of making claims such as (1) the claim, (2) claimsmaking, and (3) the claimsmakers (Best, 2017). The “claim” is the specific issue or social problem, “claimsmaking” is when an individual recognizes a problem and makes the topic known to others in society, and the “claimsmaker” is the individual who created the initial claim (Best, 2017). In the current study, the claim under examination is that irregular migrant children and youth being held in immigration detention are being unjustly incarcerated and are deserving of sympathy. Furthermore, the claimsmaking are the ways the claim is presented to the audience through news articles, and the claimsmakers are various experts such as Public Safety Ministers or academics. Best (1987) explained that making a claim is a rhetorical action because it needs to be persuasive and due to the importance of making a claim persuasive, individuals making claims are often activists or “experts, such as physicians, scientists, lawyers, and officials” (Best, 2017, p. 20). Experts leveraging their knowledge about the problem can make their claims more believable to the audience.

Persuading the Audience. Clarke and Cochrane (1998) who studied the ways social problems are constructed described that beyond making a claim, there are important factors the claimsmakers need to consider in order to persuade their audience. For example, presenting claims in ways that will aid in gaining a reaction from the audience about the social problem to recruit additional followers (Clarke & Cochrane, 1998). Best (2017) agreed and described that claimsmakers’ aim to persuade people such as “other claimsmakers, members of the media who might publicize the claims, the general public, policymakers, and so on” (p. 40-41). When recruiting an audience, the audience consisting of highly knowledgeable individuals is more

important than the size of the audience (Loseke, 2013). Various known tactics are used in order to portray certain social problems more effectively to recruit followers.

Framing. Goffman (1974) described how people are able to interpret social situations through creating frames, which are “schemata of interpretation that provide a context for understanding information and enable individuals to locate, perceive, identify and label” (p. 21). Primary framing involves using an initial perspective of a topic without making use of previously held interpretations (Goffman, 1974). Considering that primary frames are not created from prior analysis, many would initially believe them to be insignificant, however this frame then evolves into a thought that has meaning (Goffman, 1974). Prior to Goffman (1974) studying frames, Toulmin (1958) described that an important aspect claimsmakers should consider when making a claim are: grounds and warrants. Toulmin (1958) developed the foundation of these important aspects, however Best (2017) formulated additions, clarified the characteristics of claimsmaking, and added conclusions as an important aspect to consider.

Grounds, Warrants, and Conclusions. There are three ways that framing is achieved through grounds, warrants, and conclusions. According to Toulmin (1958), grounds are backing evidence, data, and factual information provided to the audience to make a claim more believable. He explained that grounds are important pieces of evidence leading the claimsmaker to their claim (Toulmin, 1985). Similarly, Best (2017) noted that grounds are based on factual information; therefore, the claimsmaker makes an argument to display that there is an issue and that they will present evidence to bolster their claim. Best (2017) made additions to Toulmin’s (1958) ideas of grounds as he described there are three important components used in order for grounds to be made: (1) typifying examples, (2) naming, and (3) statistics. Best (2017) found that “typifying examples” help draw the attention of the audience by describing a situation’s worst

case scenario. The “naming” component refers to when the claimsmaker creates a captivating case to draw the attention of the audience (Best, 2017). Best (1990) described that names that relate to negative situations such as discrimination or abuse provide the audience with an indication of the potential harmful outcomes of the social problem. Finally, the “statistics” component includes the claimsmaker quantifying the impact of the problem as affecting a significant number of people. The larger the estimated prevalence of affected people, the greater the portrayed societal issue (Best, 2017).

Warrants help justify why the claimsmaker made their claim (Best, 2017; Toulmin, 1958). The claimsmaker presents the public with reasoning underlying the importance of solving the issue (Best, 2017). Furthermore, if someone asked a claimsmaker why the claim was made, the claimsmaker would respond with a warrant (Toulmin, 1958). Best (1990) explains a common claim highlighting a vulnerable victim or children being harmed is often received well by society because “it is harder to ignore the plight of innocent victims of those who are especially deserving” (as cited in Best, 2017, p. 38). Therefore, using grounds and warrants that focus on the vulnerability and innocence of children such as in the current study can draw on the emotions from the audience to make the claim more believable.

Once the grounds and warrants have been outlined, conclusions are made, which are recommendations made by the claimsmaker that describes how society can go about fixing the issue (Best, 2017). Claimsmakers tailor their claims towards audience views as they “inevitably characterize problems in particular ways: they emphasize some aspects and not others, they promote specific orientations, and they focus on particular causes and advocate particular solutions” (Best, 2009, p. 7).

Counterclaims. Toulmin (1958), O’Neil (1997), and Best (2017) acknowledged the possibility of people presenting counter-arguments to a claim. Toulmin (1958) described these as rebuttals, whereas O’Neil (1997) and Best (2017) referred to them as counterclaims. Best (2017) described that after a counterclaim was created, the claimmaker of the counterclaim will provide grounds, warrants, and conclusions that bolster their reasoning for the counterclaim. Furthermore, the original claim will then be altered by the original claimmaker to account for the counterclaim, making the claim more believable to the public (Best, 2017). Toulmin (1958) described this process as qualification, which allows for additions to the original claim to address and defuse counter-arguments. O’Neil (1997) found that counterclaims were often arguments about laws in place or policies to explain why the social problem is an issue.

Media Coverage Stage

The second main stage of SCSP is media coverage (Best, 2017). It is important for claimmakers to gain followers; therefore, many claimmakers work towards popularizing their claims by presenting them in media sources such as the radio, news broadcasts, social media sites, magazines, or newspapers (Best, 2015; Best, 2017). When publishing in newspapers, a primary claim is what the claimmaker presents to the media; whereas, a secondary claim is the claim presented by the media that has been tailored to their audience (Best, 2017). Many claimmakers choose to present their claims in well-known newspaper sources; however, local newspapers allow for claimmakers to focus on a more targeted audience from a specific area (Best, 2015).

Social Construction of People in the Media. According to Loseke (2003, 2009) and Loseke and Kusenbach (2008), claimmakers often use emotional strategies to engage the audience in their social problem because of the difficulty of posing effective counterclaims

against an emotional issue. Loseke (2009) explained that “emotional appeal is critical for persuasive communication in mass media” (p. 497). Kemper (1981) who studied emotions in social settings found that feelings are often created due to someone’s social interactions and their cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, Loseke and Kusenbach (2008) found that when people interact with others and make sense of certain beliefs, feelings are often an outcome of these socially constructed attitudes. More specifically, when certain experts such as a well-liked public figure or a physician makes a claim in the newspaper and provides their opinion on the problem, the audience is often inclined to believe the claim due to the claimsmakers likability and known expertise on the topic (Loseke & Kusenbach, 2008).

Claimsmakers also make use of humanitarian themes which “appeal to a human desire to make the world a better place, to help those in need, [and] to stop pain and suffering” (Loseke, 2003, p. 77). Therefore, when the media refers to a victim in need, people often sympathize with the victim (Loseke, 2003). As explained by Loseke (2003), for an individual or group of people to view another as a “victim,” others in society need to believe they deserve sympathy. Claimsmakers use the emotions of their audience to their advantage through explaining “morally good people are greatly harmed through no fault of their own [...] [and the audience] should care because good people are unjustly harmed” (Loseke, 2003, p. 79). Interestingly, Loseke and Kusenbach (2008) described that “new immigrants might have emotion cultures that differ from those who are native born;” (p. 518) therefore, reducing the gaps of the emotion code, which is knowing when and where it is socially acceptable to feel emotions may be important to show that the irregular migrants are similar to domestic Canadians (Loseke, 2009). Within the humanitarian theme, there are various tactics claimsmakers use to gain sympathy from the audience about their social problem, which will be discussed below.

Claimsmaking Strategies in the Media. Holstein and Miller (1990) studied victimology as a result of social interaction and they described “the attempt to formulate victimization as an interactional phenomenon is particularly significant because it offers alternative, even innovative, possibilities for studying the *social processes* through which persons become ‘victims’” (p. 103). Moreover, people are classified as victims if they were unjustly harmed (Holstein and Miller, 1990). Holstein and Miller’s (1990) victimology was acknowledged by Loseke (2003) who further described the importance of focusing on victims over villains in the claimmaker’s social construction of the social problem. Audiences tend to find victim claims more appealing compared to villainous claims; moreover, it is more difficult to level counterclaims against the claims of a victim because the claim often intensifies emotions (Loseke, 2003; Loseke & Kusenbach, 2008). Loseke (2009) explained that “emotion codes [...] encourage audience members to feel in particular ways about the Good [...] victim and hero and the evil [...] villain who are the primary story characters” (p. 497).

Loseke (2003) offers five claimsmaking strategies that claimsmakers use to present their claims, which were used as a framework in the current study:

- (1) “constructing victims as suffering horribly,”
- (2) “constructing potential victims as anyone,”
- (3) “constructing victim purity,”
- (4) “constructing cultural biases in sympathy evaluation,” and
- (5) “personalizing victims” (p. 80-82).

Claimsmakers focusing on suffering victims create concern among the public, which may result in sympathetic feelings (Loseke, 2003). When claimsmakers make it seem as though a victim could be any individual in society, the public becomes fearful that they or someone they know

could be harmed in the future (Loseke, 2003). Moreover, potential victims are constructed as anyone when “such claims construct social problems as equal opportunity” or randomly occurring (Loseke, 2003, p. 80). Thus, in the case of the current study, this strategy is present when the media claims that the reader or their children could potentially experience the negative effects of detention. The media portrays purity through describing the innocence and vulnerability of victims to frame them as being deserving of sympathy (Arora et al., 2015; Gordon, 2008; Loseke, 2003). Cultural biases in sympathy evaluation occurs when the claimmaker focuses on a certain category of people. In the current study, the focus of the claimmaker is irregular migrant children and youth held in immigration detention. One of the cultural feeling rules that is fostered through making claims about child hardship is “the individual is not responsible for the harm they experience” (Loseke, 2003, p. 78-79). Secondly, children may be portrayed as being “[people] with a behavioural expression of help,” therefore, as a result of these two cultural feeling rules, the public has a moral obligation to feel compassion towards certain groups of people, like children (Loseke, 2003, p. 78-79). Loseke (2013) described that children, their perceived innocence, and the value placed on freedom are often important emotion codes for almost all individuals in society. Finally, when claimmakers personalize the victims, a vivid story is portrayed illustrating the difficult situations people face (Loseke, 2003).

Cultural Feeling Rules. Along with the claimmaking strategies, cultural feeling rules often bring about emotions for various situations, which leads to feelings of sympathy towards others (Hochschild, 1979; Loseke, 2003). Hochschild (1979) pointed to the importance of cultural feeling rules regarding how social interaction alters people’s feelings, and that people respond to their feelings through emotional management. Loseke (2003) took the understanding

of emotions and cultural feeling rules and theorized situations when people are deserving of sympathy:

(1) the individual is not responsible for the harm they experience, (2) people in higher moral categories [i.e., individuals are placed in different social categories, therefore a person who works hard for what they have obtained will be in a higher moral category than someone who does not work], (3) people are in very troublesome conditions, and we tend to evaluate troublesome conditions by comparing others' to our own, (4) [people] with a behavioural expression of help [i.e., individuals feel obligated to provide assistance to individuals who are harmed but are not at fault for the harm inflicted on them]. (p. 78-79)

Ultimately, when the media claims that people are being harmed, it often fosters compassion from the public.

Conclusion

For the current study, SCSP is a beneficial theory to use as an analytical framework because it focuses on social problems and how the media portrays victims. The social problem of interest in the current study is the detention of irregular migrant children and youth in Canada. SCSP (Best, 2017) was used to guide the analysis of how children and youth are reported in the Canadian press to be affected by immigration detention and portrayed as deserving of sympathy using Loseke's (2003) claimsmaking strategies.

Research Questions

The following research question formed the focus of the current study: How does the Canadian media construct detained children and youth in IHCs through a social construction of social problems lens? Specifically, who are the claimsmakers used in the media who argue that

immigration detention is problematic for children and youth? Additionally, how are the five claimsmaking strategies used to construct detained children and youth as deserving of sympathy in Canadian media?

Chapter 4: Methodology

A media analysis was conducted to analyze media discourse in online newspapers around detained youth in Canada through a SCSP lens (Best, 2017). Qualitative media analyses protocols comprise “instruments [that] helps query the unit of analysis in an appropriate document” to establish an understanding of various “frame[s], theme[s], and discourse[s]” that are present within the data (Altheide & Schneider, 2013, p. 32/62). A content analysis is a “research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). Similar to protocols used by Elo and Kyngäs (2007), a qualitative deductive content analysis guided by Loseke’s (2003) claimsmaking strategies were used. The data collection procedure and an explanation of how the data was analyzed is described below.

Data Collection Procedure

The content analysis was of online newspapers articles reporting on detained youth immigrants found using Canadian News @ ProQuest available through the university’s digital library. Selected terms including *youth*, *minor*, *child**, *Canad**, *IHC*, *immigration holding cent**, *immigration detention cent**, *detain**, *detention*, *refugee*, *migrant*, and *asylum seek** were used to identify newspaper articles to analyze. Specified terms not to be used included *United States**, *US*, *U.S**, *America**, and *Trump*. Specifying such terms yielded narrower search results where these words were not permitted to be present in the document title. To taper results, in the first row of the ProQuest Advanced Search the terms *youth*, *minor*, and *child** were selected to be found in the document title. The second row of search terms included the term *Canad** anywhere in the document. The third row of terms were *IHC*, *immigration holding cent**, *immigration detention cent**, *detain**, or *detention* anywhere in the document text. The fourth row of search

terms consisted of *refugee*, *migrant*, or *asylum seek** anywhere in the document text. The search above helped ensure the articles sampled for the study were largely focused on youth held in immigration detention in Canada.

Only Canadian news sources were used in this research. The publication date was set for a six-year period from January 1, 2013 to December 31, 2019. These dates were selected to allow newspaper coverage during both a Conservative (approximately 34 months in office) as well as a Liberal (approximately 50 months in office) Prime Minister's term in office. This decision allowed for the capture of possible variations in the portrayal of irregular migrants over the terms of different political parties in power. A similar methodology was used in a study conducted by Ku and colleagues (2018), which examined newspaper articles over a five-year time period.

The ProQuest site was scraped until all newspaper articles were found using the key terms. There were 118 newspaper articles in the original output. From here, the newspaper articles were reviewed by the author and only included in the sample if the articles substantively reported on children held in immigration detention in Canada. Out of the 118 articles that were identified in the original search, a total of 22 print newspaper articles were included in the analysis. An additional 30 articles that were generated were duplicate articles, and were therefore removed. Due to the small number of articles generated from the original search, supplemental articles were identified through *Google* using augmented search phrases such as *children in Canada's immigration detention* and *kids in Canada's immigration detention*. Again, articles generated from this online search were screened by the author and only selected if inclusion criteria were met. A total of 13 additional articles were identified through *Google*, resulting in a total of 35 newspaper articles for analysis.

Data Analysis

The collected newspaper articles were downloaded and exported into individual word documents. The word documents were then placed in a file folder on a secure computer. Each newspaper article was individually exported into NVivo (QSR International, 2016). This tool was used to assist in the organization and analysis of the various nodes that emerged through the author's review and coding of the sampled articles. SCSP (Best, 2017) was used as the theoretical perspective to understand the discourse that arose throughout the data. Coding and analysis of media framing youth held in detention was shaped specifically by Loseke's (2003) claimsmaking strategies pertaining to individuals deserving of sympathy. After discussing coding methods with my supervisor, coding was undertaken and completed on my own. The articles were reviewed and coded to establish initial nodes; this once through afforded an opportunity to become familiar with the article content and coding process. Articles were coded for a second time following discussion with committee members. During discussion regarding the themes, it was agreed upon that the themes would be mutually exclusive. Therefore, the themes were contained under the claimsmaking strategy that they were projected to best fit. For example, the theme of exacerbated mental health was placed under the claimsmaking strategy of constructing victims as suffering horribly rather than constructing potential victims as anyone because the ways the claimsmakers portrayed the exacerbated mental health problems was through the children and youth's suffering. Articles were read over numerous times to ensure proper coding was executed and the data was exhausted. Multiple codes were identified in each of the sampled articles. While some newspaper articles included images, only the body text was analyzed in the study. The following were the main themes coded for the five claimsmaking strategies (Loseke, 2003):

1. Constructing Victims as Suffering Horribly: Frequent Detentions – “A Great Many Victims,” Lengthy Detention, and Exacerbated Mental Health Problems
2. Constructing Potential Victims as Anyone
3. Constructing Victim Purity: Miscarriage of Justice and Counterclaims
4. Constructing Cultural Biases in Sympathy Evaluation: Biases about Family and Biases about Children
5. Personalizing Victims: Describing Life in Detention

The above themes will be further described in the results section below.

Chapter 5: Results

The purpose of this research was to analyze the media discourse of irregular migrant children and youth held in immigration detention in Canada through a SCSP lens (Best, 2017). Specifically, who are the claimsmakers used in the media who argue that immigration detention is problematic for children and youth? This focus will provide insight into the various experts used in the media to create persuasive claims. Additionally, how are the five SCSP claimsmaking strategies used to construct detained children and youth as deserving of sympathy in Canadian media? Results are presented in separate sections addressing these five claimsmaking strategies (Loseke, 2003): (1) constructing victims as suffering horribly, (2) constructing potential victims as anyone, (3) constructing victim purity, (4) constructing cultural biases in sympathy evaluation, and (5) personalizing victims. Cultural feeling rules were used to analyze the results, which are “cultural ways of feeling, emotion codes are sets of ideas about what emotions are appropriate to feel when, where, and towards whom or what as well as how emotions should be outwardly expressed” (Loseke, 2009, p. 501). An analysis of the claimsmakers will be provided, followed by a discussion of the claimsmaking strategies and their subthemes.

The Claimsmakers

Claimsmakers such as activists or experts are used in the media to help portray certain social problems to the audience in order to make a claim more believable (Best, 2017). Table 1 displays the frequency of 35 news sources included in the sample. The three most common news sources were: (1) The Globe and Mail ($n = 8$), (2) Toronto Star ($n = 5$), and (3) Ottawa Citizen ($n = 5$). Regional news sources comprised newspaper articles in Canada of smaller readership and only published a single newspaper article. Notably, The Globe and Mail, Toronto Star, and Ottawa Citizen are media sources located in the same provinces that house IHCs.

Table 1

Frequency of Sampled Media Sources

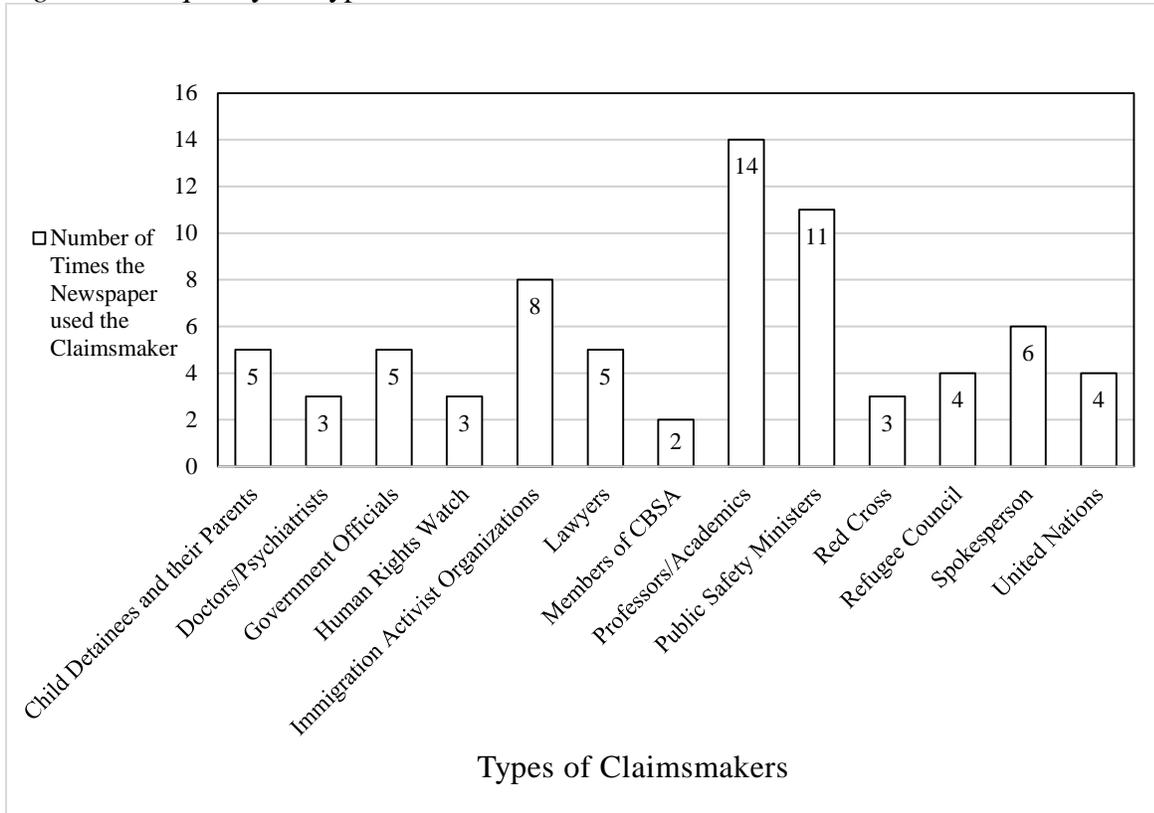
News Source	<i>n</i>	%
Canadian Press	2	5.7
CBC News	2	5.7
CTV National News	3	8.6
Global News	2	5.7
Ottawa Citizen	5	14.3
Regional News	6	17.1
The Globe and Mail	8	22.9
Toronto Star	5	14.3
Vancouver Sun	2	5.7

Note. The percentages shown are calculated with a denominator of 35 sampled articles.

Due to regional newspapers often being from smaller news sources, political stance could only be identified in 32 articles (approximately 91 percent) in the sample. However, of these 32 news sources, there was a relatively even representation on the political spectrum: Left ($n = 3$), Centre-Left ($n = 11$), Centre ($n = 3$), and Centre-Right ($n = 15$). Political leaning of each news source was distinguished using a media bias website (Media Bias Fact Check, 2019), and were reviewed by the author to validate the accuracy of this source. Notably, despite 15 sampled articles being from centre-right biased news sources, there was only one article that advanced counterclaims concerning the purity of youthful irregular migrants. Previous research found right-winged politically biased newspaper articles to construct irregular migrants as more threatening towards society than left-winged politically biased news sources (Fryberg et al., 2012). The current study did not identify nearly as many counterclaims as previous research, which will be discussed later, and could be a result of a lack of inclusion of news articles from extreme right-winged sources, as radical sources are rare in Canadian media (Scrivens, Davies, & Frank, 2018).

Figure 1 describes the types and frequency of various claimsmakers found in the sample. A total of 32 sampled newspaper articles (approximately 91 percent) made use of claimsmakers to make assertions more believable. The newspaper articles that did not make use of claimsmakers focused on more general claims about immigration detention, such as statistics regarding the number of detainees, descriptions of the detention facilities, or immigration detention policies (The Globe and Mail, 2018; Harris, 2017). Best (2017) advances that claimsmakers may be activists, and “various sorts of experts, such as physicians, scientists, lawyers, and officials” (p. 20). Figure 1 illustrates that Researchers/Academics ($n = 14$) were the most widely used experts who emphasized the negative implications of immigration detention such as exacerbated mental health problems, which was confirmed by previous research (Brean, 2017). The second most widely used claimsmaker were Public Safety Ministers ($n = 11$). Public Safety Ministers often made claims on the inhumanity of detaining youth, describing that youth should only be detained if no other options are available, and recommending increased funding for detention facilities to reduce the reported inhumanity of child detention (Canadian Press, 2016; Kassam, 2016). The third most frequently used claimsmakers were advocacy groups ($n = 8$). Claims made by advocacy groups described poor nutrition, exacerbated mental health problems, and changes in children’s behaviour during detention (Brean, 2016). Researchers/Academics are highly knowledgeable individuals who have credentials, Public Safety Ministers are educated in the importance of keeping people in society safe, and advocacy groups often strive to ensure the best interest of the group they are advocating for. Therefore, using these knowledgeable individuals who want the best for the irregular migrant youth to explain the portrayed horrifying conditions of detention may make the claims more believable.

Figure 1. Frequency of Types of Claimsmakers



Note. The numbers shown are calculated with a denominator of 35 sampled articles, including missing data.

As shown in Figure 1, sampled articles made use of highly knowledgeable and educated individuals to persuade their audiences that detained irregular migrants are people deserving of sympathy. In particular, making use of professors and researchers because they have academic credentials, legitimate knowledge, and are informed about the effects of immigration detention and vivid descriptions of detainees horrifying lived experiences helps draw on the emotions of the audience. Claimsmakers such as activists and experts were found to frame the helplessness of detained children by presenting the audience with claims about undeserved harm inflicted on youth, inhumane detention conditions, and being in need of assistance (Best, 2017; Loseke, 2003).

Constructing Victims as Suffering Horribly

Results demonstrated that constructing the victim as suffering horribly was the most commonly used claimsmaking strategy to construct detained children and youth as people deserving of sympathy. The large extent of victim suffering was presented, often through the use of statistical evidence to convey the prevalence of the impact on a significant part of the population. As shown in Table 2, approximately 80 percent of sampled newspaper articles were found to invoke the strategy of constructing victims as suffering horribly. Three subthemes were identified in the sampled articles including (1) Frequent Detentions ($n = 26$), (2) Lengthy Detention ($n = 9$), and (3) Exacerbated Mental Health Problems ($n = 20$).

Table 2

Frequency of Articles Using Specific Claimsmaking Strategies (and Associated Themes)

Claimsmaking Strategy and Prominent Themes	<i>n</i>	%
Constructing Victims as Suffering Horribly	28	80.0
Frequent Detentions – “A Great Many Victims”	26	74.3
Lengthy Detention	9	25.7
Exacerbated Mental Health Problems	20	57.1
Constructing Potential Victims as Anyone	0	0.0
Constructing Victim Purity	15	42.9
Miscarriage of Justice	14	40.0
Counterclaims	1	2.9
Constructing Cultural Biases in Sympathy Evaluation	20	57.1
Biases about Family	12	34.3
Biases about Children	9	25.7
Personalizing Victims	6	17.1
Describing Life in Detention	6	17.1

Note. The percentages shown are calculated with a denominator of 35 sampled articles. Strategies and themes were not mutually exclusive, and articles contained multiple examples of different themes.

Frequent Detentions: “A Great Many Victims”

About 74 percent of sampled articles portrayed victims as suffering horribly through examples of the overuse of detention. Claimsmakers relied on statistics to illustrate the extent of the problem in order to construct a significant number of children and youth affected by

immigration detention. For example, Arbel and Showler (2013) stated, “with reports that Canada incarcerated 289 migrant children in detention facilities last year, Canada’s increasingly questionable policy of detaining refugee claimants, including children, is again in the spotlight” (p. 1). A similar article by Renzetti (2018) emphasized many detentions of accompanied and unaccompanied youth:

“Last year, 151 minors were detained with their parents in Canadian immigration holding centres. Eleven others were held in custody unaccompanied by an adult.” We should be vigilant about the treatment received by children detained here, too. (p. 1)

On a larger scale describing the number of detentions over a three-year period, Yussuff (2018) stated:

595 minors have been detained at Canadian immigration holding centres [...]. Forty-three were unaccompanied by an adult. We need to be asking why children – including Canadian citizens – are being held in jail-like detention facilities at all in this country, even if it’s with a parent. (p. 1)

This particular article went on explaining how child detention is unacceptable and Yussuff (2018) described the agony he would be in if his child was being held in detention. Many irregular migrant detainees were portrayed as suffering horribly as many children faced detention, some in deplorable conditions such as jails emphasize the many victims (Arbel & Showler, 2013, Renzetti, 2018; Yussuff, 2018).

Lengthy Detention

Victims were constructed as suffering horribly by claiming they endured long-term detentions, which occurred in approximately 26 percent of sampled articles. Lengthy detentions were coded when the articles emphasized the long periods youth were held in detention facilities.

Articles often described the suffering through the length of detention by providing the number of days or months detained. For example, one article described the number of child detainees from 2014 to 2015, the age of the children, and the length of their detention using statistics across Canada:

87 of them were under five years old, and 35 were between six and 11 years old. They were kept in detention for an average of 16 days. Six of them were kept as long as 90 days in detention, and another eight children were kept up to 180 days, or six months. (Solyom, 2018, p. 1)

Solyom (2018) consulted Hanna Gros, a researcher who described the above lengthy detentions further. She elucidated that convicted criminals have the ability to count down the number of days until their release date, but irregular migrants are unable to count down to their release because they are often unsure of when they will be free, which ultimately leads to more trauma. Similarly, another article described a study conducted between 2010 and 2014 that used statistics to highlight the length of detention of youth,

which range in length from days to several months, and calls for urgent reform to a Canadian practice that has attracted consistent criticism from the United Nations. The average length of detention is 10 days for children who are formally detained. For those who are held informally with their parents, the average length of the detention stretches to nearly 30 days. “Because under the law they’re invisible, their interests aren’t identified and represented,” said Muscati. “So they actually languish in these facilities for longer periods of time than formally detained children.” (Kassam, 2016, p. 1)

The invisibility of the detained children is emphasized and lasts throughout the lengthy detentions. According to the director of the International Human Rights Program (IHRP), the

children who are not accounted for are some of the most vulnerable individuals detained because they are not legally supported and do not get a review hearing (Gros, 2017). Furthermore, de facto detainees are not counted in statistics and are not taken into consideration regarding their parent's detainment because their parents "chose" for them to be held in detention (Gros, 2017). Thus, children are suffering in these lengthy detentions because they are not accounted for. Along with newspaper articles using statistics to describe the length of detentions, indefinite detentions were also referenced. Kennedy (2017) explained, "non-citizens can be jailed indefinitely if they are deemed a danger to the public, unlikely to show up for deportation or their identity is in doubt" (p.1). The suffering of the children is portrayed in the examples above through the description of children held in detention for extensively long periods, while some child de facto detainees have been described as being detained indefinitely, oftentimes accompanying their parents.

The three quotes above framed the suffering detained children and youth faced by emphasizing the long and unpredictable nature and injustice of their detention. Research by Gros and Song (2016) argue that reasons used to detain an individual are not always held to a rigorous standard. Sometimes, reasonable grounds "rely on evidence that they consider 'credible or trustworthy in the circumstances'" (Gros & Song, 2016, p. 34); therefore, a CBSA officer can detain an irregular migrant if they believe they might be deemed a risk. As Solyom (2018) explained, many young children, particularly five-year-olds were detained for great lengths; however, children under the age of five were very unlikely to be a risk, therefore, many are suffering due to their parent's detainment.

Indeterminate sentences are a disposition reserved for the most violent or mentally disordered offenders in Canada. Section 735 of the Criminal Code of Canada describes that

dangerous offenders are the most violent people in society. Allowing dangerous offenders the ability to remain in society could cause serious harm and create an unsafe environment for the public, providing justification for their indeterminate sentence (Government of Canada, 2019). In 2018, approximately 63 individuals were designated dangerous offenders in Canada (Statista, 2019). Similarly, those found not criminally responsible (NCR) experience uncertain lengths of detention (Government of Canada, 2013, p. 1). An NCR designation is given to an individual accused of a crime who, due to mental illness, did not understand the nature or quality of their actions, or understand their actions were wrong (Criminal Code, 1985). Such persons are under the purview of the provincial Parole Board and will be detained until the Parole Board deems them not to be an imminent threat to community members (Government of Canada, 2018; Government of Canada, 2019). Only 0.001% of people charged with an offence are found NCR (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 2013). Considering these examples in which Canada indeterminately detains people who have violated laws and present a very real danger to the public, bestowing a similar fate on irregular migrant youth unlikely to present such a threat can be understood as inordinately lengthy and a cause of suffering. The media commonly portrayed indeterminate detainment of irregular migrant youth as morally wrong (Kennedy, 2017). Many irregular migrants have previously experienced trauma, and therefore holding them for an extended period of time may contribute to their continual suffering (Coffey, Kaplan, Sampson, & Tucci, 2010; Mares, Newman, Dudley, & Gale. 2002). Correctional Service Canada (2015) indicated the purpose of incarceration was to discipline offenders and discourage others from committing crimes, and the youth in this study are rarely offenders. The audience is becoming more concerned of the frequent and lengthy detentions because the media commonly represented the youth as undeserving of their detentions, and criticized associated harsh immigration policies.

Exacerbated Mental Health Problems

Approximately 57 percent of sampled newspaper articles displayed youth suffering through examples describing the worsened mental health of detained youth and the persistence of the deterioration post release. A journalist from the Toronto Star argued that detention was “an experience children often don’t recover from for years after their release. Instead, studies show they exhibit increased symptoms of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress and suicidal thoughts, as well as developmental delays and behavioural issues” (Toronto Star, 2019, p. 1). Similarly, Kassam (2016) stated,

Even just a few days in detention can cause serious and long-lasting psychological harm to children. Studies have shown children who are detained experience increased symptoms of post-traumatic stress, anxiety and depression, and are more likely to contemplate suicide. These symptoms often persist long after the children are released.
(p. 2)

As displayed in both quotes above, detaining youth may lead to significant mental health problems that could potentially last once they have been released from detention. A study conducted by Kronick and colleagues (2015) comparably found detained children’s anxiety often worsens during detention. While the anxiety did improve post-release, children were still experiencing high levels of anxiety. Therefore, results from this study are consistent with previous studies suggesting that child detention has lasting implications on youth mental health during detention as well as after they have been released.

The media also reported some youth had displayed altered behaviours due to the combined effects of detention and their mental health decline. For example, an advocacy group described,

Newborns to teenagers, they come from all over the world, and have often fled conflict. They are held in literal jails – the main ones are in Toronto and Laval, Que. – where nutrition is poor for babies especially, conditions are grim, and the detainees’ mental health is damaged so much that the younger ones start playing games like “security check pat down.” (Brean, 2017, p. 1)

The exacerbated mental health concerns of detained youth have lasting implications which have been shown to change their behaviour, leading to the creation of disturbing games modeling situations that are commonplace in detention. Even short-term detention may have an enduring influence on individuals, and long-term detention may lead to worsening effects (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2019).

Silverman (2014) described those held in immigration detention who have mental health problems are often transferred to prisons to receive enhanced services for their mental health needs. Furthermore, studies show “those with suicidal ideation are sometimes kept in solitary confinement” (Gros & van Groll, 2015, p. 8). Solitary confinement for suicidal individuals is not an effective treatment option because it may intensify mental health conditions (Haney & Lynch, 1997). Confining youth in solitary confinement will be discussed in a later section of the results. Thus, serious mental health problems in this vulnerable population are not treated adequately and in many cases are worsened through restrictive policies that lead to isolation.

In constructing victims as suffering horribly, there have been distinct problems revealed in the news articles in relation to cultural feeling rules. These problems include detained youth are in need of help because they are frequently held in detention for extended lengths of time, the child detainees are oftentimes not at fault for the treatment inflicted on them, and their mental health has declined (Loseke, 2003). According to the Government of Canada (2017), during a

lifetime, one in every three individuals will be affected by a mental illness in Canada. A known risk factor of mental illness is early childhood trauma or abuse (Government of Canada, 2017). People often receive assistance with their mental illness through services offered within the community, health professionals, and in more serious situations, hospitalization (Government of Canada, 2017); however, such services are not always offered in detention centres. Many refugees are fleeing war and violence from their home country hoping for a better life for their families, fearfully immigrating to Canada with little opportunity to gather the identification information required to immigrate (United Nations, 2019), which often leads to their detention. Therefore, many refugees have prior trauma from fleeing their country (United Nations, 2019), and then sometimes have an extremely unwelcoming beginning in Canada due to detainment. Thus, the media portrayal of irregular migrant children suffering horribly gains sympathy from the public because the detained children are constructed as undeserving of their many, lengthy detentions and exacerbated mental health problems.

Constructing Potential Victims as Anyone

The strategy of constructing potential victims as anyone referred to times where claimsmakers inferred that any person could be a victim, including the person consuming the media, or someone they know (Loseke, 2003). Since anyone could be considered a victim, fear may be generated among the audience because no individual wants to be victimized (Loseke, 2003). Interestingly, in the current study, there were no coded articles that constructed potential victims as anyone even though the media articles often framed detained youth as being deserving of sympathy (see Table 2).

“Othering” is defined as a group’s recognition of norms; anyone who is different whether they have unusual values or beliefs is considered an outsider or the other (Chan, 2013; Esses et

al., 2013). “Othering” can be deduced in what has not been said in the media as much as what has been said. Maynard (2017) argues that racial profiling of irregular migrants does occur, resulting in disproportionate detention of Black irregular migrants; however, this trend appears to be practically invisible to media reporting. Perceptions of dangerousness and threat are deeply engrained in aspects of identity including African ancestry, a legacy rooted in the slave trade, including ideas about criminality and the need for police surveillance of Black people (Maynard, 2017). People of Middle Eastern descent have been stereotyped as having terrorist motives, and being referred to as a threat (Henry & Tator, 2002; Lawlor & Tolley, 2017; Medianu et al., 2015); whereas people from South Asia, Japan, and China have been stereotyped as economic threats because people fear they may take domestic jobs because they are hired for cheap labour (Eberl et al., 2018; Maynard, 2017). Wortley (2006) explains that persons of colour make up 3% of the population in Canada (as cited in Maynard, 2017), yet there is a paucity of references to race in constructions of irregular migrants deserving sympathy. People who immigrate to Canada often take on aspects of Canadian National Identity, which includes the culture, compassionate, moral, and humanitarian nature of Canadians (Bauder, 2008). Oftentimes, this results in adults being influenced by racist ideas, which are frequently internalized by children, making it difficult for children to escape these engrained identities (Maynard, 2017). Strong xenophobic tendencies may be less prominent in my findings due to Canada’s lack of radical news sources (Poynting & Perry, 2007). In sum, claimsmakers did not rely on constructing potential victims as anyone as there were no instances found in the sample.

Constructing Victim Purity

Constructing victim purity is another claimmaking strategy used by news sources as they portrayed irregular migrants as innocent and holding high morals; people who have worked for

what they received in life, and therefore are undeserving of the mistreatment they faced (Loseke, 2003). As shown in Table 2, approximately 43 percent of sampled articles constructed irregular migrant youth through victim purity using one major theme: (1) Miscarriage of Justice ($n = 14$). This theme will be discussed, followed by a discussion about one counterclaim found in a single source.

Miscarriage of Justice

Approximately 40 percent of sampled newspaper articles framed the detained youth through victim purity by describing the youth as not being at fault for their detention. According to previous research, children are often constructed as innocent and vulnerable beings who have not yet learned societal stereotypes and are often unable to protect themselves (Arora et al., 2015; Gordon, 2008). The following quotes construct the youth's punishing detainment irrespective of their lack of criminality. For example, Muscati (2017) explained children being detained due to their parent's detention:

According to *Invisible Citizens: Canadian Children in Immigration Detention*, a new report from the University of Toronto's International Human Rights Program (IHRP), parents who ultimately have their children stay with them in detention quickly find themselves down a legal rabbit hole. Canadian children in this predicament are considered "guests" or de facto detainees. They are particularly vulnerable because they do not benefit from the legal safeguards that protect formally detained non-Canadian children. Since de facto detained children are not legally recognized as being detained, they are not subject to detention review hearings. In other words, they are legally invisible in the immigration detention system. (p. 1)

Children were held in detention because their parents were detained and there were no other guardians who could provide care. Therefore, the de facto children have been stripped of their rights and their health is not taken into consideration during detention. Another quote similarly described the detained youth's lack of criminality: "Have those in detention been convicted of similar crimes? No. Have they even been charged with a crime? No. They exist in legal limbo, but can be treated like convicted criminals anyway" (Ashby, 2016, p. 1). Both quotes framed that the detained youth were held in detention, despite their innocence, and many detainees were in precarious legal positions because of their lack of visibility and guaranteed rights.

One quote in the sample used the term innocent to portray the miscarriage of justice inflicted on detained youth. Kalvapalle's (2017) article began by referring to children being held as "de facto detainees," then went on to describing children as innocent. Audrey Macklin (Human Rights Chair at the University of Toronto) opined, "Children are surely the most innocent and defenceless among us. Yet Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) detains both citizen and non-citizen children, without acknowledging detention of the former or adequately justifying detention of the latter" (p. 4). The children referenced in this section did not choose to immigrate to Canada, they were brought along with their parents, resulting in them enduring distress. Gordon (2008), a researcher, described "childhood innocence, the idea that children should not have to bear the burdens of their parents' poverty; that children deserve opportunity precisely because of their youth" (p. 335-336) is relevant because it frequently appeared as a theme in the current study. Previous research described imprisoning children in Canada as frowned upon because it deprives kids of their liberty and often leads to major mental health problems, such as anxiety, depression, and PTSD (Gros & Song, 2016). According to the Youth Criminal Justice Act (2002), Canada does not incarcerate children under the age of 12. It is

inconsistent, then, that accompanied irregular migrant detainee children are being incarcerated (Government of Canada, 2020).

Counterclaims

Sampled articles often framed child detainee's suffering through the construction of victim purity; however, Walters (2013) described one instance where children were not portrayed through innocence, an important departure from the original theme:

A 2012 submission to the Committee on the Rights of the Child by the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants highlights some of the challenges facing unaccompanied minors. Some are labelled 'bullet' or 'anchor' children, sent ahead to help the rest of their family migrate to Canada. This stigma persists even though minors who are granted asylum can't include parents or siblings when they eventually fill out Permanent Residency applications and can't sponsor immediate relatives while still minors. (Even when they're adults, they have to show they're earning enough income to support family members when they first arrive). (p. 3)

Walters (2013) described particular stereotypes that may be identified when unaccompanied youth arrive in Canada. Children were explained to be sent to Canada in order for their family to follow afterwards, an action that may originally be considered as morally wrong because it makes it seem as though the irregular migrants are "cheating the system." This is not the child's fault; however, the children are forced by their guardians to partake, giving their parent's an easier time of gaining asylum because the children are already in Canada. It may appear that the children are undeserving of sympathy because there seems to be a lack of innocence, however these children are often sent by their parents (Walters, 2013). Children are vulnerable, make less sophisticated decisions, and follow their parent's decision-making (Arora et al., 2015); therefore,

children may still be perceived as innocent because the choice to immigrate is generally not theirs. Regardless of this single newspaper article presenting counterclaims about irregular migrant youth being impure, there were far more newspaper articles constructing victim purity portraying irregular migrant youth as people deserving of sympathy.

According to Loseke's (2003) cultural feeling rules, people would be deemed as being deserving of sympathy if they "are not responsible for the harm they experience" (p. 78); a consistent finding in the miscarriage of justice theme (Kalvapalle, 2017; Muscati, 2017). The Conventions on the Rights of the Child (CRC) argues that child detention should only occur as a last resort (CRC, 1989, article 37), yet 2017 statistics describing 162 youth and child detainees in Canada indicates otherwise (Global Detention Project, 2018). Canadians are thought to value protecting children and providing them with an environment to prosper (Gros & Song, 2016); however, findings suggest that the media claims that the protection of children does not always occur (Kalvapalle, 2017; Muscati, 2017). Therefore, the media portraying innocent children as undeserving of their detention engenders public compassion because innocent children are facing harm and injustice by no fault of their own.

Constructing Cultural Biases in Sympathy Evaluation

Children are a group that people often sympathize with, therefore the claimsmakers in the media highlighted children's plights to construct cultural biases in sympathy evaluation. This claimsmaking strategy is used when claimsmakers focus on portrayals of certain groups such as children because they are often found to be deserving of sympathy (Best, 2017). The public also tends to sympathize with white middle-class individuals over minorities such as irregular migrants (Loseke, 2003); therefore, claimsmakers worked to reduce the difference between people in order to display the difficulties irregular migrant children faced in detention. For

instance, making it seem as though irregular migrant youth are similar to domestic Canadians because they comparably want to be with their family, are in need of their parents' assistance, and need the ability to freely play and prosper. As displayed in Table 2, approximately 57 percent of sampled articles explored cultural biases in sympathy evaluation. Two themes arose in the data: (1) Biases about Family ($n = 12$), and (2) Biases about Children ($n = 9$), which will be further explored.

Biases about Family

The theme biases about family referred to instances where the articles referenced separation among family members during detention. According to research by McCarthy (2012), family constitutes a sense of togetherness, belonging, and being in the presence of relatives. Specifically, Canadians often value having a tight-knit family bond (Walton, Cohen, Cwir, & Spencer, 2012). Approximately 34 percent of sampled newspaper articles constructed cultural biases in sympathy evaluation through examples about family biases.

One example from the sample that illustrated the separation among family members in Canada's IHCs referred to a difficult parental decision regarding whether the child should remain with them in detention, be given to another family member, or enter foster care:

Others are Canadian citizens who are forced to choose between separating from parents who have been detained by immigration authorities or living in detention with their parents as de facto detainees. Those who stay with their parents still face family separation, in that they are held with their mother and have limited visits during the day with their father. (Kassam, 2016, p. 2)

Comparably, Bensadoun (2019) reiterates the separation among family members as he explained at the Vancouver detention centre that "men and women are held separately while children may

be housed with their mothers” (p. 1). Therefore, regardless of the parent’s decision, the child is still separated from their parent, a similar finding to previous research (Kronick et al., 2015). Previous literature described that any form of family separation, whether the child is held inside the detention facility or living outside of the detention centres often leads to trauma (Wood, 2018).

According to previous research, families are negatively affected by family separation because they often experience “significant anxiety, including separation anxiety, selective mutism, mood and posttraumatic symptoms” (Kronick et al., 2015, p. 292). Evidently, children and their parents are often harmfully impacted by family separation (Gros, 2017). In particular, many parents reported feeling they had let down their children during separation because they were no longer able to provide for their child (Coffey et al., 2010). Irwin Elman, a child advocate, argued the only reason children should be separated from their parents is if the parents have “physically, emotionally, sexually abused or neglected” their child (Gros & Song, 2016, p. 41). With Canadian’s sense of family reflected in strong bonds and a sense of belonging (McCarthy, 2012), claimsmakers rely on biases about family to create compassion in the audience concerning family separation and the harmful effect it has on children.

Biases about Children

Approximately 26 percent of the sampled newspaper articles constructed cultural biases in sympathy evaluation through examples of child suffering. Canadians strive to have children grow up with the ability to prosper, and are knowledgeable about the importance of protecting children because of their innocence and vulnerability (Arora et al., 2015; Gordon, 2008). Youth in immigration detention were portrayed as being in isolation from being allowed outside as well as being held in solitary confinement, which will be further explored.

An example of an article that referenced child isolation stated: “The constant surveillance can cause mental distress. Separation from the community and outside world leads to a sense of isolation” (Toronto Star, 2016, p. 1). The provided quote illustrates the segregating effect of these facilities and incumbent suffering of detained youth due to a lack of interaction and being free. It is essential to an individual’s well-being to have access to healthy environments such as being outdoor in order to grow and live a healthy life (Ginsburg, 2007). Similarly, previous literature found that children in detention are not given the opportunity to freely play and expand their knowledge (Gros, 2017). Moreover, some children have zero interest in playing due to feelings of depression (Gros, 2017). Various researchers found children in detention face boredom, rigid rules and restrictions, a lack of beneficial education, and very little activity in which to participate (Kronick et al., 2015; Kronick et al., 2018). Research shows when people are isolated, they begin to withdraw socially, leading to a lack of trust in others, and becoming stuck in a quiet desperation (Haney, 2002). Some people who feel isolated may be affected by psychological distress; in turn this could lead to post-traumatic stress disorder once they have been released from the facilities (Gros & Song, 2016; Haney, 2002).

Along with child isolation while being held indoors, some youth were reported to be held in solitary confinement, which is the isolation of an individual in a small cell for a minimum of 22 hours each day; and contact with other individuals even in the IHCs is rare (John Howard Society of Ontario, 2017). One case in particular was in the spotlight regarding solitary confinement and government officials were not pleased with how the CBSA dealt with the minor involved:

The treatment of migrants held in Canada’s immigration holding centres made headlines in 2016, when a 16-year-old Syrian boy was detained in isolation for three weeks. Public

Safety Minister Ralph Goodale responded in November, 2017, with a ministerial directive ordering Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) to “stop the detention or housing minors.” (Zilio, 2019, p. 1)

Another newspaper article described solitary confinement for youth held in detention was more of a common occurrence than expected:

Several teenage boys caught travelling alone who were then mostly placed in solitary confinement. “In some cases it could go on for weeks or months,” Audrey Macklin, chair in human rights law at the University of Toronto, told CTV News. “It is very damaging to them” (Akman, 2017, p. 1).

There are many negative outcomes as a result solitary confining youth as The Globe and Mail (2016) explained, “For minors, the negative effects of solitary confinement are amplified. The human brain undergoes significant changes in adolescence and continues to develop into early adulthood” (p. 1). Therefore, it is reported that youth are not provided with the opportunity to have proper brain development while being in isolation. Thus, these kinds of negative outcomes are particularly egregious because they are not consistent with our cultural bias about protecting innocent children.

Forbidding youth from interacting with others and being held in a small confined space demonstrates detained youth as being stripped of their rights (Government of Canada, 2019). According to the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (1992), the purpose of solitary confinement “is to maintain the security of the penitentiary or the safety of any person by not allowing an inmate to associate with other inmates” (Government of Canada, 2019). Haney and Lynch (1997) emphasized there are many negative mental health outcomes of solitary confinement such as anxiety, difficulty sleeping, and loss of appetite (as cited in Kerr, 2015).

Ultimately, the media framed that solitary confinement is harmful for youth and may lead to negative lasting implications.

Personalizing Victims

The last claimsmaking strategy personalizing victims, draws on emotions from the audience through detailing vivid stories about victims affected by a social problem (Loseke, 2003). Oftentimes, the more descriptive the story pertaining to the victim, the more sympathy gained from the readers. As presented in Table 2, approximately, 17 percent of the sampled newspaper articles used the personalizing victim's strategy. A singular theme was identified: (1) *Describing Life in Detention* ($n = 6$), which will be further explained.

Describing Life in Detention

The theme describing life in detention was prominent in 17 percent of sampled newspaper articles focusing on rich descriptions of the poor treatment many detained youth faced. The use of specific instances of certain cases deeply personalized victims through revealing their lived experience in detention. The first quote illustrated the process of a 16-year-old woman who needed to leave university in her home country because her father ran out of money after borrowing it from an old man (Hayes, 2013). The young woman's father gave her away to marry the older man, in order to "repay" him for the borrowed money (Hayes, 2013). As a result of this, the young woman fled to Canada but ended up enduring the detention admission process:

She looked confused and unsure where to go, so soon a pair of immigration officers, a man and a woman, demanded to see her passport and took the terrified girl away to a small room. After questioning her for most of the afternoon, she was sent to the Immigration Holding Centre on Rexdale Blvd., where she was detained for two weeks.

Recently, she sat in a meeting room in the downtown offices of McCarthy Tetrault, the fourth largest law firm in Canada, reflecting on the experience. “Oh my goodness, I was so scared,” she says. “They said, ‘we don’t know how you got into the country but we’re going to put you in jail.’ Visibly shaking, she added an expression from her homeland: ‘I thought, ‘There’s a pot cooking in the fire now.’” (Hayes, 2013, p. 1)

This young woman was distraught and did not expect to end up in immigration detention after all the previous trauma she faced back home. The article also described what the young woman looked like stating she is a “pretty young woman, with shoulder-length wavy hair, wire-frame glasses and red lipstick” (Hayes, 2013, p. 2). Describing the young woman can help her be visualized by the audience to personalize the story, possibly making people think of their young kids and understand the horrifying situation that may be endured. Along with personalizing victims while becoming detained, the media also illustrated life while being held in the detention facilities. For example, the Toronto Star (2016) narrated the daily routines of detained youth:

When 2-year-old Michel returned from playing outside each day, he would go straight to a wall and put his hands up. Preparing himself to be searched by a guard was a simple routine for him since he was raised from birth with his mother in an Immigration Holding Centre. How is it possible that a toddler could be held in a cell in Canada for two years, never mind searched? (p. 1)

Similarly, a former youth detainee provided a richer description of the strict routines they followed:

In a phone interview from Ukraine Monday night, one of these children, Vladyslav Zadorozhnyi, 15, described his experiences in Toronto’s immigration detention facility last month. Vladyslav, his mother and seven-year-old brother were held for five days as

flight risks before being deported last week, after their refugee claim failed. The youth described being chained in handcuffs when he was moved around the institution. He was forced to follow a rigid schedule that started with breakfast at 6 a. m., and only a brief half hour outside, but only if his mother could accompany him. They were not allowed contact with her husband, his stepfather, who was held separately for much longer. “It was like a jail,” Vladyslav said. Friends brought them candies only to have them confiscated, the family says. (Brean, 2017, p. 1)

As illustrated, the media portrayed the excessive interrogation of youth, and the strict daily rules of the facilities.

According to previous literature, children are highly susceptible to harm because they are physically, psychologically and economically dependent and because they are unable to protect themselves (Arora et al., 2015). Furthermore, youth who have been exposed to dangers such as war or traumatic experiences in their home country are some of the most vulnerable individuals (Arora et al., 2015). Therefore, as explained by Hayes (2013), continual interrogation of children by a person they do not know may be extremely intimidating and traumatic. The three cases above richly narrated the harsh treatment, trauma, and fear inflicted on the detained youth. As previously stated, detention is for individuals who committed a crime (Government of Canada, 2019); however, in the case of the young 16-year-old woman, she was threatened to be put in jail (Hayes, 2013) and others such as Michel (Toronto Star, 2016) and Vladyslav (Brean, 2017) faced strict rules in detention similar to jail. Such occurrences represent the inability of child growth and potential trauma the youth and children faced in detention because they were not provided with the fundamental aspects of child growth such as encouraged free play. The horrifying portrayed conditions of detention may be remembered by the children and youth for a

lifetime, as previous research described there is often trauma during detention and post-migration trauma that could occur such as post-traumatic stress disorder (Beiser & Hou, 2016; Kronick et al., 2015). Providing the audience with a better understanding of the difficult living situation of detention on children and youth may help foster public sympathy.

Chapter 6: Discussion

The present content analysis of Canadian newspaper articles investigated the media discourse surrounding detained irregular migrant children and youth using a SCSP framework (Best, 2017). Findings suggested that claimsmakers were typically academics, safety ministers, and advocates and that four of the five claimmaking strategies were used frequently to portray migrant children and youth as victims deserving of public sympathy. These four claimmaking strategies (i.e., constructing victims as suffering horribly, constructing victim purity, constructing cultural biases in sympathy evaluation, and personalizing victims) invoke similar cultural feeling rules. Recall that cultural ways of feeling are “emotion codes [and] sets of ideas about what emotions are appropriate to feel when, where, and towards whom or what as well as whose emotions should be outwardly expressed” (Loseke, 2009, p. 501). In the present study, four claimmaking strategies were found to appeal to cultural feeling rules connected to children and family. Accordingly, this section will discuss childhood cultural feeling rules, followed by cultural feeling rules and Canadian National Identity (Loseke, 2003) surrounding family unity. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how the media made irregular migrant youth relatable to domestic Canadians. Implications, limitations, and future directions of the study will be presented at the end of the discussion section.

Protection of Children

Given that children are unable to protect themselves physically, psychologically, and economically, they are dependent on their parents (Arora et al., 2015). A commonly held value in Canadian society is the protection of children and the importance of providing children with the opportunity for free play to assist in the development of a healthy mind through social interaction (Ginsburg, 2007). The media in the current study capitalized on cultural feeling rules

pertaining to children in order to portray them as being deserving of sympathy. Child hardships were often framed through (1) children being innocent and not at fault for the harm they faced, (2) youth in need of help due to a lack of basic services and experience of isolation, (3) the imposition of restrictive rules in detention limiting healthy development, and (4) declines in mental health for vulnerable youth.

Bhabha (2009) studied Arendt's Children who are "de facto or functionally stateless, unable to enforce rights that are supposedly inalienable" (p. 411), in Canada the US, and Europe. It was found that oftentimes migrant children who have been separated from their family or immigrate on their own do not have the help and support they need from their parents or adults (Bhabha, 2009). Such children in need of support rarely have rights to redress problematic treatment because they typically lack identification or documentation (Bhabha, 2009). Similarly, di Tomasso (2012) pointed out that the choice to immigrate rarely belongs to the child, and thus they are undeserving of punishing detention and should have better access to needed services. As previous literature indicated (e.g. Arora et al., 2015; Bhabha, 2009), it is important for parents and guardians of children, as well as the adult community to identify and care for children in need. Children's limited capacity to protect themselves is an issue that comes to the fore in media covering immigration detention. Indeed, reports of fractured services, exacerbated mental illness, and widespread suffering in detention are commonplace regardless of children's cultural label as being innocent.

The lack of children's rights and adults being unsupportive of children does not align with cultural feeling rules and the Canadian National Identity. Loseke and Kusenbach (2008) describe the importance of morality in Western society, as well as the importance of maintaining good health, in particular mental health. As found in the current study, media reported that a

common outcome of children in detention are mental health problems, including anxiety (Kassam, 2016; Toronto Star, 2019). Therefore, the public would most likely feel sympathy towards the children in detention because they are viewed as innocent, yet they are being harmed in detention through mental health deterioration.

Family Separation

Another key cultural feeling rule that emerged in this study was the portrayal of child trauma due to family separation in detention centres. Family unity and the feeling of belonging and togetherness is an important aspect of many Canadian's lives (Hawthorne, 2007; McCarthy 2012). Many irregular migrants arriving to Canada were expecting a welcoming beginning and a healthier place for their children to grow up (United Nations, 2020); however, the media portrayed a more hostile reception to irregular migrants considering their detention and separation from family members (Bensadoun, 2019; Kassam, 2016). In light of Canadian National Identity, morality, and Canadians valuing an intact family unit (Hawthorne, 2007; McCarthy, 2012), the sampled media articles clearly framed detained children through victimization. According to Gros and Song (2016), "neither detention nor family separation account for the best interests of the child" (p. 23). Ultimately, the greater the understanding people have regarding the deleterious effects of family separation on children, which was discussed in the media, the more likely people are to believe that children and youth in detention are deserving of sympathy.

Overall, the media used various cultural feeling rules about children in order to present youth as victims deserving of public sympathy. The media has used cultural feeling rules such as acknowledging morality and the need for support, and values surrounding the portrayed

importance of protecting vulnerable children and having an intact family to ensure healthy childhood development.

Relatability

A pattern emerged in which the various claimsmaking strategies connected to an element of relatability. Oftentimes, the more a person can personally identify with an issue, the more sympathy people may have towards the problem (Spector & Kitsuse, 2001). According to Statistics Canada (2020), in 2017, there were 1,014,190 families residing in Canada that had at least one child under the age of 6 years old. Given cultural feeling rules and Canadian National Identity, many of the audience members can empathize with the difficulty irregular migrant youth faced while being held in detention because they can recognize the importance of childhood development among their own children or youth they care about. For example, the media frequently focused on mental health problems among young irregular migrants, which was argued to be a result of isolation, family separation, lack of services, and being held in detention for great lengths of time. Statistics show that in Canada “in any given year, 1 in 5 people will personally experience a mental health problem or illness” (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2020, p. 1). Therefore, people may be able to relate more to the plight of detained migrant children because they have experienced poor mental health or have had difficulties in accessing treatment services. Adults may be concerned for the detained children because they can empathize as parents, or are personally aware of the impacts of poor mental health. Consequently, the audience may be more likely to view these youth as victims and believe they are in need of help.

Implications

The current study helped address gaps in the research literature to enhance knowledge about media constructions of irregular migrant children and youth held in immigration detention. Various implications of the study findings were identified. This study showed which claimsmaking strategies and cultural feeling rules were used in hopes of positively portraying detained youth in displaying the hardships faced in detention and how they are undeserving of the inflicted harm. This study may make the public more aware of which claimsmaking strategies the media uses in anticipation of persuading audience opinions pertaining to youth held in immigration detention. According to Best (2017), public reaction is expected following claimsmaking and media coverage on a social problem. In the current study, it would be theorized that due to the many representations of detained youth suffering, the audience would be concerned for the children. Ultimately, this study demonstrates the utility of using Loseke's (2003) five claimsmaking strategies and cultural feeling rules as a framework to interpret and understand media portrayals of irregular migrant children and youth in detention in Canada.

Overall, the findings of this study were somewhat consistent with previous literature. For instance, similar to past research, irregular migrants were portrayed through victimology (Eberl et al., 2018; Chovanec & Molek-Kozakowska, 2010; Medianu et al., 2015). As well, the children were portrayed as being vulnerable and innocent which is a common representation of children in the media to display their need for help, rights, and services (Arora et al., 2015; di Tomasso, 2012; Gordon, 2008). Ultimately, this may lead to public sentiment that children and youth are deserving of sympathy.

A considerable amount of previous literature described negative representations of irregular migrants in the media through describing the detainees as criminals or terrorists (Chovanec & Molek-Kozakowska, 2017; Esses et al., 2013; Greenberg, 2002; Lawlor & Tolley,

2017; Maynard, 2017; Medianu et al., 2015), bogus (Henry & Tator, 2002; Medianu et al., 2015), and economic threats (Baker et al., 2008; Esses et al., 2012; Esses et al., 2013; Ibrahim, 2005) due to an “us versus them” mentality (Chan, 2013; Ibrahim, 2005). Regardless of these negative portrayals in the media, this was an inconsistent finding in the current study. There was only one counterclaim that framed irregular migrant youth as undeserving of sympathy (Walters, 2013). This may be due to Canada’s lack of extreme right-wing news sources and that much of the previous literature that portrayed irregular migrants negatively in the media did not have a strict focus on youth. Additionally, some of the most prominent types of claimsmakers found in the sample were passionate activists such as members of immigration activist organizations and informed experts such as professors, scholars, who may be more likely to discuss detained children and youth in a more favourable light. Thus, the decidedly positive portrayal of irregular migrant youth in the current study may have been explained by aspects of Canadian National Identity, morality, and the most prominent types of claimsmakers present emphasizing the protection of innocent and vulnerable children in society.

The current study brought to light the lack of race referenced in the media, which is consistent with the arguments that racial discrimination is veiled in Canada (Maynard, 2017). Irregular migrants are often racialized (Maynard, 2017; Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2019), therefore the lack of explicit media discussion about how racialization impacts the experience of detention and structural inequality more generally was a notable finding. It is possible that claimsmakers chose to ignore issues of race in order to increase relatability with domestic Canadians who identify in the vast majority as Caucasian (Statistics Canada, 2018). Despite this, failing to identify the impact of race in detention is a startling omission.

Limitations

There were several limitations in the present study. First, the article search yielded a relatively small sample size. A total of 35 newspaper articles from most provinces were collected; however, a larger sample may have made the results more generalizable to the greater population. Differing immigration policies may make this study less generalizable among countries such as the United States. For instance, Canada is known to be a free-country and welcoming of immigration (Chan, 2013), whereas countries such as the United States that uphold strict immigration policies may portray irregular migrants more negatively in the news (Wray-Lake, Wells, Alvis, Delgado, Syvertsen, & Metzger, 2018). In the future, using various newspaper output sources in addition to ProQuest and Google may lead to a larger sample size, making the study more generalizable. Additionally, French articles were not included in the sample, therefore the results are generalizable to English media only. Another limitation to the study was that only traditional newspaper articles were used for the study. The lack of inclusion of other forms of media from which many Canadians consume news, such as social media where radical perspectives are more likely to be located could have been a contributing factor to the lack of counterclaims identified in the sample. Thus, conducting this analysis using this theoretical frame using social media may have yielded different results.

Another limitation to the current study is the minimal previous literature conducted on irregular migrant youth held in immigration detention specifically in Canada. There has been more research conducted on irregular migrant adults, however the focus on children and youth is lacking. Therefore, there was only a miniscule amount of literature available to inform the analysis pertaining to young people held in immigration detention specifically in Canada. A fourth limitation is that because official reports and empirical data measurement of what is objectively happening to children and youth in detention is either not collected or not widely

available, it is impossible to crosscheck that accuracy of what the media has chosen to emphasize (e.g., a report measuring children's mental health status in detention to determine if the levels are really low as claimed by the media).

Future Directions

A future direction of this study would be using more newspaper output sources similar to ProQuest, such as Factiva to obtain a larger sample size of articles. Having a larger sample size may make the results more generalizable to the population. Another future direction is to analyze whether groups of claimsmakers (e.g., experts, activists) prefer specific claimsmaking strategies. Knowledge about which types of claimsmakers tend to use certain claimsmaking strategies may help to theoretically advance SCSP in media analyses of societal issues such as irregular migrant children and youth. For example, detainees and their family may rely on strategies of personalizing victims more compared to other claimsmakers because they have been affected by immigration detention first-hand. Further, gaining an understanding of which claimsmakers are most persuasive in using various claimsmaking strategies could help the media portray societal issues more effectively.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

A total of 35 Canadian newspaper articles were analyzed to gain an understanding of the portrayal of irregular migrant children and youth held in immigration detention through a SCSP lens. The sampled news sources in the current study used various claimsmakers and claimsmaking strategies to portray detained youth as deserving of sympathy (Loseke, 2003). The most common claimsmakers were professors/academics, public safety ministers, and immigration activist organizations. Themes arose in the coded newspaper articles pertaining to Loseke's (2003) five claimsmaking strategies and a total of four of the claimsmaking strategies were used to construct children and youth as deserving of sympathy. The three most common strategies were: constructing victims as suffering horribly, constructing victim purity, and cultural biases in sympathy evaluation. The claimsmaking strategy of constructing potential victims as anyone was notably absent. Previous literature describes that the media often portrayed irregular migrants using a negative frame (Chan, 2013; Eberl et al., 2018); however, a negative portrayal of youth only appeared in a single article from the data. Regardless of differing political ideologies across the sampled newspaper articles, the majority of the articles framed irregular migrant children and youth as deserving of public compassion. Soroka (2002) notes that frames are most persuasive when many news publications are presented in a short timeframe. The current study only identified 35 articles reporting on children and youth in immigration detention in Canada within a 6-year timeframe. This miniscule amount of media attention on this topic emphasizes the low priority that Canadians actually give to this issue. A symptom and implication of this underreporting is the lack of publicly available factual information about these detainees, lack of public awareness of the plight of these individuals as a

social problem that needs to be addressed, and the continued invisibility of these children and youth.

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