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Alencar, A.P.; Deuze, M.J.P.

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# **News for assimilation or integration? Examining the functions of news in shaping acculturation experiences of immigrants in the Netherlands and Spain**

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**Amanda Alencar**

Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam, The Netherlands

**Mark Deuze**

University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands

## **Abstract**

This study investigates the functions of news media in shaping acculturation experiences of new economic and refugee immigrants in the Netherlands and Spain. Focus group data revealed that consumption of host country news media was mainly connected to immigrants' deliberate strategies to assimilate the culture, politics and language of the host society, while exposure to transnational news was viewed in terms of strategies of integration in both countries. We also observed that participants' educational background and language skills combined with their perceptions of the host country's news have an impact on the use they make of news for assimilating and/or integrating into the host society. Finally, important sociopolitical conditions of the context influenced the ways participants use the news media in their process of acculturation.

## **Keywords**

Acculturation experiences, European integration, new immigrants, news media

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## **Corresponding author:**

Amanda Alencar, Department of Media and Communication, Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam, Woudestein, Van der Goot building, M8-17, P.O. Box 1738, 3000 DR Rotterdam, The Netherlands.

Email: [pazalencar@eshcc.eur.nl](mailto:pazalencar@eshcc.eur.nl)

## Introduction

With the waning of multiculturalism, the concept of integration garners a greater deal of attention among scholars from various academic fields. Despite the significant development of empirical research, there is a lack of consensus on what the concept of integration refers to. Overall, the term has been widely used in the European context to define the economic, political, social and cultural processes migrants go through when they arrive in a new country and try (or are made to) fit in (Ward, 2013). Scientifically speaking, there is no clear measurement to determine when an individual is integrated into a new society (Favell, 2003). Some scholars define integration as the full assimilation of migrants into the new culture (Ward, 2013). In acculturation theory, integration involves equal sociocultural participation in a new environment (Berry, 2006).

At a normative level, the absence of a common understanding of integration may pose a problem, mainly when it comes to immigration policy-making in supra-national territories, such as the European Union (EU). The various 'EU integration models' fail to address in a realistic manner the trajectory of migrants when they arrive into a new society, as is once again clear from the EU migrant crisis from 2015 onwards. Instead, these models render an 'ideal' national society (Schinkel, 2013). The crucial role that immigrants play in the economic growth as well as in the formation of a multicultural society underscores the social, political and cultural relevance of explicitly considering the question of integration.

The study at hand considers intercultural communication processes and relations mediated by news media in evaluating how different migrant groups experience acculturation in two EU countries: Spain and The Netherlands. These countries were selected because they have developed different politically charged debates of immigration and integration. Despite the vast literature on the relationships between acculturation and media use of ethnic groups in different countries (Kim, 1988; Kline and Liu, 2005; Peeters and d'Haenens, 2005; Reece and Palmgreen, 2000; Shah, 1991; Yang et al., 2004), few studies have involved comparisons across countries and migrant groups regarding the use of news media in the context of societal integration.

The interpretive framework for this study draws from acculturation theory and functional approaches to investigate news media in shaping immigrants' acculturation experiences in both countries. Specifically, we first present the motivation trends regarding the immigrants' use of news media for acculturation together with media preferences for each purpose. Second, we offer a comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing their consumption across different types of news media. Finally, we assess the influence of structural conditions of the host country on how participants use and experience the news media for adapting to the new environment.

To examine these issues, 12 focus groups with three migrant groups for each country were conducted to obtain richer responses. In the Netherlands, our sample of informants included economic migrants from Southern and Eastern Europe and refugees living in Amsterdam. In Spain, we worked with informants from Eastern Europe, Latin America and Sub-Saharan African countries living in Madrid.

## The process of acculturation

In the research literature, the process of adaptation and adjustment to a new cultural environment is generally understood as acculturation (Padilla, 1980). A seminal study in this area is the work of the Canadian socio-psychologist scholar John Berry (2003), in which he identifies four acculturation models (also called strategies, orientations, attitudes, preferences and modes) when it comes to sociocultural integration of persons from non-dominant, ethno-cultural groups. These four models include (1) integration, (2) assimilation, (3) separation and (4) marginalization. To define these acculturation modes, Berry proposed two important questions with which individuals experiencing the acculturation process are continuously confronted. The first questions whether it is of value to maintain one's cultural identity and customs, while the second points out the issue of whether it is important to establish intercultural contact with other groups (Berry, 2003). Consequently, integration occurs when both cultural maintenance and contact are successfully negotiated. Those pursuing assimilation experience a high level of cultural contact, while separation supports cultural maintenance among immigrant groups. Finally, marginalization undervalues one's cultural identity and contact with others.

The first two models in Berry's theory are most directly relevant to the study at hand, as he defines assimilation and integration as leading concepts referring to the settlement of refugees and other migrants, as well as the two most commonly adopted views of integration in the European context (Favell, 2003).

Scholarly criticism on Berry's model of acculturation argues that these four forms of acculturation change fail to address in a more comprehensive way the influences of major structural and contextual variables in the process (i.e. interpersonal relations, personal and intercultural development, communication, the environment, and racial or ethnic discrimination) (Rudmin, 2003). In Kim's (2008) integrative communication theory of cross-cultural adaptation (p. 101), she defines acculturation as a process that takes place over time, leading to a gradual 'intercultural transformation' towards adaptation to a new and unfamiliar environment and explains that an individual's acculturation trajectory is confronted with key factors that facilitate or impede the adaptation process. The author identifies 'communication' as one of the four dimensions of factors that exerts great influence on the process model. In this dimension, mass communication constitutes a factor that, together with other cultural and contextual variables, contributes to both promoting and constraining the adaptation process of migrants (Yang et al., 2004). The next section presents an overview of research on media use and acculturation, with specific reference to the role of news media in the assimilation and integration models.

## The relationship between (news) media and acculturation

Mass communication scholars have recognized the fact that the mass media can serve acculturation functions for many years (i.e. Lasswell, 1948; Wright, 1986). The functionalist perspective on the media has been further developed by Kim (1988), who regards cross-cultural adaptation as the process of learning communication skills necessary for successful social interaction within the new culture.

The last two decades have seen a trend towards studies examining whether media exposure relates to consumers' assimilation of new social norms. Empirical evidence suggests that the use of host country mass media can help immigrants attain a higher level of sociocultural adaptation, promoting greater interaction with individuals of the new culture (Kim, 1988; Kline and Liu, 2005). For example, the study of Lee and Tse (1994) with Hong Kong immigrants in Canada provided evidence that media exposure relates significantly to immigrants' acculturation of the new culture after controlling for personal characteristics. Moreover, Yoon et al. (2011) found that the use of informative contents of the host country's media is closely related to the adaptation of Asian immigrant women in South Korea.

Similarly, the use of the homeland media serves as a tool to learn about the host society and how to adapt to it (Yoon et al., 2011), and at the same time preserving the immigrants' cultural identity and strengthening their inter-group connection and solidarity (Lum, 1991). More recently, researchers have shown that there is a positive correlation between integration and general media use, including the use of homeland media. The study of Peeters and d'Haenens (2005) found that well-integrated ethnic minorities in the Netherlands tend to spend time on Dutch media as well as on media from their own culture.

A transnational perspective in the analysis of news media consumption among immigrants may be seen in the light of immigrants' mixed media use. For example, following the news of home and host countries can help immigrants cope with their demands of identity protection while engaging with the new culture (Lin et al., 2010). A number of researchers have reported that exposure to the host country's news can provide immigrants with a broader range of cultural elements that can facilitate adaptation to their new environment (Portes and Rumbaut, 1996). In the same manner, immigrants turn to in-group news to stay abreast of developments in their host societies as well as to maintain cultural contacts with their homelands, thereby contributing to social identity within their particular ethnic community (Christiansen, 2004).

Despite the importance of news media in the process of immigrant integration, little attention has been given to immigrants' experiences with news. Work in political communication research suggests that news media of the host country are important communication agents for political acculturation (Chaffee et al., 1990). A recent study conducted by Liu and Gastil (2014) found no significant differences in how major immigrant ethnic groups in the United States use and benefit from news media for political knowledge and participation. Similarly, a review of literature on news and migration revealed no clear pattern of news consumption across immigrant groups in different European countries (Christiansen, 2004). However, both studies highlight the importance of considering individuals' socioeconomic characteristics and acculturation experiences when analysing news media practices across immigrant groups.

Furthermore, most evidence on the role of mass media in the cultural and sociopolitical adaptation of immigrants is based on their perceived need to assimilate into the host society. Studies analysing media consumption and acculturation patterns among Chinese migrant students and Asian Indian sojourners in the United States found that one's perception of the need to learn and understand the ways American people behave and think, and in making friends with Americans were the main reasons for television viewing in

the United States (Reece and Palmgreen, 2000; Yang et al., 2004). Our study adds to the literature by analysing the news media factor in both strategies of acculturation: assimilation and integration.

We focus on different immigrant groups in two Western European countries to examine the extent to which differences across groups and countries reflect on their use of news media for acculturation. Taking the example of Spain and the Netherlands, the following section discusses the development of integration policies to cope with diverse immigrant populations in both countries.

## **Diverse contexts of reception and acculturation strategies**

The increase of immigration and diversity of European societies has spurred vigorous public debate and political handwringing about various models of integration. The politicization of integration is, in a broad sense, mostly concerned about the perceived urgency of EU nations to develop effective migration and integration policies to tackle the so-called ‘migration crisis’ of 2015 and beyond. Despite rising levels and various types of immigration in both countries, the Netherlands and Spain have managed to address ‘integration policies’ in very different ways. In the Netherlands, culturist notions of integration attribute to individuals the responsibility to integrate into host society by adopting Dutch values and traditions and acquiring sociocultural competencies (Baumann, 1996). Thus, Dutch integration policies are focused on the protection of national identity and social cohesion in Dutch society (Duyvendak and Scholten, 2012).

The Spanish intercultural approach understands that ‘social cohesion is a bidirectional process, of mutual adaptation, which affects all citizens, both Spanish and immigrants’ (Spanish Ministry of Work and Immigration (PECI), 2014: 92). Hence, Spain’s immigration policies place great emphasis on the recognition of differences among people pertaining to diverse cultures, but at the same time foster the process of immigrant integration as part of the dominant project of identity politics within nation-states (Baumann, 1996).

Consequently, we conclude that Spanish and Dutch integration policies address immigrant groups and categories differently, resulting in different levels of assistance and types of responses to acculturation. This is certainly true in the case of new economic and refugee immigrants. Both immigrant groups differ with respect to the adoption of acculturation strategies, which is also directly related to the background characteristics and migration motives of each group (Yang et al., 2004).

Since 2007, work has been the main motive for new immigrants coming to the Netherlands. Almost 80% of labour migrants come from the EU and 10% come from Asia (Statistics Netherlands (CBS), 2013). The severe economic crisis has hit hard Southern European countries, such as Greece and Italy, leading to increased levels of intra-European mobility. Eastern Europeans also represent almost 20% of the total economic migrant population in the Netherlands (CBS, 2013). On the other hand, political upheaval in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia is reshaping migration trends in Europe. Recently, the number of refugee migrants arriving in the Netherlands has witnessed an increase of 20% compared to previous records dating back to 1999 (CBS, 2013).

Until recently, Spain experienced a rapid economic growth and became a popular destination for economic migrants seeking to benefit from a potential host country's prosperity (Spanish Ministry of Work and Immigration, 2014). Eastern Europeans and Latin Americans are two large economic immigrant groups in Spain with 38% and 30% of the total immigrant population (Observatorio Permanente de la Inmigración, 2010). However, Sub-Saharan immigration increased at the beginning of the 21st century due to population growth, economic problems and overall difficult conditions of life. The choice for this group relies on the fact that Sub-Saharan Africans account for the most vulnerable immigrant group in Spain, and thus opposing the more dominant groups of economic immigrants (Observatorio Permanente de la Inmigración, 2010).

This research takes into account these culturally, economically and politically diverse immigrant populations in order to examine their practices of news consumption in relation to their adaptation in the host country. Drawing from the study participants' point of view, we propose the following research questions:

*RQ1.* What roles do the news media play in the experiences of new economic and refugee acculturating immigrants in the Netherlands and Spain?

*RQ2.* What are the factors affecting their news media practices?

*RQ3.* How does the context of reception influence the news media practices of acculturating economic and refugee migrants differently?

## Method and sampling design

A cross-cultural study on the role of news media in the integration process of migrants from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds in the Netherlands and Spain was conducted. A focus group approach was adopted as to not isolate participants, facilitate a discussion and thusly extract a wider range of perspectives. The field site was located in the two largest cities (by population) of both countries: Amsterdam and Madrid. The researchers established contact with coordinators and directors of migration and language centres, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for help with recruiting participants in the two countries. In this project, we have been working with four NGOs and immigrant centres in Amsterdam (the Netherlands), and three in Madrid (Spain) for 3 months before the study took place. Given the sensitive nature of the topic and sampling population, it was particularly important to spend some time to get to know participants and make them feel comfortable with each other and the moderator (the first researcher).

We organized and conducted a total of six small focus groups in Amsterdam and six in Madrid between November 2014 and March 2015. As an attempt to create a familiar and convenient environment for research participants, sessions were conducted in their language centres and/or immigrant organizations and scheduled according to their availability. Each group consisted of, on average, four research participants ( $N=49$ ). In the Netherlands, our sample of informants included immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe and refugees living in Amsterdam (see Table 1). In Spain, we worked with informants from Eastern Europe, Latin America and Sub-Saharan African countries living in Madrid (see Table 2). By including new immigrant groups in both countries,

**Table 1.** Key demographics of participants in the Netherlands.

|                                 | Participants (ID) | Home country | Age | Year of arrival in the host country | Educational background         |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|--------------|-----|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Group 1<br>(Southern Europeans) | Woman 1           | Italy        | 26  | 2014                                | Master's degree                |
|                                 | Woman 2           | Greek        | 26  | 2011                                | Master's degree                |
|                                 | Woman 3           | Greece       | 26  | 2014                                | Bachelor's degree              |
|                                 | Man 1             | Greece       | 35  | 2009                                | Master's degree                |
| Group 2<br>(Southern Europeans) | Woman 4           | Italy        | 27  | 2014                                | Master's degree                |
|                                 | Woman 5           | Greece       | 22  | 2010                                | Master's degree                |
|                                 | Woman 6           | Greece       | 28  | 2010                                | Master's degree                |
| Group 3<br>(Eastern Europeans)  | Man 2             | Greece       | 29  | 2009                                | Master's degree                |
|                                 | Woman 1           | Hungary      | 41  | 2007                                | Short-cycle tertiary education |
|                                 | Woman 2           | Hungary      | 21  | 2013                                | High school                    |
|                                 | Man 1             | Hungary      | 24  | 2014                                | High school                    |
| Group 4<br>(Eastern Europeans)  | Man 2             | Hungary      | 35  | 2014                                | High school                    |
|                                 | Man 3             | Hungary      | 31  | 2014                                | Short-cycle tertiary education |
|                                 | Woman 3           | Poland       | 20  | 2014                                | Bachelor degree                |
|                                 | Woman 4           | Hungary      | 27  | 2014                                | Short-cycle tertiary education |
|                                 | Woman 5           | Poland       | 27  | 2008                                | Short-cycle tertiary education |
| Group 5<br>(refugees)           | Man 1             | Congo        | 49  | 2003                                | Short-cycle tertiary education |
|                                 | Man 2             | Iran         | 32  | 2010                                | Bachelor degree                |
|                                 | Man 3             | Iran         | 52  | 2012                                | High school                    |
|                                 | Woman 1           | Congo        | 29  | 2009                                | Short-cycle tertiary education |
| Group 6<br>(refugees)           | Woman 2           | Uganda       | 31  | 2013                                | High school                    |
|                                 | Man 4             | Afghanistan  | 30  | 2012                                | Master degree                  |
|                                 | Man 5             | Iran         | 49  | 2007                                | High school                    |
|                                 | Woman 3           | Syria        | 27  | 2013                                | High school                    |
|                                 | Man 6             | Syria        | 27  | 2012                                | Bachelor degree                |

formed by individuals from diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds and with different legal and work entitlements, this study provides an important opportunity to explore the intersections between migrants' news media practices and their acculturation strategies across countries.

The 12 focus group discussions lasted approximately 90 minutes, and were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The discussions were guided by a protocol that listed unstructured questions and interactive activities (i.e. pictures and cards) in order to maximize group interaction. During the discussions, the researcher further explored their perception of and attitudes towards Dutch and Spanish news media in the context of their integration into Dutch and Spanish society.



The questions and interactions generated by the group dynamics provided the data for each group and served as the basis for directing the discussions and comparing response patterns across different groups. The analysis followed parallel and iterative paths that enabled us to code, establish theoretical connections and evaluate more in-depth the strategies research participants employed to manifest their opinion and share their experiences on using news media for acculturating in both countries (Crabtree and Miller, 1999).

## Results

### *RQ1: What roles do the news media play in the experiences of new economic and refugee acculturating immigrants in the Netherlands and Spain?*

Irrespective of their migration background, five broad themes emerged from their motives of news consumption: (1) the acquisition of information about events and current affairs of the host country, (2) the acquisition of competence in the host country's language, (3) the acquisition of information that can facilitate living and functioning in the host country, (4) the acquisition of information about events and current affairs of the home country and (5) the acquisition of information about events and current affairs of foreign countries.

The acquisition of cultural and sociopolitical knowledge of the host country refers to the migrants' need to rapidly assimilate into their host country's culture, politics and society. In Spain, migrants expressed a variety of perspectives about their preferred medium for this specific purpose. Obtaining information about Spanish society, culture and politics is associated with their attendance to national radio news, newspapers and the free press (i.e. "20 minutos"). In the Netherlands, study participants reported that in order to fulfil their need to be informed about the host society, they watch the national TV news channels and follow the news online from news websites in both languages, Dutch and English, and social media platforms (i.e. 'Facebook, Twitter').

Attending the news for the acquisition of the host country's language makes reference to the participants' need to promote their linguistic-communicative integration. Across the sample of informants in both countries, television is still by far the most effective medium for this specific function attributed to news contents. These views are echoed by findings from empirical studies carried out in the United States and Canada, in which TV watching was found to be the most commonly adopted practice of media use among migrants for learning the host country's language (Reece and Palmgreen, 2000; Yang et al., 2004).

The acquisition of information that can facilitate living and functioning in the host country alludes to the migrants' need to know about services in general (i.e. tax office services, job search, public transportation, health issues, etc.). In order to have access to information about Dutch services, the participants mentioned that they read Dutch newspapers online or free newspapers. In Spain, national TV news was mainly used for obtaining information about practical issues of the host country.

The acquisition of information about their home country is associated with the participants' need to maintain and protect their cultural identity. For participants living in the Netherlands, the need to have access to news from their home countries is essentially

**Table 2.** Key demographics of participants in Spain.

|                             | Participants' ID | Home country | Age               | Year of arrival in the host country | Educational background         |
|-----------------------------|------------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Group 1 (Eastern Europeans) | Woman 1          | Romania      | 31                | 2012                                | Master's degree                |
|                             | Woman 2          | Romania      | 38                | 2003                                | High school                    |
|                             | Woman 3          | Romania      | 26                | 2005                                | High school                    |
|                             | Woman 4          | Ukraine      | 30                | 2007                                | Bachelor's degree              |
| Group 2 (Eastern Europeans) | Woman 5          | Romania      | 29                | 2006                                | Elementary school              |
|                             | Man 1            | Romania      | None <sup>a</sup> | 2009                                | Elementary school              |
|                             | Woman 6          | Romania      | 30                | 2006                                | High school                    |
| Group 3 (Latin Americans)   | Woman 7          | Romania      | 40                | 2005                                | High school                    |
|                             | Woman 1          | Chile        | 38                | 1999                                | Bachelor's degree              |
|                             | Man 1            | Argentina    | 20                | 2011                                | Elementary school              |
|                             | Woman 2          | Equator      | 26                | 2014                                | Master's degree                |
| Group 4 (Latin Americans)   | Woman 3          | Argentina    | 28                | 2006                                | Bachelor's degree              |
|                             | Woman 4          | Argentina    | None <sup>a</sup> | None <sup>a</sup>                   | Master's degree                |
|                             | Man 2            | Bolivia      | 26                | 2011                                | Short-cycle tertiary education |
|                             | Man 3            | Mexico       | 22                | 2013                                | Bachelor's degree              |
|                             | Man 4            | Colombia     | 25                | 1991                                | Short-cycle tertiary education |
| Group 5 (Sub-Saharan)       | Man 1            | Senegal      | 32                | 2012                                | Bachelor's degree              |
|                             | Man2             | Senegal      | 45                | 2002                                | Primary school                 |
|                             | Man 3            | Guinea       | 28                | 2013                                | High school                    |
|                             | Woman 1          | Ivory Coast  | 42                | 2011                                | Studying languages             |
| Group 6 (Sub-Saharan)       | Woman 2          | Senegal      | 30                | 2012                                | Secondary school               |
|                             | Man 4            | Senegal      | 38                | 2006                                | None                           |
|                             | Man 5            | Guinea       | 25                | 2013                                | Primary school                 |
|                             | Man 6            | Senegal      | 30                | 2013                                | Secondary school               |

<sup>a</sup>The participants desired not to disclose this information.

related to their consumption of both home country's and foreign Internet sites. As for migrant groups in Spain, Internet also functions as a tool for connecting them with news media from their home country. Finally, participants' motivation for acquiring information about foreign countries on the Internet is justified by their need and desire to obtain as much news as possible about what are considered relevant facts worldwide make them search for international media sources.

### *RQ2: What are the factors affecting their news media practices?*

In this research, we observed that there is a strong interrelationship between the level of education, language skills (including proficiency of the host country's language) and their perception of the host country's news and the use of the various types of news media.

*Level of education and language skills.* The more educated usually know several languages, and this factor increases the availability of news sources for them to choose from. Previous studies also suggest that language skills, mainly in English, allow migrants to access a wide range of news sources, and they are highly varied among immigrants (Christiansen, 2004). Greek and Italian participants with higher levels of education and great domain of English tend to use a greater variety of news sources in order to fulfil their desire for more international news and news from their home country, and at the same time solve the language barriers they still face to follow the news in Dutch, even after living in the Netherlands for more than 3 years at the time of the study. In their accounts of the events surrounding the use of news, they declared that they follow Dutch news websites in English as an alternative way to get news about the Netherlands.

The same goes for participants within the Eastern European labour migrant group, who also reported using a varied media menu to obtain news from all over the world. In the case of refugees, they are also more disadvantaged in accessing information from the various types of media due to their poor language skills in English and Dutch. One participant from Iran mentioned that following Dutch news via television facilitates his comprehension of the content, as it does not require high-level reading skills in Dutch, and that images and the type of language used in TV news programmes make it easier for him. Two other participants from this group revealed they use 'Facebook' to get some information shared by friends as a way to overcome their limited skills in Dutch. Only two out of nine participants declared being able to spread themselves among several news providers in English.

In Spain, linguistic barriers in both English and Spanish languages also limited participants from the Sub-Saharan African group to get news from a variety of media sources. In all cases, television remained the most used source to obtain Spanish news among this group. Limitations in English proficiency also emerged within participants from the Eastern European group, who reported having less access to international news media. Interesting was the case of three Latin American informants who seem to pursue good proficiency in more languages other than English, as they claimed to have wide access to different types of news sources from different countries.

*Perception of news media.* Two divergent and conflicting discourses emerged from discussions on the quality of Dutch news. Some participants argued that Dutch news media are relatively impartial, while others questioned the neutrality of Dutch news, arguing that they tend to be judgemental and portray a negative image of immigrants. During focus groups with Southern European informants, two different views on the issue emerged:

I think Dutch news media, or more in a broad way, the Dutch people are neutral, in general they don't do so passionately as we do. (Man 1)

My opinion is that Dutch news media tends to judge. They are not so neutral; I think they judge migrants! (Woman 2)

I agree as well and that's the reason why I don't really like to follow Dutch news media as well. (Woman 3)

These views were also shared among participants within the groups formed by refugees:

In my opinion, Dutch news media is good, of good quality. (Man 2)

I don't always understand so it's hard for me to give an opinion. Also about politics for my country, I know Dutch media does not convey the real picture of what's going on there. Dutch news media always portray a negative image of Iran, it is not always correct. (Man 3)

A common view among participants from both Southern European and refugee migrant groups was that Dutch news coverage of their home country contributes to the increase of stereotyping and discrimination against immigrant groups living in the Netherlands. A refugee participant from Syria reported that when he wants to learn from his country, he uses news media websites from his home country, because he thinks Dutch news media do not show everything about what is going on there, nor in a correct manner (man 6).

As for migrant participants in Spain, their views surfaced mainly in relation to the quality and amount of Spanish news compared to the abundance of entertainment programmes in mainstream media in Spain. While a minority reported having learned about Spanish history in national news (women 1 and 2), all agreed about the sensational nature of Spanish news as a reference to the American model of news production. Hence, Latin American participants were the least enthusiastic about watching Spanish TV news owing to the great amount of advertisement and infotainment: 'There are lots of entertainment programs to attract and amuse people; there are lots of them. There should be something more informative ... with more news, or a good movie' (woman 3). Eastern European participants also attributed their lack of motivation to attend the news from Spanish TV channels to poor-quality information.

In discussions of credibility in the news media, participants from the second group of Latin Americans and Eastern Europeans believe that both Spanish news and that of their home countries fare equally in terms of credibility, and neither is more or less credible than the other. Only one participant from the second group of Latin American migrants perceives Mexican news as less reliable than Spanish news. On the other hand, Eastern Europeans from the first migrant group and Sub-Saharan Africans from both groups perceive Spanish news media as being more trustworthy than those of their home countries. As one participant from the Sub-Saharan group commented, 'Here in Spain, people can say whatever they want to in television ... it's not the same in my country ... there is no freedom in my country. We cannot say the truth' (man 1).

### ***RQ3: How does the context of reception influence the news media practices of economic and refugee migrants differently?***

*The Netherlands.* The majority of Eastern Europeans mentioned that they do not attend the news for cultural and political assimilation. Most participants from this group reported not having a real need to assimilate because they come to the Netherlands to work on a temporary basis:

Dutch news is for someone who wants to be the life here for good ... the problem is that most people here just came to work and may not have any intention to stay, not really having any need to integrated because they came here to work. (Woman 4)

On the other hand, participants from Southern Europe were the most inclined towards integration strategies through their use of news media. This can be illustrated briefly by women 1 and 4, who reported combining the use of news media for cultural and political learning of both the host and home country's society. Some said that they should be more motivated to follow Dutch news to practice their language skills in Dutch but the fact that Dutch people are always open to speak English facilitates for them, and this balance in terms of news consumption is hard to find (woman 3 and man 1).

The acquisition of cultural and sociopolitical knowledge and language competence of the host country was especially common among refugee participants, who may have the most assimilation needs and may be the most motivated to adapt to the host society: 'Yes, I think news media is very important for both learning the language and integration ... I learn what is happening in my host country, today and yesterday. Yes, it helps me a lot' (woman 1). In the Netherlands, the stronger need of refugee migrants to learn Dutch to integrate compared to that of EU economic migrants is essential in this context. This underscores the importance of policies of the host government for the news media practices of immigrants, especially among refugees (Portes and Rumbaut, 1996). To put it differently, European migrants are not required to speak Dutch to have a resident and work permit in the Netherlands, and this factor influences their acquisition of Dutch language and culture.

*Spain.* Participants' perceptions of the host society combined with their need for acculturation were decisive in the context of Spanish integration. Problems related to host country hostility towards outsiders can affect their settlement in the new society and how they perceive and actually use the news media for acculturation (Portes and Rumbaut, 1996). Moreover, in times of economic downturn, immigrants are perceived as competitors for the few job opportunities.

Despite the strong economic crisis in Spain, most Eastern European participants perceive Spanish society as being open and tolerant with immigrants and claimed that this openness has helped them feel integrated and comfortable in the new society. As one participant puts it, 'I think Spanish people are very kind and polite, very open to foreigners ... this helped me a lot' (woman 2). In this sense, a positive perception of the context of integration among Eastern European participants led to a more enthusiastic view on using the host country's media for knowledge acquisition of culture and politics of the host society. Although the majority of participants follow more national news media for learning how Spanish society works as well as about practical information of the host country, some added that they consume news from their homeland. Hence, their practices of news consumption are more in line with acculturation strategies of integration.

A different perspective in relation to the context of reception in Spain can be seen among Latin American participants who presented negative perceptions of the political system. For example, one informant said, 'The integration of migrants in Spain is very complicated. There is not an official document regulating different practices of labor

integration for migrants, or a person who informs you about what you can and cannot do' (Woman 3). These participants were less motivated to acculturate, and this also reflected on their use of the host country's news media to learn more about the new cultural environment. Besides this, they reported facing many linguistic obstacles in the context of Spanish integration:

Even though we speak the same language, 'they' (Spanish people) find it difficult to understand us ... the way we speak. (Woman 2)

Also, some participants reported having difficulties to follow Spanish news: 'Spanish news is not a useful tool for integration ... the vocabulary is very difficult. (Man 1)

Finally, Sub-Saharan African participants were the most oriented towards assimilating Spanish culture and language: 'It is very important to integrate into Spanish society. News is a good tool to learn how Spanish society works' (man 2). Lesser opportunities in Spain's labour market paired up with low socioeconomic backgrounds make them the most vulnerable migrant group in terms of acculturation processes. They respond to their stronger need for acculturation by attributing to Spanish news media a fundamental role for successful adaptation.

## Conclusion

Our study looked at how news media exposure relates to the strategies of acculturation adopted by new economic and refugee migrants in Spain and the Netherlands. The choice of a multicultural sample of informants was relevant for our study as the different immigrants with different socioeconomic and geographic backgrounds perform acculturation differently, and this might reflect in their practices of news consumption. First, we explored their acculturation motives for viewing the news media and how these ally with their consumption of various types of news sources. In line with previous research, the role of host country news media was mainly connected to immigrants' deliberate strategies to assimilate the culture, politics and language of the host society. On the other hand, exposure to homeland and transnational news media was viewed in terms of integration strategies as participants reported using home and foreign news websites for being informed about the events and current affairs of both host and home countries. Overall, migrant participants mentioned that they do not limit their news sources to one single medium. In the study of news consumption patterns among immigrants in Europe, Christiansen (2004) called attention for further work to investigate the implications of this diversity in news media practices for migrants' perception of issues, as the use of a varied media menu to obtain news might generate different perspectives of reality among them.

Beyond this, we have seen a transnational trend in terms of news consumption among participants in both countries. Previous studies point at the central role of transnational media in the way migrants experience acculturation in their host countries, as these practices are very often connected to the lack of immigrant integration (Lin et al., 2010). The rationale behind this reasoning is the distance migrants keep from their host country's

media while consuming more media of their home as well as other nations (i.e. ethnic media, satellite TV, foreign websites). Two cases in our study illustrate this point clearly. For instance, it was observed that participants do not use news media of their homeland for assimilation purposes. The same goes for the use of ethnic media news sources across migrant groups in both countries. Although ethnic media can function as crucial tool to find work in the host country, migrants in our study generally did not comment on the use of this type of media as resources for orientation functions in the new environment.

Embedded in these analyses is the recognition of the need for ongoing work that links these patterns of news consumption with the rise of new forms of acculturation strategies – such as cultural hybridization and transnationalism – due to the growing cultural diversity in Europe (Ward, 2013). Migrants are characterized by a greater mobility, and this implies that they have more opportunities for intercultural contact with people not only from the host country but also from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds. Hence, these transnational acculturation forms are also reflected in the (news) media consumption practices among migrants (i.e. different uses of social media and other transnational media platforms), but most importantly are the outcomes of these practices for positive adaptation in the new cultural environment.

We should point at the crucial role played by participants' perceptions of the host country's news in the use they make of news for assimilating and/or integrating into the host society. Following previous findings from Swedish and German studies (see Christiansen, 2004), this study also suggests that continuing actions and initiatives to increase diversity in European news are necessary, and this should be a central issue in the building of media policies at both national and EU level.

Ultimately, we examined the influence of the context of integration on how participants actually 'use the news' based on their strategies of adjustment in both countries. The analysis brought up differences both across and within countries. During focus groups, important sociopolitical conditions of the context influenced the ways migrants make sense of acculturation and resonated on what participants have to say about their use the news media in this process. A greater focus on different cultural contexts could enhance our understanding of acculturation processes and how these interact with migrants' news media practices.

In addition to these practical implications, this study provides theoretical insights. This study may be the first attempt to explore the news media factors among assimilation and integration experiences of a cross-cultural diverse immigrant population in terms of Berry's acculturation models. Moreover, this study has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding on how Kim's integrative communication theory of cross-cultural adaptation could complement Berry's individual-based model of acculturation.

A natural progression of this work is to extend empirical evidences on how individuals' practices of news consumption influence their responses to acculturation and their outcomes for successful adaptation in various contexts of immigration.

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