

Article

Portrayal of Immigrants in Danish Media—A Qualitative Content Analysis

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Abstract: Media coverage can affect audiences' perceptions of immigrants, and can play a role in determining the content of public policy agendas, the formation of prejudices, and the prevalence of negative stereotyping. This study investigated the way in which immigrants are represented in the Danish media, which terms are used, what issues related to immigrants and immigration are discussed and how they are described, and whose voices are heard. The data consisted of media articles published in the two most widely read Danish newspapers in 2019. Inductive qualitative content analysis was conducted. The portrayal of immigrants was generally negative. Overall, immigrants were portrayed as economic, cultural and security threats to the country. The most salient immigrant groups mentioned in the media were non-Westerners, Muslims, and people 'on tolerated stay'. Integration, xenophobia and racial discrimination were the three immigrant-related issues most frequently presented by the media. The media gave voice mainly to politicians and immigrant women. The material showed that Danes have a strong affinity for 'Danishness', which the papers explained as a major barrier to the integration and acceptance of immigrants in Denmark.



Citation: Cengiz, P.-M.; Eklund Karlsson, L. Portrayal of Immigrants in Danish Media—A Qualitative Content Analysis. *Societies* **2021**, *11*, 45. <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc11020045>

Academic Editors: Salvatore Palidda and Fabio Quassoli

Received: 8 March 2021

Accepted: 10 May 2021

Published: 13 May 2021

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Keywords: immigrants; integration; Danish media; xenophobia; discrimination

1. Introduction

Globally, international migration is on the rise. In Denmark, the percentage of immigrants of the total population rose from 6.9% to 11.5% between 2000 and 2017 [1]. Existing research shows that immigrants in Denmark are perceived as exploiting welfare benefits more than natives do, making the former a burden on the Danish economy [2]. Fietkau and Hansen [2] also revealed that while skin colour does not matter to Danish natives, Danes with low levels of education tend to have negative attitudes towards religious symbols (e.g., headscarves or hijabs).

In terms of Nordic and European media representation, most often, immigrants are depicted in a negative way and as a burden to society [3–5].

The general topics around immigrants and immigration debated in the Scandinavian press are crime, work, and arrival and return of legal immigrants, although the coverage of the two latter subjects has decreased over time [6]. Despite the various similarities that Denmark, Norway and Sweden appear to have in terms of culture, mass-media, political system and immigration histories, studies have shown that there are evident differences between the subjects discussed by media in the three countries. While the Danish media are strongly threat-focused (and discuss topics like integration policy, social/health care/welfare state issues, family and social customs, and immigration as a partisan-political issue) [6], Swedish media focus on the humanitarian aspects of immigration, and discuss issues like racism, multiculturalism, and immigrants' political and civil rights [6,7]. Moreover, in a study analysing press coverage on the refugee crisis in Germany, Sweden, UK, Spain, and Italy, Swedish press was found to be the most positive towards refugees and migrants [8].

Yilmaz [9] found that the Danish media discourse tends to stress religious and cultural differences in its explanations of almost every immigration-related problem. Riegers

and Hovden [3] argue that, in Denmark, cultural journalism describes immigrants with reference to their religion twice as often as cultural journalism in Sweden or Norway and highlight that, among all religions, the Danish media particularly focuses on Islam, a religion that Danes seems to perceive as a potential threat to the country's Christian identity. This finding is in accordance with those of Hovden and Mjælde [6]'s, who note that, in recent years, there has been a sharp rise in Scandinavian media speaking about Islam in some explicit way (a quarter of the newspaper articles in Norway and Denmark, and one in five in Sweden).

There is often a noticeable difference between natives and immigrants in terms of physical features (such as skin and hair colour), style of dress, religious conduct, and fluency in the Danish language [10]. This perceptual distinctiveness, together with existing stereotypes about migrants and the perceived impact that immigrants may have on the Danish economy, safety, and culture, influences native Danes' opinions about immigrants [2]. In addition, the way the media presents issues around migrants can strengthen or weaken existing stereotypes and influence not only Danes' attitudes towards immigrants [11], but also the content of policies regarding immigration [12,13], citizens' political views, party preferences and even voting [4].

Negative media coverage is linked to negative attitudes towards migrants, ethnic prejudice and stereotyping [4,14,15]. The salience of immigration-related issues may lead to a preference for anti-immigrant parties, as they are perceived to be the most able to deal with these issues [4]. Anti-immigrant attitudes and political stances may affect migrants' quality of life and their integration into society, which may, in turn, contribute to widening health disparities. According to Morey [16], anti-immigrant stigma leads to the separation of immigrants from the rest of society and negatively impacts the health of the stigmatised. Dahl and Jakobsen [17] identified discrimination and prejudice as the most important barriers to the integration of ethnic minorities.

The media not only produce and distribute information but may also influence immigrants' integration processes in Denmark as well as their self-confidence and mental health [18].

To understand the role the media may have as a driving force of public health policies and discourse, this study's research question aims to explore the way immigrants in Denmark are represented in the media, which terms are used in such discussions, what issues around immigrants and immigration are covered, and whose voices are heard.

In this study, immigrants are defined as people born abroad who currently reside in Denmark and whose parents are not Danish citizens and were not born in Denmark. If there is no information about one of the parents and the person was born abroad, the person is perceived to be an immigrant [19]. Even though there is a difference between the terms 'migrant' and 'immigrant', in this study, these two terms are used interchangeably, with the connotation of 'immigrant'.

2. Theoretical Perspectives Underpinning the Study

The difference between 'us' and 'them', and the idea that 'we' are always better than 'others' [20], is often debated in studies investigating immigrant- and immigration-related issues [2,3,21]. The concept of 'otherness' is often present in situations in the form of an 'us versus them' mentality. Hall [22] argues that presenting someone as the 'other', identifying differences, and articulating these distinctions are essential in the creation of collective meaning. Forms of 'otherness' can be signalled through references to race, gender and disability, and they are the result of oppressive social coding [23]. Labelling someone as the 'other' deprives them of their genuine otherness, as each person or group is more than the labels they are forced to carry. While the concept of 'otherness' tends to be detrimental to the individual(s) and incapacitate them, Hall [22] argues that the effect of signifying differences could be reversed so that they empower rather than suppress.

Social identity theory and realistic conflict theory are widely used to explain the reasons behind anti-immigrant attitudes. According to social identity theory (SIT) [20], individuals tend, on the one hand, to positively evaluate groups that they belong to

or identify with and, on the other hand, to discriminate or negatively evaluate other groups. SIT proposes that, from birth, every individual is confronted with a complex network of groupings and relationships in which they must find, create, and define their place. Therefore, during their lifetime, individuals belong to numerous social groups that contribute (positively or negatively) to the image they have about themselves. Moreover, each person has multiple identities that are affiliated with these various groups, and thus, they behave differently in different contexts, depending on the group they are dealing with in each specific situation [24,25]. When people identify themselves as part of a group, this group becomes an 'ingroup' for them. In contrast, all groups that they do not identify themselves with are 'outgroups'. The 'ingroup-outgroup' mentality is comparable to the 'us' versus 'them' mindset.

According to realistic conflict theory (RCT), hostility between groups appears when there is perceived direct competition for valuable or limited resources (e.g., money, status, power, prestige) [26]. For intergroup hostility to arise, only one group needs to perceive there to be a competing group that threatens their 'valuables', regardless of whether this perception is accurate or not. If the ingroup feels endangered/threatened by the other group(s), negative stereotypes about the outgroup(s) will be created, and feelings of prejudice, resentment, and hostility towards the others may appear. As a result, mistrust, avoidance, and discriminatory behaviour will occur [26]. While conflicts may escalate to extreme violence and feelings of hostility, RCT suggests that unity among ingroup and outgroup members may be established/restored only in situations where both groups depend on each other to achieve important, common goals that are valued by both sides [26]. Sniderman et al. [10] highlight that even though SIT and RCT indicate distinct explanatory directions, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

Ingroups and outgroups are evident in multi-ethnic societies. High levels of migration coincide with a marked increase in discrimination and violence directed against immigrants, refugees and other non-nationals [27]. Issues such as xenophobia and racial discrimination occur at various levels and in different contexts.

According to Boehnke [28], xenophobia is "an attitudinal orientation of hostility against non-natives in a given population". Xenophobic behaviour is solely based on the perception that the other is foreign or has an external ethnic, societal or community origin. Xenophobia is displayed through attitudes, prejudices and behaviours that reject, exclude and often denigrate people [27]. In contrast, racism implies distinctions between ingroups and out-groups in terms of physical features (e.g., differences in skin and hair colour or facial features). According to the UN, "any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life" counts as racial discrimination [29].

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Data Collection

The data consist of media articles about immigrants in Denmark published in *B.T. Metro* and *Politiken*, the two most widely read online newspapers in Denmark in 2019 (Appendix A). The original idea was to include the whole year of 2019, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, which affected universities, access to data sources was restricted, and the completion of the data collection was hindered. Thus, articles from *Politiken* were only included for the first 10 months of 2019. To access all the relevant data, the Infomedia database was used.

The exclusion criteria consisted of articles dealing with "refugees", "asylum-seekers", and "emigrants" and the truncations of these terms. The reason for this exclusion was that the problematics around these groups are quite specific including, e.g., traumatic experiences. The present study focused on the immigrants who already have settled down and live in Denmark (whereas refugees and asylum seekers are newcomers). Moreover, the

inclusion of the media data about these groups would have resulted in an overwhelming dataset for an inductive content analysis. Very short newspaper articles (of less than 125 words) were also excluded because several of these short articles were no more than the heading and/or subheading of articles that appeared as full articles inside the newspaper. Figure 1 visualises the data selection process, which resulted in the inclusion of 191 articles. Of the 191 eligible articles, 149 articles were published in Politiken and 42 in B.T. Metro.

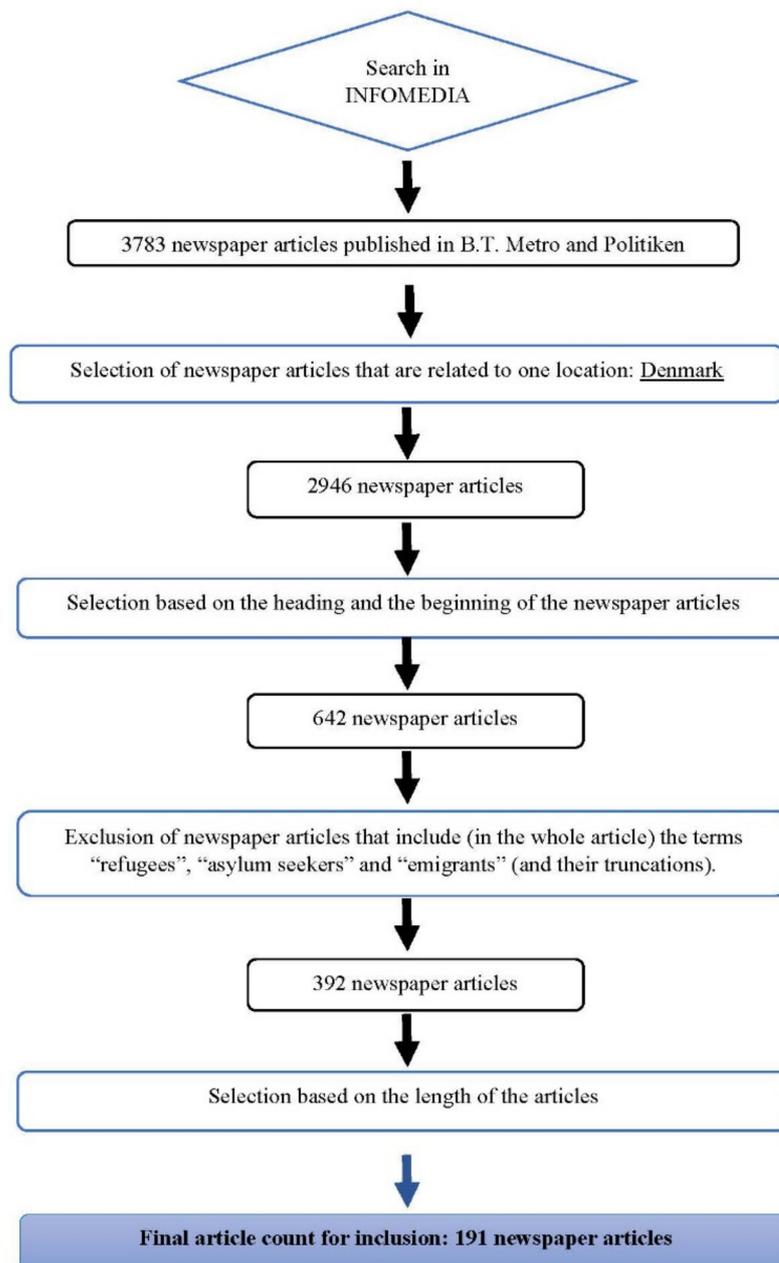


Figure 1. The data collection process visualised in the form of a flow chart.

3.2. Qualitative Content Analysis

To provide knowledge and increase understanding regarding the portrayal of immigrants and the issues around immigrants and immigration in Danish media, a conventional qualitative content analysis was conducted. According to Hsieh and Shannon [30], qualitative content analysis is defined as a research method that is useful for the subjective

interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns.

Conventional content analysis is a method usually used when the existing research literature or theory about the studied phenomenon is limited. In this case, instead of using predetermined categories, the researchers immerse themselves in the data and let new categories, sub-categories and insights emerge from these data [31]. According to Elo and Kyngäs [32], this approach is referred to as “inductive content analysis”. Our qualitative content analysis was inspired by the guidelines of Elo and Kyngäs [32] and Hsieh and Shannon [30].

The researchers were committed from the very beginning of this study to maintaining a naïve stance towards the target phenomenon. This means that they tried to stay curious, open to new and unexpected findings, sensitive to what was said in the text (and not said), and critical of their own assumptions and prejudices regarding the studied phenomenon [33].

The researchers made several inductive rounds, where they read all the selected articles and strove to make sense of the data, understand ‘what was going on’ in the media, and obtain a sense of the whole. After a sense of the whole was obtained, all the data were introduced into NVivo 12, and the actual process of coding (organising phase) was started. The analysis started by highlighting the units of analysis (words, sentences, or paragraphs) that seemed to capture key thoughts or concepts (open coding). At the same time, the researchers took notes on their impressions and thoughts (initial analysis). Based on this initial analysis, labels for codes were identified and included in an initial coding scheme. Given the large number of codes, they were grouped and organised into broader, meaningful categories based on how different codes were related or linked [30], keeping in mind that the ideal number of clusters ranges between 10 and 15. The decision of which category a concept belonged to was based on the researchers’ own understanding and interpretation.

The abstraction process was the last step of the organising phase. In this process, the initial codes and categories were reviewed. The codes that overlapped and categories where data were too diverse or insufficient were excluded. To formulate a general description of the research topic, the data were organised into subcategories, generic categories, and main categories [32].

3.3. Ethical Considerations

This study did not require ethical clearance, as only publicly available written data were used. The use of person-related information was minimised, and references were made only to public figures that are salient in Danish media. In the case of private persons, their full names were excluded from the quotes.

4. Results

4.1. Portrayal of Immigrants

The Danish newspapers *B.T. Metro* and *Politiken* referred to migrants in terms of their geographical origin, ethnicity, religion, or legal status and tended to focus on non-Western, Muslim, and Eastern European immigrants as well as on people in the country ‘on tolerated stay’. When referring to ‘migrants’, several one-word synonyms (e.g., ‘immigrants’, ‘foreigners’, ‘Somalis’) were often used within the examined texts.

Regarding ethnic origin, the migrants portrayed in these articles came from various regions across the globe, from the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, Asia, and both Eastern and Western European countries.

In terms of religion, Muslim faith was mentioned explicitly. Both negative and positive/realistic facts about Islam and Muslims were presented in the media. On the one hand, Muslim culture was generally characterised as violent and oppressive (especially towards women). For instance, in an article published in *B.T. Metro*, the author (who was also the former minister of Immigration and Integration) stated that:

One should not have read much in the Qur'an or followed the news very much without understanding the seriousness and quickly ascertaining the debilitating reality: violence against women, honour killings and serious violations in these Muslim environments. ('B.T. Metro', 7 October 2019)

On the other hand, several articles published in *Politiken* served to debunk myths and untruthful statements about Islam/Muslims, and about other relevant topics. An example of a debunked fallacy concerned the assumption regarding fertility rates among Muslims:

The claim that Muslims give birth to 3-4-5 children is not true. ('Politiken', 8 May 2019)

In terms of behaviour, immigrants who had family members who were Danish citizens were described differently than immigrants of non-Western origins without familial connections to Danes. For example, these two articles captured the stories of two non-European women who were married to Danish citizens and because they unconsciously disobeyed the strict immigration policy, they were forced to leave Denmark. Despite their fault, the journalists portrayed them as honest, trustworthy persons, willing to integrate into Danish society and respect Danish regulations:

[The woman], who speaks and writes Danish and has learned it in just 11 months (. . .), has never received social benefits. ('B.T. Metro', 31 May 2019)

It has not been easy for Iamae to say goodbye to her friends, family and studies in Brazil—her country, which she loves. But because of Lasse's illness, she needed to do it, so they could live together. ('B.T. Metro', 2 November 2019)

On the other hand, immigrants with a non-Western background and without family ties with Danes were portrayed as being “intimidating and unpleasant”, having violent characters, and being frequently present in the crime statistics. Moreover, they were described as less educated than those with Danish family ties and, in many cases, as unemployed. For instance:

Somalis (. . .) are the foreign nationality most frequently convicted of pernicious crime, such as murder/attempted murder, violence and robbery. ('B.T. Metro', 1 June 2019)

Far too many women with non-Western backgrounds are not in the labour market. ('B.T. Metro', 15 June 2019)

In the Danish media, ‘non-Westerners’ and Muslims were closely associated with economic burdens for Danish society (high unemployment and increased use of social welfare) or a cultural and security threat. In particular, Somali and people ‘on tolerated stay’ were described as threats to the country’s security, given their ‘violent characters’ and overrepresentation in crime statistics. Eastern European migrants were more often associated with an economic threat (i.e., competitors in the Danish labour market).

A tendency towards associating non-Danish cultures, values, and backgrounds, with crime, and towards describing immigrants (in general) as troublemakers was also observed.

In Denmark, it is often talked about that other cultures, other values and backgrounds can be part of the cause of violence and crime. ('B.T. Metro', 19 November 2019)

It was acknowledged in the texts that many of the immigrants had learned Danish, secured a job, and were an active part of the local community. These immigrants were valued for their contribution to society. An example of such appreciation was expressed in a ‘Politiken’ article, where a left-wing politician was quoted as saying:

A good place to start is to say thank you to the many citizens of foreign descent who drive our buses, empty our garbage bins, provide care for our elderly and clean our workplaces while others are laying around and sleeping. Thank you for your efforts. Denmark would be a poorer country without you! ('Politiken', 21 May 2019)

Migrants’ attitudes and behaviour regarding employment and integration were described positively by characterising migrants and their descendants as highly motivated to secure a job, as employment was seen as an essential factor for social recognition.

Emphasis was placed on the increased number of foreigners working full-time in Denmark and on employees of non-Western origin who were being hired and working in fields unpopular among working Danes (e.g., elderly care homes). Non-Western immigrants were also described as good employees, as both private and public companies' satisfaction levels with them were relatively high and stable.

Two-sided messages about the unemployment of non-Western women were presented. On the one hand, these women were described as unwilling to work and having very high unemployment rates. For example, in this article, the journalists expressed the position of Tesfaye (left-wing politician and minister of Immigration and Integration since June 2019) regarding the unemployment of women of Arab origins, as follows:

He does not buy the story that well over half of women from Arab countries are some poor people who are frozen out of a discriminatory labour market. Tesfaye's implicit postulate is such that there is work for everyone who wants to work. ('Politiken', 27 January 2019)

On the other hand, very weak human capital was said to be the reason for some of the unemployment among these women. An elaborated explanation of the situation of this group of women was given by Lassen, H., Ph.D, a Danish author, on integration success, in an article published in *Politiken*, where he highlighted the relationship between employment and human capital:

The most obvious explanation [for their low employment rate] is that their human capital is too weak. They are too poorly educated, their language skills are too weak, they have too little experience with the Danish labour market, which is why their employment-relevant networks many times do not exist at all . . . when non-Western women are educated, they actually use the education to a great extent to get to work afterwards. ('Politiken', 26 September 2019)

The attitudes and behaviours of newer generations of women with a non-Western background were also discussed in *Politiken*. These groups were portrayed as better educated, well integrated into Danish society, present and involved in public debates, and capable of building a bridge between their ethnic culture and that of the Danes. These women were described as "part of a whole new pattern". Quotations from these women were presented in several articles and served as examples of how empowered the newer generations are. Two such quotes are presented below:

I needed to reflect on my Pakistani and Danish roots, and I have learned to set my own boundaries. (. . .) I need to break some of the patterns that have been created through generations. ('Politiken', 10 February 2019)

In a Danish family, she had seen that men could also cook and set the table. And she went home to her own traditional home and demanded that the men do this. (. . .) Today, (. . .) [she] is an independent activist, speaker, consultant, moderator. ('Politiken', 15 February 2019)

Additionally, examples of attitude changes among conservative women were presented in the media. For instance, in one of the articles, the journalists presented the case of a young girl who succeeded not only in convincing her conservative family that going to school is her right and beneficial for her, but also in persuading her mother of the importance of education:

[She] gradually changed her sceptical attitude. Now she advises her friends to send their daughters to school. ('Politiken', 10 February 2019)

People on 'tolerated stays' were portrayed in the media as a distinct and unwanted immigrant group. People belonging to this group were said to be dangerous for society, as they had committed serious crimes in their own countries, and they were also committing crime in Denmark. This message was promoted in various articles, where journalists quoted politicians' official view on the matter (for example, see the citation below):

There are foreigners that we do not want in this country, but which, unfortunately, we also cannot send home right now, because they risk being subject to the death penalty or torture in their home country. ('Politiken', 26 September 2019)

4.2. Issues around Immigrants and Immigration

Among the immigrant- and immigration-related issues described in the *B.T. Metro* and *Politiken* newspaper articles throughout 2019, three main areas of discourse were identified: the success/failure of integration, descriptions of racial discrimination and discourses on xenophobia. Additionally, discourse around immigration policy was a common subject in the media data.

4.2.1. Integration—Success or Failure

Several factors were mentioned as being crucial for the integration of migrants: learning Danish, securing a job, putting democracy over religious rules, starting education early in kindergarten, and going to “white schools”.

Indicators of successful integration were described to be immigrants’ increased employment rate, decreased fertility rate, and contribution to Danish society. Several examples of successfully integrated individuals were presented in the media. These cases highlighted that, as also stated in one of the analysed articles, *“The integration of many of those who have come to Denmark has gone well”* (*‘Politiken’, 26 September 2019*).

The data show that, in 2019, the Danish economy was challenged by a depleted workforce in both the public and private sectors. As the integration of people from Eastern European countries was not reported to be problematic, strategies for bringing new migrant workers from such countries were suggested.

The phenomenon of failed integration was further depicted in connection with Islamic extremism. Newspaper articles portraying Muslims often referred to those with radical religious views, who put Islam and their beliefs above Danish law and culture. Therefore, Islam and Muslims were perceived and presented in the media (predominantly in *B.T. Metro*) as threats to the Danish democracy and to Denmark’s Christian identity, as the examples below reveal:

Studies show that an increasing number of Muslims want to break the foundations in Denmark and establish Islamic religious law instead of the constitution. ('B.T. Metro', 14 May 2019)

Darkened Muslim forces in Denmark play with completely different rules of game than all of us democratic and freedom-loving Danes do. ('B.T. Metro', 7 October 2019)

We must be able to speak openly and critically about the role of Islam in Danish society, just as we must maintain that Denmark is based on free Christian values. ('B.T. Metro', 30 November 2019)

The media underlined that as migrants of non-Western origins have high unemployment rates and are dependent on social welfare benefits, they are a burden for Danish society. Concrete numbers regarding the economic impact that non-Western immigration has on the Danish economy were also provided:

The state spends 33 billion kroner a year on non-Western immigration. Read again: 33 billion—it's a kind of (tax) kroner anyway. AN AMOUNT THAT should strictly be zero—or almost zero. ('B.T. Metro', 14 May 2019)

The existence of parallel societies where individuals speak their own language and live within their own cultures and increased ethnic and cultural segregation were two important consequences of failed integration discussed in the Danish media.

Messages calling for cohesion and community and for people to not turn their backs on each other were also found in the texts. *Politiken* reported that some Danish politicians had concluded that the failed integration of migrants means that integration efforts are a waste of money and that this justifies the tight immigration policy followed by new governments:

Integration must work, not just cost money. (. . .) [There has been] more than 15 years of the uncontrolled use of public funds for the world's coloured integration projects. ('Politiken', 7 July 2019)

4.2.2. Discourse on Discrimination

According to the news reports, a narrow definition of 'Danishness' was present throughout society, both in the natives' mindset and in Danish governmental policies. To be a real Dane, features such as a white skin colour, Christian appurtenances, a Danish name, adoption of Danish culture and values, and perfect fluency in the Danish language were seen as obligatory.

The two Danish newspapers presented a series of events that exposed attitudes and behaviours that were discriminatory towards foreigners living in Denmark. The data described discriminatory behaviours in Denmark based on 'ethnicity', 'name', 'religion', 'language', and 'education'.

For instance, in one article, the journalists reported a comedian of non-Western origin's experience regarding discrimination against immigrants in Denmark. They quoted:

If it's not Ramadan, then it's our clothing. And if it's not our clothing, then it's obviously our names. Everything about immigrants is obviously problematic. ('B.T. Metro', 2 February 2019)

The data showed that discrimination based on ethnicity and name occurred in the educational system, the job market, and everyday life. *B.T. Metro* presented a sound case of discrimination, where a city council decided to separate Danish-ethnic children from children of non-Western origin by setting up a new, separate school department for non-Western pupils:

Herning Municipality received harsh criticism from the Institute for Human Rights for illegal discrimination on the basis of ethnicity in school relocation. ('B.T. Metro', 29 November 2019)

As names are closely associated with language, culture, religion and community belonging, discrimination against individuals with foreign-sounding names was reported as a common and often unconscious occurrence:

There are examples of discrimination against students with foreign-sounding names like Yousef—not because the teachers are racist but because they are hard pressed. Therefore, they can better accommodate Mathias and his like. ('Politiken', 24 March 2019)

Therefore, people of immigrant origin who have Danish names were considered to be better integrated in Danish society and were more likely to be perceived as belonging to Danish society.

Language skills were reported to be a discriminatory factor in two ways. On the one hand, while speaking Danish with an accent was an identification factor for being 'outsider'/'foreigner', poor Danish language skills were an impediment to securing a job.

On the other hand, the perception of the value of a native language changed drastically based on whether the native language was 'Danish' or a minority language. In one article, the author explained that:

Native language teaching in the sense of teaching minority mother tongues has not been considered enriching for the pupils in question in the same way as [teaching] Danish as a native language. ('Politiken', 24 March 2019)

The matter of learning Danish was deeply considered and included in policies regarding integration. Therefore, rules regarding the access of foreigners or children of minority origins to education were set, and discussions regarding their discriminatory impact arose. The cost of Danish courses, the expectation that bilingual children would learn Danish from a very early age (in crèches), the mandatory stop checks, the requirement to pass exams in their transition from day care to school, and the implementation of 'white schools'

are examples of discriminatory action that were mentioned in the news reports. Education discrimination within the educational system was also reported:

For decades, Danish and a narrow form of Danishness have been the norm in the education system, in which bilingualism, teaching minority mother tongues and interculturalism have had difficult circumstances. ('Politiken', 24 March 2019)

In a more disguised manner, discrimination based on religion was observed through the political views expressed by some right-wing parties, whose members described Islam as incompatible with Danish culture. Anti-Islam attitudes were portrayed in all the news in which Rasmus Paludan, the "racist-led leader" of the immigrant-critical party, was the main subject. Religion-based discrimination and anti-Islam attitudes coming from civil society were also depicted by the media which highlighted that a significant number of surveyed Danes did not want Muslims living in Denmark:

There is a deep concern that there are some in Denmark who seem to think that people should be expelled solely because of their faith. 28 percent of the surveyed Danes either fully or partially agree that Muslims should be sent out of Denmark. ('B.T. Metro', 17 November 2019)

4.3. Discourses Revealing Xenophobia

The data showed that xenophobic attitudes were expressed both by civil society members and politicians. Overall, the xenophobic mentality tended to be expressed through three senses: 'anti-Islam', 'anti-immigration' and 'fear of 'the great replacement'.

'Politiken' noted that over a quarter of the Danes surveyed wished that Muslim immigrants would be expelled from the country; furthermore, the media mentioned that, in the general elections for the Danish parliament, almost 2% of voters supported the anti-immigrant/anti-Muslim party Stram Kurs (Hard Line):

With 63,537 votes, equivalent to 1.88 percent, Stram Kurs became eligible for party support of more than 2 million kroner a year and is now continuing its anti-Muslim campaign with more resources than they had before the election. ('Politiken', 27 October 2019)

Rasmus Paludan, the leader of the Stram Kurs party, is notorious for his anti-Islam activities, such as burning and throwing away the Quran in public areas with high Muslim populations. Additionally, in political debates, his focus was always on migrants and especially on Muslims, and his messages about this group of people were always negative.

While anti-immigration views were usually expressed by politicians and political parties in their debates on immigration policy, the statements of regular citizens denigrating immigrants were cited within news reports on various subjects. For instance:

Just because a generation decides that now there must be a lot of coloured people, they are not entitled to it. The next generation may not agree that they should grow up in a multicultural society (. . .). I hope to stop the flow of migrants to Europe. The whole of Europe will be transformed into a shithole because those people cannot contribute or fit culturally with us. ('Politiken', 19 May 2019)

Explanations for citizens' anti-immigrant views reported by the media include cultural differences, the perception that some immigrants have no right to live in Denmark and the perception that these people are of no use:

25,000 people came on the Syrian wave that should be thrown home. They have no right to be here, and we have nothing to use them for. ('Politiken', 19 May 2019)

Politiken reported that there is a fear of natives being replaced by other ethnic groups through an increased number of immigrants and their descendants (Great Replacement). The perception of this threat was strengthened throughout the texts by quotes from political actors such as Rasmus Paludan, the Generation Identity movement (a nationalist, far-right-wing youth organization), and ordinary citizens with no defined political views. For example, the quote below is from an ordinary Danish citizen who expressed his fear of the Great Replacement and provided some insight into his perception of this matter:

Denmark is in a desperate situation where the Danes are being exterminated. It's because of immigration, and it doesn't matter if it's from Arab, Asian or Eastern European countries. ('Politiken', 19 May 2019)

Despite the texts describing civilians' concerns regarding this issue, texts where experts were quoted aimed to convince readers that this fear was unfounded, and the phenomenon of a 'great replacement' was reported as unlikely to happen.

Discourses around Danish Immigration Policy

Immigration policy was the focus of debates during the general elections, and 'integration' was the most frequently debated topic in most of the immigrant/immigration-related articles published in *B.T. Metro* and *Politiken* in 2019 in this analysis.

'Immigration policy' was described as the Big-Bang of the elections. Greater demands on integration, a controlled influx of foreigners into Danish society, and the maintenance of strict immigration policy laws (e.g., jewellery law) were the basis of the immigration policy discussions.

There was a consensus among all political parties that a strict immigration policy must be maintained. However, some differences between the left- and right-wing parties' views on immigration policy were reported in the media. The expressed views of right-wing parties on immigration policy were often described in the media as harsh, discriminatory, and unfair. Left-wing parties took a more humanistic view of immigration policy. In addition to their interest in continuing a strict immigration policy, left-wing politicians claimed to support policies aiming for the better treatment of children living in Sjælsmark deportation center and less aggressive integration rules for migrants in general.

The issues related to immigrants living in deportation centres ('on tolerated stay') were of high interest in political debates and were an important subject within immigration policy. As these people were described as unwanted, a tendency to monitor their presence in Denmark and find methods to reduce their number was observed. Among the strategies used to this end was the creation of very harsh conditions so that people 'on tolerated stay' would voluntarily leave the country. Politicians' official views regarding this matter were quoted in several newspaper articles. Two such examples are provided as follows:

The minister will use 'all the tools we have available' to reduce the number of people 'on tolerated stay'. They have long been a rock in the shoes of the minister at all times in the field, and now the stone seems to have become larger. ('Politiken', 26 September 2019)

The strategy is to cripple the freedom of movement of the convicts and—despite international conventions—give them such intolerable conditions that they move [out of the country]. ('Politiken', 3 February 2019)

Strict and inflexible policies for family reunification and integration were described as having negative consequences for Danish citizens. Much attention was paid by the journalists to the separation of families and the psychological distress that separated families go through, as well as on the solutions implemented by the government to address this problem.

4.4. Voices Presented and General Tone Used

Throughout the articles published in 2019, *B.T. Metro* and *Politiken* gave voice to the following groups: immigrants and their relatives, members of Danish civil society, experts and officials, and politicians (and political parties).

Across the texts, direct quotes were taken from individuals belonging to each of the identified groups. The journalists generally maintained a neutral tone and talked about migrants in general, though they often pointed out their ethnic, geographic or religious backgrounds. Additionally, racist and xenophobic expressions, such as "coloured people" or "shitty people", were published in interview articles in their original form (uncensored).

The general tone of the published articles was neutral. Direct quotations from individuals belonging to the above-mentioned groups were provided, often in the form of an

interview. However, regarding political stances, some articles presented only a summary of the perspectives in the debate, with few direct citations.

Differences between the approaches used by the two newspapers analysed in this study were noticed. On one hand, *B.T. Metro* presented migrants mostly from a negative perspective (one-sided messages), especially with regard to Muslims and people with non-Western backgrounds. On the other hand, *Politiken* maintained a neutral stance, and messages from multiple sides of an issue were provided. Simply put, when a negative or stereotypical statement was expressed in an article, the information was checked, factual data were also provided, and/or the same issue was discussed from multiple viewpoints.

In addition to the journalists, published newspaper articles were attributed to politicians (in *B.T. Metro*) and to members of civil society, experts, and professors (in *Politiken*). The general tone used by the journalists, experts and professors was neutral, while politicians and members of civil society tended to use a negative tone with respect to immigrants.

In addition to the journalists' news reports, the contribution of professors from Danish universities was substantial. Their reports and analysis provided different perspectives on the highly debated issues in the media and in political discourse, and no subjective information was provided. In contrast, short articles written by members of civil society expressed the personal opinions of the authors. However, the way in which the articles were written and published clearly showed that the presented information was subjective and should not necessarily be seen as factual.

In general, right-wing parties and politicians tended to express more racist and xenophobic attitudes and political views, using a sharp tone, while left-wing politicians expressed more balanced attitudes, views, and tone when addressing immigrants or immigration-related issues.

Migrants' voices were heard in a number of articles where the subject related to discrimination against immigrants. Both members of the general public with immigrant origins and famous people with immigrant origins were interviewed about this issue and, in all cases, direct quotes from the interviewees were given. However, when it came to negative news (e.g., about crime and misbehaviour), migrant voices were less likely to be present in the articles. Islamic extremist attitudes were attributed to Muslims based only on statistics, and no direct quotations were given.

When Danish citizens were directly involved in a case, more attention was given to the way they (and their migrant relative) felt about or were affected by the given situation. Additionally, a more compassionate tone was used by journalists when writing about cases that affected Danish citizens and/or children.

Authorities and experts were asked to comment on the topic or provide factual data. In those cases, their stance, or the information they provided, was perceived as objective and unbiased. All authorities and representatives maintained a neutral tone and standpoint when commenting on the given issue.

The voices of members of Danish civil society were also prominent. Most of the civil society members who were included were individuals with anti-immigrant views who expressed their fears and frustrations regarding immigrants and foreign policy.

5. Discussion

5.1. Portrayal of Immigrants

The two Danish newspapers presented a clear delimitation between those who are regarded as 'real Danes' and those who are not. Additionally, the news coverage revealed that the concept of 'Danishness' is deeply rooted in and diffused throughout Danish society and that there is perceived competition between Danes and ethnic minorities. This further signals that the 'us versus them' mindset is deeply rooted in Danish society—a finding also confirmed by Jensen et al. [34].

The 'us versus them' mentality is also revealed through the way media categorizes and labels immigrants based on their geographical, ethnic, or religious origins. This classification can, on the one hand, be detrimental for foreigners whose genuine selves are

reduced to their 'given labels' [23] and, on the other hand, lead to intergroup hostility and the stigmatisation of migrants (as suggested by Realist Conflict Theory [26] and Social Identity Theory [24,25]).

In addition to religion being a method of differentiating the 'native' from the migrant (the 'other'), the media texts show that Islam is perceived by Danes as a potential cultural threat to Denmark's Christian identity—a claim also supported by Riegert and Hovden [3]. Racist and xenophobic expressions, such as "coloured people", "darkened Muslims" or "shitty people", which were published uncensored in various interview articles and attributed to both politicians and civil society members, contradict Fietkau and Hansen's [2] findings, according to which, Danish people do not care about one's race (skin colour).

The Danish media texts in which immigrants were associated with being an economic burden and a threat follow the pattern found by other European studies investigating natives' attitudes towards immigrants [2–4,34].

5.2. Issues around Immigrants and Immigration Described by the Media

Integration, xenophobia, social discrimination, and immigration policy were the three most common immigrant- and immigration-related issues presented by the Danish media.

5.2.1. About Integration

The failed integration of non-Western migrants was depicted by *B.T. Metro* and *Politiken* as a result of great differences between immigrants' original cultural and religious values and beliefs and those of Danish society (e.g., Islamic values are regarded as being opposed to Danish law and culture). This is in accordance with Yilmaz's [9] findings. Additionally, high unemployment rates among non-Western immigrants were depicted by the media as an additional reason for their failed integration into Danish society.

The two Danish newspapers highlight that in Denmark, immigrants' successful integration depends on their capacity to come as close as possible to matching the concept of Danishness by learning the language and adopting Danish values, traditions and habits, as well as by building a bridge between Danish culture and their own. Moreover, successfully integrated individuals contribute to the wealth of the country and are valuable members of the community.

According to the Danish media, in 2019, Denmark experienced workforce shortages in both the public and private sectors, and migrant workers were portrayed as necessary to solve the issue and as an economic asset. The news reports showed that ethnic minorities often work in fields that are unpopular among native Danes, so there is no real perceived competition in terms of resources (e.g., the job market). Instead, both migrants and natives work together for a common goal: the prosperity of Denmark and a good life for everyone. In this way, according to RCT, unity among ingroup and outgroup members occurs, and friendships arise across group lines [26]. Thus, a decrease in the prevalence of anti-immigrant attitudes and an increase in successful integration cases may be expected.

As described by the media, Danish society is challenged by ethnic and cultural segregation, parallel societies, and religious (Islamic) extremism. These could be the results of the stigmatisation of migrants (by the media, policymakers, or civil society), which leads to their isolation from the rest of society [16] and a stronger affiliation with the ethnic or religious group with which they identify [24,25,35].

5.2.2. About the Discourse on Racial Discrimination and Xenophobia

According to the *B.T. Metro* and *Politiken* newspaper articles, racial discrimination is deeply rooted in Danish society and appears at various societal and structural levels (in the educational system, in the job market, in deportation centres, and among civil society members).

Discrimination against minorities in Denmark appears to be based on ethnicity, name, religion, and language, and is independent of age and gender. Ethnicity can be indicated by one's physical appearance, name and religion. All these factors indicate 'otherness' [18]

and are connected to the narrow definition of 'Danishness'. The harder it is for foreigners to fulfil the criteria of 'Danishness', the more salient the issues around immigrants presented in the media are, and the more likely the feelings of hostility and prejudice among ingroups and outgroups appear.

In the Danish media, Muslims are constantly stigmatised, and stereotypes regarding Islamic culture and values, as well as Muslims' behaviour, are promoted. In fact, Islam is the only religion stigmatised in Danish news coverage, as was also confirmed by Riegert and Hovden [3]. In 2019, several news reports emphasised the opinion expressed in civil society that Muslims should be thrown out of Denmark, a finding that strengthens the idea that, "*Danes' attitudes towards Islam are the most negative in Europe*" [34].

The two newspapers also reported that there are Danes who fear that Danish national identity is threatened by the increasing number of immigrants with conflicting cultural identities (e.g., non-Western immigrant groups) and that Danes will become a minority in their own country. As experts have shown, the fear of such a 'great replacement' is not realistic [21].

5.3. Whose Voices Were Heard?

Similar to the findings in other studies [36], politicians' voices were the most salient in the media in this study, while male immigrants' views were underrepresented, regardless of the topic. Moreover, in cases of negative depictions of migrants, e.g., as economic burdens or criminals, the standpoint of migrants was completely missing [36]. Remarkably, contrary to other studies [4,37], immigrant women's voices were heard and valued in the Danish media analysed here.

5.4. Media Discourses' Potential Effects on Migrants and Immigration

The news media presents an information environment, in which specific issues, perspectives and ideas are predominant, and it can persuade audiences to think along specific lines. This helps change audiences' cognition or attitudes, especially when news coverage is one-sided [15]. Additionally, the tone of news coverage is critically important, as it can influence readers' perception of a given issue. For example, "*the more positively news outlets cover immigrants, the less people are concerned about immigration*" [15].

The general tone used by Danish journalists was neutral. However, the overall message appearing across Danish media emphasised issues such as otherness, racism, and xenophobia.

In contrast to *B.T. Metro*, where a tendency to provide one-sided messages was observed, the *Politiken* newspaper maintained a neutral stance, where multiple perspectives and sources of information about the same issues were provided. This approach was also observed by Masini et al. [38] (as cited in Eberl et al. [4]), who claim that elite newspapers cover the highest diversity of actors and perspectives.

5.5. Limitations

As qualitative analyses risk subjective bias, the authors are fully aware that this bias may have occurred and thus do not claim to have revealed any universal truth. Another limitation of this study is the small sample size of newspaper articles included in the analysis. Considering that only 42 out of 178 articles (this number also includes the articles published in November and December 2019, to which access was restricted) published in the *Politiken* newspaper met the inclusion criteria, one may question whether the remaining sample was representative or whether significant newspaper articles were left behind. As the latter could be the case, one should question whether the results of this study would have been significantly different if more or all of the articles had been included in the analysis.

5.6. Strengths and Future Recommendations

A strength of this study is the use of both a tabloid and a quality newspaper, which provided an overview of the sphere of news coverage of immigrants and immigration in Denmark and decreased the chances of over- or under-estimating the depiction of these issues in the Danish media.

This study identifies concrete immigrant- and immigration- related issues that public (health) authorities could address in projects concerning immigrants' integration or empowerment. Moreover, this study indicates some of the risk factors that may impact the health of immigrants living in Denmark. By analyzing them, public health professionals may identify which of the determinants of health should be tackled in order to conduct effective health promotion interventions for this vulnerable group.

Regarding future research, the next step would be to conduct an empirical interview study where to investigate how the immigrants themselves perceive how they have been presented in the media and how this corresponds to reality. In addition, researchers should investigate immigrants' perception on whether the mediatic representations on their ingroup affect their everyday life, and how.

6. Conclusions

This study examined the ways in which Danish media portrays the immigrants living in Denmark and explored both issues around immigrants and immigration and whose voices were heard in the media. The portrayal of immigrants in Danish media was generally negative. The media texts referred to immigrants in terms of their geographical origin, ethnicity, religion, or legal status, and labelled them as economic, cultural and security threats. Integration, xenophobia, racial discrimination, and Danish integration policy were the major immigrant-related issues discussed in the media.

The Danish print press conveyed the message that Danish culture is threatened by immigrant groups. This may be the central factor generating negative reactions to ethnic minorities in Denmark. Additionally, the data revealed that Danes have a strong affinity for 'Danishness'. This was presented as one of the major barriers to the integration and acceptance of immigrants in Denmark.

The voices of politicians and political parties and of immigrants and their relatives were the most salient in the media. Immigrant women's voices were heard and appeared to be valued, while male immigrants' views were underrepresented (regardless of the topic) and particularly absent in texts providing negative portrayals of immigrants.

Despite the journalists' generally neutral tone, the Danish media emphasised issues like otherness, racism, and xenophobia. This, together with the delivery of one-sided messages (in *B.T. Metro*), and the overall negative portrayal of migrants, may shape and influence audiences' perception of immigrants and immigration, making the media a key player in the acceptance and integration of ethnic minorities in Denmark.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, P.-M.C. and L.E.K.; Data curation, P.-M.C.; Formal analysis, P.-M.C.; Investigation, P.-M.C.; Methodology, L.E.K. and P.-M.C.; Supervision, L.E.K.; Validation, L.E.K.; Visualization, P.-M.C.; Writing—original draft, P.-M.C.; Writing—review & editing, L.E.K. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: The study did not receive any funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Appendix A

Appendix A.1. *B.T. (Berlinske Tidene)*

- Ambrosius, T. & Elkjær Andersen, J. (1 June 2019). Pape: Vi har et stort problem. *B.T.*, Section 1, Page 10.
- Bach Jakobsen, S. (2 November 2019). Tesfaye vil have redegørelse. *B.T.*, Section 1, Page 6.
- Bjerring Jensen, S. (2 February 2019). 'Alt ved indvandrere er åbenbart problematisk'. *B.T.*, Section 1, page 9 (NYHEDER).
- Friberg, J., & Bjerring Jensen, S. (17 November 2019). UDLÆNDINGE: Ellemann satte Støjberg på plads. *B.T.*, Section 1, Page 4 (NYHEDER).
- Græsbøll Svaneborg, R. (29 November 2019). De ødelægger vores børns uddannelse. *B.T.*, Section 1, Page 17.
- Havskov Hansen, J.A. (31 May 2019). Renée var advaret. *B.T.*, Section 1, Page 24.
- Høgh, M. (14 May 2019). Det er jo nærmest blasfemi i 20. potens. *B.T.*, Section 1, Page 24.
- Jørgensen, F. & Ritzau. (19 November 2019). SKYDERIER: Löfven: Bandevold skyldes ikke indvandring. *B.T.*, Section 1, Page 13.
- Karker, A. (15 June 2019). Nu fortsætter forhandlingerne. *B.T.*, Section 1, Page 8.
- Støjberg, I. (7 October 2019). Jeg forstår Ida Aukens vrede—men vågn op!. *B.T.*, Section 1, Page 24.
- Vestergaard Larsen, J. (30 November 2019). Fløjkrig blusser op. *B.T.*, Section 1, Page 6 (NYHEDER).

Appendix A.2. *Politiken*

- Arnfred, C.E., Stryhn Kjeldtoft, S, & Bæksgaard Christensen, E. (8 May 2019). Faktatjek: Paludan overdriver om stor udskiftning af danskere. *Politiken*, Section 1, Page 14.
- Heltberg, S. (21 May 2019). Hold en ordentlig tone. *Politiken*, Section 2 (Kultur), Page 6 (Debat).
- Holm Sejersen, E.L. (10 February 2019). Sidste omgang med stipendier til unge indvandrere. *Politiken*, Section 4 (PS), Page 10.
- Hvilsom, F. (19 May 2019). Jeg stemmer kun på Stram Kurs på grund af én sag: Indvandringen. *Politiken*, Section 1, Page 8.
- Kjærgaard, I., & Tang Kristensen, J. (27 January 2019). Debat: Vil S integrere eller vil de assimilere? *Politiken*, Section 2 (Debat), Page 4 (Debat).
- Kristjánsdóttir, B. (24 March 2019). Debat: Sig mig, hvad du hedder, of jeg kan sige dig, hvordan du vil blive behandlet i skolesystemet. *Politiken*, Section 2 (Debat), Page 7 (Debat).
- Lai Schmöde, C., Krogh Hansen, H., & Johansen, A. (9 February 2019). Debat: UDLÆNDINGE: Naboer til Lindholm: Politikernes plan er både ineffektiv, smagløs og spild af skatteydernes penge. *Politiken*, Section 2 (Debat), Page 5 (Debat).
- Lassen, H. (26 September 2019). Kronik: Danmark som et verdensførende integrationsland. *Politiken*, Section 2 (Kultur), Page 9 (Debat).
- Nilsson, K. (15 February 2019). Hun er en del af et helt nyt mønster. *Politiken*, Section 2 (Kultur), Page 8 (Navne).
- Shakir, K. (27 October 2019). Debat: Udskiftning. Dommedagsprofeterne fra den yderste højrefløj har sat deres aftryk. *Politiken*, Section 2 (Debat), Page 6 (Debat).
- Skærbæk, M. (26 September 2019). Antallet af udlændinge på tålt ophold stiger—igen. *Politiken*, Section 1, Page 12.
- Zouzou, R. (7 July 2019). Debat: INTEGRATION: Integration skal virke, ikke bare koste penge. *Politiken*, Section 2 (Debat), Page 5 (Debat).

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