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“Room at Our Table”: Analyzing the Efficacy of Pro-Refugee Social Media Campaigns Based on Hospitality Values and Resource Sharing

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“Room at Our Table”: Analyzing the Efficacy of Pro-Refugee Social Media Campaigns Based on Hospitality Values and Resource Sharing

Virginia Gallner

University Honors Program Thesis

Submitted by

Virginia Gallner

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Dr. Gina Ligon
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UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA

HONORS THESIS ABSTRACT

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS:

Applying a theoretical framework of engaging hospitality values can reduce implicit bias. This research was implemented through a social media campaign called Room at Our Table, based around a series of webisodes that utilize the psychological concept of meal sharing as a community-building activity to change perspectives on hospitality toward refugees, via the reduction of implicit bias. Psychologically, aversion to welcoming refugees can also stem from identity threat and a desire to protect resources within a given group. Here in Nebraska, people are changing their minds about refugees based on personal interactions. In 2016, Nebraska resettled the most refugees per capita of any US state, according to the Pew Research Center. This is important as it represents a significant shift in the state’s demographic make-up. Reducing biases toward these new residents is important because for every individual who believes refugees to be a burden on their communities, there are underlying biases that inform their beliefs. Far Right extremist groups are also competing for the uncommitted majority’s views on refugees as demonstrated by the ADL’s Hate Crime Map (2017). Utilizing the “power of contact,” we aim to provide a way for uncommitted populations to experience connection with a refugee family (albeit digitally) to change their perspectives.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction..................................................................................................................4

Literature Review........................................................................................................5
  Challenges: Implicit Bias, Intergroup Conflict, and Resource Sharing...............5
  Religious Values and Intergroup Communication..............................................9
  Countering Implicit Bias through Counter-Narratives........................................11

Research Questions..................................................................................................14

Method.......................................................................................................................14

Procedures................................................................................................................14
  Study 1....................................................................................................................14
  Study 2....................................................................................................................16

Findings......................................................................................................................18
  Study 1....................................................................................................................18
  Study 2....................................................................................................................19

Conclusions and Future Directions.................................................................27

Appendices...............................................................................................................29

References...............................................................................................................
Introduction

Nebraska settled more refugees per capita than any other state in 2016 (Nohr, 2016). This is important as it represents a significant shift in the state’s demographic make-up, and reducing biases toward these new residents is important because for every individual who believes refugees to be a burden on their communities, there are underlying biases that inform their beliefs. These are implicit biases: beliefs and thoughts formed in unconscious mental processes. Psychologically, aversion to welcoming refugees can also stem from a fear of scarcity and desire to protect resources within a given group.

Thus, there are three goals of the following literature review. First, it will explore the challenges faced in research of this nature with implicit biases inherent to the study populations. The theoretical approaches referenced include intergroup conflict, resource scarcity, social dominance theory, and the racial threat hypothesis, as lenses through which to view the roots of these implicit biases. All of these conditions can make individuals especially vulnerable to extremist ideologies, which is where counter-messaging campaigns enter the equation.

In addition to exploring these concepts in relation to counter-messaging campaigns, I will also analyze underlying values systems of those who would ostensibly be accepting refugees into their community. Individuals who support offering asylum to refugees are usually part of a stable, resourced community (Croucamp, 2016). With these theoretical justifications in place, I aim to explore the reasons for bias against refugees and assess the efficacy of social media campaigns in countering these biases. Finally, I demonstrate how applying this theoretical framework of engaging hospitality values can reduce implicit bias through an active social media campaign called Room at our Table, based around a series of webisodes that utilize the
psychological strategy of meal sharing as a community-building activity to change perspectives on hospitality toward refugees, via the reduction of implicit bias.

**Literature Review**

**Challenges: Implicit Bias, Intergroup Conflict, and Resource Sharing**

Implicit bias literature emphasizes the agency of “unconscious mental processes” in determining actors’ attitudes and actions (Greenwald and Krieger, 2006, pp. 946. Here, the word “implicit” refers specifically to those processes which are outside of conscious awareness, both in relation to the self and the environment. If these conflict with an individual’s explicit values(e.g., they purport to be supportive of an issue for which they hold unconscious distaste) it can result in cognitive dissonance. Greenwald and Krieger (2006) define implicit biases as “discriminatory biases based on implicit attitudes or implicit stereotypes.”

Greenwald and Krieger define attitude as “an evaluative disposition – that is, the tendency to like or dislike, or to act favorably or unfavorably toward, someone or something” (2006, pp. 948). When these arise from implicit biases, an actor may not be aware of the unconscious values that inform his/her decisions and actions. In their parallel survey measures of implicit and explicit bias, Greenwald and colleagues found that IAT (implicit measures) had a higher rate of predictive validity, as well as more clearly demonstrating bias toward or against persons outside of an actor’s in-group (2006, pp. 954).

Croucamp and colleagues put this theory into action with their 2017 study on attitudes toward asylum seekers in Australia. Their study utilizes a multi-component model to discuss the development of implicit attitudes from the underlying feelings, thoughts, and behaviors toward the group in question. They made a conscious choice to incorporate multiple angles of the
cognitive and behavioral processes rather than study these factors in isolation. These attitudes and behaviors are reinforced by negative language that proliferates during a new wave of refugee arrivals – terms like “boat people” or “queue jumpers” (2016, pp. 239). They found a stark disparity between attitudinal and affective responses, which points to “strong internalisation of cognitive beliefs and processes” (2016, pp. 243).

Concordantly, another study found that positive interactions with minorities have the capacity to dramatically alter implicit biases. Through quantitative and qualitative analysis of surveys, they found that the quality and content of interactions with minorities had a strong potential to change respondents’ perspective, and even increased their likelihood of supporting policies that would help minorities (Turoy-Smith et al., 2013, pp. E181). The target minority population in their study consisted of Indigenous Australians and, more recently, refugees.

Their research was founded on the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954) which postulates that “having contact with a member of another out-group will decrease prejudice toward that group as a whole and will assist in positive future group interactions,” given a few necessary conditions (Turoy-Smith, 2013, pp. E179). However, it is unclear how the contact hypothesis manifests in virtual interactions. The best evidence we had prior to initiating this campaign was a meta-analysis of whether hypothetical interactions with outgroup members had equal effectiveness to physical meetings (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008).

Applying Allport’s contact hypothesis, Aberson and colleagues (2004) offer a strategy for reducing implicit bias and intergroup conflict. This is especially effective when the relationship between in-group and out-group members is interdependent. While the contact hypothesis has yet to be meta-analytically examined in virtual settings (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008), Crisp & Turner (2009) found that when participants simply imagined positive, interdependent
interactions with outgroup members, they experienced more positive perceptions and a reduction in bias toward them. Thus, in the present effort, we extend Allport’s original work on the contact hypothesis to examine how contact that occurs online might also result in reduction in biases.

From the standpoint of racism literature, one important theory to consider is the Threat Hypothesis, first proposed by Blalock in 1967. He postulated that threats to political or economic status can function as predictors of animosity toward minority populations. In the context of social environments, racist attitudes increase with the percentage of minority populations in a given area (Oliver and Mendelberg, 2000). The idea of immigrants or refugees entering a community and taking what is perceived to belong to existing members may also activate this unconscious bias. Thus, integration of immigrant populations would be a greater threat (in Blalock’s terminology) to residents of economically disadvantaged regions or neighborhoods due to the perceived threat and competition for resources from new members (Croucamp et al., 2016).

These theories of intergroup competition interact with implicit biases in the context of refugee issues. Intergroup competition arises in situations of resource scarcity, which may operate in implicit biases against refugees and asylum seekers. Realistic group competition is founded in concerns about resource scarcity, but the perception of group competition alone leads to intergroup conflict.

Resource stress refers to “any perception that, within a society, access to resources may be limited for certain groups” (Esses et al., 2001, pp. 702). Individuals who seek a hierarchical society likely place higher value in resources that are limited, distinguishing outgroups as competitors when the resources are most scarce. One example of this is the struggle refugees encounter to find space when arriving in the United States, as most communities place a limit on the number of asylum seekers who can be accepted. They recognize underlying cognitive and
affective aspects of intergroup competition: the cognition of a zero-sum situation where only one group can successfully utilize resources, and the affecting emotions of anxiety and fear. These underlying beliefs may be rooted in a fundamental fear of resource scarcity. Seeing more than a simple causal relationship, Esses and colleagues see resource competition as a rationalization of preconceived notions and underlying biases about immigrants.

Under the theory of resource scarcity, one of the potential responses enumerated by Esses and colleagues is to reduce the efficacy of their competitor through negative attitudes and discriminatory behavior. Another response is self-aggrandizement by the in-group presenting themselves as entitled to the resources in question. Under the umbrella of social dominance, this is a tactic used by the Far Right to recruit followers, particularly white supremacists with their statements of “they will not replace us” (Levin and Guenther, 2017). Esses and colleagues observe this in their study as the relationship between social dominance and attitudes toward members of the out-group, or, in their case, immigrants. Their findings confirmed a relationship between extremist views – here, termed “right-wing authoritarianism” – and negative attitudes toward out-groups (Esses et al., 1998, pp. 712). Ultimately, although they did not find a direct connection between social dominance and right-wing authoritarianism, they found a strong positive correlation between social dominance and distrust of immigrants, and a negative correlation between high social dominance and the desire to empower new immigrants. Therefore, individuals high in social dominance are likely to have problematic attitudes toward immigrants.

Esses released another article about resource competition and the Instrumental Model of Group Conflict (Esses et al., 2001). In this study, they examine populations both within Canada and the United States. This article delves deeper into the relationship between zero-sum beliefs
and negative attitudes toward immigrants, as well as reiterating the idea of immigrants threatening collective identity. Naturally, it follows that if immigrants feel threatened or discriminated against, they will have difficulties integrating into a new community, but nevertheless in-groups cling to the notion of a collective identity that remains stagnant through time. The authors argue that economic success can prove detrimental to immigrants’ experiences in the community, at least among those individuals who feel threatened by resource scarcity.

Esses and colleagues point out that current immigration policy in the United States favors highly skilled immigrants – those “who will substantially benefit prospectively the national economy, cultural or educational interests, or welfare of the United States” – which increases the perceived threat (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, 2001, cited by Esses et al., 2001). There is also a “diversity lottery,” prioritizing immigrants from countries with lower rates of recent immigration. Refugees fall outside of both these categories, with an annual ceiling. For refugees, the situation is more complicated. They face the same discriminations as other immigrants, but with the added factor of escaping a dire situation. Many people feel threatened by the obligation of welcoming refugees into their community.

**Religious Values and Intergroup Communication**

Greenwald and Krieger remark that implicit bias measures should be assumed to represent “modal beliefs or attitudes that respondents understand to be generally endorsed by others” (2006, pp. 960). This can be interpreted as cultural beliefs, a broader category under which religious traditions and theological beliefs can be found. In investigating the underlying values of the dominant culture, it is important to also consider theological origins of popular attitudes toward refugees, particularly the rationale of uncommitted populations who neither actively oppose nor support refugee rights. Theological perspectives and scriptural selections
influence individuals’ willingness to provide hospitality and a welcoming environment for
refugees. These are informative for values of both the target audience and the subject of the
campaign. According to the Pew Research Center, 75% of adult Nebraskans identify with a
Christian religious tradition (Pew Research Center, 2018). A Nebraskan pro-refugee campaign
that capitalized on these religious values, then, would have a greater chance of success.

The process of asylum-seeking is fraught with mistrust, as Allard notes. It is common for
refugees to be reduced to their vulnerabilities, which takes away their humanity and makes it
easier for people to reject them. But within the Abrahamic religious traditions, there are moral
obligations illustrated by stories that advocate for hospitality toward asylum-seekers, precepts
that have been ignored by those who would prefer not to see refugees entering their country. As
quoted by Allard in Reimagining Asylum, “asylum seekers are guilty until proven innocent”

In order to earn the trust of the authorities and transition from a politically liminal state to
legal recognition, asylum seekers are generally expected to have a clear, consistent and
compelling narrative before they can be taken in under the auspices of a refugee program.
According to Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, “everyone has the right
to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.” (UN General Assembly, 1948).
Although the UDHR is regarded as a covenant, it is not enforceable in international courts. The
1951 UN Refugee Convention protects refugees from being returned to countries where they risk
being persecuted, but as with the UDHR, it is more a guideline than enforceable law (Hirsch).

The experience of resource sharing across cultural differences has the capacity to bridge
that gap. “Sharing a meal models the mutual vulnerability and generosity that sustains the
hospitable relationship” (Allard, 2012, pp. 418). Bringing back the notion of power and control,
the act of resource sharing is a way of accepting the interdependence that is necessary within human communities. In our increasingly globalized world, this means accepting refugees into our communities. Allard describes this as an “‘unconditional surrender’ by both parties” (2012, pp. 419). He emphasizes the moral imperatives within Christianity to welcome those who are most vulnerable, and not to place expectations of reciprocity on guests in need.

Allard qualifies this with an interreligious perspective on political hospitality (or, in other words, offering asylum). Recognizing that many refugees are entering communities whose religious traditions are different from their own, he looks to shared values among these disparate traditions. “To say that hospitality is an offering is not to say that only members of the same tradition can share hospitality, but to say that each allows the divine to intervene in the relationship” (Allard, 2012, pp. 420) At the table of hospitality and shared resources, these different religious groups can renegotiate their understanding of moral values to find common ground. This is how disparate communities can converge to welcome newcomers and become a singular community.

**Countering Implicit Bias through Counter-Narratives**

According to the annual Anti-Defamation League (ADL) Center on Extremism Report, domestic right-wing extremists have killed more people in the United States than any other ideological group in the past year, comprising 18 of the 34 ideologically-driven murders within that category (ADL, 2017). The rate of murders perpetrated by white supremacists in relation to other extremists within the United States is double that of 2016 (ADL, 2017). Several of these were incited by arguments over ideology.
CVE Methodology, or Countering Violent Extremism, “interrupt[s] the process by which individuals become radicalised toward violent extremism” (Aly et al., 2014). Counter-messaging campaigns that have proven successful often establish a “master narrative” to accomplish their goals of challenging implicit biases. Radicalization, defined by Macnair as “the gradual adoption of beliefs and attitudes that are in opposition to… dominant sociopolitical discourses,” (Macnair et al., 2017, pp. 148) may either reaffirm preexisting biases or shift an uncommitted individual toward extremist ideologies.

The underlying framework of counter-narratives hinges on the assumption that the use of violence is a communication strategy, not only for the victims of terrorist acts but also as propaganda for individuals who would be vulnerable to extremist messaging (Aly et al., 2014). Extremists utilize social media and other online platforms to engage, manipulate, and persuade users to become radicalized, “replicating feelings of personal contact” (Aly et al., 2014) through online conversations. One study by the RAND corporation, cited by Aly, found that online communication not only facilitates but accelerates the radicalization process, establishing ties equivalent or greater to those created through in-person contact. Counter-messaging campaigns function as “noise,” disrupting the stages of engagement with extremist groups and potentially preventing radicalization.

CVE campaigns can incorporate a range of theories and methodologies. Usually, these involve either the attempt to extract or undermine an existing belief, or introduce positive values to replace the growing extremist ideologies. There are educational initiatives, community-based programs, and dialogues, as well as the online components which constituted the focus of the Room at Our Table project. These campaigns can take a proactive approach by targeting uncommitted populations who are vulnerable to radicalization but have not yet been exposed to
propaganda. EdVenture Partners is an organization dedicated to developing innovative industry–education partnership programs.

One of its partners, Peer 2 Peer (P2P): Challenging Extremism, is a U.S. State Department program operating under the paradigm of CVE, utilizing students to build counter-messaging campaigns designed to attract their peers. (Tu, 2015). Their work is focused on social media outlets, trying to avoid direct contact with extremists on high-risk platforms such as chat rooms. One such counter-messaging campaign, *Voices Against Extremism*, targeted extremism by promoting education for the uncommitted or silent majority. Started by students in Vancouver, this campaign was originally part of a P2P competition. They sought to promote humanist ideals to replace radical narratives. In 2018, EdVentures established a partnership with the Anti-Defamation League on the #innovateagainsthate campaign. The Anti-Defamation League, founded in 1913, is the world’s leading organization combating anti-Semitism, exposing hate groups, training law enforcement on hate crimes, developing anti-bias education programs for students, countering cyber-hate and relentlessly pursuing equal rights for all.

Meal sharing and, by extension, resource-sharing is an act of expressing vulnerability and mutual interdependence. This might mitigate the unconscious drive to obtain social dominance, given that refugees are portrayed as less threatening and in fact resource sharing and collaborative. Utilizing the “power of contact” (Turoy-Smith et al., 2017), we aimed to provide a way for uncommitted populations to experience connection with a refugee family (albeit digitally) to change their perspectives. In the following sections, we review our research questions, the method used to assess them, as well the findings flowing from this project.
Research Questions

1. Do social media campaigns that incorporate hospitality values resonate with uncommitted populations?

2. What social media images and platforms most effectively target implicit biases about intergroup conflict?

3. How can we utilize social media platforms to shift implicit biases away from intergroup conflict and toward values of hospitality?

Method

Procedures

To test these research questions, we utilized a mixed method approach of applied research. Study 1 examined behavior among online populations, while Study 2 looked for attitudinal changes among our participants using neurophysiological instruments in a lab experiment.

Study 1 – Online Population

Sample 1 was an online population comprised primarily of our target demographic, the uncommitted population of college-age individuals who are not strongly committed to either supporting or rejecting refugees. We organized our stimulus materials as strategically planned social media posts, organized in a calendar (Appendix A1: Social Media Strategy). We developed our posts to manifest the themes of hospitality, incorporating images of a shared meal to capitalize on the notion of resource sharing.

Considering the age demographics within our target of the uncommitted population (college-age individuals), we wanted to create a video series that would appeal to the attention spans of college students. Our video series started with the story of a refugee family who arrived in the United States little more than eighteen months ago from Syria. We have capitalized on the
concise nature of social media video clips to create 15-30 second videos, cross-posted on Facebook and Instagram. Within the videos, we have included subtitles so they are viewable silently as well as with sound.

The interviewers, myself, Alexis d’Amato, and Josie Jastram, remained off-camera for the entirety of the videos. This served two purposes: first, that viewers could envision themselves as witnesses to this family gathering, and second, to keep the focus on the refugee family. With this approach, we wanted to provide space for the viewers to imagine themselves within that conversation.

The first variable we tested was the visual content of the campaign. To explore what types of stories would appeal most to our target audience, we published short clips from the interview on different themes: favorite recipes from home, working in the United States, and even their children’s art. Considering the content themes as variables, we wanted to determine whether social media campaigns that incorporate hospitality values would resonate with uncommitted populations, and what expressions of those values would resonate most strongly. Although it is difficult to detect an attitudinal shift from a purely online response, we were able to harvest data on the view counts and qualitative information from the reactions on Facebook.

To provide context for the metrics on our own page, we also harvested data using the platform NodeXL regarding the conversation about refugees in the state of Nebraska. NodeXL scrapes Twitter data from a span of approximately 18 days to create a representation of the conversation around a given topic in matrix form (Smith et al., 2009). Through these analytics, we hoped to determine not only what kinds of media people would be most responsive toward, but also what form of social media marketing would resonate most strongly with people in this region and target demographic. We combed our data from regular intervals with the Insights
tools to accomplish this goal. The NodeXL analysis helped us understand where our social media campaign would fit in the larger conversation. The type of photo, wording, and presence of a person with whom viewers could identify are all elements within this question.

**Study 2 – Experimental Participants**

Sample 2 consisted exclusively of participants in the Jack and Stephanie Koralleski Commerce and Applied Behavioral Laboratory (hereafter referred to as the CAB Lab). These participants were drawn from a pool from the student population of a Midwestern university. Participants from pre-survey showed that they neither harbored strong views about refugees and few had exposure to them, so that fulfills the definition of uncommitted population. Using the instruments available to us in the CAB Lab, we were able to effectively measure attitudinal changes using the eye-tracking technologies. Eye-tracking involves the detection of eye movements and the measurement of its anatomical components for the purposes of knowing what an individual looks at and the effects of stimuli on the individual (Derrick, Elson, & Ligon, in press).

Within this study, we randomly assigned participants to a control group or an experimental group. Prior to answering the main survey questions, members of both the control and experimental groups were asked to take a pre-survey created in Qualtrics. This served multiple purposes: to determine whether the participants had any prior knowledge of the social media campaign, and to develop a baseline for their opinions toward refugees prior to viewing our campaign materials. This was achieved by asking meta-opinion questions, a common methodological approach for measuring attitudes that may have social desirability associated with them questions to assess implicit biases, such as “about how many people like you [emphasis added] have met a refugee?” (See Appendix B1). The final question, “what percentage
of people like you would have dinner with a refugee family if asked,” alludes to the theme of our campaign.

For the experimental task, participants were presented an image for 20 seconds to allow for eye behavior to be captured by the Tobii Eye Tracker. The control group answered a series of questions relating to a family photo taken from a white supremacist webpage, while the experimental group answered the same questions after looking at an image of the refugee family we interviewed for the campaign. Both images were accompanied by the social media description of what the family was doing from the Room at Our Table Campaign. The question types included word association scales to assess themes they observed in the images. In addition, we asked open-ended questions to simply assess what the participants reported the images conveyed (See Appendix B1).

The post-survey intended to capture the overall impact of the campaign images, as compared to the control group. One of the first questions pertains to the perception of the family’s dignity or self-respect, qualities that are often questioned within vulnerable populations (Esses et al., 2001). Moving into a consideration of the similarities and dissimilarities between refugees and people “like” the participants, they are asked to consider how much money they would be willing to donate to refugee causes. This final question assesses the efficacy of our campaign in reducing implicit bias and, by sharing financial resources, intergroup conflict.

While eye tracking metrics helped us determine what participants attended to when examining our campaign materials (See Appendix B3), we also utilized Facial Expression Analysis to gain a better understanding of what emotions were experienced by our participants, through non-intrusive analysis of micro-muscular movements in the face.
Findings

Study 1

After our campus dialogue event, there was a significant rise in our reach and post engagement, showing that in-person contact has effect on online communities (See Appendix A2: Facebook Insights). The personal networks of individuals featured on our page also started to reach out, including relatives and friends of our interviewees, as well as friends and colleagues of participants at our dialogue event. The majority of our post engagements came from personal connections in this way.

To provide context for our page in the larger online conversation, we also harvested data using the platform NodeXL regarding the conversation about refugees in the state of Nebraska (See Appendix A3: NodeXL). The network analysis revealed keywords frequently used alongside “refugee” in this localized network, including community, freedom, and #refugeeswelcome. The NodeXL network analysis revealed keywords frequently used alongside “refugee” in this localized network, including community, freedom, and #refugeeswelcome. Most of the participants in these conversations appeared to be in support of refugees, which meant that they would not be considered among the uncommitted population to whom our social media campaign was targeted. The Twitter conversation appeared to be limited to those who were already invested in the issue.

Study 2

From our eye-tracking heat maps, we discovered that the nature of the visual content made a substantial difference in participants’ interest in the verbal content. Participants in the control (white supremacist family image) group looked at the text first, and then the image.
However, the experimental (refugee family image) group spent more time studying the image, then went to the text. This is one indication that social media campaigns depicting refugee families are indeed attention getting.

One of the initial meta-opinion questions asked in our pre-survey was for participants to report, in their opinion, what percentage of people like them viewed refugees negatively (Fig. 1).

Figure 1 In your opinion, what percentage of people like you view refugees negatively? (Pre-Survey)

14 of the 37 (37.84%) participants believed that about half (26-50%) of people like them view refugees negatively. Twenty of the 37 believe that either some (1-25%) or more than half (51-75%) of people like them view refugees negatively.

When asked to list negative views people like them hold about refugees, the major themes for the entire sample, as reflected in the word cloud below, included: job, poor, terrorist, and different. Some of the words expressed the fears of resource scarcity that were discussed in the literature review, including welfare, stealing, criminal, and very clearly, resource (Fig. 2.)
21 of 37 (56.76%) believed that people like them, in contrast, view refugees positively (Fig. 3). This positive perspective was reflected in their word choices as well.
When asked to describe some positive views about refugees that were held by people like them, participants expressed major themes about people, life, culture, society, and diversity. Difference became a point of positivity in this context. This word cloud (Fig. 4) is reminiscent of the themes seen in the broader social media conversation about refugees from our NodeXL samples.

Figure 4. List some positive views that people like you hold about refugees. (Pre-Survey)

Accordingly, we asked participants how similar they believed refugees were to other people living in Nebraska (Fig. 5). 18 of 37 (48.65%) believed that refugees are “more dissimilar than similar to Nebraskans,” while 13 of 37 believe refuges are “moderately similar to Nebraskans.”
One of the most important meta-opinion questions was this: *In your opinion, what percentage of people like you would have dinner with a refugee family if asked?* In asking this question, we are drawing on the themes of resource-sharing and hospitality (as discussed in the literature review), by asking whether participants would share a meal with a refugee family. From the sample as a whole, the answer was divided. Out of the pre-survey groups, 14 of the 37 (37.84%) believed that “about half (26-50%)” of people like them would have dinner with a refugee family. Closely following, 11 of 37 (29.73%) believe that “More than half (51-76%)” would (Fig. 6).
Figure 6. In your opinion, what percentage of people like you would have dinner with a refugee family if asked?

(Pre-Survey)

**Post-Survey**

After viewing the main content (the experimental and control images), participants from the full sample expressed their initial reactions to the content they just viewed (Fig. 7). Both groups saw themes of families and happiness, but their verbal responses varied significantly depending on whether they saw the control or experimental content.
Those who saw the control images generally described the family as typical, happy, and American. However, those who saw the experimental stimuli were quick to describe how they perceived this family to be “different” or “unhappy.” Participants noted their surprise at how “put-together” the refugee family appeared to be, or “not typical” of a refugee family, revealing some of their underlying assumptions about the economic status of refugees. One even remarked that they had always assumed refugees were homeless.

We asked participants to express, in percentage, how many people like them would describe this family as having dignity or self-respect after viewing this content (Fig. 8). As seen in our verbal pre-survey and literature review, many perceive refugees to be dependent and unable to become self-sufficient upon entering a new community, so this is an important value judgment to consider. After viewing the campaign content, 9 of 17 (52.94%) control group participants believed that “more than half (51-75%)” of people like them would think refugees have dignity and self-respect, while 5 of 17 (29.41%) believed a “majority (76-100%)” of people like them would. After seeing the refugee family photo, 14 of 18 participants believed that either
“More than half (51-75%)” or “Majority (76-100)” of people like them would think refugees have dignity and self-respect.

Figure 8. How many people like you would describe this family as having dignity or self-respect after seeing this content? (Left, control; right, experimental)

We repeated our question about sharing dinner with a refugee for the post-survey. For the control group, 7 of 17 (41.18%) participants believed that “more than half (51-75%)” of people like them would have dinner with the family depicted in the photos, while 6 of 17 (35.29%) believe “about half (26-50%)” would. For the experimental group, 9 of 18 (50%) believe that “More than half (51-75%)” people like them would have dinner with the refugee family, and 4 of 18 believed that the majority of people like them would have dinner with the family. This is about the same as the average numbers given for the same question in the pre-survey, which indicates that our participants’ opinions on the subject were not altered negatively by the campaign content.
Figure 9. How many people like you would have dinner with a refugee family if asked? (Left, control; right, experimental)

Both groups remained uncertain of whether this content could actually change views about refugees. When asked about what percentage of people like them would view refugees negatively after viewing this content, 8 of 17 (47.06%) participants in our control group believed that “about half (26-50%)” would view refugees negatively after seeing this content, while 6 of 17 (35.29%) believed that only some (1-25%) would. These responses differ from the pre-survey, as the majority (7 of 17) believed “More than half (51-75%)” would view refugees negatively. For our experimental group, however, only 9 of 18 (50%) participants believed that “Some (1-25%)” would view refugees negatively after seeing this content. These responses show a positive change from the pre-survey, as the majority (14 of 18) of participants believed that “Some (1-25%)” or “About half (26-50%)” people like them view refugees negatively.

After combining the data from both collections, the differences in emotional response became clearer. We used iMotions’ built-in emotion detection tool to compare the images between the experimental and the control groups. The control group had very little emotional response but the experimental registered a response. The emotional activation registered as lower in the image of the refugee family than the image from the control group, as was the affectivity.
The affectivity, interestingly, included negatively associated emotions such as confusion, fear, and disgust.

The eye-tracking data (Appendix B3) shows that each group viewed the stimuli images. In the control group, the participants spent the most time viewing the text, rather than the images; in the experimental group, the participants focused most of their attention on the faces of the refugee family (Appendix B5). This attention to their physical features was also reflected in their verbal survey of initial reactions. The heat maps show that in addition to reading the text, attention to the faces of the individuals in the pictures were among the most viewed components of the picture. Participants in the control group were more interested in reading the captions, as evidenced by the heat maps (Appendix B4).

With this initial finding, we exported the raw data for the emotional responses and created a comparison of emotions (Appendix B5) between the image stimuli. In general, greater joy was experienced with our control group stimulus and more anger, surprise, fear, and sadness were experienced with our experimental stimulus. These complexities within the emotional spectrum are representative of the complicated views held by the uncommitted majority of Nebraskans about refugees.

**Conclusion and Future Directions**

In the future, I would like to implement this campaign with a broader scope. The target demographic of Room at Our Table was limited to Nebraska. If we were able to expand to the broader Midwest region through expansive post boosting, or to interview families from outside of the state, then we would have access to a broader and more diverse study sample for our social media network analysis with NodeXL and Facebook Insights. Linking our posts with wider
stories, perhaps by utilizing the #refugeeswelcome or related hashtags, could also bring our campaign into the wider conversation.

The limitation of our research design (single sitting) could have conditioned our participants to look for the nationality of our subjects. There were a few responses to the control sample that demonstrated our participants were actively looking for content related to refugees, and of course, they were unable to find such content in the control images. Future research should separate out the pre-survey, which had questions about refugees, from the experimental conditions.

Another method by which we could create a more effective campaign would be to create more emotionally evocative images. The campaign photos featuring the refugee family were perceived as stagnant and artificial by several of our study participants, according to their verbal responses. Hospitality values would be better expressed through active imagery: showing the family creating a meal, welcoming visitors into their home as we can welcome them into our community. In the stagnant, publicity-focused imagery, their ethnicity is the first feature noticed by study participants and social media users alike, overriding the values upon which the campaign was founded.

With some improvements, this methodology could be applied to future studies on CVE campaigns and to strengthen existing initiatives. Hospitality values and resource sharing could be a strong foundation for a pro-refugee campaign on a wider scope.
Appendix A

Appendix A1

Social Media Strategy

Facebook: /neroomatourtable

Instagram: @roomatourtable

Appendix A2

NodeXL graphs

Appendix A3

Facebook Insights

Before Sustained Dialogue Event
After Sustained Dialogue Event
Appendix B

CAB Lab Study Items

Appendix B1 Pre-Survey Questions

- Have you heard of the social media campaign "Room at Our Table" before today?
- Please share what you know about the campaign.
- In your opinion, about how many people like you have met a refugee?
- What concerns do you personally have about refugees living in Nebraska?
- In media you have seen, how are refugees typically portrayed?
- In your opinion, what percentage of people like you view refugees negatively?
- List some negative views people hold about refugees.
- In your opinion, what percentage of people like you view refugees positively?
- List some positive views people hold about refugees.
- In your opinion, what percentage of people like you worry that refugees will take more than they deserve once here?
- In your opinion, what percentage of people like you would have dinner with a refugee family if asked?
- In your opinion, how similar are refugees to people living in Nebraska like you?

Appendix B2 Post-Survey Questions

- What are your initial reactions to the content you just viewed in part two?
- In your opinion, what percentage of people like you would describe this family as having dignity or self-respect after viewing this content?
- In your opinion, what percentage of people like you would have dinner with this family if asked?
- In your opinion, how similar are refugees to people living in Nebraska like you?
- List some of the similarities and dissimilarities between these refugees and people living in Nebraska like you.
- If you had $100, would you be willing to give a portion of the money to a refugee family?
- How much would you give? - Dollar Amount
- In your opinion, after seeing the content, about what percentage of people like you would view refugees positively?
- List some positive views people hold about refugees after seeing this content.
- In your opinion, after seeing this content, about what percentage of people like you would view refugees negatively?
- List some negative views people hold about refugees after seeing this content.
Appendix B3 Experimental Task Stimuli for Control Group

On a Friday night, the Logan family goes to the park to play games or look at the ducks. They also like visiting the zoo regularly to learn more about the animals. When it is too cold to go outside, the family goes to the mall to walk around and window shop.
Appendix B4 Experimental Task Stimuli for Experimental Group
Appendix B5 Emotional Analyses
Appendix C

Study Protocol

2018 Room at Our Table Study Protocol

Study Directions

Your job will be to set up the participants on a computer for the study. Eye tracking software will be used so proper participant position is essential to the study. Below are step by step instructions to run the experiment.

1. Make sure participant has SONA ID. (The CABlab staff will give this number to the participant when they check in)

2. Hand out a copy of the “Rights of Research Subjects” and “Informed Consent” to each participant.

3. Instruct the participant to sit at a computer and wait for instructions.
   a. Make sure the individual is comfortable.
   b. Tell the individual to adjust so that he or she can see the reflection of his or her nose in the Tobi eye tracker.
   c. The sensor reading on attention tool will help you guide the participant into proper placement for the eye tracker.

4. Please read the following instructions to the participants:

   “The purpose of this study is to examine social media, as well as share your opinions about refugees. You will take a pre-survey, see some images, and then answer questions about the images.”

5. Once the participant is properly positioned, add the respondent’s SONA ID, gender and age into Attention Tool.

6. Next is the eye calibration.
   a. Instruct the participant to follow the red dots on the screen.
   b. The participant should be instructed not to blink more than is normal.
   c. Once the calibration is excellent, run the study.

7. Once the participant is done with the study, they will need to be escorted to the computers in the back of the room to complete the post-survey.
8. After completion of the survey, the CABlab staff will hand out the debriefing form to each participant.
References


