ABSTRACT

"Welcoming the Religious Stranger: Social Sources of Attitudes Towards Syrian

Refugees"

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Due to the human rights violations occurring in Syria, many Syrians fled their homeland and are now refugees. Their refugee status and potential admission to the United States is a hotly contested issue because many Americans perceive both realistic and symbolic intergroup threats from Syrian refugees. Of note is the fact that most Syrians are Muslim; the intersection between religion and refugee status plays a role in these perceived threats. In this thesis, I examine four key independent variables – political affiliation, religious tradition, educational attainment, and gender – and their effects on respondents' approval or disapproval for potential policies increasing United States admission of Christian and Muslim Syrian refugees. I find that religious tradition and political affiliation are two demographic characteristics that significantly impact one's approval of these potential refugee admittance policies.

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"WELCOMING THE RELIGIOUS STRANGER: SOCIAL SOURCES OF

ATTITUDES TOWARDS SYRIAN REFUGEES"

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Attitudes of Americans towards refugees in general date back at least to the first half of the 20th century. After the Nazi-led coordinated attack on Jews in Germany, remembered as "Kristallnacht", 94% of American respondents to a Gallup poll demonstrated that they disapproved of the Nazi treatment of Jews in Germany. However, that disapproval did not translate to support of American policies that could aid Jews. Approximately 72% of Americans responded "no" when asked "Should we allow a larger number of Jewish exiles from Germany to come to the United States to live?" (Green and Newport 2018). The American climate was so strongly against refugees at the time that two months after Kristallnacht, a bill planning to allow child refugees from Germany was opposed by 67% of Americans (Green and Newport 2018).

This trend has remained stable over the late 20th century. In a 1958 Gallup poll, 55% of respondents said that they would disapprove "of a plan to permit 65,000 refugees who escaped the Communist regime in Hungary to come to the U.S." (Desilver 2015). Similar lack of support was present in matters concerning refugees from Indochina in 1979, Cuba in 1980, and Kosovo in 1999 (Desilver 2015).

We live in an era where the current President makes comments and policy aims in a consistent pattern to discriminate against refugees fleeing from select countries. In fact, one of Trump's election promises was the deportation of Syrian refugees. "They're going to be gone. They will go back. … I've said it before, in fact, and everyone hears what I

say, including them, believe it or not. But if they're here, they have to go back, because we cannot take a chance. You look at the migration, it's young, strong men. We cannot take a chance that the people coming over here are going to be ISIS-affiliated" (Walker 2015).

While videos of Syrian children pulled from rubble and stories of Assad gassing his own citizens are featured on the evening news, it's hard to ignore the human rights violations occurring in Syria. Approximately 87% of Americans have heard of the refugees fleeing violence in Syria ("Mixed Views of Initial U.S. Response to Europe's Migrant Crisis" 2015). Still, the debate rages in the United States about what exactly the nation should do with Syrian refugees attempting to enter. With 47% of Americans saying that "they are very or somewhat worried that they or someone in their family will be a victim of terrorism" and the conflation of ISIS with Syrian refugees in the media, it is no surprise that 41% of Americans do not support the admission of Syrian refugees into the United States, although a healthy majority (53%) do support allowing Syrian refugees as long as they complete security clearance (Cox & Jones 2015).

Which Americans reject admitting Syrian refugees today and to what extent do American attitudes vary based on the religion of the refugee? Besides aggregate polling results, little is known about the distinguishing characteristics between Americans who support and reject admission of this vulnerable population. This thesis is rooted in intergroup threat theory; an intergroup threat occurs when individuals of one group feel that members of a different group can cause them harm. This threat can be either realistic or symbolic (Stephan, Ybarra, & Morrison 2009). Based on this theory, this thesis provides a more complete explanation of what factors impact one's support for Christian

and Muslim Syrian refugees. We find that for many individuals, there is a distinction between support for Christian refugees and Muslim refugees. Political affiliation and religious tradition are the two most important factors when determining support for a potential policy to increase admission of refugees. These findings support what one would expect from intergroup threat theory in regards to the relationship between religious tradition and refugee support. However, an interesting result of our research was the relationship between political affiliation and refugee support, which is not necessarily expected based on intergroup threat theory since the target groups are religious and not political. These findings show that not all political affiliations and religious traditions perceive the same levels and types of intergroup threat; this differentiation in perceived threat between political parties and religious groups impacts their members' support for refugee policies.

Literature Review

General Beliefs and Attitudes Regarding Refugees

Given the previous evidence regarding Americans' views towards refugee and refugee policies, the current unease and lack of support towards refugees is no large surprise. A 2015 Pew national telephone survey of 1,502 adults found that 45% of respondents disapproved of the U.S. decision to increase the number of migrant refugees from Syria and other violence-ridden nations. Approximately 50% of respondents said that in response to the refugee situation, the U.S. should be doing "about the same" or "less" ("Mixed Views" 2015). A 2015 Bloomberg Politics National Poll provides more evidence of Americans' lack of refugee support. In a survey of 628 U.S. adult citizens, when asked "Which of the following do you think is the best approach for the U.S. to

take with refugees fleeing the civil war in Syria?", approximately 53% of respondents selected "Do not accept any Syrian refugees into the U.S." and 11% supported only the resettlement of Christian Syrian refugees (Bloomberg Politics National Poll 2015). This thesis finds a different gap in refugee approval than the Bloomberg Poll (as shown in the results below); this is likely due to significant events occurring in the United States, such as the election of Donald Trump as President between the 2015 poll and the survey I used (collected in 2017). Also, Bloomberg's poll claims national-level representativeness, whereas the 2017 survey I used does not. This difference in survey sample likely contributed to the differences in refugee approval between this research and previous polling.

Intergroup Threat Theory

While it may initially be difficult to fathom how some Americans can be resistant to aiding the seriously afflicted Syrian refugees, I believe that intergroup threat theory can provide some explanation for the approval and disapproval of refugees expressed by Americans. Intergroup threat theory claims that when individuals in one group believe that a different group could cause them harm, members of the first group experience what is called an intergroup threat. Intergroup threats can be realistic or symbolic. Realistic threats are based on worries about potential physical harm or denial of necessary resources. Symbolic threats can harm a group's value system and beliefs, such as preventing the in-group from practicing their religion (Stephan, Ybarra, & Morrison 2009). For example, some have expressed concern that Muslims coming to the United States would force citizens to follow sharia law and thus not allow them to practice Christianity (Samuels 2017). These concerned Americans view Muslim immigration as a

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symbolic threat to their religion. Realistic and symbolic threats are very important to intergroup relationships because of their perceived harmful effects on attitudes. Behaviorally, members of threatened groups may act civilly, but their affective and cognitive responses to the threat will probably be negative (Stephan, Ybarra, & Morrison 2009). Although some Americans might maintain civil interactions with Syrian refugees, they may actually harbor attitudes and judgments that are harmful to Syrian refugees. These negative attitudes could translate into decreased support for measures that aid Syrian refugees. While attitudes might not seem harmful on the surface since they are not a behavior, they can result in policy implications with similarly devastating results.

Intergroup theory is relevant to this research because we posit that certain groups of Americans will feel that Syrian refugees pose realistic and symbolic threats to them; therefore, individuals belonging to groups that feel threatened will demonstrate less support for policies to increase admission of Muslim and Christian refugees into the United States. More specifically, I anticipate that individuals who are members of select identity-shaping groups will feel the most threatened and demonstrate the least support. For example, religious identification may be an indication of an in-group identity. According to Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory, social identity can lead to individual self-esteem and is linked to the sense of self that is based on membership in a specific group. While group membership can have positive individual impacts, simply placing oneself in a group can lead to out-group biases (Summers 2016; Tajfel and Turner 1979; Tajfel and Turner 1986). Therefore, identifying with a religious in-group can lead to concerns about religious out-groups (in this case, refugees of Christian and Islamic faiths). In 2018, political parties dominate United States culture and media.

Members of the two parties do not share the same objective reality of the United States. Democrats and Republicans surveyed disagree about the unemployment rate, the annual deficit and national debt, the crime rate, the amount of deportations occurring, and healthcare costs, all of which are objectively determined (Dunning 2016). If Republicans and Democrats do not even share the same objective view of the United States, it is not far-fetched to believe that this disagreement in the nation's reality causes further differences in perceived symbolic and realistic threats. Also, educational attainment may indicate a socialization towards tolerance. Increasing tolerance could potentially diminish the power of intergroup threats to create negative attitudes and behaviors. Lastly, boys and girls are often socialized differently which results in different value orientations among men and women. This differentiation could impact how men and women perceive intergroup threats and their reaction to threats. An outline of these key demographic variables (political affiliation, religious tradition, gender, and education) follows in this literature review.

Americans and Islam

My prediction that individuals in certain demographic groups will feel more threatened by Muslim than Christian refugees is related to some Americans' strong attitudes towards Islam and its followers. A significant portion of Americans believe that Islam is a religion of violence and that Muslims do not fit into the ideal American culture. Approximately 28% of respondents to a Bloomberg Politics National Poll answered that "Islam is an inherently violent religion, which leads its followers to violent acts." (Bloomberg Politics National Poll 2015).

Not only do some Americans see Islam as violent, they also think it is cold and not relatable to their vision of American life. In a 2014 study by the Pew Research Center, a nationally representative sample of randomly selected American adults ranked Atheists and Muslims most coldly at the bottom of their list of religiously-defined groups' feeling thermometer ("How Americans Feel About Religious Groups" 2014). In Edgell, Hartmann, and Gerteis's 2006 study, when asked about Muslims, 26.3% of respondents affirmed "This group does not at all agree with my vision of American society" and 33.5% supported the statement: "I would disapprove if my child wanted to marry a member of this group" (2006).

The existence of anti-Muslim prejudice in the United States complicates life for Muslim Syrian refugees; not only are they not Americans, they also belong to a negatively stereotyped religion. In the views of many Americans, Muslim refugees pose a strong intergroup threat. Americans perceive a realistic threat from Muslim refugees due to concerns about terrorism and violence. They also sense a symbolic threat from Muslim immigrant communities because some Americans believe that Islam poses a threat to the current American values and way of life.

The Relationship between Evangelical Christians and Islam

Evangelical Protestants are a unique subset of the United States. They compose approximately 25% of the American population and are generally conservative on religious and social issues (Woodberry and Smith 1998). They are highlighted in this research due to the various political and social differences that exist between Evangelical Protestants and other religious traditions. In this research, we use the term "Evangelical Protestants" to refer to individuals belonging to denominations that are associated with

fundamentalist, Pentecostal, charismatic, or evangelical religious movements. They tend to be less tolerant than their peers from other religious traditions, likely because they prioritize their vision of the common good (based on their own morals) over tolerance (Woodberry & Smith 1998). They also report that their faith has serious significance in their lives (Smith 1998). As of the 1990s, Evangelicals were the most likely out of all Christian traditions to show support for moral absolutes (Woodberry & Smith 1998). There are some signs that this support is changing. Concern for morality might not hold constant in the political sphere, as 72% of Evangelicals agree that "an elected official who commits an immoral act in their personal life can still behave ethically and fulfill their duties in their public and professional life" (Kurtzleben 2016).

In a study of American Evangelical discourse after 9/11, Richard Cimino found that Evangelicals push three main arguments against Islam. They use apologetics in attempts to prove that Christianity is true and Islam is not, use prophetic literature to show that Islam is "the main protagonist in end-time scenarios", and use teachings and stories of "spiritual warfare" to Islam (Cimino 2005). Concern over "spiritual warfare" is a type of symbolic threat perceived by American Evangelicals. Amit Bhatia's 2017 article details the findings of a qualitative study of lay American Evangelicals and their pastors, as well as members of a Christian outreach ministry to Muslims in the United States. Many respondents had known or interacted with Muslims, but most concluded that "Muslims are evil; Islam is an evil religion" (Bhatia 2017, 29). They stated this by ignoring positive attributes of Islam, and focusing on Islam's view of women and perceived lack of freedom. These concerns about Islam further exemplify the symbolic threat that Evangelicals perceive. Evangelicals sense a potential danger to their beliefs, such as the American value of religious freedom.

Overall, Evangelicals' attitudes "tend to be mistrusting, fearful, and suspicious of Muslims" (Bhatia 2017, 30). Some of the respondents believed that "Muslims have an agenda to take over America" and that "they want to convert the whole world to Islam or kill them" (Bhatia 2017, 30). These concerns about physical safety and violence are types of realistic threats.

The consequences of these American Evangelical arguments against Islam and the symbolic and realistic threats perceived by Evangelicals are demonstrated by examining Evangelicals' disapproval of Muslims. Cimino finds that "American evangelicals are more likely than other Americans to be opposed to Islam and to believe that there is little common ground between the two faiths" (2015). On the Pew Research Center's thermometer study, Evangelicals tended to give other non-Christian faiths a very low rating; they rated Muslims the lowest of all of the non-Christian faiths ("How Americans Feel about Religious Groups" 2014). Kalkan, Layman, and Uslaner found that Evangelical Protestantism affiliation has a negative indirect effect on affect towards Muslims because of Evangelical Protestantism's generally negative views towards outgroups (2009).

Although Evangelical Protestants might remain outwardly civil and even have relationships with Muslims (Stephan, Ybarra, & Morrison 2009; Bhatia 2017), the intergroup threats that they perceive have potential for negative consequences towards Muslims. Worth noting is that the effect of these intergroup threats can be potentially strong due to the presence of both types of perceived threat.

Educational Attainment

Since the mid-20th century, numerous studies have demonstrated that higher educational attainment decreases a variety of prejudices, including attitudes towards desegregation, and attitudes toward groups such as Communists, atheists, and Jews (Hyman and Sheatsley 1956; Davis 1975; Selznick and Steinberg 1969; Jackman and Muha 1984). Upon determining that education was a key factor in predicting anti-Semitic prejudice, Gertrude Selznick and Stephen Steinberg theorized about what aspects of educational attainment make it a powerful predictor of anti-Semitic attitudes. "Education is a learning process through which people acquire knowledge, are exposed to values, and develop modes of thinking and acting… Education is a social process through which individuals come into contact with different kinds of people and are exposed to an environment generally committed to norms of tolerance."[i] (Selznick and Steinberg 1969; Jackman and Muha 1984).

The relationship between education and prejudice reduction has also been demonstrated through polling results in regards to attitudes towards Muslims. Americans with greater educational attainment are unlikely to support negative views of Muslims; 70% of Americans with a bachelor's degree disagree with the survey question stating that Muslims want to "institutionalize shari'a" (Jones et al. 2011). Approximately 72% of individuals with postgraduate training viewed Muslims as key members of the American religious community, while only 46% of respondents who had at most a high school education felt the same way (Jones et al. 2011). A 2014 study reaffirmed the effect of education on prejudice towards Muslims. Ogan et. al found that in the majority of the

nations studied, level of education was one of the strongest and most consistent predictors of positive attitudes towards Muslims (Ogan et. al 2014).

In relation to prejudice against Muslims, educational attainment likely ameliorates such beliefs because of its relationship to perceived intergroup threats. Individuals with high educational attainment (defined in our study as having completed at least a bachelor's degree) have obtained a larger and more elevated base of knowledge than their less-educated peers. They are better equipped to understand the complexities of many social situations and reject simple binary conclusions to pressing questions (Jackman and Muha 1984). I believe that individuals with advanced education will demonstrate greater approval of Syrian refugee entry due to higher educational attainment's impact on increased tolerance.

Gender

I posit that the gender differences detailed below could lead to differences in refugee approval between men and women. In a study of United States adolescents, Ann Beutel and Margaret Marini found differing value orientations between males and females. They found "substantial gender differences" on measures of compassion, materialism, and meaning. Key to this thesis is their finding that females in the study were "more likely than males to express concern and responsibility for the well-being of others" (Beutel & Marini 1995, 436). If females are more likely to be concerned for others, this may affect how they approach intergroup threats. Females may perceive the same intergroup threats as males, but act differently in order to fulfill their obligation to care for others. This is because attitude and action are not synonymous; people can perceive threats and develop negative attitudes towards out-groups while simultaneously

maintaining outward civility. Christine Ogan and her colleagues used data from the 2008 Pew Global Attitude Project and 2010 Pew News Interest Index to specifically study anti-Muslim prejudice, and their results demonstrate females' unique attitudes. They found that being a female was not only a predictor for the attitude that Islam does not encourage violence, but also that being female in the United States in 2008 was a predictor of positive attitudes towards Muslims (Ogan et al 2014).

Females' attitudes and reactions towards threat can be extended to the refugee crisis. Females may experience similar symbolic and realistic threats as men, but because of their awareness and concern for the extreme suffering of Syrian refugees, they may show more compassion and responsibility for the care of Syrian refugees and less concern about the intergroup threats that they experience. This reaction may be due in part to the gendered expectation that women be more empathetic than men.

Based on the previous literature findings, I believe that the women in this study will be more likely to consider the plight of Muslim Syrian refugees instead of solely focusing on the intergroup threats that they may feel. Due to their priority for compassion issues and sense of responsibility for the well-being of others, they will be more likely to support policy decisions that aid Muslim and Christian Syrian refugees than their male counterparts (Beutel and Marini 1995; Shapiro and Mahajan 1986).

Political Affiliation

For approximately a decade (beginning in 1994), Republicans and Democrats held similar views about immigrants and their work ethic. In 1994, only 30% of Republicans and 32% of Democrats surveyed agreed that "immigrants today strengthen the country because of their hard work and talents" (Jones 2016). Although agreement

with this statement rose and fell between 1994 and 2006, Democrats and Republicans maintained similar levels of support for nearly the entire 12-year period (Jones 2016). The two political parties began to develop separate opinions on this issue around 2006; a fifteen-point gap in their view of immigrants arose, with 49% of Democrats believing that immigrants strengthen the country and only 34% of Republicans sharing the same view (Jones 2016). This divergence in viewpoints occurring in 2006 likely stems from the Republican-sponsored Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005. This bill passed in the House of Representatives, but did not pass in the Senate. The Senate pushed for their own immigration bill while President Bush attempted to inspire comprehensive immigration reform. Meanwhile, the Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005 remained controversial and caused immigration advocates to enter the streets in protest in 2006 ("The State of American Public Opinion on Immigration in Spring 2006" 2006). Support for immigrant naturalization was met with fury by conservatives (who tend to be Republicans); strong disagreement over immigration policy and failed reform efforts led to the clear divergence in immigration approval between political parties beginning in 2006 (Thompson 2018).

Americans who admit prejudice towards Muslims are more likely to be Republicans than Democrats. Of those individuals who "report a great deal of prejudice towards Muslims", 50% are Republicans and 17% are Democrats ("Islamophobia: Understanding Anti-Muslim Sentiment in the West"). A 2016 PRRI/Brookings survey reached similar conclusions. Concern about the number of Muslim immigrants to the United States is higher among Republicans than Democrats; 50% of Republicans believe

the number of Muslim immigrants is too high (a view shared by 23% of Democrats) and 23% of Republicans believe that immigrants from predominantly Muslim countries should be denied entrance to the United States. Approximately 9% of Democrats support banning the admission of immigrants from Muslim countries (Cox 2017). Democrats and Republicans show greater agreement regarding immigrants from Christian nations; 82% of Republicans and 85% of Democrats believe that there are "about the right amount" or "too few immigrants" from these Christian countries (Cox 2017).

In this thesis, I predict that being Republican will decrease support for Syrian refugees. I base this hypothesis not only on the poll results included above, but also on intergroup threat theory. In a study of immigration policy preference, George Hawley discovered that in counties with a large foreign-born population, Republicans abided by the tendencies demonstrated in group threat theory (Hawley 2011). They showed increased support for immigration restrictions, whereas their Democrat and Independent peers were less likely to support such restrictions. There are a few possible explanations for this type of attitude.

Hawley himself hypothesizes that the difference in support between Republicans, Democrats, and Independents can be explained by group threat theory. Given the perceived threat that is characteristic of conservatives, this is a strong possible explanation. Republicans do feel threats to their job security from immigrants. However, Hawley hypothesizes that Republicans are also concerned about threats to their political power, since immigrant voters are less likely to support the Republican party than native-born American citizens (Hawley 2011). These perceived threats are reflective of both symbolic and realistic threats. Republicans may perceive a realistic threat to their jobs,

which produce an income that they need to survive. The perceived threat to Republicans' political power is a type of symbolic threat because they fear that an increase in immigrant voters will result in a decline in their conservative values, policies, and attitudes.

Other research also lends support for the relationship between political affiliation and intergroup threat. Fundamentally, political conservatives tend to be affiliated with the Republican party. Therefore, many characteristics of conservatives are also characteristics of Republicans. In their study of psychological variables predicting conservatism, Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski et al. stated that "The core ideology of conservatism… is motivated by needs that vary situationally and dispositionally to manage uncertainty and threat" (Jost et al. 2003). This statement was supported by their result that found fear of threat and loss in general, as well as the perception of a dangerous world specifically, to be predictors of political conservatism with a p-value < .001 (Jost et al. 2003). The fear of threat that is characteristic of conservatives likely makes Republicans especially vulnerable to perceived intergroup threats and also impacts their reaction to said threats. I predict that political conservatives' tendencies to be Republicans, and conservatives' fear of threat and perception of a dangerous world as well as their goal to manage those threats, will manifest in Republicans' overall decreased support for Syrian refugees. Not only do conservatives perceive a scary world, they are afraid of the threats it may present and feel compelled to manage them. One way to mitigate potential threats is by changing policies and making laws.

Because of the affiliation between political conservatism and the Republican party, the conservative motivation to manage threat, and the economic and political

intergroup threats that Republicans may feel from immigrants, I hypothesize that

Republicans will show decreased support for increasing admittance of Syrian refugees

when compared to their Democrat peers. I predict that this difference in support will

manifest as increased approval of Christian refugees rather than Muslim refugees among

Republican respondents.

The Aims of This Thesis

The question of what role the United States should take in aiding refugees from

the crisis in Syria is a divisive and debated issue. The situation is especially unique due to

its complexity. In Syria, 33% of the population is 15 years old or younger and 43% of

Syrian refugees referred for resettlement in 2013-2014 were members of the "Survivor of

Violence and/or Torture" category ("Population Profile: Syrian Refugees" 2015). Despite

the youthfulness of the Syrian population and the extreme violence faced by its citizens,

it is not always easy to resettle them due to prejudicial religious attitudes. The majority of

the population in Syria practices Islam; 87% of the population is Muslim (mostly Sunni

Muslims) and 10% of the population is Christian ("Population Profile: Syrian Refugees"

2015). In 2015, only 1.2% of the Syrian refugees registered in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, and

Egypt were Christian (Hattem 2015). Although most of the population in Syria is Muslim

as are most of the registered refugees, one can determine by reviewing potential United

States policies and statements from politicians that Christian Syrian refugees garner the

most concern. President Trump has demonstrated special concern for Christian Syrians

and believes that they have been discriminated against. In a 2017 interview, he stated that

"They've [Christians] been horribly treated. Do you know if you were a Christian in

Syria it was impossible, very, very – at least very, very – tough to get into the United

States? If you were a Muslim you could come in, but if you were a Christian, it was almost impossible and the reason that was so unfair, is that the – everybody was persecuted in all fairness, but they were chopping off the heads of everybody but more so the Christians. And I thought it was very, very unfair. So we are going to help them." (Farley 2017). It comes as no major surprise that in Trump's 2017 "Executive Order Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States" the Secretary of State is directed to "prioritize refugee claims made by individuals on the basis of religious-based persecution, provided that the religion of the individual is a minority religion in the individual's country of nationality" ("Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry Into the United States" 2017).

Heightened concern for Christian Syrians and ambivalence (at best) towards Muslim Syrians is likely due to the intergroup threat that Americans feel in regards to Syrian Muslim refugees. In the eyes of many Americans, this group poses a double threat: not only are they immigrants who could take their jobs or resources (a realistic threat), they are also followers of Islam, a faith that is frequently wrongfully associated with ISIS and terrorism. This leads some Americans to believe that their personal safety is threatened by Muslims – another perceived realistic threat. Lastly, some Americans believe that Islam and its followers might not fit with their moral values or visions of American society (a symbolic threat). Christian Syrian refugees are more likely to be favored by Americans because they pose only a single intergroup threat as immigrants. Although both Christian and Muslim refugees have the same status threat as immigrants, Muslims pose multiple threats – symbolic and realistic threats for being a Muslim and a threat for being a refugee, whereas Christians only pose the singular refugee threat.

Americans in general are likely more supportive of Christian Syrian refugees because they do not pose the realistic and symbolic intergroup threats that their Muslim peers do.

This research aims to further elucidate relationships between demographic factors and Syrian refugee support. To answer the research questions, responses to a survey question are studied alongside demographic factors. The results of this thesis will impact the existing understanding of what factors influence support for policies that increase admission of Syrian refugees to the United States.

Hypotheses

Based on the body of literature reviewed above as well as other academic readings and experiences, I hypothesize that:

H1: Respondents will show greater support for a policy increasing admission of Christian Syrian refugees than a policy increasing admission of Muslim Syrian refugees.

H2: Female respondents will show higher levels of approval of policies to increase admission of Christian and Muslim Syrian refugees than their male peers.

H3: Respondents with a bachelor's degree or higher will demonstrate higher approval of both Christian and Muslim Syrian refugees than respondents who did not complete a bachelor's degree.

H4(a): Respondents who are members of the Evangelical Protestant religious tradition will show decreased support for all Syrian refugees than their peers who are not Evangelical Protestants.

H4(b): Respondents who are members of the Evangelical Protestant religious tradition will show especially decreased support for Muslim Syrian refugees when compared to peer respondents from other religious traditions due to American Evangelicals' increased

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likelihood over other Americans to be opposed to Islam and Evangelicals' generally

negative views towards out-groups (Cimino 2005; Kalkan et al 2009).

H5: Republicans will show less overall approval than Democrats for the potential policies

and also show higher approval for increasing admission of Christian Syrian refugees than

Muslim Syrian refugees.

CHAPTER TWO

Methods

Participants and Procedure

Data for this study come from a 33-question survey administered to an established

online panel (Amazon Mechanical Turk, abbreviated MTurk) of over 1,400 respondents

conducted in late summer and fall of 2017 (Story 2018). Mturk allows surveys created by

researchers to be completed by individuals online. Survey respondents (also known as

"workers") then receive payment as compensation. Respondents to this survey were U.S.

citizens currently residing in the United States (Story 2018). While MTurk is not a

representative sampling of adults in the United States, Mturk workers are, as a whole,

more diverse than samples of university students that would be used otherwise

(Burhmester, Kwang, and Gosling 2011). [ii]

Dependent Variable: Support of Refugee Admission Policy

The main dependent variable of the study centers on survey responses to one

question posed in regard to two different religious traditions – Christianity and Islam. The

survey question read "Would you approve or disapprove of a U.S. plan to increase the

number of the following refugees admitted into the U.S. from Syria?" Respondents first

answered the question in regards to Christian refugees – marking that they would approve

of the policy (1) or disapprove of the policy (0). Next, respondents answered the question

in regards to Muslim refugees – marking that they would approve of the policy (1) or

disapprove of the policy (0). The application of the same question to two different

religious groups allows for the determination of a difference in response due to the religious affiliation of target groups. The descriptive statistics for the dependent variable can be found in Table 1 of the results section.

Independent Variables

Religious Tradition

Respondents indicated their religious affiliation through a drop-down list of religious families. After survey collection, responses were recoded and organized by religious tradition using an established classification system (Steensland et al 2000). The different religious tradition groupings used in this research are Evangelical Protestant, Mainline Protestant, Black Protestant, Catholic, all other religions (Hindus, Jews, Buddhists, etc), unaffiliated or don't know, and Atheists.

Political Affiliation

Political affiliation was ascertained from responses to a 7-point scale which ranged from "1=strong Republican" to "7=strong Democrat" with 4=Independent. Respondents could also select that they were a moderate or leaning Democrat or Republican. Respondents answers were recoded to make three groups – Democrat, Republican, Independent – regardless of the strength of their party affiliation.

Gender

Respondents' gender was measured when they chose from three options: other, female, and male. There were a few (N=3) respondents who identified as other. Their responses were not used in the analysis. The dummy variable for gender was created with 1 = female and 0 = male.

Education

Mturk workers completing the survey were asked to report their highest level of education attained. They reported this information by selecting a response from a seven-point scale (12th grade or less; no high school diploma; high school graduate; technical, trade, vocational, or business school or program after high school; some college but no degree; two-year associate's degree from a college, university, or community college; four-year bachelor's degree from a college or university; postgraduate or professional degree). To address the education hypothesis, responses from the seven point scale were divided into two categories: those with a four year bachelor's degree or higher were dummy coded as 1 (four-year bachelor's degree from a college degree or university; postgraduate or professional degree) and those responses showing educational attainment of less than a bachelor's degree were dummy coded as 0 (12th grade or less; no high school diploma; high school graduate; technical, trade, vocational, or business school or program after high school; some college but no degree; two-year associate's degree from a college, university, or community college).

Race

Respondents reported racial categories from the following non-exclusive categories: "American Indian or Alaska Native", "Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander", "Asian, Middle Eastern, or North African", "Black or African American", "White", and "Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish". Respondents were allowed to select more than one racial category. The respondents' answers were reclassified into the following categories: non-Hispanic whites (n=1074); non-Hispanic Blacks (n=122); Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish

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(n=74); Asian (n=74); and a non-Hispanic other (n=50) category. The "other" category included the following responses: Middle Eastern, or North African; Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander; and American Indian or Alaska Native; and any responses that indicated more than one racial identification (Story 2018).

Analytic Strategy

To initially identify if there was a significant difference in responses of approval or disapproval for Christian and Muslim Syrian refugees, this study utilized a cross-tabulation table and the Pearson chi-square test. The Pearson chi-square test analyzes categorical data and estimates the probability that the data is distributed due to chance ("Using Chi-Square Statistic in Research" 2018). After determining that there were significant differences in approval levels towards the two refugee groups, I created a correlation matrix to determine the strength of the bivariate relationships between dependent and independent variables. Lastly, a multinomial logistic regression was performed to determine how an individual's membership in select demographic groups determines the likelihood of supporting some other policy arrangement (supporting Christians only, supporting Muslims only, or supporting neither) compared to approving both policies to increase admittance of Christian and Muslim Syrian refugees. A multinomial logistic regression is a type of predictive analysis that is used when the dependent variable has more than two levels and is nominal. Our multinomial logistic regression depicts the relationship between at multiple independent variables and one nominal dependent variable ("Conduct and Interpret a Multinomial Logistic Regression" 2018).

CHAPTER THREE

Results

Description of Variables

Table 1 provides the coding that corresponds to each variable, as well as the sample size, mean, and standard deviation.

Table 1: Description of Variables

Variable	Range	N	Mean or %	SD
Dependent				
Christian Approval	1 = support for Christian refugees; 0 = oppose	1393	0.746	0.011
Muslim Approval	1 = support for Muslim refugees; 0 = oppose	1393	0.547	0.013
Approval of Christians & Muslims	1 = support for Christian & Muslim refugees; 0 = not supporting both	1393	0.532	0.499
Approval of Neither Christians nor Muslims	1 = does not support Christians or Muslims; 0 = supports at least one	1393	0.239	0.426
Approval of Christians Only	1 = supports only Christians; 0 = supports both, neither, or Muslims only	1393	0.213	0.41
Approval of Muslims Only	1 = supports only Muslims; 0 = supports both, neither or Christians only	1393	0.014	0.119
Independent				
Political Affiliation				
Independent	1 = Independent; 0 = not Independent	1394	0.234	0.423
Democrat	1 = Democrat; 0 = not Democrat	1394	0.456	0.498
Republican	1 = Republican; 0 = not Republican	1394	0.309	0.462
Religious Tradition				
Evangelical Protestant	1 = EP; 0 = not EP	1391	0.188	0.39
Mainline Protestant	1 = MP; 0=not MP	1391	0.148	0.355
Black Protestant	1 = BP; 0 = not BP	1391	0.033	0.178

Catholic	1 = Catholic; 0 = not Catholic	1391	0.185	0.388
Other Religion	1 = other religion; not other religion	1391	0.104	0.305
Unaffiliated or don't know	1 = Unaffiliated or don't know 0 = not Unaffiliated or don't know	1391	0.205	0.404
Atheist	1 = Atheist; 0 = not Atheist	1391	0.135	0.341
Gender Female	1 = Female; 0 = not Female	1394	0.540	0.499
Male	1 = Male; 0 = not Male	1394	0.457	0.498
Race White non-Hispanic	1 = White non-Hispanic; 0 = not White non-Hispanic	1394	0.770	0.421
Black non-Hispanic	1 = Black non-Hispanic; 0 = not Black non-Hispanic	1394	0.088	0.282
Hispanic	1 = Hispanic; 0 = not Hispanic	1394	0.053	0.224
Asian	1 = Asian; 0 = not Asian	1394	0.053	0.224
Other or multiracial	1 = Other or multiracial; 0 = not other or multiracial	1394	0.035	0.186
Educational Attainment Bachelor's degree or higher	1 = Bachelor's degree or more; 0= less than Bachelor's degree	1399	0.507	0.5

When asked the question that functions as the dependent variable of this study, "Would you approve or disapprove of a U.S. plan to increase the number of the following refugees admitted into the U.S. from Syria?", respondents gave two answers in response to potential admission of two different religious groups: Christians and Muslims. 1393 responses were recorded regarding a policy for admission of Christian refugees. Nearly 75% of the sample (74.6%, 1040 respondents) would support this type of policy. About 25.3% would disapprove of this type of policy. When the same question is asked in regards to Muslim refugees, there is a sharp contrast in the results. Out of the 1393 respondents, 762 (54.7%) would approve of a policy to increase admission of Muslim

refugees. Approximately 45.2% (n=631) of the respondents would disapprove of such a policy.

<div style="text-align:center">*Overall Statistical Difference in Support Among Americans*</div>

Given the different rate of responses to these survey questions I initially examined the possible relationship between the two through a contingency table. A contingency table allows for the depiction of frequency counts from two categorical variables; this table with frequency counts is then utilized in further analyses (Weisstein 2018). The contingency table with more complete data can be found under Table 2. Approximately 53.27% (n=742) of the sample approve of policies increasing admission for Christian and Muslim Syrian refugees; 23.91% (n=333) of the sample disapprove of policies increasing admission for Christian and Muslim Syrian refugees. About 21% of the sample (n=298) approve of a policy increasing admission for Christians but disapprove of the same policy for Muslims. A small 1.44% (n=20) approve of a policy increasing admission for Muslim Syrian refugees but disapprove of that same policy applied to Christian Syrian refugees.

Table 2: Christian Refugee Support & Muslim Refugee Support Contingency Table

		Christian Refugees		
	Count Total %	Approve	Disapprove	Total
Muslim Refugees	Approve	742 53.27	20 1.44	762 54.70
	Disapprove	298 21.39	333 23.91	631 45.30
	Total	1040 74.66	353 25.34	1393 100.00

Note: The top number in each box is the count number (n) and the bottom number is the total % of the respondents.

The Pearson chi-square value of the contingency table in Table 2 is 458.825 and the p-value is <0.0001. We accept the alternative hypothesis; there is a relationship

between support for a policy increasing admission of Christian Syrian refugees and support for a policy increasing admission of Muslim Syrian refugees.

Difference in Support Across Demographic Variables

After determining that there was a statistically significant difference in refugee support in our sample as a whole, I wanted to determine whether or not the significant difference in support could be found within specific demographic variables. To initially analyze whether or not there was a statistically significant difference in our key independent demographic variables, a cross-tabulation table was created. The results can be found in Table 3: Cross Tabulation of Refugee Approval and Demographic Variables. Across the top row, four different categories of approval are listed: approves both Christians and Muslims, approves of Christians only, approves of Muslims only, and approves of neither group. Cross tabulation analysis was then performed between these approval categories and individual demographic variable categories (political affiliation, religious affiliation, gender, race, and education). The individual results of each demographic category will be analyzed in upcoming sections.

Table 3: Cross Tabulation of Refugee Approval and Demographic Variables

Count Total % Row %	Approves of both Christians and Muslims	Approves of Christians only	Approves of Muslims only	Approves of neither group	Total
Political Affiliation ***					
Democrat	481	53	12	87	633
	34.63	3.82	0.86	6.26	45.57
	75.99	8.37	1.90	13.74	
Republican	98	173	3	156	430
	7.06	12.46	0.22	11.23	30.96
	22.79	40.23	0.70	36.28	
Independent	160	72	5	89	326
	11.52	5.18	0.36	6.41	23.47
	49.08	22.09	1.53	27.30	
Total	739	298	20	332	1389
	53.20	21.45	1.44	23.90	

Religious Affiliation ***

Evangelical	93	97	0	72	262
Protestant	6.70	6.98	0.00	5.18	18.86
	35.50	37.02	0.00	27.48	
Mainline Protestant	121	48	2	35	206
	8.71	3.46	0.14	2.52	14.83
	58.74	23.30	0.97	16.99	
Black Protestant	28	12	0	6	46
	2.02	0.86	0.00	0.43	3.31
	60.87	26.09	0.00	13.04	
Catholic	127	62	1	68	258
	9.14	4.46	0.07	4.90	18.57
	49.22	24.03	0.39	26.36	
Other Religion	83	27	3	32	145
	5.98	1.94	0.22	2.30	10.44
	57.24	18.62	2.07	22.07	
Unaffiliated or	157	37	5	85	284
don't know	11.30	2.66	0.36	6.12	20.45
	55.28	13.03	1.76	29.93	
Atheist	130	15	9	34	188
	9.36	1.08	0.65	2.45	13.53
	69.15	7.98	4.79	18.09	
Total	739	298	20	332	1389
	53.20	21.45	1.44	23.90	

Gender

Female	409	146	12	185	752
	29.47	10.52	0.86	13.33	54.18
	54.39	19.41	1.60	24.60	
Male	329	152	8	147	636
	23.70	10.95	0.58	10.59	45.82
	51.73	23.90	1.26	23.11	
Total	738	298	20	332	1388
	53.17	21.47	1.44	23.92	

Race *

White non-Hispanic	535	240	15	280	1070
	38.52	17.28	1.08	20.16	77.03
	50.00	22.43	1.40	26.17	
Black non-Hispanic	83	21	1	17	122
	5.98	1.51	0.07	1.22	8.78
	68.03	17.21	0.82	13.93	
Hispanic	43	14	2	14	73
	3.10	1.01	0.14	1.01	5.26
	58.90	19.18	2.74	19.18	
Asian	50	11	1	12	74
	3.60	0.79	0.07	0.86	5.33
	67.57	14.86	1.35	16.22	
Other; Multiracial	28	12	1	9	50
	2.02	0.86	0.07	0.65	3.60
	56.00	24.00	2.00	18.00	
Total	739	298	20	332	1389
	53.20	21.45	1.44	23.90	

Education *

Bachelor's degree	337	127	4	124	592
or more	24.26	9.14	0.29	8.93	42.62
	56.93	21.45	0.68	20.95	
Less than	402	171	16	208	797
bachelor's degree	28.94	12.31	1.15	14.97	57.38
	50.44	21.46	2.01	26.10	
Total	739	298	20	332	1389
	53.20	21.45	1.44	23.90	

Note: Statistical significance levels within each demographic variable category are denoted by the presence of an asterisk (*) by the variable label. Chi-square significance with a p –value <.05 is denoted by a single asterisk (*) and chi-square significance with a p-value <.001 is denoted with three asterisks (***). The top number in each cell is the count (n), the middle number is the total %, and the bottom number is the row %.

Difference in Support Due to Political Affiliation

The first analysis in exploring the hypotheses that Republicans show lower overall approval for both policies and support the policy for Christian refugees more than the policy for Muslim refugees when compared to Democrats was the cross-tabulation results available in Table 3.

Approximately 75.99% of Democrats (n=481) demonstrate support for both policies for Muslim and Christian refugee admittance; 22.79% of Republicans (n=98) show the same level of support. About 8% (n=53) of Democrats and 40% (n=173) of Republicans approve only of the policy for Christian refugees. Only 1.90% of Democrats (n=12) and 0.70% of Republicans (n=3) approve only of the policy for Muslim refugees. About 14% (n=87) of Democrats and 36% (n=156) of Republicans disapproved of both potential policies.

The Pearson chi-square p-value was <0.0001. Thus, there is a relationship between political party and support of the two potential policies.

Comparing Evangelical Protestants and Non-Evangelical Protestants

Upon noticing the significant difference in Evangelical Protestants' approval between policies for Christian and Muslim refugees, I used a contingency table to observe if the difference in support was maintained regardless of Evangelical Protestant religious tradition. Respondents who were not Evangelical Protestants were classified as non-EP. The complete data from the contingency table can be found under Table 4.

Table 4: Evangelical vs Non-Evangelical Support of Christian & Muslim Refugees Contingency Table

Count Total % Row %	Both	Christians	Muslims	None	Total
Evangelical Protestant	93	97	0	72	262
	6.68	6.96	0.00	5.17	18.81
	35.50	37.02	0.00	27.48	
Not Evangelical Protestant	649	202	19	261	1131
	46.59	14.50	1.36	18.47	81.19
	57.38	17.86	1.68	23.08	
Total	742	299	19	333	1393
	53.27	21.46	1.36	23.91	

Note: The top number in each cell refers to the count (n), the middle number refers to the total %, and the bottom number refers to the row %.

About 35.50% (n=93) of the EPs approve of both policies for Christians and Muslims; while 57.38% (n=649) of the non-EPs approve of both policies. Approximately 37% (n=97) of the EPs and 18% (n=202) of the non-EPs approve only of the policy for Christians. No EPs supported only the policy for Muslim refugees, while about 2% of non-EPs approve only this policy. About 27% (n=72) of EPs and 23% (n=261) of non-EPs disapprove of both policies for Christians and Muslims.

A Pearson-chi square test was performed; the chi-square value was 61.649 and the p-value was <0.0001. Therefore, we find support for the hypothesis that there is a relationship between evangelical religious tradition and support.

Also of note is the religious tradition data in Table 3. The cross-tabulation table did not only separate Evangelical Protestants from their peers, but distinguished all the religious traditions featured in this thesis. The cross-tabulation was significant to Pearson chi-square p-value <.0001. This confirms that there must be a relationship between religious affiliation and refugee approval level, but also suggests that the relationship is not only unique to being Evangelical Protestant or not (as Table 4 suggests), but between a variety of religious traditions. This finding is further studied in a logistic regression appearing later in this paper.

Gendered Differences in Support?

To initially address the next hypothesis that females would show increased support for both policies for Syrian refugees than their male counterparts, I performed a cross-tabulation as shown in Table 3. About 54 percent of women and 51 percent of men support both policies for Christian and Muslim refugees, while about 19 percent of women and 24 percent of males only approve of the policy for Christian Syrian refugees. Very small percentages of both genders – about 2 percent of women and 1 percent of men – only support the policy for Muslims. About 25 percent of women and 23 percent of men disapprove of both potential policies. The Pearson chi-square p-value was 0.2330. Male and female respondents do not significantly differ in their support for one type of admission policy over another, so I reject the hypothesis that women will show increased support for both Syrian refugee policies.

Educational Attainment and Refugee Approval

To initially test our hypothesis that respondents with a bachelor's degree or higher will demonstrate increased approval of both Christian and Muslim Syrian refugees than respondents who did not complete a bachelor's degree, I performed a cross tabulation as shown in Table 3. The results show that about 57% (n=337) of respondents with a bachelor's degree or higher and about 50% (n=402) of respondents without a bachelor's degree approve of both policies for Christian and Muslim Syrian refugees. About 21% (n=127) of respondents with a bachelor's degree or higher and about 21% (n=171) of respondents without a bachelor's degree only approve of the policy for Christian refugees. Approximately 0.29% (n=4) of respondents with higher educational attainment and 2.01% (n=16) of respondents with lower educational attainment support only the policy for Muslim refugees. About 21% (n=124) of respondents with a bachelor's degree or higher and about 26% (n=208) of respondents with less than a bachelor's degree disapprove of both policies.

The Pearson chi-square p-value was significant and equal to 0.0138. Therefore, there is a relationship between educational attainment and approval of refugee policy. However, the exact relationship between education and support cannot be fully determined using this test. Further analyses are provided in the logistic regression.

Correlation Matrix

Table 5 is displayed in two parts for ease of examination and contains the results of the correlation matrix. The first variables listed in the table is the dependent variable, the various levels of approval for refugee admittance: approving both Christians and Muslims, approving neither group, approving Christians only, and approving Muslims

only. Following the dependent variables, the key independent variables of this study are listed: religious tradition, political affiliation, educational attainment, gender, and race. Each variable in the first column is assigned a code number as listed in the parenthesis following it; these code numbers, and thus the variables themselves, correspond to the same numbers that are listed across the first row of the table.

Few relationships on the correlation matrix exhibit a high correlation. Those relationships that are highly correlated are not alarming and do not impact the overall results of these project. We find significant correlations between different racial groups (e.g White non-Hispanic and Asians = -0.4344; White non-Hispanic and Black non-Hispanic = -0.5683) and different political affiliations (e.g. Democrats and Republicans = -0.6126; Republicans and Independents = -0.3712) but these are not surprising.

The key finding from the correlation matrix is the low correlation between the key dependent variables (the four different levels of approval for refugee admittance policies) and the independent variables. With the exception of two relationships that are correlated (being Democrat and approving both policies for Christian and Muslim Syrian refugees = 0.4174 and being Republican and disapproving of both policies for Christian and Muslim Syrian refugees = -0.4079), all of the dependent variables exhibit low or no correlation to the key independent variables. This is a positive result because we are looking for low levels of correlation to establish that the dependent and independent variables are not simply equivalent to each other.

Table 5: Correlation Matrix of Refugee Admission Support and Key Independent Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Approve Both (1)	1											
Approve Neither (2)	-0.59	1										
Approve Christians (3)	-0.55	-0.29	1									
Approve Muslims (4)	-0.12	-0.06	-0.06	1								
Evangelicals (5)	-0.17	0.04*	0.18	-0.05*	1							
Mainline Protestants (6)	0.04*	-0.06	0.01*	-0.01*	-0.2	1						
Black Protestants (7)	0.02*	-0.04*	0.02*	-0.02*	-0.08	-0.07	1					
Catholics (8)	-0.03*	0.02*	0.02*	-0.04*	-0.23	-0.19	-0.08	1				
Atheist (9)	0.12	-0.05*	-0.12	0.11	-0.19	-0.16	-0.07	-0.18	1			
Unaffiliated or don't know (10)	0.02*	0.07	-0.1	0.01*	-0.24	-0.21	-0.09	-0.24	-0.2	1		
Other Religion (11)	0.02*	-0.01*	-0.02*	0.01*	-0.16	-0.14	-0.06	-0.16	-0.13	-0.17	1	
Democrats (12)	0.41	-0.21	-0.29	0.03*	-0.2	0.03*	0.12	0.00*	0.1	0.05*	-0.01*	1
Republicans (13)	-0.4	0.19	0.3	-0.04*	0.23	0.00*	-0.08	0.08	-0.14	-0.14	-0.01*	-0.61
Independents (14)	-0.04*	0.04*	0.00*	0.00*	0.00*	-0.04*	-0.05*	-0.09	0.03*	0.09	0.03*	-0.5
Bachelor's or more (15)	0.06	-0.05*	0.00*	-0.05*	-0.06	0.07	0.00*	0.06	-0.05*	-0.06	0.05*	0.08
Less than bachelor's (16)	-0.06	0.05*	0.00*	0.05*	0.06	-0.07	0.00*	-0.06	0.05*	0.06	-0.05*	-0.08
Female (17)	0.02*	0.01*	-0.05*	0.01*	0.08	0.02*	0.02*	0.03*	-0.09	-0.06	-0.02*	0.03*
Male (18)	-0.02*	-0.01*	0.05*	-0.01*	-0.08	-0.02*	-0.02*	-0.03*	0.09	0.06	0.02*	-0.03*
White non-Hispanic (19)	-0.11	0.09	0.04*	0.00*	0.04*	0.08	-0.33	0.04*	0.05*	0.00*	-0.08	-0.15
Black non-Hispanic (20)	0.09	-0.07	-0.03*	-0.01*	-0.01*	-0.07	0.59	-0.07	-0.08	-0.03*	0.00*	0.13
Hispanic (21)	0.02*	-0.02*	-0.01*	0.02*	-0.02*	-0.03*	-0.04*	0.06	0.00*	0.03*	-0.02*	0.05*
Asian (22)	0.06	-0.04*	-0.03*	0.00*	-0.08	-0.01*	-0.04*	-0.02*	0.00*	0.00*	0.19	0.1
Other; multiracial (23)	0.01*	-0.02*	0.01*	0.00*	0.04*	-0.02*	-0.03*	-0.04*	0.01*	0.01*	0.00*	-0.04*

Table 5: Correlation Matrix of Refugee Admission Support and Key Independent Variables

	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
Approve Both (1)											
Approve Neither (2)											
Approve Christians (3)											
Approve Muslims (4)											
Evangelicals (5)											
Mainline Protestants (6)											
Black Protestants (7)											
Catholics (8)											
Atheist (9)											
Unaffiliated or don't know (10)											
Other Religion (11)											
Democrats (12)											
Republicans (13)	1										
Independents (14)	-0.37	1									
Bachelor's or more (15)	-0.02*	-0.06	1								
Less than bachelor's (16)	0.02	0.06	-1	1							
Female (17)	-0.02*	-0.02*	-0.06	0.06	1						
Male (18)	0.02*	0.02*	0.06	-0.06	-1	1					
White non-Hispanic (19)	0.2	-0.04*	-0.02*	0.02*	0.02*	-0.02*	1				
Black non-Hispanic (20)	-0.13	0.00*	-0.05*	0.05*	0.03*	-0.03*	-0.56	1			
Hispanic (21)	-0.07	0.02*	0.00*	0.00*	-0.01*	0.01*	-0.43	-0.07	1		
Asian (22)	-0.12	0.01*	0.11	-0.11	-0.09	0.09	-0.43	-0.07	-0.05*	1	
Other; multiracial (23)	-0.02*	0.07	0.00*	0.00*	0.02*	-0.02*	-0.35	-0.06	-0.04*	-0.04*	1

Demographic Variables and Refugee Approval: A Multinomial Regression Model

To test this study's many hypotheses in a concise and accurate way, a multinomial logistic regression was performed. The results of the multinomial logistic regression are displayed in Table 6: Analysis of Maximum Likelihood Estimates**.** The regression demonstrates the effects that the independent variables have on an individual's likelihood of approving both policies for Christians and Muslims, a policy only for Christians, a policy for only Muslims, or not supporting any policy at all. The regression builds three models to show these results. In each model, the baseline category is approval of both policies for Christian and Muslim refugee admittance to the United States. In each model, the b value shows the impact of an independent variable on an individual's likelihood to identify with that specific approval category in contrast to approving both Christian and Muslim refugees (the baseline category). The SAS program utilized for these analyses uses a forward selection approach regarding the inclusion of independent variables in the model; it only includes those independent variables which are found to be significant. The significant independent variables in the multinomial logistic regression are political affiliation and religious tradition. Both of these variables have a contrast group; for political affiliation the contrast group is Republicans and for religious tradition the contrast group is Evangelical Protestants.

The Effect of Political Affiliation on Refugee Support

We find that political affiliation impacts support for refugees in two of our models: approving neither Christians nor Muslims versus approving both Christians and Muslims, and approving Christians only versus approving both Christians and Muslims.

The b values for Democrats in these models are negative and highly significant (p <
0.0001*). If a subject identified as Democrat rather than Republican, the odds of the
individual disapproving of both policies for Christians and Muslims instead of supporting
both policies decreases significantly (b = -1.08, p <0.0001*) while holding all other
independent variables constant. The likelihood of the same Democrat individual
preferring to support only a policy for Christian Syrian refugees instead of supporting
policies for both Christian and Syrian refugees also significantly decreases refugees (b=-
1.36, p <0.0001*).

The Effect of Religious Tradition on Refugee Support

Similar to political party affiliation results, religious affiliation has a significant
effect on two models: supporting neither admission policy and supporting a policy only
for Christians. An individual who is unaffiliated or does not know her religious tradition
instead of being an Evangelical Protestant is significantly more likely (b=0.42,
p=0.0057*) to disapprove of both refugee admittance policies instead of approving both.
If a subject were to be an Atheist instead of an Evangelical Protestant, that individual
would be significantly less likely (b= -0.99, p=0.0001) to prefer a policy only for
Christian refugees instead of approving policies for both Christian and Muslim refugees.
Black Protestants demonstrate the opposite effect. If an individual is a Black Protestant
instead of Evangelical Protestant, he or she is significantly more likely (b=0.85, p=0.01*)
to prefer only a policy for Christian refugees instead of supporting both policies for
Christian and Muslim refugees.

Summary of Multinomial Logistic Regression Results

The forward-selection process utilized to create the model demonstrates that out of all independent variables studied (political affiliation, religious tradition, gender, education, and race), only political affiliation and religious tradition have significant results in the regression analysis.

Democrats are generally significantly more likely than Republicans to demonstrate support for both policies for Christians and Muslims instead of supporting neither policy or only a policy for Christians. In reference to Evangelical Protestants, Black Protestants are actually significantly more likely to support only a policy for Christians instead of a policy for both Christians and Muslims. Respondents who report no religious affiliation or do not know their affiliation are significantly more likely than Evangelical Protestants to disapprove of both policies instead of approving both, whereas Atheists are significantly less likely than Evangelical Protestants to prefer only a policy for Christians rather than policies for both Christians and Muslims.

Table 5: Analysis of Maximum Likelihood Estimates

Model 0 - Approving Neither

	b	SE	Z	P
Political Affiliation				
Democrat	-1.08	0.1	10.65	<.0001*
Independent	0.005	0.1	0.04	0.96
Religious Tradition				
Mainline Protestant	-0.37	0.19	1.9	0.056
Black Protestant	-0.07	0.4	0.18	0.85
Catholic	0.18	0.16	1.11	0.26
Other	-0.14	0.2	0.67	0.49
Unaffiliated or don't know	0.42	0.15	2.76	0.0057*
Atheist	-0.27	0.19	1.42	0.15

Model 1 - Approving Christians Only

	b	SE	Z	P
Political Affiliation				
Democrat	-1.36	0.12	11.34	<.0001*
Independent	0.08	0.11	0.75	0.44
Religious Tradition				
Mainline Protestant	0	0.18	0	0.99
Black Protestant	0.85	0.33	2.56	0.01*
Catholic	0.14	0.17	0.81	0.41
Other	-0.26	0.22	1.17	0.24
Unaffiliated or don't know	-0.3	0.18	1.61	0.1
Atheist	-0.99	0.25	3.85	0.0001*

Model 2 - Approving Muslims Only

	b	SE	Z	P
Political Affiliation				
Democrat	-0.23	0.31	0.74	0.45
Independent	-0.08	0.37	0.23	0.81
Religious Tradition				
Mainline Protestant	3.25	132.8	0.02	0.98
Black Protestant	-9.36	732.5	0.01	0.98
Catholic	2.5	132.8	0.02	0.98
Other	4.03	132.8	0.03	0.97
Unaffiliated or don't know	3.94	132.8	0.03	0.98
Atheist	4.73	132.8	0.03	0.97

CHAPTER FOUR

Discussion of Results

Beginning with the contingency table featured in Table 2 of this thesis and

continuing through the multinomial logistic regression at the end, I find support for my

hypothesis that there would be a difference in approval levels for the two refugee policies

(one for Christians and the other for Muslims) across the entire sample. It is clear that at

least some individuals distinguish between members of the Christian and Islamic faiths

when making decisions about who the United States should allow to enter the country.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that respondents will show higher support for a policy increasing

admission of Christian Syrian refugees than a policy increasing admission of Muslim

Syrian refugees. I find support for this throughout the various statistical measures that

were performed, beginning with the contingency table. Table 2 shows that only 54% of

the respondents approve of a policy for Muslims, whereas that same policy designated for

Christians garners a 74% approval rate.

This significant difference in support for Muslim and Christian Syrian refugees

lends support to the intergroup threat theory. I believe that the disparity in support for

policies for Muslim and Christian Syrian refugees confirmed in this thesis is due largely

in part to the symbolic and realistic threats that Americans perceive, especially from

Muslim refugees. Some Americans feel that Muslim refugees pose symbolic threats to

their prized American values and way of life and realistic threats to their safety

(stemming from concerns about terrorism and violence). Although Americans may

maintain civility towards the Muslim refugee community, they likely act on the threats they perceive through cognitive and affective responses, such as not supporting potential policies to help a vulnerable community that they feel is a threat (Stephan, Ybarra, & Morrison 2009).

In Hypothesis 2 I predicted that respondents' gender would impact their support for refugee policies. I did not find support for this hypothesis. Based on the cross-tabulation results in Table 3, gender and support for refugee policy are independent of one another. Further, the multinomial logistic regression's forward selection process provided additional support for this finding. Gender is not included in the regression, thus demonstrating that its impact on approval is non-significant. While reviewing literature, I noticed mixed results between various studies on gender's impact towards Muslim prejudice (Ogan et al 2014; Khan and Ecklund 2012; Ponce 2017). My estimate is that although women are "more likely than men to express concern and responsibility for the well-being of others" and also place more importance on "regulation, protective policies, and compassion issues", the symbolic and realistic threats that they sense from refugees, especially Middle Eastern and Muslim refugees, outweigh any obligations they may feel to be compassionate or take responsibility for the care of others (Beutel and Marini 1995; Shapiro and Mahajan 1986). In this instance, the intergroup threats that women feel counteract any value orientations that may normally distinguish them from male peers. To expand on mine and others' findings, I think it could be productive to research women's feelings towards refugee groups (whether or not they feel compassion and a sense of responsibility) and compare it with their approval for policies like the ones proposed in this study. It would be worthwhile to truly determine if the intergroup threats

are counteracting any compassion they may have or if the current state of fear of refugees and Middle Easterners has significantly diminished women's sense of obligation to these groups.

The next demographic variable that we considered was educational attainment. Hypothesis 3 predicts that individuals with a bachelor's degree or more will demonstrate higher approval of both policies for Christian and Muslim Syrian refugees than their peer respondents who did not complete a bachelor's degree. Educational attainment has been frequently demonstrated in the literature as a variable that decreases prejudice towards a variety of marginalized groups. It is theorized that education decreases prejudice because the experience of institutionalized learning introduces individuals to many different types of people, thus increasing intergroup contact (which has also been shown to decrease prejudice). However, we do not find significant support for these theories or hypothesis 3. Education was not included in the logistic regression, making it a non-significant variable. I posit that education is non-significant in this situation because of the sample characteristics. The sample is not representative of educational attainment in the United States; there is an over-sampling of individuals with higher education. I believe that if these analyses were repeated with a sample that was more representative of educational attainment in America (thus, more respondents without degrees), we would find that educational attainment does influence approval of refugee admittance policies. It is also possible that the current highly partisan culture of America today may override any significant effect of education to reduce prejudice.

The next segment of our analyses focused on religious tradition and its relationship to approval of policies for refugees. Hypothesis 4a predicts that respondents

who are members of the Evangelical Protestant religious tradition will show decreased support for all Syrian refugees when compared to their peers who are not Evangelical Protestants. I find support for this based on the contingency table in Table 4. Only 35.5% of the Evangelical Protestant sample approves of both policies for Christians and Muslims, a measure that is supported by 57.38% of all other respondents. The p-value from the Pearson-chi square test (p<0.0001) shows that this difference in support between Evangelical Protestants and the rest of the sample is significant.

The logistic regression provides more insight about the preferences of Evangelical Protestants compared to their peers from other religious traditions. When it came to all-or-nothing support of Syrian refugees, Evangelical Protestants differed significantly from unaffiliated respondents and those who don't know their religious tradition[iii]. The unaffiliated or don't know option was provided when respondents were completing the survey to more accurately capture the respondents' religious backgrounds; undeniably, there are Americans who believe in God but do not adhere to a specific denomination. Respondents of the unaffiliated or don't know religious tradition are actually more likely (b=0.42, p=0.0057*) than Evangelical Protestants to demonstrate disapproval of both potential policies for refugee admittance instead of supporting policies for both Christian and Muslim Syrian refugees. Perhaps this finding is due to the composition of the unaffiliated or don't know category; many individuals attend non-denominational churches (and are thus "unaffiliated"), but these churches can still shape their members towards political and religious conservatism. Still, some respondents in this unaffiliated or don't know category may not attend a church at all. This lack of church attendance could cause them to feel less allegiance than their Evangelical Protestant peers towards a

certain religious group (such as Christian refugees). A lack of any connection or sense of responsibility to assist members of a certain religious affiliation, a sentiment which is possible for Evangelical Protestants (wanting to or feeling obligated to aid fellow Christians), can also cause respondents in our unaffiliated or don't know category to simply lack support for religious refugees overall.

Hypothesis 4b predicted that Evangelical Protestant respondents will show decreased support for Muslim Syrian refugees when compared to peer respondents from other religious traditions. Using the multinomial logistic regression, I find mixed support for this prediction. Evangelical Protestants are no more or less likely to show decreased support for Syrian refugees than their peers from Catholic and Mainline Protestant religious traditions. However, they are significantly more likely than Atheists to support only a policy for Christian Syrian refugees rather than supporting both policies for Christian and Muslim refugees. A surprising finding is that Black Protestants are significantly more likely than Evangelical Protestants to support only a policy for Christians instead of supporting policies for both Christians and Muslims. Previous research does not predict this result because anti-immigrant sentiment exists within the Black community; many working-class Blacks support restrictive immigration policies due to economic-self interest (Nteta 2013). However, we find that this does not dissuade Blacks from supporting policies for Christian refugees. I posit that this result stems from Blacks' status sets when they are trying to make decisions about this issue. Robert K. Merton's research on status sets stems from the definition that a status is "a position in a social system occupied by designated individuals"; each status also has a role, which is "the behavioral enacting of the patterned expectations attributed to that position" (Merton

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368). A single status can have a series of associated roles, and a single individual can have more than one status – for example, a woman can be Black, Christian, a mother, and an engineer (369). The array of social statuses that an individual has is called a "status set" that has an associated "role set" (370). These status and role sets can change over the course of time and develop into a "status sequence" (370). Perhaps approval from Black Protestants for Christian refugee policy is the result of a change in their status set. Black Protestants likely prioritize their identity as a Christian (and thus feel inclined to support refugees in their Christian in-group) instead of focusing on the economic statuses that they may occupy (which they might feel are threatened by immigrants).

The religious competition that Black Protestants may feel with Islam also cannot be forgotten in this discussion. Blacks compose 32% of the U.S. born Muslim community; approximately half (51%) of Muslim families who have been in America for more than three generations are Black ("U.S. Muslims Concerned About Their Place in Society, but Continue to Believe in the American Dream" 2017). Since Black Protestants emphasize preparing souls for heaven and salvation, they may feel competition from the Islamic faith to which so many of their Black peers belong. Some Black Protestants likely see Islam as a symbolic threat to their faith, since a significant portion of their racial community has become Muslim. The results of this study lend support for Jong Hyun Jung's analysis that "Black Protestants see Islam competing for the allegiance of their family members and relatives as younger generations are increasingly turning to alternative religious expressions, such as the Black Muslims" (Jung 2012). Black Protestants show increased support for a policy only for Christians because they prioritize their status as a Christian while also making a rational choice to benefit the proliferation

of their faith and reduce the intergroup threats that they may perceive from Muslim refugees.

To summarize, Evangelical Protestants' support of Muslim Syrian refugees does not differ from that of Catholics, Mainline Protestants, and other religious affiliations (composed of followers of faiths like Islam, Hinduism, and Judaism). Evangelical Protestants are, however, less likely than unaffiliated respondents and those who don't know their religious affiliation to disapprove of both refugee admittance policies instead of supporting both policies for Christian and Syrian refugees. Evangelical Protestants are more likely than Atheists, but less likely than Black Protestants, to approve of only a policy for Christian Syrian refugees instead of approving of both policies for Christians and Muslims. These results provided mixed support for previous research. The findings support previous literature on Evangelical Protestants' negative affect towards Muslims and their negative views towards outgroups (Kalkan, Layman, Ulsaner 2009). It does also seem that these results corroborate evidence of perceived intergroup threats towards Evangelical Protestants (Bhatia 2017). While I do find that Evangelicals compared to the rest of the population as a whole are less supportive of refugees, this does not remain true when Evangelicals are compared to other specific religious denominations. It does not appear that on the issue of Syrian refugees they are any less tolerant than Catholics, Mainline Protestants, and other religious groups. While Evangelical Protestants may tend to be less tolerant than peers from other religious traditions, attitudes towards refugees are an important exception to the norm (Woodberry & Smith 1998).

The last analyses of this thesis studied the relationship between political affiliation and support for refugee policy. I predicted that Democrats and Republicans

would demonstrate different levels of approval for the potential policies. The results show that this is resoundingly true, beginning with the cross-tabulation table (Table 3). The majority of Democrats support both policies for Christian and Muslim Syrian refugees, but the majority of Republicans support only the policy for Christian Syrian refugees.

Further strong evidence for hypothesis 5 is found in the logistic regression. Republicans show less overall approval for the potential policies and also show higher approval for increasing admission of Christian Syrian refugees than Muslim Syrian refugees. The regression models show that not only is there a difference in policy approval levels between Democrats and Republicans, but that the difference in approval supports hypothesis 5. Democrats are significantly less likely (b=-1.08, p <.0001*) than Republicans to approve neither refugee policy for Christians or Muslims instead of approving of both policies. Democrats are also significantly less likely (b=-1.36, p<.0001*) than Republicans to approve of only a refugee admittance policy for Christians instead of supporting both policies for Christians and Muslims.

This thesis confirms results found in other literature. Firstly, it supports poll results of prejudice towards Muslims ("Islamophobia: Understanding Anti-Muslim Sentiment in the West"; Cox 2017). Secondly, since Republicans are more likely than Democrats to approve of only a refugee admittance policy for Christians instead of both Christians and Muslims, it suggests that Republicans do follow tendencies of group threat theory as theorized by George Hawley (Hawley 2011). The results also show that Republicans are distinguishing between members of the two faiths and not just grouping them all together as refugees. This supports the statement that managing threat is a key

tenet of conservatism, because it is highly probable that Republicans treat Muslims differently than Christians because of the symbolic and realistic threats that they perceive (Jost et al. 2003). Intergroup threat theory, previous literature, and these results lead me to believe that Republicans' varying levels of support for refugees are due in part to their attempts to mitigate symbolic and realistic threats that they perceive from Muslims. It would be beneficial for future research on this topic to further elucidate the difference in perceived intergroup threats between the two political parties and how exactly those perceptions of threats from Muslims and immigrants change the attitudes of party members.

Conclusions and Future Research

As demonstrated by examining past surveys of American support for immigrants and refugees, the idea of accepting outsiders into the United States has never been a clear and easily decided issue. Considering the state of the nation in 2018 as well as the extreme violence and human rights violations occurring in Syria, the need to examine what demographic factors mediate refugee support has become more urgent. The findings of this thesis demonstrate that when it comes to approval for policies increasing the number of Muslim and Christian Syrian refugees in the United States, two variables matter: where an individual leans on the political scale and his or her religious affiliation. Despite other evidence suggesting that gender and education play a role in prejudice and perceived intergroup threat, I find that these variables are not significant

Before our current American political climate in 2018, many individuals would not have noticed a linkage between political party and religious outgroup preferences. However, this thesis confirms what the news media and Twitter feeds suggest: that

Democrats are more friendly towards refugees and Muslims than Republicans. Republicans are more likely than Democrats to prefer to admit neither Christian or Muslim Syrian refugees, or only admit Christian Syrian refugees, instead of supporting policies for both groups.

The impacts of religious tradition on refugee support are not as clear-cut as political affiliation, but they are still strong. Although Evangelical Protestants tend to be more conservative than other Christian faiths, this does not significantly differentiate their policy approval from that of their Catholic, Mainline Protestant, and other religious groups. However, they do demonstrate less support than Atheists, but more support than both Black Protestants and members of the unaffiliated or don't know category.

At the present time, little other research exists on this topic besides aggregate polling results of support for allowing Syrian refugees into the states. We know from previous studies that race, gender, education, political affiliation, and religious tradition all impact either prejudice or perceived intergroup threat in some way. However, when it comes to support for allowing Syrian refugees into the United States, only political affiliation and religious tradition are significant. The findings presented in this thesis are worth expanding upon in future research. This study was limited by characteristics of the sample making it non-representative of the United States population. Perhaps other demographic variables would prove to be significant if a similar study was performed with a more representative sample. Considering the era that we live in and the divisiveness surrounding the "fake news media", it could also be fruitful to consider an individual's media exposure (including how much and what type of media they are exposed to) and research its impacts on the relationships that we find between political

affiliation, religious tradition, and refugee support. I also believe it would be worthwhile to further examine the relationship between intergroup threat, political affiliation, and refugee approval. This thesis did not examine perceived symbolic and realistic threats; although intergroup threat theory makes sense as an explanation for the disparate refugee support between Democrats and Republicans, it would be beneficial to have more evidence confirming this relationship.

The "why" behind this thesis stems from a lack of understanding regarding how individuals could hear of and see the atrocities being committed in Syria and still be unwilling to allow Syrian refugees into the United States. This study provides evidence to understand how this lack of support can occur. Symbolic and realistic threats perceived by Americans toward Middle Eastern immigrants and adherents of Islam doubtlessly exist, but the relationship between these perceived threats, demographic characteristics, and support for Syrian refugees was previously unexamined. Based on our findings, we now know that two major demographic variables impact an individual's approval of Syrian refugees: political affiliation and religious tradition. For adherents to certain political beliefs and religious traditions, perceived realistic and symbolic threats toward Arabs and Islam likely outweighs the suffering and possible death faced by many Syrians left with no where to seek refuge.

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[i] This statement about education as a social learning process in an environment committed to tolerance is generally accurate. However, it is worthwhile to mention that a significant portion of American college students attend private institutions. In 2018, 14.8 million students attended public universities and 5.13 million attended private ("US College Enrollment Statistics…"). This means that approximately 25% of college students are attending private universities (some of which are religious institutions) that may not be as committed to tolerance as peer public institutions. The decreased tolerance in these institutions, such as Evangelical colleges, suggests that maybe individuals who attend Evangelical colleges are not as tolerant as their peers.

[ii] Aware of the misrepresentation in the Mturk worker population, namely an increased amount of college-educated and younger workers (Huff and Tingley 2015; Paolacci, Chandler, and Ipeirotis 2010; Story 2018), Story and Park implemented extra requirements at various points of data collection. Halfway through data collection, it was determined that the survey's sample was misrepresentative of the United States population because the respondents were more highly educated and not as old. In an attempt to solve this discrepancy, an age minimum requirement of thirty-six years old was added. The previous requirements regarding United States residency and citizenship were maintained. The introduction of the survey was updated to reflect the new age requirement. If Mturk workers answered the first question by selecting an age below thirty-six years, the respondent was deleted (Story 2018).

While this updated requirement improved the age discrepancy, it did not solve the overrepresentation of college attendees in the survey sample. In an attempt to resolve the education skew, respondent requirements were again altered in the last stage of data collection. The new requirement replaced the previous requirement to address the age issue. This new requirement prevented respondents with a four-year college degree or higher from participating in the survey (Story 2018).

Data collection was completed over a six-week time period in different batches of respondents. Each wave of survey administration involved at least three hundred respondents. Upon administration of each survey batch, the respondents' answers were verified for completion. Mechanical Turk workers who completed the survey appropriately received compensation within three days of finishing the survey. To prove their completion and the corresponding data, each worker entered a randomized code into the Mechanical Turk system. The codes were unique to each worker and were found at the end of their surveys.

Compensation for Mechanical Turk workers is decided upon by the survey designers. Story and Park used the national minimum wage to determine their worker's compensation. Through pre-testing the survey, it was determined that the survey took an average of six minutes to complete. Workers were compensated $0.75 for their completion of the survey. Before beginning the survey, workers were informed that the survey was brief (Story 2018).

[iii] Although we did not find any significant difference between Evangelical Protestants when compared to Catholics and Protestants in the multinomial logistic regression, it is worth noting that we did encounter one result between Evangelical Protestants and Mainline Protestants that was very close to reaching a value of significance. On the first model of our regression which compared the likelihood of approving of neither refugee admittance policy instead of approving of both policies for admittance, Mainline Protestants were less likely than Evangelical Protestants (b=-0.37) to disapprove of both policies instead of supporting both policies. This result occurred at a p value that was very close to being significant (0.056). I believe this relationship is worthy of evaluation in further research.