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**Security or Humanity? Framing Trumpian Refugee Restrictions**

**Abstract:**

This study responds to the Trump Executive Order 13759, more commonly referred to as the “refugee ban”. In its original form, this order temporarily suspended the refugee resettlement program, banned entry of travelers from seven Muslim-majority countries, provided measures for “extreme vetting”, and reduced the annual refugee admissions cap by 60,000, among other actions. The goal of this research is to explore the rhetorical choices related to garnering support or fanning opposition to such a divisive policy. This paper employs a mixed methodology combining a qualitative framing analysis of elite rhetoric with a framing survey experiment gauging public attitude. Survey respondents were randomly assigned experimental vignettes which reflected the *security* and *humanitarian* frames which arose from the qualitative coding of congressional statements following the announcement of EO 13759. Next, the survey measured respondents’ support for a mock policy which is reminiscent of EO 13759. This work draws upon political psychological literature including framing theory, race and group theories, and individual-level factors which lead to support of antiterrorism policies and restrictive immigration policies. Initial findings indicate that, unexpectedly, a statement in favor of restrictive refugee policy that frames the policy in terms of humanitarian concerns appears to be the most influential in shifting opinion. However, this finding is heavily qualified due to data limitations. This design lays the foundation for an analysis of the potential moderating effects of empathy and terror threat sensitivity on security and humanitarian framing effects and a discussion of the practical and normative tradeoffs between the use of each frame.

**Introduction:**

On January 27th, 2017, President Trump signed Executive Order 13769 entitled “Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States” into law. For many elected leaders and others, this day was one of great emotion. For example, a tweet from senator Chris Murphy a Democrat from Connecticut read, "To my colleagues: don't ever again lecture me on American moral leadership if you chose to be silent today", accompanying an image of a toddler face down in the surf.

This executive action temporarily suspended the US Refugee Resettlement Program, barred travelers from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen, and indefinitely suspended entry for Syrian refugees. Measures for “extreme vetting” were also outlined, including an evaluation of refugees’ prospects of making positive contributions to society and “national interest” and an assessment of the intentions of refugees to commit terrorist acts. The policy also reduced refugee admissions to 50,000 from the 110,000 set by the Obama administration. Perhaps most controversially, in its original form the order prioritized religious minorities for resettlement. 6 of the 7 countries in question are Muslim majority. Legal challenges and public outcry immediately followed the bans’ announcement and its chaotic implementation sparked panic and confusion at airports across the country.

The purpose of this policy is ostensibly to prevent terrorist attacks on the homeland by individuals who entered the U.S. as refugees, though a report by the Cato Institute estimated the odds of this occurrence as one in 3.64 billion a year. EO 13769 has since been replaced by another version of the order (Nowrasteh: Cato 2017, Pierce and Miessner: Migration Policy Institute 2017, refer to the issue brief for more information). A July 2016 poll found that 50% of Americans supported “banning future immigration from regions where there are active terrorist groups” while a December 2016 poll found that 35% of voters supported temporarily banning Muslims from entering the US (Enten 2017: FiveThirtyEight).

The goal of this research is to explore the rhetorical choices related to garnering support or fanning opposition to such a divisive policy. This work draws upon political psychology, including theoretical work on immigration attitudes and traits including empathy and sensitivity to terror threats. The big picture questions this project begins to unpack surround how elite rhetoric – statements from politically sophisticated actors such as elected representatives – may delegitimize humanitarian goals, dehumanize outgroups, or exploit individual psychological needs.

This project asks: *What are the impacts of these juxtaposing rhetorical frames -"humanitarianism” and “national security”—on public attitudes towards policies restricting refugee resettlement in the US?*

Using a mixed methodology, this paper combines a qualitative framing analysis of the statements of congresspeople regarding the Trump EO and employs an original framing experiment using vignettes which mimic real-world rhetoric. This experiment is embedded in a survey which captures other factors associated with support for restrictive immigration and anti-terrorism policies. Initial findings suggest that a statement in favor of a restrictive refugee policy employing a humanitarian frame is the only treatment which meaningfully shifts respondents’ policy opinions. A discussion of how these results fit into and diverge from theoretical expectations follows, along with a description of the potential future directions of this work.

**Literature Review:**

**Framing Theory & Framing Experiments:**

Chong and Druckman (2007) describe “framing” as a process by which political communicators conceptualize or reorient the thinking on issues. Frames can set up conflicting messages which alter the perspective about factually identical information or compare qualitatively different but sociologically relevant concepts such as free speech and public safety. In their review of early framing literature, these authors argue that some of the more troubling revelations of framing studies include the suggestion that opinions of citizens are highly malleable and that entrepreneurial elites can manipulate opinion on issues through presentation rather than content change. However, in its best light, framing can be understood as a necessary tool for persuasion and the communication of ideas in a democracy.

Framing theory depends upon the premise that public attitudes are malleable and thus political communicators can intervene in the opinion formation process and potentially manipulate public opinion by providing cues and cognitive shortcuts for their audience (Zaller 1992, Hafner Burton et al. 2013). Experimental framing studies include presentations of identical information in a more positive or negative light -equivalency frames- and presentations of specific tracks of argumentation related to specific policy areas -issue frames (Druckman 2004). Equivalency frame experiments originate in the economics study of “prospect theory” and in experimental evidence of the “loss aversion” phenomenon. That is, when presented with factually identical information, respondents who are given frames which emphasize losses report more negativity towards the object in question. Most notably, Kahneman and Tversky (1984) found that people were more willing to opt for surgery when presented with the number who survive (95/100) versus the number who die on average (5/100).

Other works emphasize public policy choices rather than personalized reactions, though the selection of policy issues discussed by social scientists examining framing effects has been described as “higgledy-piggledy” (Sniderman and Theriault 2004). Sniderman and Theriault (2004) find that a positive framing of government aid to the poor as allowing needy individuals to “get ahead” increases support for the policy while negative framing which suggests that government spending for the poor results in “higher taxes” depresses support for the policy. However, these researchers find that when both frames are presented in a dual frame condition, framing effects disappear. They interpret this as respondents’ tendency “to go home” to their genuine pre-treatment disposition when faced with conflicting frames. Druckman (2004) also cautions that evidence of framing effects need not lead scholars to view the public as entirely irrational or conclude that attitudes do not exist. He finds across a series of tests that counter-framing and heterogenous deliberation temper or eliminate the effects of both equivalency and issue frames. Finally, as Slothuus (2008) predicts, framing effects will be larger for respondents with higher levels of political awareness and more strongly held values. He concludes, “Framing effects may not act uniformly across individuals” (pg. 21).

**Public Opinion Towards Immigration and Refugee Policies:**

Social-psychological theories about public opinion towards immigration and refugee policies build upon social identity theory (SIT) and emphasize multicultural contact and life experiences. Berg (2009) used a core network analysis (this method is attributed to Lazarfield and colleagues see Huckfeldt et al. 2013) in which he showed that white respondents who had more high-quality personal contacts with people of color hold more positive attitudes towards immigrants and are more supportive of beneficial immigration policies. Relatedly, Haubert and Fussell (2006) introduced a model for measuring cosmopolitanism, a factor associated with more positive conceptions of immigrants and support for expansionist immigrant policies. Cosmopolitans hold college degrees or higher, work in white collar jobs, have liberal political ideologies, and have lived abroad. Members of this group are described as "knowledge workers with a vested interest in global exchange" and are therefore less susceptible to populist anti-immigrant trends than parochials who promote ethnocentric efforts to resist diversity and globalizing forces.

Moreover, Newman et al. (2015) find that individual-level humanitarian concern significantly decreases support for restrictive immigration policy. Furthermore, these scholars found that when survey experiment respondents were exposed to countervailing messages about immigration which emphasized threat and humanitarian concerns, humanitarian concerns were powerful enough to override the threat message. Finally, these authors find evidence that individual feelings of empathy moderate the effects of both threat and humanitarian stimuli.

Additionally, Post-9/11, immigration has been increasingly linked to terrorism (Cassese et al. 2011). Therefore, attitudes towards terror threat may be an important component of public opinion towards immigration and refugee policies. Importantly, the Trump Executive Order 13769 was publicly touted as an anti-terrorist effort. Empirical political psychological work on this topic emphasizes individual-level threat sensitivities, submission to authority, status quo justification, and national attachment. Huddy et al. (2006) found that as perceived threat (but not anxiety) increased, there was heightened support for a wide range of domestic and international government actions to combat the threat of terrorism, including overseas military action, a curtailment of civil liberties, and increased surveillance and tighter immigrant restrictions for Arabs. More controversially, Hibbing et al. (2014) using implicit attitude testing (IAT) suggest that ideological conservatives may be more sensitive to threatening stimuli and thus more attentive to negative messaging.

Furthermore, Hetherington and Suhay (2011) analyze the effects of perceived threat on support for anti-terrorism policies- even those that are discriminatory in nature. The results from this study illustrate that people who score high in “authoritarianism”, a personality trait associated with outgroup hostility (Adorno et al. 1950), are willing to eschew the democratic values of civil rights and liberties at any threat level. However, when people who normally score low on authoritarianism perceive high levels of threat they hold "activated authoritarian" views and are willing to support policy that impedes civil rights and liberties. Similarly, Kam and Kinder (2007) posit that ethnocentrism, a personality component closely linked to social dominance orientation and social identity (see Levinson 1950) is the best explainer of American enthusiasm for national defense and tightening border security. These authors conclude: “Threat comes regularly in politics, and elites commonly rely on rhetorical weapons to pit ‘us’ against ‘them’. Because opinion is ﬂuid and politics is dynamic, there may reside within a democratic society the capacity to leave ethnocentrism in the dark or to bring it to center stage (pp. 337).”

**Methodology:**

**Qualitative Frame Analysis:**

In order to examine the rhetoric by public elites surrounding the refugee ban executive order, I performed a qualitative framing analysis of 339 statements from members of Congress. I used a compilation of statements collected by National Public Radio staff-members for a public-facing webpage that allows constituents to view their representatives’ position on the executive action. These statements were collected from email correspondence, official press releases, media interviews, and social media posts by congresspeople. These statements were sorted on the web page by state and into sections labeled “in favor”, “opposed”, or “statement unclear”. For my analysis, I only selected statements which fell into either the “in favor” or “opposed” categories. I completed a manual text coding of 120 statements which expressed support for the ban and 219 which expressed opposition to the ban.

I used inductive reasoning to predict that I might find statements which used frames which presented support or opposition to the order in terms of security or humanitarian concerns. After organizing these statements into “in favor” and “opposed” sections, I read through the quotes for each camp to get a deductive sense of the themes and keywords present in the statements. Next, I coded these statements in a way which allowed them to contain multiple frames and key phrases.

Among the congresspeople’s’ statements which offered support for the Trump EO, phrases related to the “safety of Americans first” appeared 69 times. Mentions of “people who want to hurt us” or “terrorists” occurred 38 times. Finally, descriptions of the seven countries targeted by the ban as “terrorist hotbeds” or similar terminology occurred 32 times. An example of a statement supporting the policy with a security framework is as follows:

"It has been well-established by the U.S. intelligence community that the strategy of radical Islamic terror groups is to hide operatives among refugees from the Middle East and North Africa entering Western countries. While we welcome refugees, I believe that the fundamental responsibility of the federal government is to provide for the common defense, including ensuring those who reach our shores are first fully vetted through a reliable screening process." -Jody B. Hice, Republican, GA 10th District

Opponents of the executive order in Congress also employed security frameworks to couch their argument. 45 representatives stated that the executive order “threatens national security”. An example of this sentiment appears below:

"There are two ways to lose our generational battle against jihadism by losing touch with reality. The first is to keep pretending that jihadi terrorism has no connection to Islam or to certain countries. That's been a disaster. And here's the second way to fail: If we send a signal to the Middle East that the U.S. sees all Muslims as jihadis, the terrorist recruiters win by telling kids that America is banning Muslims and that this is America versus one religion.” -Benjamin Sasse, Republican, NE

In addition, congresspeople’s statements opposing the ban emphasized humanitarian concerns. 56 identified refugees as “desperate”, “fleeing danger” or “women and children” and/or argued that “slamming the door” or “turning our backs” on them is “cruel”. An example of this rhetorical pattern follows:

"Trapping victims of terror and oppression in war-torn countries is not the way of the U.S., the leader of the free world. We can keep our country safe without barring entry to people fleeing for their lives." -Tony Cárdenas, Democrat, CA 29th District

Major takeaways from this qualitative framing analysis include an observation in key differences between the frequency of frames used by proponents and opponents of the executive order. Supportive statements display greater internal consistency because they rely almost exclusively on the security frame with no instance recorded of employing a humanitarian framework. At least on the surface, this consistency could be attributed to strategic rhetoric like partisan messaging (holding the “party line”) or the dissemination of talking points. On the other hand, statements opposing the refugee ban draw from both humanitarian and security frameworks and often employ multiple frames and key phrases. This could be partially due to the larger volume of statements from the opposition camp or from strategies like rhetorical cooptation and counter-framing.

**Framing Survey Experiment Design:**

This qualitative framing analysis informed the design of an experimental test of humanitarian or security frames to defend or oppose a mock policy which would limit refugees to the US. The experiment is embedded within a Qualtrics survey which is designed to take approximately 10 minutes. Respondents are randomly assigned to 1 of 6 vignettes that either consists of a pro-restrictive refugee policy statement appealing to security, an con-policy statement appealing to security, a pro-policy statement appealing to humanitarianism, an con-policy statement appealing to humanitarianism, a pro-policy control statement that is frame free (i.e. provides no rationale for its stance), or a con-policy control statement that is frame free. For example, the con-policy statement appealing to humanitarianism reads as below:

The proposed refugee policy would restrict refugee settlement from several conflict areas. This means turning our backs on the vulnerable families fleeing violence, the US must uphold its *humanitarian* commitments and accept our share of refugees along with the rest of the democratized world (emphasis added, please refer to the appendix for additional vignettes).

The pro-policy and con-policy control conditions appear as follows:

(PRO): The proposed refugee policy is *harmful* because it would restrict refugee settlement from several conflict areas.

(CON): The proposed refugee policy is *beneficial* because it would restrict refugee settlement from several conflict areas (note: emphasis added).

Next, the survey measures respondents’ support for a mock policy which is reminiscent of Executive Order 13769. This dependent variable item asks respondents to answer: “How would you rate support for this policy?” on a balanced 7-point Likert response item ranging from “Strongly Support” to “Strongly Oppose” (reverse coded for analysis). Other items include questions about respondents’ demographic information (gender, race, US/foreign born, vote eligibility and whether they voted in 2016, political ideology and party identification), personality items including Authoritarianism (measured by the ANES child rearing scale proposed by Feldman and Stenner 1997) and Social Dominance Orientation (employing an 8-item short scale the SDO7, Ho et al. 2015), Cosmopolitanism (adapted for a student sample by asking about ability to speak more than one language and experience having lived abroad for 3 months or longer), feelings of threat from terrorism (adapted from Hetherington and Suhay 2011 and Huddy et al. 2006), and feelings of empathy (measured by the Toronto Empathy Questionnaire).

**Expectations:**

First, the rationale behind a design with two control conditions is the expose the effect of the security and humanitarian issue frames beyond simple negative and positive equivalency framing (Druckman, 2004). Because of the scholarly emphasis on security concerns when framing immigration and refugee issues (Cassese et al. 2010, Lakoff and Ferguson 2006) and the intuitive logic of humanitarian concerns for this issue area (Newman et al. 2015), it is expected that the interaction of these frames and their valance will impact respondents significantly differently than the control conditions.

Both proponents and opponents of restrictive refugee policy rely heavily upon security frameworks, as illustrated by the qualitative framing analysis. Furthermore, the literature demonstrates the psychological potency of such messages (Hibbing et al. 2014, Hetherington and Suhay 2011, Huddy et al. 2006). Therefore, it is expected that vignettes that employ security frames will shift respondents attitudes towards the mock policy significantly away from the control categories, in their intended persuasive direction, regardless of whether they are pro-policy or con-policy messages. Though the relationship between security frames and pro-policy messages is well documented, there are plausible public and academic arguments that restrictive refugee policies threaten US security goals. For example, Kerwin (2005) argues that policies which restrict refugee and immigrant rights as part of antiterror national security schemes curtail civil liberties, target victims of terror, and “endanger U.S. credibility with targeted immigrant groups and with its overseas allies in the ﬁght against terror” (pg. 763).

Furthermore, the heavy reliance on humanitarian frames by opponents of the restrictive refugee policies revealed by the qualitative framing analysis and the conclusions of Newman et al. (2015) suggest that conceiving of restrictive refugee policies as detrimental to humanitarian goals is persuasive. Therefore, it is expected that the vignette which employs the humanitarian frame in a con-policy message will shift attitudes significantly away from the control con-policy condition and pro-policy conditions in the intended direction (i.e. towards greater opposition to the mock policy). It is less clear if there are circumstances under which humanitarian frames are effectively employed to rally support for restrictive refugee policies as no instances were recorded in the qualitative framing analysis and the unique theoretical contribution by Newman et al. (2015) predicts a negative relationship between humanitarian messages and support for restrictive immigration policies. These expectations can be summarized in the following hypotheses:

*H1: Main Framing Effects: The type of frame (security or humanitarian) will shift respondents’ attitudes to be significantly different than the pro-policy or con-policy control conditions.*

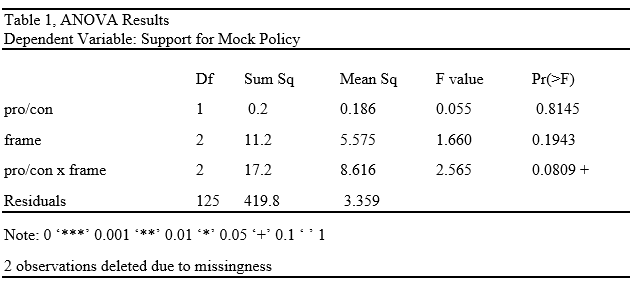
*H2: Successful Security Framing: Security frames will significantly shift respondents’ attitudes away from the control conditions towards their intended valence (support or opposition for the mock policy).*

*H3: Humanitarian Opposition: Con-policy humanitarian frames will significantly shift respondents attitudes away from the con-policy control condition and pro-policy conditions and towards the intended direction of greater opposition to the mock policy.*

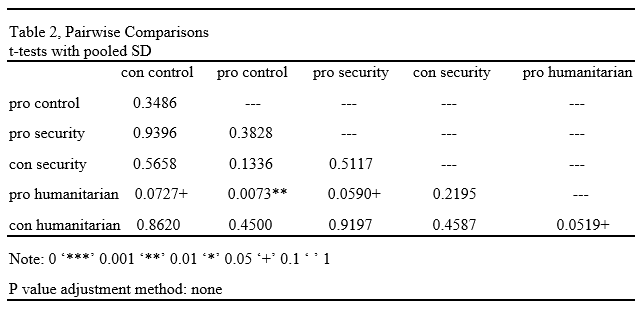
*H4: Humanitarian Support? No strong expectations are held for the impact of a pro-policy message that employs a humanitarian frame.*

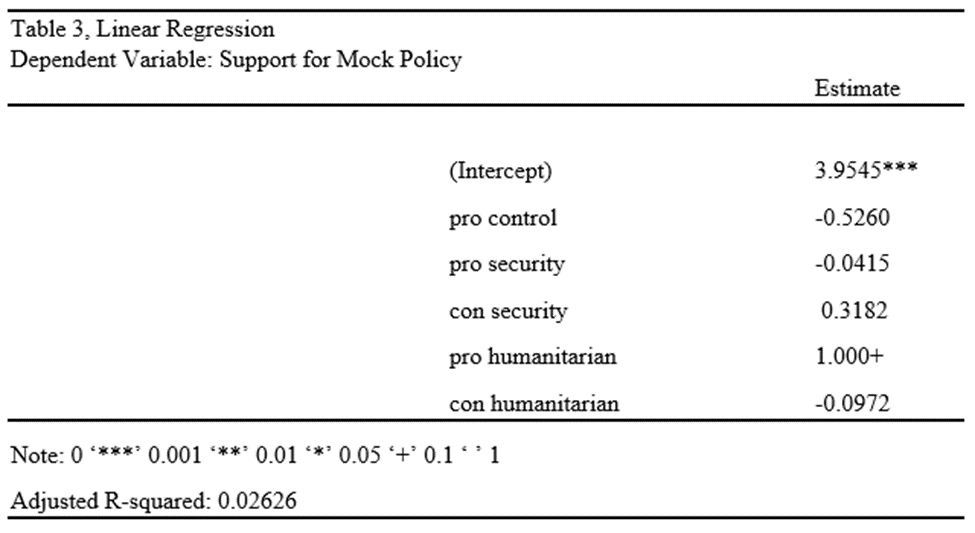
**Data and Analysis:**

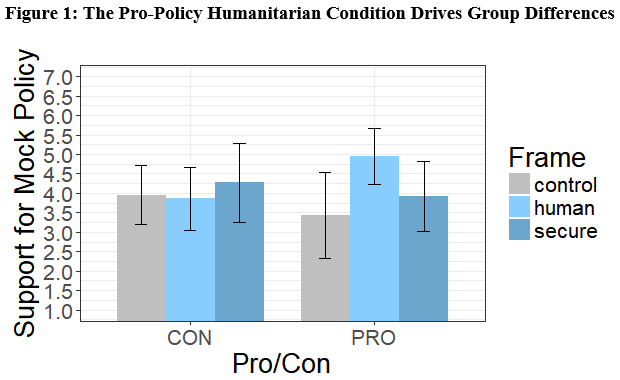
Responses to the survey experiment were collected in the School of Government and Public Policy (SGPP) Research Center. 133 undergraduate respondents participated in this survey experiment in exchange for one point of extra credit for their participating course. This student sample age typically ranges from 18-22 (only 18+ are eligible) and previous student samples collected in the SGPP Research Center have included every major ethnic group represented at The University of Arizona. The current sample is diverse on gender, race, and party identification items. Furthermore, approximately even distribution into the control conditions (with between 21-23 respondents in each condition) confirms random assignment. Finally, as the introduction described, at the elite level, views towards restrictive refugee policies have been extreme so it is feasible that public attitudes towards this type of policy may be polarized or heavily lopsided. However, this relatively small undergraduate sample showed great diversity in their responses to the dependent variable. Please refer to the appendix for details on the makeup of the sample.

In order to test the main framing effect, I conducted an ANOVA test in which the dependent variable (support for the mock policy) was regressed on the interaction between the valence of the vignette (pro/con) and the type of frame (security/humanitarian). The results indicate that this interaction variable is marginally significant, implying a difference between the framed and “frame free” pro/con control vignettes (N=131, See Table 1). 

Next, I looked at the pairwise comparisons between the conditions using t-tests with a standard deviation and no adjustment to the p-values. The results indicate that the out of all the matchups, the only statistically significant difference is between the pro-policy humanitarian condition and the pro-policy control condition. Furthermore, the differences between the pro-policy humanitarian condition and the con-policy control condition, the pro-policy humanitarian condition and the pro-policy security condition, and the con-policy humanitarian and pro-policy humanitarian condition are marginally significant. None of the remaining relationships can be distinguished given the current data (N=131, See Table 2 & Figure 3).

Finally, in order to test to what extent the treatments shifted respondent’s support for the mock policy and whether they did so in the expected directions, I performed a simple linear regression. The results indicate that none of the treatments appear to shift attitudes in their intended direction except for the pro-policy humanitarian condition and the con-policy humanitarian condition. It is important to recognize that these effects are not statistically significant and only the pro-policy humanitarian condition approaches significance. It should also be noted that since the dependent variable, support for the mock policy, is measured on a 7-point scale, the estimates of a one-point shift towards support of the policy achieved by the pro-policy humanitarian condition could be substantively meaningful. Figure 1 clearly shows the meaningful differences between pro-policy humanitarian condition and other treatments (N=131, See Table 3). 





**Discussion:**

Before unpacking the potential implications of the results of the analyses performed, it is important to note that this survey experiment is currently underpowered due to a small sample size. Therefore, the statistical tests performed are less able to capture the relationships examined and these estimates should not be overstated. As the low or non-significance levels indicate, these results cannot confidently be viewed as meaningful. Currently, there are only 21-23 respondents in each condition, but the literature indicates that framing effects tend to be minute (around .2), therefore, power calculations reveal a relatively high-powered sample (.97) is required to observe these effects (Cohen 1992). I ran a power analysis for a balanced one-way ANOVA using this effect size, suggested power, and number of conditions (6) of the experiment and the recommended sample size per group is approximately 92. Despite these limitations, the current analyses may provide initial evidence about the tested hypotheses.

The results of the ANOVA test indicate limited support for H1, the Main Framing Effects hypothesis. That is, I can be marginally confident of the existence of an interaction effect between frame choice (security or humanitarian) and the vignette’s valence (pro/con policy). Additionally, the analyses provide no support for H2 the Successful Security Framing hypothesis. The pairwise comparison indicates that the only relationship in which there is marginal confidence that includes a security frame is that there is a marginally significant difference between the pro-policy security frame and the pro-policy humanitarian frame. This difference could be mostly attributed to the strength of the pro-policy humanitarian frame and does not necessarily offer evidence of the “success” of security frames. Furthermore, the linear regression suggests that the effects of the security treatment frames are signed opposite of what was expected. While there is not statistical support to report these effects with full confidence, it does not bode well for the Successful Security Framing hypothesis that security frames appear to push opinion in the opposite direction than intended (if at all).

Similarly, there is insufficient evidence to confirm H3 the Humanitarian Opposition hypothesis. The pairwise comparison indicates that the only relationship in which there is marginal confidence that includes the con-policy humanitarian frame is that there is a marginally significant difference between the con-policy humanitarian frame and the pro-policy humanitarian frame. Again, this difference could be mostly credited to the strength of the pro-policy humanitarian frame and does not offer a clear indication that the effect of a con-policy humanitarian frame exists statistically or substantively. While the linear regression indicates that the con-policy humanitarian frame is at least signed as expected suggesting that this frame depresses support for the mock policy, this result does not attain statistical significance so cannot be reported with confidence.

Though it can only be considered suggestive, the preponderance of the evidence points to the pro-policy humanitarian frame as the treatment condition which is driving most of the attitude shifts captured by this sample and design. The only significant difference between conditions demonstrated by the pairwise comparisons is between the pro-policy humanitarian condition and pro-policy control condition. Furthermore, the differences between the pro-policy humanitarian condition and the con-policy control condition, pro-policy security condition, and the con-policy humanitarian condition are marginally significant. Additionally, the effect of the pro-policy humanitarian treatment on the dependent variable is correctly signed, marginally significant, and potentially substantively meaningful.

I held no strong theoretical expectations for the impact of this treatment because the qualitative framing analysis provided me with no evidence that this type of framing is employed by political elites which, if the behavior of these elites can be considered reasonable or effective, may have hinted at the persuasive power of such a statement. Moreover, the reviewed literature is overwhelmingly biased towards explanations of anti-immigration sentiments, and specifically feelings of threat Newman et al. (2015). Therefore, it does not adequately theorize pro-immigration opinion, especially the potential for humanitarian messages. While Newman et al. (2015) show that humanitarian claims may overpower threat messages in dual framing conditions, they do not explore the humanitarian claims which specifically endorse immigration reduction policies. These authors assume that humanitarian messages are only attached to pro-immigration arguments and threat messages are only attached to anti-immigration arguments.

A larger sample size may increase the certainty of all the results presented but, in the interim, engagement with the theoretical puzzle presented by the relative strength of the pro-policy humanitarian frame is purely speculative. Upon further testing, if these effects survive, I will look to the literatures about conflicting attitudes in policy assessments and social desirability bias. That is, at this point, I feel the counterintuitive or mismatched combination of humanitarian claims in support of a restrictive refugee policy may be giving respondents an out who would prefer restrictive refugee policies. Even though it is the only vignette respondents who see it receive, the pro-humanitarian statement may feel to these respondents like a win-win scenario in which refugees feeling violence receive aid abroad but are not incorporated into the US. Surprising or counter-intuitive rhetoric, if it can pass some low threshold of plausibility, may also have an advantage in capturing the attention of its audience because they mesh with already familiar concepts. This familiarity could lower boundaries to acceptance even if the source or broader implication of these concepts is new or different (Zaller, 1992).

This result could either be capturing a genuine opinion that restrictive refugee policies which restrict entry do not preclude other options for aiding refugees or it could be uncovering greater support for restrictive refugee policies which was previously masked by social desirability bias. Janus (2010) for example, finds that a list experiment, a technique which reduces social desirability bias, exposes widespread immigration restrictionist sentiment especially among college educated and politically liberal respondents. More work is needed to properly address this theoretical puzzle.

**Future Directions:**

I am continuing to collect data for the survey experiment in the School of Government and Public Policy Research Center at the University of Arizona and I hope to reach approximately 200 total participants through this source. Additionally, I have received a Pre-doctoral grant from the School of Behavioral Sciences Research Institute (SBSRI) at The University of Arizona which will allow me to collect around 400 more responses from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (MTurk). The MTurk pool is over 18 years of age. Diversity in gender and ethnic representation is expected for this sample, though MTurk samples tend to have slightly lower numbers of individuals from Native American and Pacific Islander populations. This online pool will be limited to respondents within the United States. My goal is to collect 600 total responses through MTurk and continued data collection in the SGPP Lab in order to have approximately 100 responses accumulate into each experimental condition.

With this expanded dataset I hope to be able to better view and gain more confidence in the framing effects and pairwise treatment comparisons discussed above. Furthermore, I aim to address interesting hypotheses related to the differential impacts of the security and humanitarian frames across on subpopulations of the sample, especially on those who score highest on individual-level measures of empathy (operationalized with the Toronto Empathy Questionnaire) and are most sensitive to the threat of terror (operationalized on scaled items adapted from Hetherington and Suhay 2011 and Huddy et al. 2006), or posses other personality or experiential traits like Social Dominance Orientation, Authoritarianism, or Cosmopolitanism. The literature supports clear theoretical expectations based on these individual-level factors, but larger group samples are required to examine such moderation effects. I anticipate findings related to these moderation effects to facilitate a discussion about how elite rhetoric may exploit threat aversion needs or underestimate humanitarian values and empathetic feelings.

I will be presenting this work at the Western Political Science Annual Meeting in San Diego at a panel entitled “Refugees, Immigrants, and Guns” in April 2019 and at the International Society for Political Psychology at their Annual Scientific Meeting in Lisbon Portugal in July 2019. Based on feedback from faculty and participants in these professional events I will prepare my project for submission to a scholarly journal.

In addition to this current survey experiment, I am in the process of designing complementary studies which will bolster the contributions of this project as well as expand the scope of the discussion. Related to the starting point of this project, the Trump Executive Order 13759 or “refugee ban”, I am interested in how political elites may frame restrictive refugee policies in terms of how they impact Muslim refugees specifically. I am also interested in additional frames which may be related to policies of this type, especially conflicting appeals to “American values.” This is another major rhetorical pattern which was illuminated in my qualitative framing analysis but for clarity and practicability of design it is not discussed here. Additionally, I am looking to expand the discussion of political elite use of humanitarian and security frames to related policy areas in which there are theoretical and/or observed instances of these frames at work. An obvious and salient example would be the governance of the US-Mexico border.

I am very motivated by the discussion of Lakoff and Ferguson (2006) about the missed opportunities for framing the wider immigration debate in the US. They observe that political conservatives have been more industrious in their production of frames about "immigration reform" and recommend that progressives should invest energy in frames that reject opponent’s frames which overemphasize security, exploit threat sensitivity, and dehumanize immigrants. These scholars argue that to settle for less than the acceptance of refugees for entry and their integration into society is essentially a failure to take Human Rights seriously (Lakoff and Ferguson, 2006, pg. 10). The research program which I am currently undertaking is centrally concerned with such tradeoffs, especially as it initially appears that elites that support restrictive refugee policies may be more successful in their attachment to certain themes and placeholders and in their cooption of traditionally progressive sentiments.

**Conclusion:**

This project explores the rhetorical choices of elites in defending or condemning restrictive refugee policies such as the divisive Trump Executive Order 13769. This work builds on the existing literature about elite issue framing, but it represents a novel contribution by testing the impact of two major, competing rhetorical trends which a qualitative framing analysis reveals are used by political leaders to communicate about current refugee policies. Initial analysis of an embedded survey framing experiment suggest that one condition, a treatment statement that supports a policy that would restrict refugee settlement by appealing to humanitarian concerns, exerts the most influence over respondent attitudes towards the policy. This finding is theoretically unexpected and should be seriously qualified by the observation that the study is currently underpowered due to a small sample size. While this paper ventures to deduce that this finding could be a product of complex attitude formation or survey design effects like social desirability bias, these notions are purely speculative. More work is required to attain greater statistical confidence and theoretical grounding.

More importantly, this project’s design lays the foundation for an analysis of the potential moderating effects of empathy and terror threat sensitivity on security and humanitarian framing effects when an expanded dataset allows for such statistical testing. Many stakeholders can gain important information from these mechanisms laid bare. If, for example, it is found that security frames are powerful predictors of supporting restrictive refugee policies among individuals with intense feelings of an imminent terrorist threat, it may be necessary to discuss internal and external sources of feelings of threat and the societal consequences of fearmongering. If, on the other hand, it is found that humanitarian frames hold power especially for those with empathetic tendencies, it may be valuable to explore the internal and external sources of empathy (an understudied topic), discuss the societal consequences of an increasing reliance on security-based arguments, and consider the potential underestimation of humanitarian concerns amongst the public.

Psychologist Gordon Alport (1954) identifies anti-locution or hostile rhetoric as the first level on a continuum of prejudice that ends in violence against an outgroup. The rhetorical choices of political leaders profiling groups already under immense social and political pressure have a direct impact on these populations. There is also broader societal impact of such rhetoric given that derogatory speech towards outgroups threatens the democratic ideal of civil discourse. Considering these stakes, it is important for social scientists to track changes in political rhetoric and the underlying psychological phenomena which facilitate scapegoating.

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**Appendix:**

**Qualitative Framing Analysis Data: NPR Composited Congressional Statements:**

I utilized the web resource from NPR to create my dataset of congressional statements about Executive Order 13769. It is my understanding that these statements were gathered by NPR researchers in their station states in the days between the announcement of the order and February 1st when the resource was published. Citation: Wamsley, Laurel, and Bret Neely. “Where Does Your Member of Congress Stand on Trump’s Immigration Order?” *NPR*. February 1, 2017.<https://www.npr.org/2017/02/01/512860167/congress-tracker-trumps-refugee-and-immigration-executive-order>.

Origin of the statements included in this paper:

* Jody B. Hice, Republican, GA 10th District: emailed statement to Johnny Kaufman at WABE
* Trent Franks, Republican, AZ 8th District: Press Release January 30th
* Benjamin Sasse Republican NE: emailed statement reported by Fred Knapp/NET
* Tony Cardenas, Democrat CA 29th District: Facebook Statement: <https://www.facebook.com/repcardenas/posts/1563247033686293> reported by Chris Keller KPCC
* Chris Murphy, Democrat, CT: Twitter January 27th <https://twitter.com/ChrisMurphyCT/status/825173776681807872> reported by John O'Conner WNYC

**Framing Survey Experiment:**

**Experimental Vignettes:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Security Frame | Humanitarian Frame |
| Pro-policy | The proposed refugee policy would restrict refugee settlement from several conflict areas. This will put the safety of Americans first by ensuring our borders are properly secured, the first responsibilities of the Federal Government. | The proposed refugee policy would restrict refugee settlement from several conflict areas. In order for the US to remain a humanitarian leader, we must concentrate our efforts on peace abroad and strengthening vetting  in order to keep conflict from leaking into our homeland. |
| Con-policy | The proposed refugee policy would restrict refugee settlement from several conflict areas. Refugees to the US are already strictly vetted and the proposed refugee policy is a politically motivated action not supported by national security professionals as a measure that will strengthen the safety of Americans | The proposed refugee policy would restrict refugee settlement from several conflict areas. This means turning our backs on the vulnerable families fleeing violence, the US must uphold its humanitarian commitments and accept our share of refugees along with the rest of the democratized world |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Control Conditions |
| Pro-policy | The proposed refugee policy is harmful because it would restrict refugee settlement from several conflict areas. |
| Con-policy | The proposed refugee policy is beneficial because it would restrict refugee settlement from several conflict areas |

**Complete Annotated Survey Materials:**

***Intro Page:***   
Refugee Policy Rhetoric and Attitudes (SGPP Lab)  
Welcome to the Refugee Policy Rhetoric and Attitudes Survey. Your participation is appreciated. On the next page you will be presented with a consent form. Participation is completely voluntary and your responses are anonymous. The study will begin immediately after your consent is obtained and should take approximately 10 minutes to complete.   
Thank You!

***Consent Document:***

University of Arizona School of Government and Public Policy Consent Form:

**Project Title:** Refugee Policy Rhetoric and Attitudes **Principal Investigator**: Isabel Williams, PhD. Student, University of Arizona. You are being asked to participate in a research study called **Refugee Policy Rhetoric and Attitudes.**  You must be 18 years old or older to participate. You must also currently reside in the United States. **What is this project about?**  The study examines the rhetoric and attitudes surrounding refugee policy. **What will I be asked to do?**  For this study, you will be asked to complete a 10-minute survey. The survey will include a variety of values and policy questions. You will first complete a series of questions about your demographics. You will then read a statement about a proposed policy. Then you will be asked to give your opinion about the proposed policy. **Can I withdraw from the study?** You may skip any question you do not feel comfortable answering; you may also drop out of the survey at any time. If you do not complete the survey, your responses will not be used. **Are there any special requirements for my participation?** Yes, you must (a) be 18 years of age or older and (b) you must live in the United States. **How long will the participation take?**  The questionnaires should take approximately 10-minutes to complete. **Are there any significant risks associated with participating?** No, the risk associated with this study is no greater than you would experience during a typical day. **What are the benefits of participation?** There are no direct benefits of participating in this study, but you may enjoy knowing that you contributed to understanding people’s political attitudes, values, and policy preferences. **Will I be compensated for my participation?** Yes, you will be given one participation point through our subject pool management system, SONA. **What else should I know about the study?** You will not be asked to supply your legal name for this study. The investigator will have no access to the names or any other identifying information. As a result, all data will be anonymous. After data has been collected, it will be aggregated and analyzed. Persons other than the investigator(s) might view your study records, but your answers are completely anonymous. Unless required by law, only the study investigators, members of the investigator's staff, and the University of Arizona Institutional Review Board will have the authority to review your study records. They are required to maintain confidentiality regarding your identity. **I have some questions about this study. Who can I ask?** If you have any questions about this study, you may email Isabel Williams at isabelwilliams@email.arizona.edu. Or, you may contact HSPP at *http://rgw.arizona.edu/compliance/human-subjects-protection-program*  Or *520.626.6721.*

***Consent:***

If you consent to participate in this study, please click below:

* Yes, I consent
* No, I do not consent

***Demographics:***

What is your gender?

* Male
* Female
* Other/Prefer not to answer

What is your race?

* White/Caucasian, Non-Hispanic/Latino
* Black/African American
* Latino/Hispanic
* Asian/Pacific Islander
* Native American
* Mixed Race/Multiracial
* Other \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Were you born in the United States?

* Yes
* No

Are you eligible to vote?

* Yes
* No

Did you vote in the 2016 general election?

* Yes
* No

What is your political ideology?

* Very Conservative
* Conservative
* Somewhat Conservative
* Moderate
* Somewhat Liberal
* Liberal
* Very Liberal

What major U.S. political party do you identify with?

* Republican Party
* Democratic Party
* Green/Third Party
* Independent
* None

***Authoritarianism ANES Child-Rearing Scale***

Many people have different opinions on how children should be raised, please think about which quality in children you prefer.  
  
I prefer children to have...

* Independence
* Respect

I prefer children to have...

* Curiosity
* Good Manners

I prefer children to have...

* Obedience
* Self-Reliance

I prefer children to be...

* Considerate
* Well behaved

***Social Dominance Orientation SDO 7 Scale:***

Please read the following statements and indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with them.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Neither Agree or Disagree | Somewhat Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| An ideal society requires some groups to be on top and others to be on the bottom |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| No one group should dominate in society |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Group equality should not be our primary goal. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| It is unjust to try to make groups equal. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| We should do what we can to equalize conditions for groups. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| We should work to give all groups an equal chance to succeed. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

***Partial Cosmopolitanism Items (education, age, and job type redacted for student sample):***

Do you speak more than one language?

* Yes
* No

Have you ever lived, studied or worked outside the U.S. for three or more months?

* Yes
* No

***Attention Check:***

Please mark "Agree" to ensure your responses are coded correctly.

* Strongly agree
* Agree
* Somewhat agree
* Neither agree nor disagree
* Somewhat disagree
* Disagree
* Strongly disagree

***Treatment Prompt:***

Please read the following press statement by a current policymaker about a proposed policy:

***Randomized Vignettes:***

***Pro-Policy Security Treatment:***

The proposed refugee policy would restrict refugee settlement from several conflict areas. This will put the safety of Americans first by ensuring our borders are properly secured, the first responsibilities of the Federal Government.

***Con-Policy Security Treatment:***

The proposed refugee policy would restrict refugee settlement from several conflict areas. Refugees to the US are already strictly vetted and the proposed refugee policy is a politically motivated action not supported by national security professionals as a measure that will strengthen the safety of Americans.

***Pro-Policy Humanitarian Treatment:***   
The proposed refugee policy would restrict refugee settlement from several conflict areas. In order for the US to remain a humanitarian leader, we must concentrate our efforts on peace abroad and strengthening vetting  in order to keep conflict from leaking into our homeland.  

***Con-Policy Humanitarian Treatment:***

The proposed refugee policy would restrict refugee settlement from several conflict areas. This means turning our backs on the vulnerable families fleeing violence, the US must uphold its humanitarian commitments and accept our share of refugees along with the rest of the democratized world.

***Con-Policy Control Condition:***   
The proposed refugee policy is harmful because it would restrict refugee settlement from several conflict areas.

***Pro-Policy Control Condition:***

The proposed refugee policy is beneficial because it would restrict refugee settlement from several conflict areas

***Dependent Variable:***

How would you rate your support for this policy?

* Strongly support
* Support
* Somewhat support
* Neither support nor oppose
* Somewhat oppose
* Oppose
* Strongly oppose

***Feelings of Terror Threat:***

How likely do you think it is that there will be another major terrorist attack on US soil?

* Very likely
* Moderately likely
* Slightly likely
* Neither likely nor unlikely
* Slightly unlikely
* Moderately unlikely
* Very unlikely

How worried are you about becoming a victim of a terrorist attack?

* Very worried
* Worried
* Somewhat what worried
* Neutral
* Not overly worried
* Not worried
* Not at all worried

***Feelings of Empathy (Toronto Empathy Questionnaire):***

Please read each statement and rate how frequently you feel or act in the manner described:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Always |
| When someone else is feeling excited, I tend to get excited too |  |  |  |  |  |
| Other people’s misfortunes do not disturb me a great deal |  |  |  |  |  |
| It upsets me to see someone being treated disrespectfully |  |  |  |  |  |
| I remain unaffected when someone close to me is happy |  |  |  |  |  |
| I enjoy making other people feel better |  |  |  |  |  |
| I have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me |  |  |  |  |  |
| When a friend starts to talk about his/her problems, I try to steer the conversation towards something else |  |  |  |  |  |
| I can tell when others are sad even when they do not say anything |  |  |  |  |  |
| I find that I am “in tune” with other people’s moods |  |  |  |  |  |
| I do not feel sympathy for people who cause their own serious illnesses |  |  |  |  |  |
| I become irritated when someone cries |  |  |  |  |  |
| I am not really interested in how other people feel |  |  |  |  |  |
| I get a strong urge to help when I see someone who is upset |  |  |  |  |  |
| When I see someone being treated unfairly, I do not feel very much pity for them |  |  |  |  |  |
| I find it silly for people to cry out of happiness. |  |  |  |  |  |
| When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards him/her |  |  |  |  |  |

***Coding Check:***

Recall the press statement you read earlier from a current policymaker. Did that statement seem to suggest that the proposed policy was beneficial, harmful, or neutral?

* Beneficial
* Harmful
* Neutral

***End of Survey:***

Thank you! Your responses have been recorded. Please proceed to the next page to read a debriefing statement.

***Debriefing Page:***

DebriefingThank you for participating in this study. Your responses help to better understand refugee policy rhetoric and attitudes.

This is study is designed to gauge the relationships between rhetorical appeals about refugee policies and resulting attitudes. For this reason, participants were randomly assigned to one of eight short statements encouraging support or opposition to a policy which would restrict refugee flows to the US. These statements were created for the purpose of this survey, are hypothetical, and are not the direct statements of any individual.

The proposed refugee policy which participants were asked to react to is also hypothetical, created for the purpose of this study and does not directly represent an actual enacted policy. I hope you found the survey to be interesting and easy to complete. Thank you very much for your time and effort. If you have any questions about this study please email Isabel Williams at the University of Arizona. isabelwilliams@email.arizona.edu

**SGPP Research Center Sample Characteristics:**

***Race:***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| White/Caucasian,  Non-Hispanic/Latino | Black/  African American | Latino/  Hispanic | Asian/  Pacific Islander | Native American | Mixed Race/ Multiracial | Other |
| 71 | 4 | 30 | 11 | 3 | 10 | 4 |

***Gender:***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Male | Female | Other/Prefer not to answer |
| 41 | 90 | 2 |

***Party ID:***

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Republican | Democrat | Green/Third Party | Independent | None |
| 25 | 76 | 2 | 21 | 9 |

***Distribution of DV, “How would you rate your support for this policy?”:***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Strongly oppose | Oppose | Somewhat oppose | Neither support or oppose | Somewhat support | Support | Strongly support |
| 16 | 21 | 7 | 24 | 31 | 21 | 11 |

***Sample Size Per Condition:***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Control CON | Control PRO | Humanitarian CON | Humanitarian PRO | Security CON | Security PRO |
| 22 | 21 | 21 | 22 | 22 | 23 |