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Taiwanese Perceptions of Refugees: Results of an Experimental Survey

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TAIWANESE PERCEPTIONS OF REFUGEES:
RESULTS OF AN EXPERIMENTAL SURVEY

A Capstone Experience/Thesis Project
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Bachelor of Arts with
Honors College Graduate Distinction at Western Kentucky University

By

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2017

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ABSTRACT

This research paper deals with perceptions of refugees, with the intent to demonstrate what factors influence perceptions of refugees in general, and specifically in the context of Taiwan. The paper is divided into two larger sections. The first section functions as a literature review with the aim of providing the reader with existing background information on the topic of perceptions of refugees. The second section contains an experimental study on perceptions of refugees in Taiwan. While the effects of individual-level factors on perceptions of refugees have been examined by many studies and in different countries, their effects have never been examined in the context of Taiwan. In this study, I employ a public opinion survey containing an experimental design question in order to see how framing of refugees affects Taiwanese citizens' willingness to agree to Taiwan taking in Syrian refugees. Motivated by the current international refugee crisis, I tested to see whether participants are more deterred by the number or by the religion of the refugees. Analysis of individual-level survey data shows that the number of the refugees is a far greater deterrent for Taiwanese citizens to accept refugees than is the religion of the refugees. This study serves as a starting point for additional research in that area.

Keywords: Public Opinion, Perceptions, Refugees, Experimental Survey, Taiwan, Syria

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INTRODUCTION

As defined by the United Nations 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, a refugee is a person who,

“owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”

It is difficult to imagine that there has ever been a time period when there have not been people forced to flee their homes and seek refuge in a safer area or country.

Refugee crises may vary in size and intensity, but nonetheless they are a reoccurring normality around the world. Just in the past 75 years alone, the world has seen 151 million people being displaced due to war or persecution (DePillis et al., 2015).

World War II led to the greatest displacement of people in the 20th century; decolonization movements were the reason for many refugee crises in Africa and Asia; during the Cold War, proxy wars displaced millions; the disintegration of the Soviet Union led to movement of millions of people; and since the turn of the millennium, the instability in the Middle East has been the root cause of the increasing numbers of refugees. An international refugee crisis has been created by the Syrian civil war of dimensions not seen since the Second World War, causing refugees to become a highly discussed and relevant topic (DePillis et al.). In fact, we are currently witnessing the highest levels of displacement on record. According to the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHRC), there are currently around 65.3 million forcibly displaced people worldwide (“Figures at a Glance”). Out

of an estimated pre-war population of 24.5 million, around 11 million Syrians have fled their homes since the outbreak of the war in 2011; there are an estimated 7.6 million internally displaced Syrians, and about 4 million Syrian refugees outside the country (Collins, 2015).

However, as refugees flee from Middle Eastern and North African countries to safer areas, the varying responses and levels of openness towards refugees by different countries have been exposed. Some are willing to take in refugees while others are not; some show hostility towards refugees in their countries while others find a way to peacefully live side by side. Taking the response to the Syrian refugee crisis as an example, Hungary answered with violence and the building of a fence at its border, Israel turned away refugees, and Germany responded with ambivalent hospitality, admitting enormous numbers of refugees but not without facing some domestic backlash (Holmes and Casteñada 14). And although the criticism that the wealthy Gulf States have not let in any Syrian refugees is not quite justified – they have allowed thousands to come in on work visas – these Syrians face severe restrictions and are often referred to as “guests,” revealing the expectation that they won’t stay (Amos, 2015). Overall, most attention remains on European countries’ responses to the crisis, while perceptions outside the region have been investigated to a lesser extent.

In comparison to other parts of the world, however, European countries host a small percentage of refugees. East Asia on the other hand, a region that is hosting a substantial percentage of refugees, has been left out of the literature almost entirely. In 2015, 39% of refugees were being hosted by the Middle East and North Africa, with Africa coming in second place with 29% of refugees. At 14% the Asia and Pacific region hosts the third largest percentage of the world’s displaced people. The

Americas and Europe hosted the smallest percentage of refugees, with 12% and 6% respectively (“Figures at a Glance”). Therefore, it is time to examine East Asian perceptions of refugees. I specifically want to make the case for Taiwan.

At first sight, it might be considered an odd choice to ask Taiwanese citizens about their perceptions of Syrian refugees. The majority of Syrian refugees have either fled to Middle Eastern countries nearby, or taken the longer route to European countries. However, there are several reasons why this study is important.

First, Syrian refugees have had continuously less success in many Western countries to find asylum. An increasing number of European countries, for example, are becoming more hostile in their policies towards refugees, and are asking for help from other countries such as the United States to relieve them of their burden by accepting some refugees themselves. A second phenomenon we see is Syrian refugees having to migrate further to find asylum. Although nine out of ten refugees are being hosted by neighboring countries or in the immediate region, we have already seen Syrian refugees apply for asylum in another East-Asian country – Japan (Taylor, 2016). If desperate Syrians are willing to try to resettle in Japan, then it is not unrealistic to consider that Taiwan may be a future destination. Third, the Taiwanese government has shown interest in the Syrian refugee crisis. Taiwan donated 10 prefabricated houses to an aid organization in Jordan to help provide shelter for 41 Syrian Catholic and Christian refugees (“Taiwan Donates 10 Prefab Homes to Refugees”). Moreover, in June 2016, President Tsai Ing-wen stated that despite its lacking UN membership, Taiwan is just as willing as UN members to assist in the global refugee crisis. She made her statement at a ceremony that celebrated the launch of a project called “Casa di Love,” which over the next three years will spend

\$370,000 to build a refugee facility for some of the 100,000 refugees on the southern Italian island of Lampedusa (Wu and Liu, 2016).

Although Taiwan has seen several groups of persecuted minorities, for instance Tibetans, seeking refuge on its land, there are several aspects that impede acceptance of refugees. Most important is the island's ambiguous status. The Republic of China, the formal name for Taiwan, is currently officially recognized by only 21 states, and lost its UN membership in 1971 after the People's Republic of China was officially recognized as the legitimate government of China and subsequently accepted as the UN member. Taiwan is neither a signatory of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees nor does it have a UNHCR office. Matters of refugees and asylum seekers are covered under the National Immigration Act of 1999.

For several years, the Taiwanese government has come under pressure to pass a refugee law, as its current law does not provide for the granting of asylum or refugee status. Therefore, Taiwan has been deporting undocumented immigrants, both from the PRC and elsewhere. From 2008 to 2010, the number of PRC immigrants being deported declined from 365 to 90, but at the end of 2010, close to 1,200 non-PRC undocumented aliens were awaiting deportation (United States Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor). However, Taiwan is closer than ever to passing a refugee law. In July 2016, the draft passed its first out of three legislative committee reviews. The new law would permit foreign nationals or stateless persons to apply for refugee status in Taiwan "if they are displaced by war or major natural disaster, or if they are oppressed on grounds of religion, ethnicity or for holding dissenting political views" ("Refugee Law Passes First Review"). The passing of this law would substantially ease the asylum process in Taiwan and also open doors for

Taiwan to take in more refugees – among those perhaps also Syrians – making this study all the more relevant.

To summarize, the goal of this project is twofold. First, I will research the factors that shape public opinion on refugees, which then lead to such differences of openness among the world's nations. Second, I aim to further extend the research on perceptions of refugees to a part of the world not yet incorporated into the research on perceptions of refugees. By means of an experimental survey, I explore the willingness of Taiwanese citizens to host Syrian refugees.

Part I

Literature Review

Public opinion towards refugees is influenced by individual level (both host population as well as refugees) and national level factors. The literature reveals that factors on the individual level have to do with a person's gender, personality type, political identity, or education level. Among factors on the national level are a country's economic well-being, bureaucratic choices, media representation of refugees, citizenship policies, national security, and international factors such as threats of terrorism.

The literature on this topic is abundant. However, despite research having been conducted on a variety of countries, studies often focus on only one particular country instead of being comparative in nature. Furthermore, although data from every continent can be found, focus on Australian and European responses to refugees are particularly prevalent in the existing literature. Interesting, too, is that the topic has been approached and investigated from many different angles. Political scientists, anthropologists, lawyers, and psychologists all have attempted to analyze the reasons behind people's responses to refugees. The different studies have often identified the same factors. However, overall the individual level factors seem to have been researched more in depth and are therefore more supported than the national level factors.

Individual-Level Factors

Individual factors relating to the host population

Because attitudes first start with the self, I will begin discussion of factors stemming from the individual. Two psychological factors that can be found in the literature over and over again are social dominance orientation (SDO) and right-wing

authoritarianism (RWA). Social Identity Theory, developed by Tajfel and Turner, is particularly relevant to intergroup relations, arguing that individuals who strongly identify with their own group tend to favor their own group more than other groups. People high in SDO favor group hierarchies and inequality, believe only the toughest survive in society, and are therefore more willing to discriminate against others in order to maintain group dominance (Esses et al. 2008, p. 8). On the other hand, individuals high in RWA believe in traditional values, submit to authority, and are therefore “willing to aggress against those identified by authorities as violating their traditional ways,” as refugees tend to do (8).

Two of three studies conducted by Esses and her colleagues (2008) found that Canadians higher in SDO are especially likely to dehumanize refugees and have more negative attitudes towards both refugees and refugee policy. However, their data did not support their hypothesis that individuals high in RWA are more likely to dehumanize refugees. Therefore, as RWA did not significantly predict dehumanization, they speculated that refugees might not necessarily be seen as a threat to traditional values. Additionally, their data revealed that dehumanization of refugees elicits emotions of contempt and lack of admiration, but is not related to pity.

Likewise, Nickerson and Louis (2006) approached the issue of attitudes toward asylum seekers from a social psychological perspective. By means of a study on Australia, they found that both high RWA and SDO are predictors of negative attitudes towards asylum seekers (808). Their main focus, however, was the effect of identity on responses to asylum seekers, as well as the interaction between identity and national and international norms. Their data revealed that Australian citizens who identified with their nationalities and perceived hostile national norms toward asylum seekers had more negative attitudes toward that group. On the other hand, participants

who considered their human identities more important than their nationalist identities were less responsive to national norms and had more positive attitudes toward asylum seekers (806).

Pedersen, Attwell, and Heveli (2005) found, similarly to SDO and RWA, that Australian citizens with higher self-esteem (measured by responses to the statement “On the whole I am satisfied with myself”) and who had false beliefs concerning asylum seekers – asylum seekers are queue jumpers, asylum seekers must be “cashed up” to pay people smugglers, and that Australia provides asylum seekers with all sorts of government handouts (152) – had more negative attitudes toward asylum seekers. Another study in Australia concluded that the majority of Australian citizens supporting their government’s strict policy toward boatpeople is not motivated by racism but by a sense of threat to a common national identity (Betts 46).

One last study concerned with SDO and RWA was a longitudinal study conducted with a community sample in Australia (Louis et al.). The researchers found that citizens “who embraced hierarchical rather than egalitarian social structures were disproportionately likely, one month later, to report having spoken out and voted to restrict asylum seekers’ access to Australia” (66). Also, respondents who perceived that asylum seekers were posing a threat to valued resources were more likely to judge harsh treatment of asylum seekers as fair. Even more interesting were the researchers’ findings on intergroup variables, such as threatening socio-structural beliefs and norms. They concluded that citizens of an advantaged national group who perceive a threat to their status by instability and permeable group boundaries will support increasingly restrictive programs. And citizens who perceive that social norms support hostility towards asylum seekers are even more likely to show hostility (67).

Gender, education, and political identity are salient factors as well. Research by Pedersen et al. (2005) showed that being male, having lower levels of education, a right-wing political position, and high levels of national identity (measured by responses to the statement “I feel strong ties with Australian people”) were significantly predictive of more negative attitudes toward asylum seekers (158).

In the EU, Kessler and Freeman (2005) were able to identify similar factors to those Pedersen described. Whereas gender did not have a significant effect on attitudes toward immigrants among Europeans, education and political identity did. Drawing on *Eurobarometer* opinion surveys from 1988 to 2000, they found that lower levels of education were significantly related to greater inclination to oppose accepting refugees from south of the Mediterranean or Muslim countries (843). However, the researchers concluded that even stronger than individual or macro-level demographic factors were attitudinal variables’ correlation with attitudes towards immigration and immigrants. These attitudinal factors are prejudice towards minorities and foreigners, political conservatism, and skepticism about the European Union. Respondents were considered prejudiced when they indicated to be disturbed by people of another nationality or race (830).

One additional important factor affecting people’s attitudes toward refugees is exposure to refugees. As Crush and Pendleton (2004) demonstrated in SADC (Southern African Development Community) countries, those with personal, face-to-face contact with refugees are far more accepting than those citizens who have never interacted with refugees.

Individual factors relating to refugees

Individual level factors on the side of the refugees have been analyzed as well. What characteristics make a refugee more appealing to citizens of a host country? Lewis

(2005) asked this exact question in the UK and found three factors that particularly shape public opinion of refugees. Opinions of immigrants are positive when the immigrant has professional skills that the host country needs, has close family ties within the host country, and is committed to the host country's way of life. This shows that a host country's population pays specific attention to how well refugees will be able to adapt to the new way of life, and respect the status quo, without being a burden to the host country.

While conducting fieldwork with asylum seekers in the UK, Griffiths (2012) concluded that public opinion toward refugees and asylum seekers is based on truth and trust, meaning the applicant's honesty or credibility. The UK's asylum system has high demands of refugees: Truthful asylum seekers need to have a good recall of events, provide 'plausible' accounts, present their stories in a consistent and unhesitating manner, and offer the 'right kind' of evidence and testimony. It is assumed that refugees know basic information such as date of birth, parents' date of marriage, inherit names in particular ways, and spelling remains consistent despite transliteration from different alphabets (12).

Bansak, Hainmueller, and Hangartner (2016) were among the first to study public opinion towards refugees during the current Syrian refugee crisis. They surveyed 18,000 eligible voters in 15 European countries to find what types of asylum seekers Europeans are willing to accept. If a refugee had the following four, out of a total of nine different attributes, he or she received the greatest public support: high employability, consistent asylum testimonies, severe vulnerabilities (e.g. the asylum seeker has suffered from torture), and was a Christian rather than Muslim.

Number and place of origin have been shown to affect perceptions of refugees as well. Generally, smaller numbers and refugees from countries or regions close to

the host country elicit higher popular support. Gibney (1999) attempted to explain why during the Yugoslav wars, European countries were welcoming towards the influx of refugees from the Balkan region, particularly Kosovars, whereas refugees from African countries were more readily rejected. First, *regionality*, led people to believe that help within the region was more warranted than help in Africa, since a collapse in the region was a greater threat to Europe. *Relatedness*, a second factor, meant that European citizens were able to more easily relate to refugees from Kosovo than to African refugees. Due to a similar lifestyle and culture, the term points to the fact that Westerners could see themselves more easily in the Kosovars' sufferings than they could in that of the Africans.

In Australia, number and place of origin have been found especially important factors in explaining rise in hostility towards boatpeople. From 1976 to 2001, Australia has witnessed the arrival of three waves of boatpeople (Betts). The first group consisted of Vietnamese leaving their country after the fall of Saigon in 1975. At first, the government responded reluctantly as the arrival was unexpected. But because the boatpeople were small in number and due to "claims that Australia was losing control of migrant selection" were hurting the government's image in the upcoming election, Australia granted these boatpeople refugee status almost automatically (Betts 34-36). The second wave of boatpeople posed a greater threat to the Australian government, as in the late 1980s and early 1990s boatpeople constituted only a small minority seeking to obtain permanent visas in Australia (36). Responses became harsher, and detention was made mandatory for everyone arriving without visas. The first numbers, mostly from Cambodia, were eventually granted visas, but as numbers grew, the majority of later groups of Sino-Vietnamese or Chinese origin were often sent back. The third wave began in 1999; numbers were

much greater than ever before, and more refugees from the Middle East and Afghanistan were increasing (37). At the same time, opinion polls revealed a steady increase in opposition to boatpeople among Australians. Growing opposition can be attributed to two factors in particular. First was the *Tampa* Incident in August 2001, during which Afghans and Iraqis forced the Norwegian freighter *Tampa* to take them to the Australian shoreline, although Australia had prohibited them from doing so (39). Second, gang rapes in Sydney by young men of Lebanese origin accompanied the *Tampa* Incident, leading to growing disapproval rates of boatpeople (45). Already in 1988, a poll had found the Middle East to be the least popular source for immigrants, the *Tampa* Incident as well as the 9/11 attacks in New York City a few weeks later further consolidated those fears.

Similarly to Betts' Australian study, Kessler and Freeman (2005) also found that region of origin of the refugees played an important role in attitude formation for Europeans. The researchers concluded that Europeans seemed more willing to accept migrants from other EU countries than from Eastern Europe or south of the Mediterranean, countries that are often considered to have a substantial Muslim population. Although not mentioned in the Betts study (2001), it can be suspected that Australians' growing opposition to Middle Eastern boatpeople could have been influenced by opposition toward Islam. Because religion, particularly Islam, is regularly used in the media to stir fear of refugees, this factor of influence will be discussed in more detail in the media section below.

Coming back around to refugees' number and place of origin, in the UK, parties were largely influenced by refugees' geographic location and political circumstances to help them. For instance, the Cold War atmosphere in the late 1970s contributed to a positive and welcoming response to Vietnamese refugees (Kaye 146).

A sudden increase in number of Tamil refugees in 1985 catapulted the issue of refugees onto the political agenda and led the UK government to respond more harshly toward refugees. Fines were placed on airplanes carrying asylum seekers, visa requirements were changed, and detention was increased (149). This serves as an example also, that refugee policy can vary historically.

Interestingly, on the other hand, in Africa origin does not seem to be as important of a factor as in Australia and Europe. Citizens' opinions from SADC (Southern African Development Community) countries are influenced little by migrants' region of origin. In fact, they make little distinction between migrants from other SADC countries and those from other African countries, Europe, or North America (Crush and Pendleton). An explanation for this is not clear, and something which future research would be worth concentrating on.

Lastly, whether refugees have themselves chosen to leave their home country, or were forced to leave has also been shown to have great impact on people's attitudes towards these refugees. A study by Verkuyten (2004) in the Netherlands served to analyze whether differing levels of responsibility attributed to asylum seekers would lead to differences in support for immigration policies. Economic refugees are generally considered to be responsible for their own plight, as they have chosen themselves to leave their home country, and they are often presented as a threat to the host nation. Political refugees on the other hand are considered "real" refugees, who were pushed out of their country and therefore lack responsibility for their plight (301-302). Verkuyten's study showed that only feelings of anger were a strong predictor for policy support towards economic, "personal choice," asylum seekers, whereas only feelings of sympathy were a predictor of policy support towards political, "lack of choice," asylum seekers, showing that citizens of host nations are

more willing to take in political rather than economic refugees (309). An example to show how the type of refugee can contribute to a country's response to refugees is the UK Home Secretary's comment in 1989 after the number of asylum seekers in the UK had tripled in only a year:

“We meet our international obligation to succor men and women fleeing from political persecution. But these obligations do not give an automatic entry to ‘economic refugees’ who are [...] wanting to migrate from a poor or troubled country to a richer and more peaceful one” (Kaye 150).

A final example that illustrates the difference the refugees' motivation for flight can make comes from Australia, where citizens were much more welcoming towards Kosovar refugees than they were towards boatpeople (Betts 44). Betts compares this to “giving to a charity of one's own accord versus being besieged by street beggars” (44). In other words, because the Kosovars were invited to Australia temporarily on the nation's own terms, whereas the boatpeople entered the country unannounced, Australians were more welcoming towards Kosovars.

Structural and Cultural Factors

As pointed out by Weldon (2006), micro-level insights, specifically of the social identity approach, are limited in their ability to fully explain differences in public opinion towards other ethnic groups (333). He rightly points to the shortcomings of individual level factors in explaining cross-national differences in levels of tolerance. For this reason, he employs a multilevel regression model to test how citizenship regime institutions affect individual tolerance judgments (335). Because refugees are often ethnic minorities in their host countries, this research is relevant here. Weldon distinguishes three citizenship regime types. The collectivist-ethnic type emphasizes ethnicity and commonly embodies the *jus sanguinis* principle, which says citizens need to be of the same bloodline as the native population. Second, the collectivist-

civic regime type defines the nation in political and secular terms; citizenship is not based on one's ethnicity, but on one's loyalty to the nation. Third, in the individualistic-civic regime type, "ethnicity and cultural orientation are viewed as a personal choice;" multiculturalism is embraced, and ethnic difference and expression are protected by the state (334-335). The results revealed a strong relationship between citizenship regime type and tolerance of ethnic minorities, with the ethnic-civic dimension particularly telling (345). Citizens of collectivist-ethnic countries are less tolerant than citizens of more inclusive civic regimes. Interesting, too, is the fact that citizenship regime type seems to determine whether or not the individual-level factors of in-group national identity, ideology, and satisfaction with democracy affect tolerance. Japan, as a *jus sanguinis* nation, fits in perfectly with this model. The island-nation has repeatedly come under attack for its extremely restrictive refugee and asylum policy; 99% of asylum seekers are rejected, and detention lasting several years is common (Dominguez, 2014). To date, Japan has only accepted six Syrian refugees, a shockingly low number (Taylor, 2016). Taking into account that Japanese have long prided themselves in their nation's homogeneity, a threat to a common national identity could explain the country's reluctance to accept refugees. Prime minister Shinzo Abe made clear that Japanese citizens come first, as he explained Japan needed to first look after its own people, before the country can consider taking in refugees (McCurry, 2015).

Adding to the discussion, Gibney (1999) identifies a macro-level factor to explain the difference in European attitudes toward African and Kosovar refugees. *Implicatedness*, as coined by Gibney, caused Europeans to be unable to deny their duty to assist Kosovar refugees, because they themselves had contributed, even if unintentionally, to the outbreak of the crisis.

Jacobsen's (1996) study is one of a limited number of research studies that has approached the issue of refugee crises from a structural macro-level point of view, in order to explain differences in host government responses to refugee crises. Jacobsen was interested in why host governments sometimes respond to refugees in relatively generous ways and other times not (655). Another factor that makes this particular study stand out is the fact that it concentrates on three regions that have been analyzed to a lesser extent, namely Africa, Asia, and Central America. Jacobsen chose to focus on these three regions, because this is where most mass outpourings of refugees occurred between 1960 and 1990. Focusing on less developed host countries (LDCs) in the three regions, and assuming that governments are the principal agents responsible for refugee policies and capable of implementing these, Jacobsen identifies four factors influencing governments' refugee policy choices. Bureaucratic choices are listed first, meaning who in the host nation is allocated responsibility for the refugees. Jacobsen theorizes that refugee policies are more positive when a country has a specialized refugee agency than when refugees are the responsibility of another department such as the army, which will regard refugees as a greater burden (660-661).

The second factor is a country's international relations. International assistance and donor countries encourage better treatment of refugees, and the promise of resettlement in third countries make it easier on countries to host refugees, as they have the promise of burden sharing. Moreover, the threat of bad international publicity by refugee organizations create a greater willingness to host refugees (663). The third factor influencing refugee policy is a host country's relation to the sending country, the two of which are able to embarrass and pressure each other, or in the case of friendly relations prevent embarrassment (655).

The fourth factor identified is the host country's local absorption capacity. This refers to structural ability – economic capacity, availability of international assistance, and number of refugees already in the country. How a country's economic capacity influences willingness to host immigrants has also been investigated in the European Union. Kessler and Freeman (2005) showed that variations in anti-immigrant opinion followed economic and migration trends over the same time period (845). As Europeans perceived economic growth and a decrease in unemployment and foreign population, the more positive their opinion toward immigrants became. On the other hand, with the worsening of these conditions also came greater rejection. Likewise, analyzing UK and German policies, Karapin (1999) found that governments are more anti-immigrant when their material interests are at stake, for example during an economic recession when competition for jobs, housing, and social welfare spending increase (423).

In addition to these four factors, Jacobsen (1996) also argues that the cultural, historical, or religious meaning of the word *refugee* in the host country can influence refugee policy. For example, in Arab-Islamic countries such as Pakistan, “the religious element in the meaning of refugees is particularly important for a community's receptiveness” (668). Sometimes, ethnicity and kinship can influence willingness to accept or reject refugees as well. In many parts of the world, border communities share kinship ties, making it more likely the two will assist and host one another in times of refugee crises (669).

A salient factor not often mentioned in the literature but identified by Jacobsen (1996) is a host country's historical experience with and as refugees themselves. A community like the Indian Sindhis, who had bad experiences with the six million Muslim refugees from Pakistan, were extremely opposed to accepting any other group

of refugees after that. A community who has had personal experience as refugees, on the other hand, is bound to be far more sympathetic to refugees. Zimbabwe and Mozambique, or Iran and Iraq are examples for this (669). Moreover, in recent years, this has also been the rhetoric of the German government to justify accepting Syrian refugees. “German citizens know that the regulations of the Geneva Refugee Convention stem from the historical experience with Jewish refugees fleeing the Holocaust,” Chancellor Angela Merkel stated last year and reminded citizens that “after World War II, many Germans were refugees themselves” (Horn, 2015). Her words show that she considers it both a moral and legal obligation to extend a helping hand to those fleeing war and persecution.

Contrary to what one might expect, one little considered factor in the literature on perceptions of refugees is national security. Jacobsen (1996) stands out in mentioning security concerns. As he says, because governments often see refugees as a threat to regime security, they tend, if willing to host refugees, to exert greater control over the refugees, such as by separating them from the general population and settling them in camps. This strategy grants the government greater control over registration and monitoring of the refugees (673).

Karapin (1999) is a scholar who stands out as one of a very limited number of researchers who mentions the role of national-level political factors such as electoral politics in influencing immigration policies. For example, it might be easier for people who press for immigration restrictions to do so in federalist states with single member districts and available referenda. On the other hand, fragmented party systems might give smaller parties, who are generally less divided on immigration issues, a better platform to voice anti-immigration interests (424). However, Karapin also points out the shortcomings of these factors to explain the timing of anti-

immigration mobilization and restrictive politics. Through examples in Europe, specifically the UK and Germany, he argues that subnational mobilization and social movements influence national-level anti-immigration policies. For instance, his examples show that pressure for immigration control was often not initiated by national politicians or officials, but rather came from state and local politicians (438). The state and local politicians in turn were pressed by social movements within the population to pressure national-level politics, and did not act on their own behalf. Finally, for these social movements to succeed, favorable local political environments had to be present. Environments were favorable where sympathetic or blundering subnational elites, and police passive in responding to violence and riots toward immigrants.

Media

Some of the greatest influences on citizens' public opinion toward refugees are media depictions and framing of refugees. Studies have shown that differences in definitions and category labels when framing a particular issue can lead to differences in reactions to the issue. For example, Augoustinos and Quinn (2003) have shown that respondents reacted more negatively to a group referred to as illegal immigrants than to a group referred to as asylum seekers (Verkuyten 302). In the Netherlands, Verkuyten has identified that participants reacted out of anger to asylum seekers framed as economic migrants having chosen to leave their country on their own, whereas participants reacted out of sympathy to asylum seekers framed as political refugees having been forced to leave their country (308).

The results of three different studies conducted by Esses and her colleagues (2013) were particularly telling of what power the media have to trigger extreme

negative reactions to immigrants and refugees. The media achieve this through dehumanizing refugees (522). Through the use of experimental cartoons and articles, the researchers tested the effect of negative media representations of immigrants as sources and spreaders of infectious diseases, refugee claimants as bogus queue jumpers who are trying to take advantage of lax refugee policies to gain entry to western nations, and refugees as terrorists trying to gain entry to Western nations (524-525). All three questions produced extreme negative reactions in respondents, even to the point of putting refugees in the same category as animals (529). In addition, they made a good point by saying that not all people will be influenced by or are equally susceptible to the media. Reasons for this can be differences in personality type or exposure to the media. This is why Esses et al. (2013) suggest that future research explores “whether susceptibility to negative portrayals of immigrants and refugees are especially likely among individuals who are in a state of high uncertainty” (531).

As pointed out by Jaji (2014), refugee hosting is not just humanitarian, but political. Because in the media Somalis are given the image of being terrorists, Kenyans are unwelcoming towards them and see them as a security threat. In fact, because it had become a “breeding ground for terrorism” and a “launch pad for various terrorist attacks by Al-Shabaab,” the Kenyan government decided in May 2016 to shut down the world’s largest refugee camp, located in Dadaab, which principally hosts Somalis. Good news for the Somalis came in February 2017, when the Kenyan High Court overturned the governments decision (Onyulo, 2017).

In the past two decades, Muslim refugees in particular have been targeted and have suffered from negative media depictions. Jaji (2014) writes, “an aftermath of the 11 September 2001 attacks and the subsequent declaration of a ‘global war on terror’

by the Bush administration has been the branding of asylum seekers and refugees, particularly those coming from Muslim countries, as a threat to national security leading to their abuse and exclusion” (637). 9/11 made the association between Muslims and refugees more common.

The November 2015 attacks in Paris can be seen as Europe’s own version of 9/11. Although claims that the passport of a Syrian refugee was found on the body of a suicide bomber were eventually refuted, “Paris [changed] everything,” in the words of Bavarian finance minister Markus Söder (Holmes and Castañeda 18). The incident reinforced already existing islamophobic feelings the media had introduced, such as beliefs that Syrian refugees are “infiltrated with Muslim extremists,” and that refugee status potentially functions as a “ISIS Trojan horse,” entering the host country only to destroy it from the inside (18). Some of this rhetoric further increased after the Paris attacks; although some leaders of several European countries have been more willing to accept Christian refugees rather than Muslims, the UK Independence Party leader believes the refugee crisis to be a “conspiracy to make Europe multicultural.” Multicultural in this context no doubt has a negative connotation, bound to destroy the European homogeneously white, Christian, and unique ethnic, cultural, and religious makeup (18).

That framing can be a powerful tool is also evident in the context of the Syrian refugee crisis and its effect on Germany. Metaphors of Europe being overwhelmed by difference are often employed to invoke popular sentiments of being invaded. The media talk, for instance, about the need to secure “open doors” and “open windows,” referring to the Schengen Area, which for years was characterized by open borders. Common also are metaphors of water, such as “flood,” “tide,” and “flow” in relation to the incoming refugees, leading to Europeans fearing for their lives, giving them the

impression of being overwhelmed or drown (Holmes 18). The method of employing water metaphors is not context specific, but has been shown to invoke fears among US Americans “about the population growth of Latinos in American society, which in turn positions them as a possible threat to the ‘nation’” (18).

It has to be kept in mind that the media, by means of different types of framing, can be used to decrease as well as increase the willingness of citizens to accept refugees into their country. While governments may use negative depictions of refugees to keep their immigration rates low, aid organizations in particular play on citizens’ feelings of compassion to mobilize support. By means of photo archives of the UNHCR and other sources, Heather Johnson (2011) found, since the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees the image of the refugee has undergone racialization, victimization and feminization. Humanitarian agencies, she noticed, especially focus on depicting refugees as vulnerable and helpless, therefore predominantly filming or photographing women and children in order to get greater mobilization of support. An incident in Germany also serves to illustrate how especially social media has the potential power to affect a country’s discourse and policy. After the broadcast of an awkward interaction between Merkel and a young Palestinian refugee girl in July 2015, during which Merkel’s harsh response brought the young girl to tears, social media responses contributed to a significant change in German policy. Only one month later, Merkel announced the suspension of the Dublin Regulation, which meant that Germany would accept Syrian refugees even if they did not claim asylum in the first EU country they entered (Holmes and Castañeda 14-15).

In conclusion, we can see that perceptions of refugees are influenced by both factors relating to the host population and factors relating to the incoming refugees.

Among the factors influencing the host population's perceptions are personality type, such as Social Dominance Orientation, Right-Wing Authoritarianism, and prejudice; demographic factors, such as age, gender, education level, income level, political identification, ethnicity, and potential kinship ties to the refugee population; structural factors, such as how citizenship is determined, the country's relation to the sending country, potential existing involvement in the refugee crisis, the state's historical experience with refugee populations, and the state's economic capacity; and lastly, official depictions in the host country's media, such as dehumanization, portraying Muslims as terrorists, or water metaphors (for example, the country is being flooded by refugees). Among the factors relating to the refugees is their reason for flight, their home country or country of origin, education level, religion, and the number of refugees entering the country.

In the following second part of the project, I aim to further extend the research on perceptions of refugees to a part of the world largely left out of the research on perceptions of refugees. By means of an experimental survey, I will explore the willingness of Taiwanese citizens to host Syrian refugees.

Part II: Taiwan

Hypotheses

As previously mentioned, literature exploring East Asians' perceptions of refugees is already slim, all the more so in Taiwan. However, the factors analyzed in the literature review section are a starting point for forming hypotheses for an experimental public opinion survey in Taiwan.

Age

Kessler and Freeman (2005), drawing on *Eurobarometer* opinion surveys from 1988 to 2000, found that older individuals had significantly stronger anti-immigrant sentiments than younger respondents (834-835). In the same fashion, a study by Weldon (2006), also conducted in Western Europe, revealed that older respondents were less politically as well as socially tolerant than younger respondents (342-343). Therefore I expect similar findings in my study. My hypothesis is that older Taiwanese participants will be less willing to accept Syrian refugees to Taiwan than younger respondents.

Gender

The effect of gender on perceptions of refugees has been researched to a minimal extent. Pedersen et al. (2005) showed that Australian men had significantly stronger negative attitudes toward asylum seekers than women (158). In line with this finding, I therefore hypothesize that male participants will be more likely to disagree with Taiwan taking in refugees from Syria than female participants.

Education

I hypothesize that Taiwanese participants with lower education levels will reveal a greater opposition to accepting refugees than those with higher education

levels. This hypothesis is based on research by Kessler and Freeman (2005) and Pedersen (2005). Both studies showed that lower levels of education are significantly related to negative attitudes toward asylum seekers.

Income level

Although the influence of specific income levels on perceptions of refugees are almost nonexistent in the literature, similar factors can be applied to this factor. Regarding this factor, I have two different hypotheses, as research can support either position. On the one hand, individuals with higher income levels could be more likely to oppose hosting refugees. This is based on Louis et al. (2006), who found that citizens of an advantaged national group (i.e. wealthier individuals) who perceive a threat to their status by instability and permeable group boundaries supported increasingly restrictive programs (67). On the other hand, individuals with lower income levels could just be as likely to oppose granting asylum to refugees. Louis et al. (2006) also found respondents who perceived that asylum seekers were posing a threat to valued resources as more likely to judge harsh treatment of asylum seekers as fair. Refugees are often given manual labor jobs, which pose a greater threat to lower-class individuals, who feel a threat to their valued occupation.

Economic capacity

In the past two years, many Taiwanese have felt their economy to be a disaster, as they perceive increasing income inequality, languishing exports, and stagnating wage rates (Hsiao 2016). I therefore expect that participants who believe that Taiwan lacks the economic capacity to host refugees will be more likely to oppose that the Taiwanese government accommodate refugees. This expectation is based on findings by both Kessler and Freeman (2005) and Karapin (1999), who showed the relationship between worsening economic conditions and growing

opposition to accepting refugees. This is logical when one considers that refugees place a high demand on a state's social welfare spending.

Housing capacity

Another aspect often overlooked is housing capacity. During the 2016 presidential election, Taiwan's housing problem topped President Tsai Ing-wen's policy concerns. Taipei's property prices are among the highest in the world, and a large percentage of the Taiwanese population is unable to afford buying an apartment (Piasecki, 2015). Moreover, taking into account that at 650 people per square kilometer Taiwan ranks 17th in the world in terms of population density, livable land is already scarce (National Statistics, 2017). Therefore, I expect Taiwanese concerned about housing capacity to oppose refugee resettlement.

Political Identification

I expect to find that Taiwanese identifying with the Nationalist Party will display greater opposition to accepting refugees. I base my hypothesis on findings by Pedersen et al. (2005) as well as Kessler and Freeman (2005). Their studies showed that a right-wing, conservative political position correlates with greater opposition to refugees. In Taiwan, the left-right schema often poorly applies to Taiwan where parties are more aligned based on the issue of independence from versus unification with the People's Republic of China (PRC). The Nationalist Party or Kuomintang (KMT), would be seen as a center-right party. It is a conservative party that has historically been pro-unification with the PRC. In this sense, it shares some similarities with conservative parties elsewhere in that it suggests clear distinctions on who is part of the nation and who is not. The KMT suggests that Taiwan is Chinese and that people from other nationalities should not be granted the same rights as Taiwanese, as exemplified by Taiwan's *jus sanguinis* citizenship law based on blood

heritage, and its nonexistent refugee law, both legacies from the long-term KMT administration on Taiwan.

Exposure

Crush and Pendleton (2004) showed that personal, face-to-face contact with refugees can increase a person's likelihood to be willing to accept them. Motivated by the thought that international exposure would increase people's likelihood of accepting refugees, I expect Taiwanese who indicate having traveled abroad and those agreeing to be comfortable around people from other ethnicities, nationalities, or religions to be more willing to accept refugees.

Number of refugees

The number of refugees to resettle should also influence perceptions. Studies by Kaye (1994) and Betts (2001) show that an increase in the number of refugees also led to increased opposition by the host public and government. Due to these findings, I expect the proposed number of refugees to correspond with public support for accepting refugees.

Religion of refugees: Islam

My hypothesis regarding religion of the refugees is influenced by research studies as well as modern social developments. The vast majority of Syrian refugees are Muslim. However, host publics tend to be particularly opposed to Muslim refugees. Bansak et al. (2016) showed that citizens are more welcoming toward Christian than Muslim refugees. This behavior is influenced by a variety of developments, such as the creation of radical Islamic terrorist organizations and terrorist attacks in Western nations, for instance in Paris, claimed by such organizations. Moreover, the media in particular capitalize on refugees' religion, and

often depict Muslim refugees as terrorists, which Jaji (2014) and Esses et al. (2013) showed to significantly increase opposition toward refugees.

Motivated by these findings, I expect to see that Taiwanese citizens who see Islam as more violent than other religions to be less likely to support Taiwan taking in refugees when told that most of the incoming Syrian refugees would be Muslim.

Confucian values

The impact of Confucian values on refugees is difficult to predict, and almost impossible due to the lack of literature on this factor. Confucianism is an East Asian philosophy that has its origin in the writings of Confucius, who lived in the Chinese Spring and Autumn period from 551 B.C. to 479 B.C. Although native to China, over the centuries Confucianism spread to other East Asian countries, including Taiwan. When in 1949 the Kuomintang lost the Chinese civil war to the Chinese Communist Party and settled on Taiwan, the Chinese citizens brought these Confucian values to Taiwan. Confucianism is often characterized as an emphasis on social hierarchy, obedience, and respect in order to stabilize society. Moreover, individuals endorsing Confucian values tend to make decisions based on the collective good of the society as a whole instead of the individual's good. Strong identification with Confucian values, therefore, can affect willingness to accept refugees in two opposite ways.

On the one hand, refugees might be seen as a threat to the stability and the good of the whole society. This is in line with the psychological theory of right-wing authoritarianism (RWA), which favors stability and traditional ways. Esses et al. (2008) and Nickerson and Louis (2006) have demonstrated that individuals high in RWA are more likely to display negative attitudes toward asylum seekers or those violating their traditional ways. Therefore, the wish to protect Taiwan from destabilizing influences from the outside might make individuals with strong

Confucian values more reluctant to accepting Syrian refugees. On the other hand, Taiwanese with strong Confucian values might be more tolerant of Muslims, resulting in a greater willingness to accept Syrian refugees into Taiwan. As has been advocated by Ming Dong Gu (2016), Confucianism as a “secular religion” is the perfect ethical concept that would be fit to create a highly tolerant world order (799). Therefore, my second hypothesis is that individuals with strong Confucian values will be more tolerant of Muslims and therefore be more willing to accept refugees than those with weaker Confucian values.

To summarize this section, Table 1 shows a visual representation of my hypotheses.

Table 1: Overview of Hypotheses

Variable	Hypothesis: Taiwanese will show greater opposition to refugees when they ...
Age	Are older
Gender	Are male
Education	Have lower education levels
Income Level	Have higher or lower income levels (two different hypotheses)
Economic & Housing Capacity	Disagree with the statements “Taiwan has the economic capacity to host refugees” and “Taiwan has the capacity to meet the housing demands of the refugees”
Political Identification	Identify most strongly with the Kuomintang (KMT)
Exposure	Have not been abroad Disagree with the statement “I am comfortable around people from other ethnicities, nationalities, and religions”
Number: Some, 10,000 or 50,000	Are assigned to the experimental versions stating Taiwan can accommodate 50,000 Syrian refugees
Religion: Islam	Agree with the statement “Islam is more violent than other religions”
Confucian Values	Have high or low Confucian values (two different hypotheses)

Methodology

Design and Procedure

This quantitative research study was conducted by means of an experimental survey. With the help of native Chinese speakers, I translated the survey into Chinese. In early August 2016, I then sent my survey questionnaire to PollcracyLab, a lab run through the Election Study Center at National Chengchi University (NCCU) in Taiwan, which recruited 500 respondents to my survey. Consisting of 57 questions, the survey was estimated to take about 10 minutes to complete. It was made up of demographic and partisan questions, an index for Confucian values, questions relating to respondents' exposure to and perceptions of other cultures, and capacity measures. Most importantly, I included an experimental design question to test for the influence of potential refugee population size (non-specified/10,000/50,000) and refugee religion (non-specified/Muslim) on Taiwanese citizens' willingness to accept refugees. In this experimental design question, respondents were randomly assigned to slightly different versions of a question regarding refugees in order to identify the extent to which wording influences perceptions. Some versions of these assigned questions controlled for the number of refugees, while slightly different versions of the questions controlled for the refugees' religion.

The first version functions as a baseline, and is a basic description of the current international refugee crisis. Each subsequent version includes the initial wording of the first version, but while two of the four additional versions add a sentence to specify the number of refugees Taiwan would be able to accommodate, the other two versions specify that the incoming refugees would be Muslim. In total, the experimental design question has five different versions. The 500 respondents

were randomly assigned to one of these five versions at 100 respondents each. The five versions are as follows.

The standard baseline versions given to every participant:

1. *The civil war in Syria has created an international refugee crisis. Some claim that as a humanitarian crisis, it is the duty of other states to take in refugees. Others claim that taking in refugees creates a potential security risk.*

The next two versions control for number:

2. *Estimates suggest that Taiwan could accommodate up to 10,000 Syrian refugees.*
3. *Estimates suggest that Taiwan could accommodate up to 50,000 Syrian refugees.*

The last two versions control for number and religion:

4. *Estimates suggest that Taiwan could accommodate up to 10,000 Syrian refugees, most of whom would be Muslim.*
5. *Estimates suggest that Taiwan could accommodate up to 50,000 Syrian refugees, most of whom would be Muslim.*

After having read their assigned version, respondents were then asked to evaluate the following statement:

Taiwan should accept refugees from Syria.

The response was measured on a 5-level Likert scale, ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

Variables

The dependent variable in this study is respondents' willingness to accept refugees.

The survey tested the effect of a total of fifteen independent variables on the dependent variable.

To make data analysis easier, I grouped the independent variables into four different categories.

Model 1 consists of my main independent variables, dummy variables for whether respondents received versions 2 to 5 of the experimental design question. This model specifically shows the effect each of the versions generates compared to the baseline (Version 1). Versions 2 and 3 test for number of the Syrian refugees (10,000 vs. 50,000), while versions 4 and 5 test for the Syrian refugees' religion (Islam).

Model 2 adds an additional six variables to Model 1. These variables are basic demographic controls. Age was measured on a scale by asking participants to indicate their exact age. To indicate their gender, respondents could choose between male (1) and female (2). Education was measured by having respondents choose their highest education level on a six-level scale from (1) elementary school to (6) doctoral degree. To measure party identification, I created a dummy variable for whether participants most closely identified with the Kuomintang (KMT). And lastly, I adapted measures from the *Asian Barometer* (as employed by the Center for East Asia Democratic Studies at Taiwan National University) on traditional values in order to measure participants' strength of Confucian values. Participants were given 9 statements of traditional Confucian thinking, and were subsequently asked to indicate their level of agreement on a 5-level Likert scale from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.¹

Model 3 adds three more variables, these being so-called exposure measures. Two of these questions asked respondents to evaluate the respective statement on a 5-level Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree: "I am comfortable around

¹ The nine statements of the Confucian Index are: 1) For the sake of the family, the individual should put his personal interests second; 2) In a group, we should sacrifice our individual interest for the sake of the group's collective interest; 3) For the sake of national interest, individual interest could be sacrificed; 4) When dealing with others, developing a long-term relationship is more important than securing one's immediate interest; 5) Even if parents' demands are unreasonable, children still should do what they ask; 6) When a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law come in conflict, even if the mother-in-law is in the wrong, the husband should still persuade his wife to obey his mother; 7) Being a student, one should not question the authority of their teacher; 8) In a group, we should avoid open quarrel to preserve the harmony of the group; 9) If one could have only one child, it is more preferable to have a boy than a girl.

people from other ethnicities, nationalities and religions,” and “Islam is more violent than other religions.” In addition, respondents were asked whether or not they had been abroad, this being a simple yes-no question with yes coded as a 1.

Model 4 adds the capacity questions. The first capacity question asked respondents if they think that Taiwan has the economic capacity to accept refugees. The second question tapped into respondents’ opinion on whether or not Taiwan has the capacity to meet refugees’ housing demand. To both of these questions, respondents had the option to respond with either ‘yes,’ ‘no,’ or ‘don’t know.’ ‘Yes’ was recoded as 1, and ‘no’ and ‘don’t know’ were recoded as 0.

Participants

Whereas most experiments rely on a student population, my 500 respondents were a quite diverse sample. In terms of age, the oldest participant was 84 years old, the youngest 20. The median age of participants was 43. In terms of gender, 290 respondents were male, making up 58% of the respondent’s total, while 210 respondents were female. At 56.4% most respondents’ highest level of education was a Bachelor’s degree, followed in frequency by a Master’s degree. 17.4% only had a high school degree, and only 3.0% had received doctorate degrees.

With the thought in mind that comfortableness around people different from oneself might influence rejection or acceptance of refugees, I asked participants to react to the statement, “I feel comfortable around people from other ethnicities, nationalities, or religions.” I was positively surprised by the results, as I saw that most respondents (42.6%) agreed with the statement, while 21.6% strongly agreed. Similarly, to measure international exposure I asked participants whether or not they had been abroad. The vast majority, 449 of 500 participants had been abroad, which makes up a percentage of 89.9%.

Since my main independent variables are measuring the effect that number and religion of refugees have on people's perceptions of them, I included a variable to measure respondents' perceptions of Islam. I asked respondents to evaluate the statement "Islam is more violent than other religions." A frequency distribution shows that the median and mode were both 3 on the 5-point Likert scale, equaling "neither disagree nor agree." The majority of respondents (180) responded with a 3. However, the range of the distribution was 4, meaning that there were people who strongly agreed or disagreed with the statement. 176 participants disagreed with the statement, whereas 144 agreed.

Concerning monthly salary, there was a wide variation in respondents' monthly income levels; however, the majority of participants made either less than 27,000 TWD² (about \$850) or between 27,0001 TWD and 59,000 TWD a month.

The Kuomintang (KMT) being considered the main conservative party in Taiwan, a dummy variable controlled for whether or not respondents identified with the KMT. As a frequency distribution shows, out of 500 respondents total, only 131 respondents most strongly identified with the KMT. The majority of respondents identified with a party other than the KMT.

The Confucian Index ranged from 0 to 36. The range being 36, the variance on the Index was high. Nonetheless, at a value of 18, the median fell at the exact center of the Index, showing that most of the study's participants had moderate Confucian views.

Lastly, a frequency distribution of the two capacity questions revealed interesting findings. Although on the economic capacity question, seven participants checked 'don't know' as a response, 69.8% of survey participants believed that

² Taiwanese Dollar. At the time of this writing, the USD : TWD exchange rate is about 1 : 30.

Taiwan does not have the economic capacity to accommodate refugees. Opinion on housing capacity was even higher concentrated. On this question, four respondents checked 'don't know,' but a whole 73.6% of respondents did not believe that Taiwan has the housing capacity to accommodate the incoming refugees. These findings are undeniably representative of the current situation in Taiwan. As previously mentioned, with current perceptions of the economy, the island's livable square mileage being already scarce, and the lack of affordable housing playing a big part in the 2016 Taiwanese presidential election, these opinions represent the general popular opinion of Taiwanese citizens.

Results

As a first step, I examined the effect of my main independent variables – the five versions of the experimental design question – on the dependent variable by means of bivariate analysis. Table 2 serves as a reminder of the experimental design question.

Table 2:

Versions of the Experimental Design Question³
Baseline: The civil war in Syria has created an international refugee crisis. Some claim that as a humanitarian crisis, it is the duty of other states to take in refugees. Others claim that taking in refugees creates a potential security risk.
V2: Estimates suggest that Taiwan could accommodate up to <u>10,000</u> Syrian refugees.
V3: Estimates suggest that Taiwan could accommodate up to <u>50,000</u> Syrian refugees.
V4: Estimates suggest that Taiwan could accommodate up to <u>10,000</u> Syrian refugees, most of whom would be <u>Muslim</u> .
V5: Estimates suggest that Taiwan could accommodate up to <u>50,000</u> Syrian refugees, most of whom would be <u>Muslim</u> .

Results of the bivariate analysis are presented in Table 3. More specifically, it shows the percentage of participants who disagreed with the statement “Taiwan should accept refugees from Syria,” in response to their respective version to which they were assigned. 33% of participants who received the baseline version either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. As the number of refugees was specified, opposition increased. 45% of participants who were told that Taiwan could accommodate 10,000 refugees disagreed that Taiwan should take in refugees. Version 3, which specified that Taiwan could accommodate 50,000 refugees resulted in the largest percentage of opposition out of all the variables. 65%, close to two thirds, of

³ Words were not underlined in the original survey, and are only underlined for emphasis.

those assigned to Version 3 responded with either “disagree” or “strongly disagree” to the follow-up statement. Versions 4 and 5 specified that most of the Syrian refugees would be Muslim. Although both versions elicited a decline in willingness to accept refugees, neither version generated an opposition as high as that for Version 3. For Versions 4 and 5, 51% and 57% respectively disagreed with Taiwan taking in refugees. Oddly, the results are contrary to the expectation that Version 5 would elicit the greatest opposition, as it includes both the highest number and the religion. Instead, Version 3, which only specifies the number of refugees as 50,000, produced the largest percentage of opposition. From this analysis we see preliminary evidence that Taiwanese citizens regard the number as a higher deterrent for accepting refugees than the religion of the refugees.

Table 3: Bivariate Analysis of the Experimental Design Question: The Effect of Framing of Refugees on Participants’ Willingness to Accept Them

Versions of the experimental design question	Percent who disagree that Taiwan should accept Syrian refugees
Baseline: The civil war in Syria has created an international refugee crisis. Some claim that as a humanitarian crisis, it is the duty of other states to take in refugees. Others claim that taking in refugees creates a potential security risk.	33%
V2: 10,000 Syrian refugees	45%
V3: 50,000 Syrian refugees	65%
V4: 10,000 Syrian refugees, most of whom would be Muslim	51%
V5: 50,000 Syrian refugees, most of whom would be Muslim	57%

OLS Regression Models

As a second step, in order to test my hypotheses, I conducted multivariate analysis. I ran Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regressions for all four of my models, starting with

the experimental design question. Table 4 and Table 5 show the results of these models.

Table 4: OLS Regression for Model 1 and Model 2

	Model 1			Model 2		
	Coeff	SE	Sig.	Coeff	SE	Sig.
V2	-0.34	0.15	0.023	-0.30	0.16	0.053
V3	-0.80	0.15	0.000	-0.69	0.15	0.000
V4	-0.50	0.15	0.001	-0.40	0.15	0.009
V5	-0.56	0.15	0.000	-0.45	0.15	0.004
Age				-0.01	0.01	0.050
Gender				-0.17	0.11	0.107
Education				0.23	0.07	0.002
Income				0.02	0.02	0.483
Confucian Values				-0.01	0.01	0.256
KMT ID				-0.02	0.12	0.852
Constant	2.95	0.11	0.000	2.76	0.47	0.000
N	500			500		
Adjusted R2	0.05			0.09		

Model 1

A first look at Model 1 shows, compared to the baseline, all 4 versions had a negative effect on Taiwanese citizens' willingness to accept Syrian refugees. Version 2, saying Taiwan can accommodate up to 10,000 refugees, generated a decline on the 5-point Likert scale of 0.34. However, the effect of Version 3 on the independent variable was far greater than the effects of Versions 2, 4, and 5. The thought of having 50,000 Syrian refugees enter Taiwan accounted for a decline of 8/10th of a point on the 5-level Likert scale in willingness to accept refugees. Interestingly, when participants were informed that most of the Syrian refugees would be Muslim, the decline in willingness to accept refugees was higher than for Version 2 that only mentioned the number, but it did not generate as high a decline as the number 50,000 alone did. In fact, when it was conveyed that the majority of the incoming refugees would be

Muslim, the number of the refugees did not make a substantial difference in willingness to accept refugees. Version 4 led to half a point decline, while Version 5 led to only a slightly greater decline of 0.56 of a point. The regression model, therefore, reveals the same trends as the bivariate analysis discussed above, showing that Taiwanese are far more concerned about the number of the refugees than their religion. Three of the four experimental versions were significant at the .001 level, while Version 2 was significant at the .01 level.

Model 2

Model 2 adds six additional control variables to Model 1: basic demographic factors and the Confucian Index. First, the regression reveals a consistency of our findings from Model 1. Even after controlling for an additional six variables, the experimental versions follow the same trend as before, with Version 3 eliciting the greatest decline in willingness to accept refugees. Three of the additional variables behaved as expected: While being older and identifying with the KMT decreased willingness to accept refugees, higher education levels increased willingness. However, political identification reached neither substantive nor statistical significance, counter to my hypothesis. In addition, age and education were the only new variables in Model 2 to reach statistical significance, consistent with my hypothesis. Unexpectedly, females were more opposed to taking in refugees than males. My hypothesis that participants with higher salaries would be less willing to accept refugees was not supported either. In fact, higher salaries were more predictive of a greater willingness to accept refugees. However, at 0.02 of a point on the 5-point Likert scale, the substantive significance is minor; neither did the variable reach statistical significance.

One potential reason why my hypothesis concerning income levels was not confirmed could be that people with higher salaries tend to have higher education

levels, which were shown to be predictive of greater acceptance of refugees. The impact of the Confucius Index was not contrary to my expectations, since I believed it could influence opinion in both directions. The variable's behavior showed support for the hypothesis that participants higher on the Confucian Index were more opposed to Taiwan accepting refugees. This reveals that Confucian values can have the effect of making people less tolerant towards destabilizing forces from the outside, such as refugees. However, with a negative effect of only 0.12 of a point on the 5-point scale, the Confucian Index' effect was much lower than expected. Neither was the variable statistically significant. It is therefore impossible to declare the hypothesis as supported, especially when considering the variable's inconsistent effects in the following two models (Models 3 and 4).

Table 5: OLS Regression for Model 3 and Model 4

	Model 3			Model 4		
	Coeff	SE	Sig.	Coeff	SE	Sig.
V2	-0.31	0.15	0.036	-0.36	0.13	0.008
V3	-0.59	0.15	0.000	-0.48	0.13	0.000
V4	-0.38	0.15	0.011	-0.43	0.13	0.001
V5	-0.44	0.15	0.003	-0.41	0.13	0.002
Age	-0.02	0.01	0.002	-0.01	0.00	0.003
Gender	-0.12	0.10	0.231	0.02	0.09	0.856
Education	0.19	0.07	0.010	0.06	0.07	0.386
Income	0.01	0.02	0.579	0.02	0.02	0.441
Confucian Values	0.00	0.01	0.974	-0.01	0.01	0.574
KMT ID	0.04	0.11	0.719	0.14	0.10	0.175
Comfort Around Others	0.24	0.06	0.000	0.18	0.05	0.001
Been Abroad	0.28	0.17	0.094	0.23	0.15	0.125
Islam as More Violent	-0.19	0.04	0.000	-0.15	0.04	0.000
Economic Capacity				0.75	0.13	0.000
Housing Capacity				0.38	0.13	0.004
Constant	2.25	0.52	0.000	2.38	0.47	0.000
N	500			500		
Adjusted R2	0.18			0.34		

Model 3

Model 3 adds the exposure measures. These measured whether a person was comfortable around people from other ethnicities, nationalities, and religions, whether they had been abroad, and whether they believed Islam was more violent than other religions.

The findings are again consistent with the previous models. Once more, Version 3 generates the highest substantial effect on the dependent variable, and is also statistically significant. Furthermore, even when controlling for the three exposure measures, the education and age variables remain significant, with age even reaching a higher significance than in the previous model (Model 2). As mentioned previously, Model 3 also reveals inconsistencies in the political identification variable and the Confucian Index. Whereas in Model 2 it seemed like close identification with the political right was predictive of greater opposition towards refugees, in Model 3 it seems that identifying with the KMT leads to greater acceptance of refugees. Similarly, while in Model 2 high Confucian values were related to minimally lower levels of willingness to accept refugees, in Model 3 Confucian values seem to have no effect on willingness to accept refugees at all. These findings force me to reject the hypotheses that identification with the political right and high Confucian values are related to greater opposition to accept refugees to Taiwan.

Looking at regression analysis for Model 3, the three newly added variables perform well. Respondents more comfortable around people from other ethnicities, nationalities, and religions, show a greater willingness to accept Syrian refugees, hence supporting my hypothesis, and significant at the .001 level. A respondent having had international exposure by traveling abroad was 0.28 of a point on the 5-point scale more likely to agree that Taiwan should accept Syrian refugees, but the

variable did not reach statistical significance. This variable can therefore not be claimed as evidence for my hypothesis. On the other hand, my hypothesis concerning people's dispositions toward Islam was supported; respondents who thought Islam to be more violent than other religions were more likely to disagree with Taiwan taking in Syrian refugees. The variable reached statistical significance at the .001 level.

Model 4

Model 4 added two more variables, the so-called capacity questions. The first capacity question asked respondents if they think that Taiwan has the economic capacity to accept refugees. The second question tapped into respondents' opinion on whether or not Taiwan has the capacity to meet refugees' housing demand.

Just like Models 1 through 3 showed, the experimental question behaves the same, even with all the other subsequently added control variables. Additionally, the demographic and exposure variables mostly behave as expected. Exceptions are the education variable, which does not reach significance in this model, and as discussed previously, the variables concerning identification with the KMT and Confucian values are not consistent. Interestingly, in Model 4, Version 3 of the experimental question does no longer generate the highest substantive effect in the dependent variable, but has been replaced by the economic capacity variable. This variable generated a difference in the dependent variable of 0.75 of a point on the 5-point Likert scale, the largest effect of the variables in Model 4. Moreover, it reached statistical significance at the .001 level. This supports my hypothesis that participants agreeing that Taiwan has the economic capacity to host refugees will be more likely to agree that Taiwan should accept refugees. The housing capacity variable had a smaller effect on the dependent variable at 0.38 of a point, but nonetheless reached a statistical significance at the .01 level. Hence, my second hypothesis concerning

capacity questions was supported as well. Respondents who agreed that Taiwan has the housing capacity to host refugees were substantially more likely to agree to taking in refugees.

Discussion

This experimental study tests how framing of Syrian refugees affects Taiwanese willingness to accept them. Bivariate analysis and four regression models reveal that for Taiwanese citizens, the number of refugees is a much greater deterrent for accepting Syrian refugees than is the refugees' religion. Being faced with the decision of accepting 50,000 Syrian refugees (Version 3) was a strong predictor of declining willingness of Taiwanese citizens to accept refugees. This finding was consistent throughout the four regression models, each time significant at the .001 level. Interestingly, the combination of the number 50,000 and the refugees being Muslim (Version 5) did not elicit as substantial of a decline in willingness as the number 50,000 alone did. Not taking into account Version 3, it can be concluded that the more information citizens are given about the refugees, the less likely they are to accept them.

Regression analysis confirmed six and refuted four of my ten hypotheses. Table 7 shows the support status for each hypothesis. Participants who are older; have higher education levels; disagree with the statements "Taiwan has the economic capacity to host refugees" and "Taiwan has the capacity to meet the housing demands of the refugees"; are assigned to the experimental versions stating Taiwan can accommodate 50,000 Syrian refugees, agree with the statement "Islam is more violent than other religions," and are more comfortable around people from other ethnicities, nationalities, and religions were more likely to agree with the statement that Taiwan should accept Syrian refugees. One reason why the exposure measure of having been

abroad did not reach statistical significance could be that many participants might have considered mainland China as “abroad,” as my survey did not ask to specify where one had been abroad to. Visiting mainland China would undoubtedly not give a person much exposure to other ethnicities and increase one’s comfort around them.

On the other hand, my hypotheses concerning participants’ gender, political identification, and Confucian values were all refuted. While I expected that male participants would be more opposed to accepting refugees, the data showed that females were in fact more opposed than males. My hypothesis concerning political identification was not confirmed either. I thought respondents identifying more closely with the political right (KMT) would be more likely to oppose incoming refugees; however, regression analysis found this variable to be inconsistent between the models and neither substantively nor statistically significant in any of the models.

Table 6: Support Status of Hypotheses

Variable	Hypothesis: Taiwanese will show greater opposition to refugees when they ...	Support
Age	Are older	Yes
Gender	Are male	No
Education	Have lower education levels (With exception of Model 4)	Yes
Income Level	Have higher or lower income levels (two different hypotheses)	Lower
Economic & Housing Capacity	Disagree with the statements “Taiwan has the economic capacity to host refugees” and “Taiwan has the capacity to meet the housing demands of the refugees”	Yes
Political Identification	Identify most strongly with the Kuomintang (KMT)	No
Exposure	(Have not been abroad = no support) Disagree with the statement “I am comfortable around people from other ethnicities, nationalities, and religions”	Partly Yes
Number: Some, 10,000 or 50,000	Are assigned to the experimental versions stating Taiwan can accommodate 50,000 Syrian refugees	Yes
Religion: Islam	Agree with the statement “Islam is more violent than other religions”	Yes
Confucian Values	Have high or low Confucian values (two different hypotheses)	No

Since I proposed two opposing hypotheses concerning the impact of Confucian values, regression analysis in Model 2 at first seemed to give clarity on the effect of this variable. It was revealed that participants with higher scores on the Confucian Index were more opposed to taking in Syrian refugees, perhaps a display of the motivation to protect their own country from destabilizing foreign traditions. However, Models 3 and 4 revealed this finding to be highly inconsistent, and the variable was unable to reach substantive or statistical significance in these models.

For this reason, I cannot declare the hypothesis concerning Confucian values as supported. Lastly, I also proposed two opposing hypotheses for the income level factor, and multivariate analysis gave clarity on the impact of this variable: participants with lower income levels were less willing to accept refugees to Taiwan.

Overall, we can draw a few implications from this. First, these results reveal how framing matters. Depending on how an issue is presented, citizens react differently. That the inclusion of additional information decreased support for accepting refugees suggests that Taiwanese opinions on refugees may not be set in stone yet. Perhaps most important, the data suggests that Taiwanese citizens seem to be far more concerned with the number of the refugees than the refugees' religion. Due to geographical conditions, much of the island is not conducive to large populations, yet with 650 people per square kilometer, Taiwan ranks 17th in the world in terms of population density. Therefore, the results might indicate fears that refugees will exacerbate this problem and the associated demands for government services.

In addition, it appears that Islamophobia is not as salient in Taiwan as in other countries, with Taiwanese generally tolerant of Muslims. For example, in 2016, Taipei 101, Taiwan's tallest skyscraper, planned to set up a Muslim prayer room in the building in order to attract more Muslim visitors (Meng-ju, 2016). Many Muslims in Taiwan also find it to be a comfortable home where they are able to freely practice their religion (Corbett, 2015). Similarly, that the mentioning of the refugees' religion did not change Taiwanese people's willingness to accept them may also be due to Taiwanese already knowing most Syrians are Muslim.

Although Taiwan is rarely mentioned within the broader debates about the Syrian refugee crisis, the findings here suggest both the potential for resettlement and

challenges to overcome in terms of public opinion. If the Taiwanese government were to decide to host refugees, they would garner more public support by accepting a smaller rather than a larger number of refugees. Moreover, they would also elicit greater public support by giving the public less information about the refugees, such as about their religion. In light of recent developments in the Syrian refugee crisis as well as Taiwan's potential upcoming refugee law, this study is especially important in showing how citizens of an East Asian country would respond to incoming Syrian refugees. As this study revealed, Taiwanese citizens are likely to agree to Taiwan taking in a limited number of Syrian refugees, which could help to alleviate the pressure on some Middle Eastern and European countries.

Conclusion

This research study has dealt with the issue of public opinion towards refugees. A look into the existing literature on the topic and an experimental study in Taiwan provides us with a deepened understanding of what factors influence public opinion of refugees and specifically what factors are most important to the Taiwanese public. To investigate public opinion is crucial, especially in democracies where the public is able to influence the government's agenda to a certain extent. If Taiwan were to consider accepting Syrian refugees, the Tsai administration would likely consider Taiwanese public opinion.

In Western Europe, public opinion toward refugees has become increasingly negative. According to a study conducted by the Pew Research Center, a median of 59% in ten EU countries are concerned refugees will increase the likelihood of terrorism. In Poland, Greece, Hungary, and Italy over 60% of the population see refugees from Syria and Iraq as a major threat. And the vast majority in all ten states

believes that the EU is doing a poor job of handling the refugee crisis (Poushter, 2016). Some of these opinions and fears are not unwarranted. In the last couple of years, Europe has seen quite a few terrorist attacks. France has been a common target, with the Charlie Hebdo attack in January 2015, the Paris attack in November of the same year, or the attack in Nice on Bastille Day 2016. Brussels was bombed in March 2016, and Germany and London have been among the targets, too. Many of these incidents have been claimed by radical Islamist organizations such as ISIS, and a few of the terrorists were later identified as having entered Europe as refugees, such as the truck driver in the December 2016 attack on a Christmas market in Berlin.

Public opinion is no trivial factor. Negative public opinion of refugees, and a growing Islamophobia in particular, has been one of the major factors that have encouraged the development and increased success of far right parties in Europe, such as the Alternative for Germany, France's National Front, the Party for Freedom in the Netherlands, Greece's Golden Dawn, or Hungary's Jobbik ("Europe's Rising Far Right").

This project is a work in progress, and I plan on adding onto it even after the conclusion of this thesis. As mentioned in the discussion above, a preliminary look at Taiwan shows that Islamophobia might not be as salient as it is in many Western countries. Because research has shown that through framing, media can have a salient effect on citizens' perceptions of refugees (e.g. Verkuyten; Esses et al.), I want to investigate the portrayal of Muslims in Taiwan in more detail. My survey questionnaire included two questions concerning how often participants watch or listen to the news, and what type of news sources they get their information from. In the near future I want to analyze these results and add these factors to my regressions,

in order to understand the trends this study has revealed even better, and to be able to compare Taiwan to the West in terms of Islamophobia.

In addition to the investigation of Taiwanese media portrayal of Muslims, I plan on expanding this study in three additional ways. First, Weldon (2004) points to the shortcomings of individual-level factors in explaining cross-national differences in levels of tolerance. For this reason, he researched how citizenship regime types affect tolerance of ethnic minorities, and found that citizens of collectivist-ethnic regimes who employ a *jus sanguinis* citizenship principle are far less tolerant of ethnic minorities than citizens of collectivist-civic or individual-civic regimes (345). Because of this I included a question in my survey, asking Taiwanese participants how citizenship should best be determined: by where a person is born, by the citizenship of the parents, or by the citizenship of the father? This is a test to see whether or not people want citizenship to be based on blood heritage (*jus sanguinis*) or on where one is born (*jus solis*) (Karalekas). By including this factor into my regression, I am curious to see what effect this factor has on participants' willingness to accept refugees, and if this will help to understand Taiwanese perceptions of refugees even better.

Second, future research might want to explore Taiwanese perceptions of different types of immigrant groups as well, for instance foreign guest workers, since these are the main group of immigrants into Taiwan. As of November 2011, there were 420,000 foreign contract workers in Taiwan, most of whom came from Southeast Asian nations, with the majority being from Indonesia (Lin, 2012). It might also be worth examining if Taiwanese are more willing to accept political rather than economic refugees, as has been shown to apply to Dutch citizens by Verkuyten (2004). Furthermore, future studies could investigate if Taiwanese are similar to other

people groups in that they are more willing to accept refugees from a country of origin close to their own, as has been shown by Kessler and Freeman (2005) and Gibney (1999). It would be interesting to see from which Asian country Taiwanese would be most willing to accept refugees.

Third and finally, I hope to eventually conduct a similar public opinion survey in a different country to be able to compare and contrast results with those of my Taiwanese survey. One option is Germany, which over the last few years has taken in almost a million refugees, a large percentage of whom is Syrian. It would be intriguing to compare German opinion to those of Taiwanese and to see what factor has greater influence on German perceptions of refugees: the number of refugees or the refugees' religion.

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