

Narratives on Arrival:

The Framing of the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Canadian Parliamentary Debates

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1. Abstract

Between 2013 and 2016, the Syrian refugee crisis captured the attention of the Canadian media. As citizens and political parties began calling for greater resettlement efforts, debate raged in Parliament. This paper examines how the Syrian refugee crisis was framed in Canada's parliamentary debates. Using the qualitative analysis software QDA Miner, this research performs a text analysis of the frames used on refugees in parliamentary debates from 2012 to 2017, and is supplemented by a literature review examining Canada's relationship with refugees, the media, and the dominant narratives employed around refugee issues. This paper seeks to address: What were the most common frames used during parliamentary debate to describe refugees? Do the frames vary by political party? How did Canada's largest political parties frame the crisis? How did the framing change over time? How does Canadian political framing compare with framing by mainstream media? My primary framing questions revolve around how refugees are depicted and represented, and on what grounds should Canada respond to the crisis (if at all). The most dominant frames on the depiction of refugees were of the victim frame, particularly as vulnerable, passive refugees lacking agency. Other popular employed included refugees as bogus 'queue-jumpers' or illegal migrants, as well as economization frames. On how and why Canada should respond, themes of humanitarianism, Canadian values and international obligations were all present, as were concerns with security and absorptive capacity. I also analysed how the debate varied by party affiliation, and over time, finding that the Conservative party was distinct in particular, and that the debate shifted from refugees as hapless victims to their resettlement and access to services.

Keywords: refugee*, frame*, question period, narrative, humanitarian, securitization

“I am probably the only immigration minister in the world whose major problem is an inability to get refugees to Canada fast enough to satisfy the overwhelming generosity of Canadians, but I am working on it”

– Minister John McCallum (April 18, 2016)

“Hard-working Canadians need to see better use of their tax dollars. They cannot afford bogus refugees. We need to crack down on the illegal abuse, while still showing compassion to those who genuinely need our help”

– MP Eve Adams (March 12, 2012)

2. Introduction

The demonstrations that began in 2011 in Syria, inspired by the Arab Spring uprisings, marked the start to a gruelling civil conflict that has ravaged the region and the country’s population. As the conflict has escalated, millions of Syrians have been compelled and forced to flee from their homes and leave the country. In the years that followed the start of hostilities, the number of refugees fleeing for Europe and Western countries began to overwhelm European capacity, and the UNHCR began calling on Canada and other developed countries to resettle more refugees. By 2015, the number of refugees fleeing Syria had topped the 4 million mark. As the crisis gained more traction in the media, the resettlement of Syrian refugees to Canada became an election issue during the summer of 2015, with the major Canadian political parties each pledging to welcome tens of thousands more into the country. In October 2015, the body of a young Syrian boy, Alan Kurdi, washed up on a shore in Greece. The picture quickly went viral, and elicited sympathy from Canadians of all political stripes. With the Liberals winning power, their pledge to take in 25,000 refugees was praised around the world.

This paper examines the framing of the Syrian refugee crisis in Canadian parliamentary discourse¹ from 2012 to 2017, in parliamentary question periods. Using a literature review and

¹ Discourse, as understood here, is defined as: “a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of

qualitative text analysis with cluster coding, this research analyses how Canadian political parties have framed the crisis and its subjects in order to promote certain values, policy options, and ideas about Canada and its role in domestic and international events. More broadly, this research examines the role of the media and parliamentary debate on how a political issue or event is framed by political parties. By comparing political parties and their branding, I aim to analyze how certain international migration issues are conceptualized, and what those narratives reveal about Canadian values and self-image. Looking chronologically at the discourse's evolution allows for evaluation of the impact of certain events, photos, or news stories on political narratives. This paper addresses the following central questions: What were the most common frames used during parliamentary debate to describe refugees? Do the frames vary by political party? How did Canada's largest political parties frame the crisis? How did the framing change over time? How does Canadian political framing compare with framing by mainstream media?

A literature review analyzes how Canadian media and Canadian political parties have traditionally aligned on humanitarian issues and how issue framing can influence policy. The review provides insight into the partisan narratives surrounding the crisis, including how elite views attempted to frame the issue, and how the specific events had an effect on narrative. As well, I include background information on refugee definition and subjectivity, framing in media and politics, and the role of parliamentary debate in the Canadian political context. These findings are intended to offer insight into how a refugee crisis is received journalistically and politically in Canada and how elite discourse has advanced certain narratives accordingly. The literature review also touches on the strengths and limitations of text analysis as a method.

events...Surrounding any one object, event, person etc., there may be a variety of different discourses, each with a different story to tell about the world, a different way of representing it to the world." (Burr, 1995, p. 48)

Throughout the development of the refugee crisis, Canadian political parties debated in Parliament on how Canada should respond to the crisis, employing a variety of frames to advance their political agendas. By analyzing these frames, this paper hopes to contribute to a greater understanding of how Canada and its political parties interpret international refugee crises, and how these debates may influence policy.

Why analyze this topic?

The manner in which Canadian political elites portray and respond to refugee crises, and the country's relation in regard to refugees can reveal a lot about how policies – both past and future – impact refugees and asylum seekers. Further, the reaction speaks to how Canadians understand their own values, identities, and what they hold important. How an issue is framed can shed a light into how parties set their agendas, the stability and strength of their positions, and what to expect for similar crises or political issues in the future. My analysis hopes to illuminate how partisan politics have framed the Syrian refugee crisis to fit certain narratives, and what this may mean for future refugee crises and refugee policy. Furthermore, the distinctiveness or similarity of the Canadian experience compared to other Western nations can situate Canada globally, and adds to the literature on political framing of refugees. Lastly, that there exists little research on the framing of the Syrian crisis, especially regarding parliamentary debate, makes this contribution timely and appreciated. An online search reveals that there are little to no published articles referencing the *LiPaD* parliamentary database (Beelen et al., 2017). My analysis is therefore novel in its use of previously untouched data.

3. Literature Review

What constitutes a refugee?

Canada is often described as a nation of immigrants. How its media and political actors discuss and evoke refugee claimants and newcomers should therefore constitute an important topic regarding identity and domestic politics. There is a key difference, however, between immigrants writ-large, and refugees. In Canadian print media and among the public, the former are more often well perceived, while the latter are scrutinized (Wallace, 2018). Because the perception of refugees has changed over time, it is important to understand how the definition of a ‘refugee’ can affect their social perception.

A. International Definitions

What constitutes a ‘refugee’ is most commonly defined in the legal sense, but can also be understood through subjectivities and social constructs of power. The first widely-acknowledged legal definition of a refugee came with the Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees in 1951 (Malkki 1995, 506).

[T]he term "refugee" shall apply to any person who[,] ... owing to 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.

This definition, contained in the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (111:26-28), is widely regarded as “the critical event in the institutionalization of the post-World War II regime” (Malkki 1995, 501) for handling refugees. The individual in question is understood as having rights to protection, rights which are determined and granted by states.

B. Social constructs and ‘refugeeness’ (subjectivity)

Much more than simply a legal descriptor, the term “refugee” carries with it social definitions and implications; a subjectivity exists to the term, since the term is adopted based on one’s socio-political situation. For Lacroix (2004), a refugee, or a person fleeing one’s country due to persecution or necessity, becomes a refugee claimant when confronted with a refugee determination system put in place by a given country. ‘Refugeeness,’ or refugee claimant subjectivity, presents the notion of a refugee as “a new kind of person, one who has been constructed by transnational forces – different systems at the supra, international and national levels” (Lacroix 2004, 148). At the macro level, construction of the refugee claimant subjectivity originates from the international refugee regime with its definitions and laws, which represents the dominant discourse on the definition of a refugee in the Western world. At the national state level, or meso level, the subjectivity is shaped in various nations through different restrictive policies and administrative measures, contributing to the construction of the refugee as ‘Other’ and to the social and political exclusion of asylum seekers from full participation in host societies. The micro level of the model deals with the more day-to-day procedures, experiences, and connections with work, family life and bureaucracy, and finally, the impact of Canadian refugee policy and institutions on their lives” (Lacroix 2004, 154). For the micro level, these three areas of a refugee’s life that affect their subjectivity are particularly impactful for the individual; the institutional influence on subjectivity is itself influenced by political dialogue and media attention.

‘Othering’, and how Syrians compare to other groups:

As a framework, Othering describes how certain groups are set apart from and marginalized by the mainstream community. The process of Othering “serves to mark and name those thought to be different from oneself” (Olsen et al. 2016, 10). In Said’s *Orientalism* (1994),

Orientalism is a Western style of dominating, restructuring, and having authority or power over the Orient or ‘Other.’ In effect, the unequal relationship between the Occident (the West) and the Orient (the ‘Other’), causes European culture to gain in strength and identity by setting itself up against the Orient culture (Said 1994, 3). The Oriental is seen as being irrational, deprived, childlike, and ‘different’, whereas the European is seen as rational, virtuous, mature, and ‘normal’ (Said 1994, 40). In the post-colonial era, this orientalism is still very present, as in the fetishization and exoticisation of non-Western cultures, in media and politics as well; Humanitarian aid and policy has a history of colonial paternalism, and aid relief campaigns have often relied on othering to elicit sympathy (and financial support). Considering Western orientalism, then, the Syrian refugee crisis would elicit particular sympathy and interest from a Western audience, “as those who flee repressive regimes (especially ones identified as Islamist or unfriendly to the West) are framed as deserving because they confirm Canada’s moral superiority and secure an image of Canada as progressive” (Fleras 2011, 146; Jenicek, Wong, and Lee, 2009). A Saidian analysis of the Orientalist construction of identity in the West would have Canada situating its own self-conception as the foil to the horrors of civil war in a far away, Middle Eastern, Muslim country. The racial and religious connotations, though rarely explicitly showcased, play a role.

Immigration policy and the integration of refugees into Canadian society is often promoted as a source of pride and nation-building, adding to the richness and diversity of the Canadian population. Regarding the latter, however, recent changes to the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP), which outlines the degree of health care coverage provided to refugees, provide a counterpoint. Power differentials between host countries and refugees are shaping the discourse on refugees. This characterization, Olsen et al. (2016) argue, can be seen when in April 2012, when the Conservative government proposed changes to the IFHP, a program which provides limited,

temporary coverage of health care costs to refugee claimants, rejected refugee claimants, and persons detained under the IRPA (Immigrant and Refugee Protection Act). The changes eliminated prescription medicine coverage, dental, vision, and other supplemental benefits (after some initial criticism, further changes were made, resulting in different classifications of special coverage, meaning that only government-assisted refugees and victims of trafficking would receive supplemental coverage).

With the changes to the IFHP, two classes of refugees were created: Designated Country of Origin (DCO) and non-designated country of origin. The creation of these categories of claimants narrowed the image of what is an acceptable refugee. The Canadian government claimed that the aim of the new policy was to deter “abuse” of the refugee system. In a 2012 Citizenship and Immigration position statement, Minister Kenney asserted that the changes to the IFHP would “stop the abuse of Canada’s generous and overburdened healthcare system by bogus refugees” (Olsen et al. 2016, 60). Unlike a non-DCO claimant, a claimant from a DCO country is depicted as “capable,” rather than “vulnerable,” and thus is likely to be a “bogus refugee.” This need to be wary of the “bogus” refugee creates Othering. Interestingly, then, Othering can both be used to cast the subject as vulnerable and in need of charity, and to cast them as a threat to the host society’s security, economy, or social cohesion. Othering is not an explicit process; rather, it is implicitly embedded in social beliefs and discourses surrounding “the refugee.” Because the Othering of refugees is implicit, it is effectively invisible and largely goes uncontested.

International views of Refugees

As Malkki (1995, 499) explains, careful study of early literature shows that refugees have not always been institutionally or discursively approached as an international humanitarian

problem. Indeed, “in the last years of World War II and the immediate postwar years, displaced people in Europe were classified as a military problem, and they were under the jurisdiction of the Displaced Persons Branch of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF).” Throughout much of the war, the control of civilians and refugees had been widely considered as a combat problem. In contrast, in the post 9-11 world, the discourse on states’ responsibilities for accepting and resettling refugees has fluctuated between humanitarian and economic, political, social security concerns. In Europe, where states have harmonized their immigration policies as part of EU policy, this synchronization has aimed for exclusion of refugees and asylum seekers, rather than inclusion. Refugees and asylum seekers have become the scapegoats in broader debates within the EU over the future of the welfare state. As access to welfare has become more competitive, asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants have been marginalized, and have seen their rights to welfare and employment erode (Gerard, 2014).

On Canadian Identity

When a country is faced with a crisis – whether political, social, or economic – the response often reflects, and can sometimes shape, the country’s national image. The Syrian refugee crisis is no exception. During the refugee crisis both media and parliamentary debate reflected ideals of Canada and its attributes and values. Canadian national identity is notoriously hard to define, but can be said to be based on a self-image of humanitarianism and liberalism governed by ethical and moral principles of social justice, universal health care and equity for all. As Tazreiter (2004, 7) explains, the core values of a state can be identified within refugee policy, something that cannot be said for wider immigration policy; “Immigration policy is broadly understood as an aspect of ‘nation-building’, utilized to balance economic and social deficits at particular points in time. On

the other hand, a state which has acceded to international human rights conventions, has ‘special’ obligations towards an individual who may be a refugee, no matter his/her mode of entry.” From humanitarian duty and compassion, to Canadian values and international obligations, the reaction to the crisis tended to elevate Canadians as altruistic and noble.

Humanitarian immigration is an important element in the construction of Canada's identity as a liberal and compassionate country. As Bauder (2008, 85) explains, “National identity is an important aspect of humanitarian immigration and the admission of refugees.” Humanitarianism is intimately linked to identity. Though the identity of the refugee claimant is important, it is only so because of the light it reflects back onto the host society. Indeed, as echoed by Dauverge (2005) and Bauder (2008, 85), “part of our humanitarianism... is about applauding ourselves.” As stated earlier, some would argue this characterization comes at the expense of ‘othering’ Syrian refugees (Bauder, 2008; Olsen et al. 2016; Wallace, 2018). By marginalizing Syrian refugees, a “saviour complex” is advanced, pitting vulnerable victims against humanitarian and generous Canadians. This was echoed by Tyyska et al. (2017, 7), who found that any criticism of the government during the height of the Syrian refugee crisis was “meted out at either Harper or Trudeau, or their governments ...as moral failures, [and] not in keeping with Canadian values...” These experiences with refugee crises are often described, for better or worse, as exercises in ‘nation-building.’

Brief History of Canadian Refugee Policy

Despite holding a more positive outlook towards refugees than other Western countries, Canada too has experienced the rise and fall of certain ideas about refugees, including a growing securitization of refugee claimants. Today Canada holds the favorable international reputation of having one of the more progressive and developed refugee claimant determination processes. In

contrast to many western countries' recent tightening and securitizing of immigration policy, this distinction only shines brighter. Canada's current status emerged through extensive debates over immigration policies and nation-building in the post-World War II period (Ashutosh and Mountz, 2012). While refugees did enter Canada in considerable numbers in the aftermath of World War II, there lacked a formal program or status for refugees. Canada did not sign the UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees until 1969 and only developed a formal refugee determination process with the passing of the 1976 Immigration Act. Prior to the 70s, the selection of refugees, managed by the Immigration department, under different names, began as ad-hoc (Lacroix, 2004). Only with the 1976 Immigration Act did a formal process for refugee determination take shape. In 1972, the Canadian approach to refugees was explained to the Executive Committee of the UNHCR as such, "Refugees selected for admission to Canada are admitted in the same manner as other immigrants and, as such, are extended the same rights and responsibilities as other Canadian residents" (Hawkins 1991, 166).

The immigration crises in the early to mid 1970s convinced the government that the previous ad-hoc basis was insufficient. The 'boat people' crisis and the immigration reform process that began in 1972 and culminated in the 1976 Immigration Act coincided in a timely manner. Canadian refugee policies were liberalized by this immigration legislation, when the 1976 Act instituted procedures to screen refugees from abroad (designated class) and procedures within Canada for those who arrive and claim asylum under refugee laws (convention refugees). Further, the 1976 legislation marked a departure from bringing in refugees only at the time of special world events and crises, to a commitment to bringing in substantial numbers of refugees each year (Green and Green, 1995).

This liberalization reversed in 1988 with the advent of Bills C55 and C84, which sought to limit access for convention refugees (asylum seekers) seeking refugee status in Canada. These bills sought to expand police powers in the name of the deterrence of false refugee claims. By advancing concerns about security and international crises, the Conservative government was able to promote these bills. Writing in the early 90s, Creese (1992, 123) notes that “more than 15 million refugees may be found today worldwide, and the majority are in Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. Under any definition this constitutes a refugee crisis.” Despite the international nature of the crisis, the issue has taken on a domestic crisis narrative as “Canadian refugee crises” during periods of increased refugee intake. The global refugee crisis was almost entirely ignored while attention focused on the alleged abuse of the Canadian immigration system by those claiming to be refugees. In the process, refugee claimants came to be seen less as individuals fleeing political persecution, and more as queue jumpers or illegal immigrants (Creese 1992, 129). The passage of C55 and C84 was deemed palatable to the public, in part due to the media’s characterization of the crisis and the refugees. The perception that the country was being ‘flooded’ with refugee claimants who were burdens on the society painted a portrait of deceptive, dishonest, and undeserving asylum seekers. Also, the negative discourse present in the leadup to C55 and C84 was influenced in part by two events: the rescue of 155 Tamils off the coast of Newfoundland in 1986 and the landing of 174 Sikhs in Nova Scotia in 1987. The dramatic nature of their arrival by sea, the relentless media attention and investigations into their veracity, and the hyperbole produced by politicians created the popular image of an assault on Canada’s borders by dishonest and bogus refugees. Prime Minister Brian Mulroney at the time said in recalling Parliament to crack down on ‘illegal migrants,’ “We are not dealing with refugees or with immigrants here” (Creese 1992, 138). Later that year, the Prime Minister made the confusing assertion that Canada needs more refugees but

must crack down on illegal immigrants. Media narratives were effectively weaponized by political parties to advance their policy agendas and pass tougher security laws.

Refugees were also increasingly seen from an economic perspective, both as a source of labour and as burdens on the welfare state. Creese argues that Canada's pre-selection policies are used to effectively choose refugees who have the most marketable skills for the labour force, and who are "most palatable based on geopolitical considerations" (Creese 1992, 127). This echoes Canada's immigration policies, which had originally focused on populating the country. Under the Liberals, the Immigration and Refugees Protection Act came into force in 2002. According to Lacroix, "the new Act has been criticized for its negative discourse 'laying emphasis on criminals and abusers' and stereotyping refugees and immigrants in highly negative terms" (Lacroix 2004, 152). This securitization of immigration has become more prominent after 9/11, where the threat of terrorism grabbed the global spotlight. This securitization plays on the illegality of asylum seekers and of belonging to a community. The concept of illegality also serves to obstruct an understanding of socio-economic inequalities within and between nation-states. A pattern of disparities is brought sharply into focus by Gilbert (2009, 39), who argues that: "'Illegal' in the sense of 'unauthorized' simply and quite conveniently obfuscates hegemonic domination, economic dependence and civil rights in immigration policy."

Previous reactions to refugee crises

As previously mentioned, the Canadian media and political reaction to previous refugee crises have tended to promote a threat and security frame, such as with the arrival of Sikhs and Tamils. The first significant experience post WWII occurred in the 1970s with the arrival of the Indochinese refugees, and was positively received by a public eager to offer their generosity and

support. However, as Cottle (2009) argues, global crises continue to be framed according to the continuing “pull of the national” interests and identities. Diab’s (2015) work has found that Canadian reactions to other refugee crises have also been based on Canadian national interests, not the humanitarian crisis itself. Take Canada’s response to the Chilean refugee crisis, which took place in the early 1970s, saw the Canadian government reluctant to take in refugees. She argues that despite the Canadian government’s humanitarian claims, fear and (in)security framed and defined its approach to refugee protection. Such fear and insecurity gave rise to a complex nexus of power that shaped the Chilean refugee resettlement. This posture was not based on US interests, which have been shown to habitually influence Canada’s foreign policy decisions. Canadian government officials formulated and rationalized their response to the refugee crisis in Chile on many occasions, but relations between Canada and the United States did not appear to play any significant role (Diab, 2015).

What is meant by framing?

How people absorb information on politics and the news affecting them has often to do with how the media or news source conceptualizes and packages the information. Different events are analyzed and weaved together to paint a coherent picture to the viewer. The media or the content producer tries to give the viewer suggestions on how different events or ideas are linked, and what their deeper meaning is. These ‘suggestions’ are “frames.” According to Gamson and Modigliani, a frame is “a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events, weaving a connection among them. The frame suggests what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue” (Gamson and Modigliani 1987, 143). For Entman (1993, 52), similarly, framing is “select[ing] some aspects of a perceived reality and making them

more salient in a communicating text.” These frames may be used to sway public opinion towards a desired policy objective, partisan view, or a particular understanding of an issue. By nature, these frames are politicized, and non-neutral (Berinsky and Kinder, 2006).

As Chong and Druckman (2007, 100) explain, “virtually all public debates involve competition between contending parties to establish the meaning and interpretation of issues. When citizens engage an issue—be it social security, foreign aid, a hate-group rally, affirmative action, or the use of public funds for art— they must grapple with opposing frames that are intended by opinion leaders to influence public preferences.” In competitive elite environments – that is, in situations in which individuals receive multiple frames representing alternative positions on an issue – repetition of certain frames may have more impact on less knowledgeable individuals, while knowledgeable audiences can systematically analyse the various strengths of different frames. An observation by Bradimore and Bauder (2011, 36) makes the connection between political and media discourse: “The media are inseparable from the political process. If media and political debates rely mostly on each other for information and knowledge, they then establish a closed discursive circle that silences dissent and stifles oppositional intervention.” In the lead-up to the 2015 election, the issue of the growing number of Syrian refugees began to make regular headlines in Canadian news media. As the story grew more salient, recurring narratives emerged along a spectrum from humanitarian compassion to securitization and threats.

Elite Discourse

Event-response theories are straightforward; events will shape public opinions and public supports for actions, such as war in the case of a foreign policy issue. This view takes for granted that the public is rational and undertakes a cost-benefit analysis in support or opposition to a

potential policy response to an external event. Berinsky (2007) points out several flaws in this theory, however, calling into question the assumption of the public's political knowledge, as well as the homogeneity of the 'public' and its partisanship. Instead, Berinsky presents an alternative view that focuses on competition among political elites, and its effects on public opinion. Building on Zaller's (1992) theory on elite competition, Berinsky (2007) advances an "elite cue theory", which hypothesizes that members of the mass public will look to prominent political actors as guides for their positions. Though his research focused on public support for war, important lessons on how the public shapes their views based on elite cues and the range of disagreement on a particular issue can be drawn and applied to the Syrian refugee crisis. When elites hold opposed views, citizens who are more informed will follow those political actors who share their views. If, on the other hand, elite discourse is unified in support of a political action or decision, public opinion should be characterized by the "mainstream pattern;" more informed citizens should be more supportive of government policy, regardless of their political predispositions. Canada, unlike most of its Western compatriots, has a political environment where all major parties value and support immigration (though for different reasons). Besides smaller far-right groups, its most successful populist movements to date have been *pro-immigrant* (Thompson, 2018). This widespread positive predisposition towards immigration has meant that Canadian political discourse on refugee issues has largely avoided all-out bans or rebukes.

In making sense of an issue for the public, what matters most is not the number of refugees or the words in international treaties, but how the crisis gets filtered through domestic politics. Of course, how the public feels about a certain issue is not *solely* driven by domestic politics and partisan opinion-making. Geography, history, and cultural values are all important inputs as well. Others would point to the media and political actors as a reflection of the public's positions.

Among the most prevalent models of the media's role in policymaking is the traditional and popular models. In the former, policymaking is the prerogative of an informed elite, with the media in derivative status. According to this view, the media simply reflects the policymakers' priorities, and can serve as a forum for debate. The 'popular model' essentially inverts this view, emphasizing the importance of domestic politics, public opinion and the influence of polls. This model assumes greater influence by television, radio, and journalism, with a loss of control by government policymakers (Minear, et al. 1996). That journalism plays a key role in setting the public agenda (Benson, 2010), is indisputable, but the degree to which political elites control the agenda remains contested.

Narratives of the Syrian Refugee Crisis

As the refugee crisis began making headlines internationally, European media took an especially severe tone regarding the arrival of refugees and asylum seekers. An analysis of domestic European media frames employed from January 2015 to January 2016 on the refugee crisis revealed that the most established narratives included security threat and economization most prominently. Humanitarianism frames and contextual information on the refugees' situation were also present, though in a lesser extent. The research also found that during especially intense phases of the crisis, when issue salience was most high, the media coverage broadened to multiple prominent frames, and 'crystallized' into a narrow set of frames (Greussing and Boomgaarden, 2017).

On the framing of immigration in Europe and the US, Benson and others (Benson 2010; Benson and Wood, 2015) have identified ten recurrent frames that capture the range of debate from left to right: three victim frames (global economic injustice, humanitarian, racism/xenophobia),

which call attention to racism and discrimination against immigrants or humanitarian concerns about immigrant human rights, suffering, and death, three hero frames (cultural diversity, integration, and good workers), which portray immigrants as “good workers” or contributors to “cultural diversity” and four threat frames (job threat, public order threat, fiscal threat, and national identity/culture threat), which accuse immigrants of taking jobs, costing taxpayers, or undermining national cohesion. Greussing and Boomgaarden (2017) found the most prevalent frames used with regards to refugees to be of victimization (focusing on their plight due to circumstances beyond their control), problem orientations (illegality, crime, terrorism, and economic costs) and anonymous, dehumanized characterizations of refugees.

Emerging migration scholars have acknowledged that the Syrian refugee crisis has fueled debate among many western nations (both for the government and public) on how to respond (Wallace, 2018). Because the crisis appeared to reach its zenith in the eyes of Canadians during an election year, only made this a particularly salient election issue. Others contend that for an issue to have an impact on the outcome of an election it must meet three conditions. First, it must be salient to voters; that is, voters must have an opinion on it and they must consider it relatively important. Second, the issue must be linked with partisan controversy. The issue will have little impact on election outcomes if all the parties are perceived to have the same position on it. Third, opinion must be strongly skewed in a single direction and not simply reflect the usual degree of attachment to the various political parties (Jackson and Jackson, 2001). That the Syrian refugee crisis became one of the most salient election issues places emphasis on their depiction. Since with regard to the integration of refugees and asylum seekers into society, “media coverage contributes to the construction of socially shared understandings and dominant representations of newly arriving people, which have further consequences for attitudes, emotions, and behaviour towards

them” (Greussing and Boomgaarden 2017, 1750; Quinsaat, 2014), this moment is likely to have implications for the next “refugee crisis” to capture Canadians’ attention and emotions.

Securitization

The post 9/11 era has been characterized by globalization, or an increasing mobility of goods, peoples and ideas. On the human side, broadening global inequalities and armed conflicts have seen an increase in the number of migrants, which has characterized itself as a problem for nation-states, particularly Western, immigrant-receiving countries. “Mobility in the current moment can be broadly characterized as increasingly global in scope, and as playing a central role in driving the domestic and international policies of governments (Castles and Miller, 2009; Gerard 2014, 31).” The politics of inclusion and belonging to the political community has reinforced the notion of securitization. Gerard (2014, 28) argues that “the securitization of migration is, in the main, engaged by advanced industrialized countries of the Global North.” This concern with security, linked with other issue areas like immigration and trade, have led many states to bolster refugee protection in the South in an attempt to avoid burden-sharing (Betts, 2011). Securitization may be defined as discursive practices (often in politics or in the media) that produce an existential threat to which a security response is then required (Waever 1993; Buzan et al. 1998; Bigo 2006). Securitization is an extreme form of politicization (Buzan et al. 1998, 23). It relies on the production of a security threat “that need not be tangible or evidence based, but which is elevated to a priority over and above other issues” (Buzan et al. 1998, 39). These security threats are often amplified by elites or the media in during ‘crises,’ real or imagined. In Europe, the manufacture of an ‘exceptional’ crisis around the arrival of people on the EU’s external borders

and within them has become a catalyst for shoring up cultural identity in EU countries (Mountz 2010, 46).”

However, scholars have advanced that crises can be regarded as ‘exceptional events’ that are able to “interrupt journalistic routines and create opportunities for promoting newly emerging interpretations of an issue” (Greussing and Boomgaarden 2017, 1750). Even Colson (2013, ii), who suggests that since 9/11, the dominant framing of Canadian refugee policy has cemented itself as securitization, admits that in moments of “contingency...refugee advocates [may be able to] destabilize the securitization meta-frame and help shift the framing of refugees into a more hospitable register.” The Syrian refugee crisis, then, holds the possibility that the dominant narrative surrounding refugees and refugee policy can change.

Canadian Media Framing of the Syrian Refugee Crisis

Tyyska et al.’s (2017) research analyzed Canadian media content from six media sources from September 2015 to April 2016, informed by theories of orientalism, neocolonialism, neoliberalism, and feminism. According to their research, three themes emerged in the Canadian media’s coverage of the Syrian refugee crisis: 1) Canadian values, specifically humanitarian and generosity; 2) representation of Syrian refugees as vulnerable and lacking agency; 3) gendered representation of male refugees as security threats. This matches with other Western country’s media narratives of refugees, which are depicted as agency-less victims and potential threats. Their thematic qualitative content analysis (covering 304 newspaper articles and 84 videos), found that the media both mirror and reinforce the government’s and public’s identity confusion in relation to the Syrian refugee issue. In other words, the media characterizes the issue through “soothing noises about the openness and generosity of Canadians... [while continuing] to depict refugees

along an inaccurate and misleading continuum between being needy and lacking agency, and as a possible threat” (Tyyska et al. 2017, 14). Wallace (2018) found that the Canadian media coverage shifted from conflict-dominated representations to more humanizing depictions, especially after the release of the Alan Kurdi picture. From then on, the focus appeared to be on refugee resettlement and services.

Hyndman et al. (2017) note that while a deterioration in attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers, often derided as ‘bogus refugees’ by politicians and the media, has been observed in the past decade, the resettlement of refugees has remained impervious to widespread criticism and continues to enjoy a positive image. Hiebert (2016, 13) attributes this to the fact of decentralization; “This decentralized approach has created a wider sense of ownership over immigration and integration, and may help explain why attempts to portray immigration in negative terms have failed to resonate in Canada.” As more stakeholders and sponsors participate, control over the immigration and integration process devolves to many actors. Luckily, this widespread participation serves to legitimize the policy, and protects it against populist suspicions and acrimony.

Since most refugees tend to come from Global South countries (Betts, 2011), race has often played a role in their representation. Unfortunately, this has manifested in demeaning coverage of new immigrants and minorities. According to Bradimore and Bauder, (2011) “Migrants and minorities are not necessarily labelled as inferior but are inferiorized through association with (1) negative news contexts, including crime, public disorder, and deviance; (2) cultural values and religious practices inconsistent with Canada’s national interests; and (3) their status as asylum seekers and undocumented immigration, which is seen as a security risk (Bradimore and Bauder, 2011). Media reporting on refugees usually fixates on the illegality of their entry, as well as the

costs associated with their processing or integration. Every time a new entrant is deemed to pose a security risk, Canada's refugee determination process is rebuked. More generally, immigrants are often cast as untrustworthy, and abusers of the welfare state, even when Canada's point system attracts some of the world's brightest and most competent. They are also often described in utilitarian terms for their contribution to the economy (Fleras, 2011).

Colson (2013) argues that the history of Canadian refugee integration has had three primary phases of framing: ambivalent humanitarianism in the inter-War years and the post-World War II period, then a shift to burdensome neo-humanitarianism (beginning in the late 1970s, in connection with the rise of neoliberalism); then shifting again (beginning in the 1990s) to securitization and criminality, especially with 9/11. However, the analysis does not suggest any more evolution beyond the 9/11- security frame. Could 2015 offer evidence of a shift back towards humanitarianism? Though politicians are often quoted in the media, a great part of the elite agenda-setting and political dialogue takes place on Parliament Hill. In particular, this inter-party arena is available to a public audience during parliamentary debate.

On parliamentary debate

“Question Period is the most visible part of the Canadian parliamentary process.

Indeed, for most Canadians, Question Period is Parliament.” (Penner, Blidook, and Soroka, 2006)

My analysis looks at parliamentary debate sessions, also known as “Question Period.” I chose to focus on this political venue, as it represents an arena where each political party is offered time to speak on pressing issues, and to challenge and question opposing parties. Though the official purpose of Question Period is “to seek information from the Government and to call it to account for its actions” (Ulrich 2011, 2), it performs many tasks. According to Penner et al. (2006,

1006), Question Period provides “a summary indication of those issues most salient to Canadian elected officials; it is a primary venue for ‘position-taking’ on the part of government and opposition members alike; it is a central means by which the executive is kept in check by Parliament; and last but certainly not least, it plays a starring role in nightly Newscasts.” With the advent of technology and a profusion of media sources, Question Period has become an important feature of the Canadian political arena. While initially questions were to be solely concerning matters of urgency, rule changes in 1975 and guidelines set by Speaker Jerome increasingly allowed more general lines of questioning, until it became the more-or-less open forum for debate that it is now. The introduction of televised coverage in 1977 brought attention to the issue of improper conduct, and helped reaffirm its purpose as a rendition of information and accounts. Acting on behalf of the public, elected members have absolute freedom to question cabinet concerning its actions, with rules in place to ensure “that no issue is inviolate, that all are eligible to be examined...in the glare of the most embarrassing public spotlight” (Franks 1987, 154). Thus, while the stated purpose is to seek and give information, the real objective, at least on the part of the opposition, is to point out inconsistencies, expenses, and other political issues or contentions to keep the opposition in check, or scrutinize policy. As well, Question Period can be used to propose new legislation and policy, and to sway the public towards a particular view or leaning (Ulrich, 2011).

Academic literature generally concurs that the central purpose of Question Period is one of public accountability. According to parliamentary expert C.E.S. Franks (1987, 156), the “challenging of the ‘noble lies’ of the state through the institutionalization of doubt in question period and debate is one of the unusual and underappreciated virtues of the parliamentary system.” The fact that the sessions are televised adds to the pressure to prepare their main arguments, and

to avoid having a lie or inaccurate position be quoted in the news. The public visibility that Question Time operates in makes MPs take it seriously, and consider the argument fully (Tazreiter 2004, 3).

The media's role in disseminating the activities of parliamentary debate is essential. The effectiveness of Question Period depends on the media because it is "the means by which the public become involved—a critical element of public accountability" (Ulrich 2011, 7). After all, it is the media who synthesizes the debate for the public; it digests, analyses, and disseminates the information. When a position or political opinion is uttered and reinforced during Question Period, a responsibility is placed on the speaker; the statement is now recorded, and may be reproduced, quoted, or referenced in the media or a political ad.

Question period carries with it media attention and public scrutiny, which has an effect on issue saliency in agenda setting. According to one study, there exists a correlation between issue priorities of the opposition, as represented by their questions in Question Period, and the Canadian public, as represented by "most important problem" questions in polling (Ulrich 2011, 4). Critics of the practice decry its theatrical nature, arguing that the periods require rehearsal, scripts, and largely anticipated responses and questions. This makes for a performance on issues without depth and thoughtful criticism. However, even if the questions and debate in general is highly scripted and anticipated, the rehearsal aspect entails careful analysis and alignment with party platform, political agenda, and proposed policies. Therefore, how an issue is framed and presented can prove to be enlightening on how each party expects to propose policy solutions, frame the debate, and shape the outcome.

But to what extent are public issue priorities reflected in the content of oral questions? According to Penner, Blidook and Soroka, (2006), parties' agendas vary in a manner that reflects

public issue attentiveness. Thus, Question Period and parliamentary debate is a forum in which issues salient to the Canadian public are debated, framed, and represented. Further, the analysis showed that representation of political issues appear more partisan than generalized in Question Period. Also, “to the extent that representation of public issue attentiveness exists in Question Period, cross-partisan differences clearly trump overtime trends. That is, at any given time, parties’ behaviour in Question Period broadly reflects differences in the issue priorities of their partisans” (Penner et al. 2006, 1018). Question period allows researchers to reliably tease out party preferences, due to the nature of the Canadian system; in parliamentary systems, the need to maintain the confidence of the legislature means that party cohesiveness is strong. Party discipline is especially strong in Canada (Galloway, 2013). This means that individual party members will reflect the party’s representative focus in parliamentary systems due to the party’s cohesiveness being a strong predictor and driver of MPs’ legislative behaviour (Penner et al., 2006).

There are limits to the importance and usefulness of Question period, however. Since the majority of questions are asked by the opposition parties, they do not necessarily reflect the full scope of a policy, or even the ruling party’s priorities. It is up to the parties to ask questions concerning issues with particular policies, which may or may not be priorities for the government in power. Oral questions, then, have a tenuous link with policy, often reflecting the symbolic nature of an issue rather than its substance. As Penner et al. (2006, 1009) suggest, however, this is not necessarily a negative thing, as “much of politics is symbolic, and oral questions may provide a valuable indication of this aspect of the policy-making process.”

4. Data and Methods

This work builds on a dataset of 1015 speeches made by Canadian members of Parliament during parliamentary sessions from 2011 to December 2017. The data is entirely made up of speeches, questions, and responses related to Canadian immigration issues, with a particular focus on Syrian refugees and Canada's response to the migration crisis. The lengthy time period allows reflection on the immigration issues of salience just before the crisis became a newsworthy topic across Canadian media.

Data Selection: Selection and Time considerations

Although the war in Syria officially began in 2011, very little Canadian media attention was paid to the conflict until the Canadian embassy closed in March 2012. Though international media sources did pay attention, their initial analysis was centered on the "Arab Spring" phenomenon and did not substantially discuss the conflict and its effects on refugee migration. To ensure saliency in the sample, I limited my data sources from 2011 to the end of 2017. The earliest mention of the word "Syria" was in September 2011. I chose to end the analysis at the end of 2017, because the media and political attention on the Syrian refugee crisis had sufficiently died down by then. Interestingly, 2012 saw much parliamentary debate on a set of immigration bills aimed at granting more power to the minister of immigration in asylum claim processing and instituting more security processes. By capturing this debate in the data-set, my analysis was able to capture the preceding deliberations on refugee policy prior to the immediate concerns with the resettling of Syrian refugees.

The dataset was collected from lipad.com (Beelen et al., 2017), a website which houses a Canadian Hansard dataset – records and transcripts of all parliamentary debates and comments.

As a first step, the data, which was in PreGeSQL format, had to be converted to .xlsx to be used in Microsoft Excel. The query used is as follows:

*Select all rows that contain the case-insensitive word "immigration" in either the maintopic or subtopic */*
*SELECT * FROM dilipadsite_basehansard WHERE maintopic ILIKE '%immigration%' OR subtopic ILIKE '%immigration%';*

Since this crisis presented an opportunity to revisit classic frames and interpretations of refugee issues, the frames employed surrounding the 2012 debates on Bill C-51 and the resettling of Syrian Refugees (2014-2016) provided insight into the stability/rigidness of Canadian interpretations of refugee policy. Further, the escalating coverage of the crisis coincided with the 2015 federal election cycle, which helped make the Canadian response to the refugee crisis an election issue. The study also aimed to look at changes in framing over time.

This study is innovative as it is (or is among) the first to address issue framing of the Syrian refugee crisis by Canadian political parties over an extended timeframe, and through parliamentary question period. The relative lack of literature and data on this subject is due to the newness of the subject, making this analysis timely and useful as a first attempt to analyze framing of the Syrian refugee crisis in Canada.

In order to find identify and analyze common frame, I undertook multiple methods, including automated text analysis and manual qualitative analysis. As Tolley (2015, 967) warns, “The reliance on a single method for analysing media texts underpins one of the fundamental debates among researchers who engage in content analysis: the trade-off between reliability and validity.” In essence, automated coding is highly efficient approach to content analysis, but can be subject to error given the complexities and ambiguities of language. As Grimmer and Stewart (2013) argue, automated coding cannot replace careful reading of text. However, it is very useful in classifying and categorizing themes across large volumes of texts, and can uncover large

patterns of association and categorization. Though I was not able to validate my coding and classification results, I believe that my methods (using automated text analysis as well as coding through careful reading) are adequate to analysing these texts.

To develop the coding scheme, I independently read through the speeches, and identified the most prevalent themes supporting or opposing refugee integration, how refugees were depicted, how Canada was seen in relation, and how the government should respond specifically to the Syrian refugee crisis. To determine the primary frames and variables, I used three methods. First, I read through a random sample from my dataset, and pulled out the primary themes and narratives I could identify. Next, I informed my frame selection by examining what other scholars had identified as the primary frames used with regards to refugees. This information came from my literature review, and resulted in identifying and substantiating frames, such as economic burden frames, threat and values-based frames. Lastly, I cross-referenced the frames I had identified thus far with the data itself, using WordStat, a content analysis software program created by Provalis Research. I explored the most frequent terms and phrases in the corpus and selected those that were substantively related to issues surrounding the crisis and my chosen frames; the goal of this step was to identify a collection of terms and phrases that are connected directly to the issue under study and to then assess if and how those terms are used in conjunction with one another in internally coherent frames.

Effectively, this meant compiling a set of terms that were meaningfully connected to the refugee crisis and using various features of the program to determine if there were consistent patterns in the clustering of words or phrases that constituted distinct themes. With WordStat's dendrogram function, a feature of the program that uses Jaccard's coefficient to analyze the cooccurrence of selected words and phrases, I was able to determine what clusters of words and

phrases existed in the sample and how these clusters were grouped or connected to one another. Many clusters of words had very high Eigenvalues, suggesting that they tended to be grouped and spoken together and on similar subjects. This allowed me to more quickly assign codes to the text. For example, the words “health” and “benefits” and “receive” were clustered together very strongly and would indicate a framing of the health benefits for refugees as being a costly to taxpayers and the social services, and therefore “economic drain”. In order to avoid falsely coding question rebuttals, I made sure to verify the intent of each frame selection. The chosen frames can be seen in Table 1. Though I assigned more frames than the 11 shown below, these are the most useful and insightful frames. Using QDA Miner software, I also analysed my coding using the dendrogram feature (see Figure 1).

Table 1
Description of the Frames

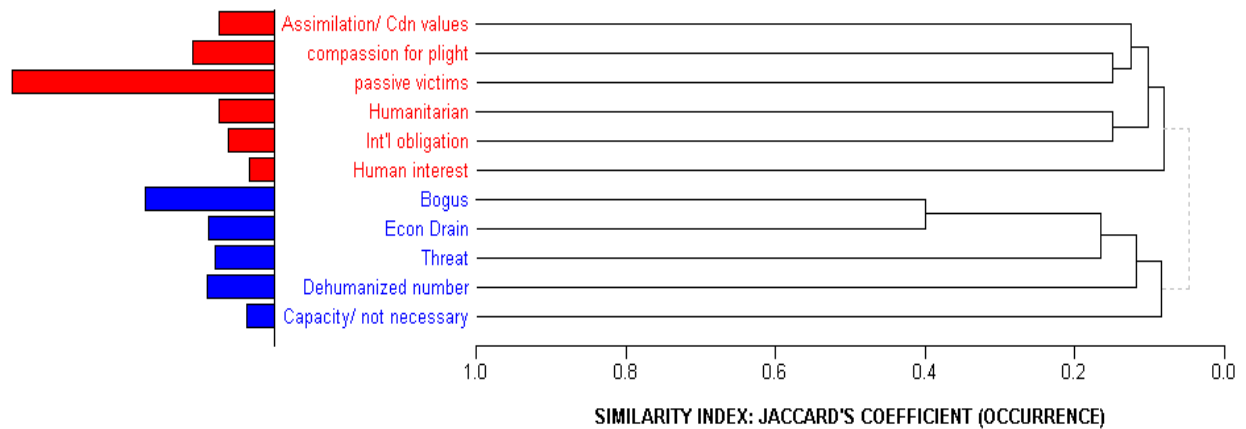
<i>Question frame</i>	Frame	Description	Example from Dataset
<i>Let Them In: Given the crisis, why should Canada respond?</i>	Humanitarian	Encompasses discussion of humanitarian duty to protect and shelter refugees, as well as ethical and moral reasons.	“We are all members of the same big human family, and we should be sharing the burden of others' suffering. Like Canadian children, Syrian children are our children. We need to open our hearts and oppose the violence that these children are experiencing.” (Maria Mourani, 28/04/2014)
	International Obligations	Encompasses discussion of international treaties related to refugees, as well as international expectations and obligations for Canadian engagement.	“When will the government respond to the call of the United Nations, which is trying to relocate 100,000 Syrian refugees?” / “The civil war in Syria continues to wreak havoc. Canadians want Canada to meet its international commitments.” (Lysane

		Blanchette-Lamothe, 09/06/2014 and 16/06/2014)
Canadian Values & Assimilation	Encompasses references to Canadian values and demographic needs. Included discussion of the vetting process and refugee's entry into Canada.	"I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to point out that Canada is a welcoming land and that our wealth is built on the 250,000 newcomers who become part of our Canadian society every year." (Steven Blaney, 05/11/2013) / "Helping the world's most vulnerable is part of who we are as Canadians." (Andrew Cash, 19/06/2015)
Capacity / Non-issue	Encompasses discussion on the lack of capacity to take in refugees, and strain on social services; this includes views that Canada does not need to take in more refugees than usual.	"On the contrary, we have done more than our part in resettling refugees from Iraq and Syria. We continue to do so." (Chris Alexander, 31/03/2015)
Threat & Security	Encompasses discussion on security issues, threats arising from refugees, and the procedures surrounding the entry process.	"We need to be able to determine that these refugees are not posing a threat to Canada. Sometimes when they come here with fake passports and documents, we do not know whom we are dealing with. Therefore, it is important that we put the security and safety of Canadians first." (Corneliu Chisu, 15/03/2012)
<i>Refugee Definition: How are Refugees perceived?</i>	Human Interest Story Encompasses personalized accounts of a family, individual, or personal anecdote, bringing the subject to vivid detail and familiarity. This frame is generally an emotionalized	"Families are broken apart because of the government's delays. Canadian citizen Anya Sass and her husband are trapped in a Damascus suburb threatened by ISIS

	perspective and places the human subject at the center of the narrative.	militants. After two years of delays, Mike Wise's family has had to settle in Sweden, not in Canada.” (Paul Dewar, 22/09/2014)
Compassion for plight	Encompasses emotionalized compassion towards refugees; generally compassionate view of the refugees’ stories and situations. Though this is similar to the “Passive victim” frame, this frame is generally less pejorative, and often attributes agency to the subjects.	“That is what people do when they are trying to find a bit of hope, a bit of light in their life, when they are trying to get out of terrible situations, when, for their own sake and for the sake of their children, they want to go live a better life in a free society. They think they will be welcomed there with open arms on humanitarian grounds and received as our brothers and sisters.” (Hon. Judy Sgro, 27/09/2011)
Passive Victim	Encompasses representations of refugees as lacking in agency, hapless, silent, or helpless victims in need of protection. Includes representations of being powerless and dependent on the good-will or protections of foreign countries like Canada. Though sometimes articulated in a compassionate tone, this frame nonetheless treats refugees in a nameless, pejorative manner, casting them as a burden on social services and generosity.	“Instead of helping millions of people displaced inside Iraq and Syria made refugees by a terrible conflict where brutal terrorists are murdering minorities every day, they would have us sit on the sidelines.” (Chris Alexander, 20/11/2014) / “They are the most vulnerable. I, for one, am very proud that almost 25,000 of them are now in Canada.” (John McCallum, 23/02/2016)
Dehumanized number	Encompasses discussion of refugees in a dehumanized manner. The language often utilizes imagery relating to the ocean; “waves” of refugees, “flooding” the system, “boatload,” “tides”, etc. Within this frame, the	“The UN has called the flood of refugees in Syria ‘a mega crisis’” (Andrew Cash, 19/11/2014) / The refugee camps are overflowing. There are one million refugees in Lebanon, which has a

		powerlessness of the immigration service is contrasted with the flood of people attempting to come into the country. The refugees are cast as anonymous numbers, alien to the host society, reinforcing an “us vs them” dichotomy.	population of 4.3 million. (Maria Mourani, 28/04/2014)
Problem orientations	a. Bogus Claimants	Encompasses illegality, crime, and security threats. Refugees are scrutinized on their legitimacy; they are compartmentalized into the illegitimate, “bogus” refugee, often depicted as “queue jumpers” who abuse the generosity of Canadians and the social services of the welfare state, or they are seen as “legitimate,” “bona fide” or “genuine” refugees with rights and deserving of support. In the first case, they are seen as a drain on public resources and the intake-capacity, while legitimate refugees are seen as rights-holders.	“We do not know if they are real refugees, which some of them may be. We do not know if they are bogus refugees trying to take advantage of our generous system. We do not know if they are queue jumpers trying to get into Canada” (Ted Opitz, 17/05/2012)
	b. Economic Drain/Burden	Encompasses representations of refugees as a drain on public resources, which represents an economization frame. They are presented as a burden on the economy and on the generosity of citizens. The costs and expenses of refugee services are often grouped in with this language.	“We will not tolerate abuse of our overburdened health care system by bogus claimants” (Chungsen Leung, 06/12/2012) / “We have already seen the Liberals' inability to manage costs related to resettling refugees, with their campaign promise of \$250 million ballooning to over \$1 billion, and now we know why” (Andrew Scheer, 11/12/2015)

Figure 1:



A dendrogram is a visual representation of hierarchical clustering, showing the relationship between data compounds. Essentially, the closer the cluster of data to another ‘compound’ (in this case, frame) of data, the smaller the occurrence coefficient. The dendrogram suggests that several frames are co-occur often. That ‘Bogus’ and ‘Economic Drain’ are strongly linked (have a small ‘height’) makes sense, since when refugees were framed as being undeserving and suspect, they were often cast as both illegal or illegitimate and as welfare state abusers. The ‘threat’ frame (in why Canada should be cautious about letting in refugees) is also closely associated with ‘Bogus’ and ‘Economic Drain,’ reflecting a negative and critical view of refugees as a risk and burden on Canadians. On the other hand, the ‘Human interest’ frame seem to not be connected closely to the other groupings, as seen by its long height. This indicates that narratives around personal or individual people tended to occur free from other groupings or frames.

Limitations:

My analysis covers the parliamentary debates, and by extension, how Canadian political parties frame refugees and the crisis. My research does not cover how local-level understandings may differ from national-level criticism. Further, tone was not analyzed as a separate variable, but was taken into account when assigning codes. This helped to prevent the assigning of a code when

a comment was a rebuttal or clarifying question regarding a previous comment from another party. Additionally, that my dataset covered an extensive timeline, one which saw a substantial debate on immigration and security, may have skewed data towards the ‘Threat’ frame. The debate on the Bill C-51 saw the Conservatives argue fiercely for greater security precautions, and so may have exaggerated their association with security concerns and problem-frames.

5. Findings

The data can be analysed in a number of ways. First, by simply using the text-retrieval function, certain words can be identified that correspond with certain frames or narratives. For example, the word “Syria*” comes up 560 times, while “Syria* AND refugee*” come up 384 times. As Table 2 illustrates, certain words associated with particular frames were present very often, indicating that the debate over the issue concerned itself with questions on the resettlement process, refugee selection, moral or political imperative, eligibility, fraud and abuse, and more.

Table 2:

Word	Count	Word	Count
“Refugee”	2842	“Syria*”	560
“Bogus”	129	“Vulnerable”	163
“Abus*”	223	“Commitment*”	110
“Queue”	53	“Taxpayer*”	186
“Genuine”	77	“Humanitarian”	126
“Victim*”	110	“Resettl*” OR “Accepting”	273

By disaggregating the use of words by party, a clearer understanding of the strategic manipulation of frames reveals itself. For example, “values,” which can be used to evoke Canadian identity, moral duty, or nationalistic pride, was most strongly associated with two parties. “Value*,” interestingly, came up most in 2014-2015, and was split by the NDP and Conservatives. That the Liberals appeared to avoid talking about values is interesting, and seems to echo political analysis

on the 2015 campaign, where the Liberals chose not to engage in the debate surrounding Canadian values, and the subsequent Islamophobia issues. On the other hand, almost all mentions of “Bogus” refugee claimants and concerns about the abuse of the immigration system and welfare state (especially healthcare) seems to be attributed to the Conservatives. Table 3 (below) shows the mention of certain words in the filtered Dataset (2011-2017);

Table 3:

<i>Party</i>	“Value*” (by sentence)	“Security” AND “Threat*” (by paragraph)	“Bogus” AND “Abus*” (by paragraph)
<i>Bloc Québécois</i>	5	0	0
<i>Progressive Conservatives</i>	27	8	34
<i>Green Party</i>	1	0	0
<i>Liberal Party</i>	9	0	0
<i>NDP</i>	35	5	2

Coding Analysis

Three macro-frames which emerged from my analysis. First, the “problem frames” – depicting refugees as security threats, bogus claimants, or economic burdens. Second, the “moral” or “humanitarian” frame, which included humanitarian intervention as driver of policy towards refugees, and depictions of Syrian refugees in a compassionate, human interest, or victimized frame. Thirdly, an economization or “resource” frame was present, which included depictions of refugees as dehumanized numbers, and concerns over capacity and economic potential with regards to responding to the refugee crisis. Grouping the six refugee definition frames into three categories: Human Interest and Compassion as “Moral/Compassion”, Passive Victims and Dehumanized as “Othering” and Bogus and Economic Drain as “Problem-Frame”, we find that the number of cases is as follows: 186 for Moral/Compassion, 569 for “Othering” and 337 for “Problem-Frame”. This suggests that the majority (52%) of (1092) the framing contributed to

‘othering’ the refugees, and generally did not give them agency. Next, 31% of the framing cast the refugees as a problem, while the other 17% appealed to compassion for their plight and grounded their condition to their humanity. The figures below (Figure 2 & 3) show the breakdown of coding frequencies for these main categories. For the ‘Let them in’ category (the question surrounding how and why Canada should commit to resettling refugees), the ‘positive’ (Humanitarian, International Obligation, and Canadian Values) frames hold the majority of the narrative, with appeals being made to Canada’s values and past history of humanitarianism and charity. Threats and lack of capacity did figure prominently as well, though part of this can be attributed to the debate in 2012 on bill C-31, ‘Protecting Canada’s Immigration System Act.’ These concerns cast the refugees in a mistrustful light, often questioning their veracity and legitimacy. Statements such as “We take lessons from no one. We are leading the world with respect to refugee protection²” tried to argue that Canada’s immigration system did not need to increase resettlement efforts, and that enough was being done. The vaunting of Canada’s values and history of immigration not only served to pit Canada as a beacon of liberal values, but was often accompanied by commentary on the private resettlement (PSR) program, and stories of generosity from citizens. Statements such as “They are making a home in our neighbourhoods, contributing to our economy and giving back to our community³” served to link refugees with valued immigrants and nation-building.

Figure 2:

² Jason Kenney, March 7, 2013.

³ Rathika Sitsabaiesan, May 17th, 2012.

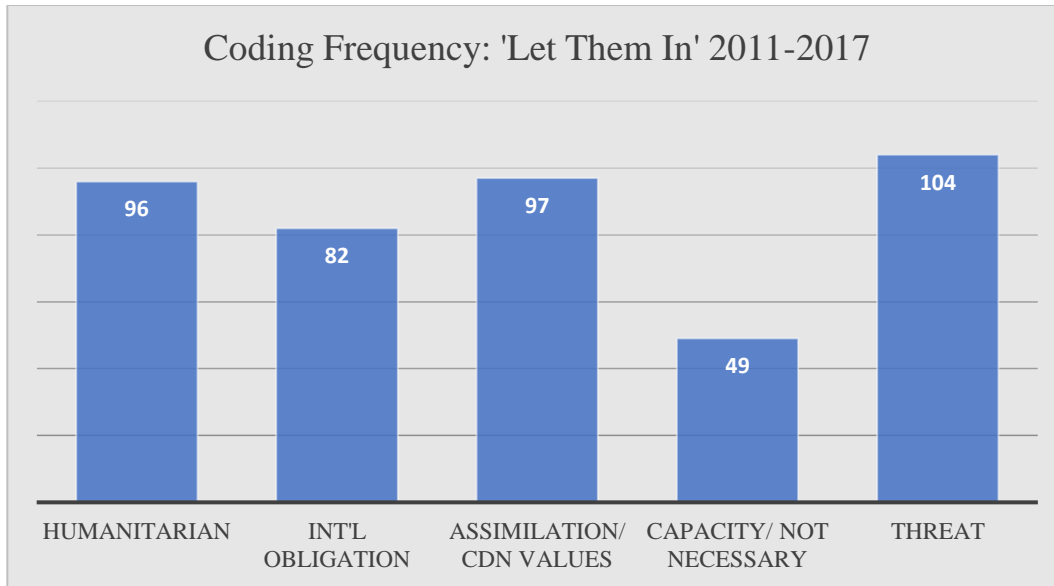
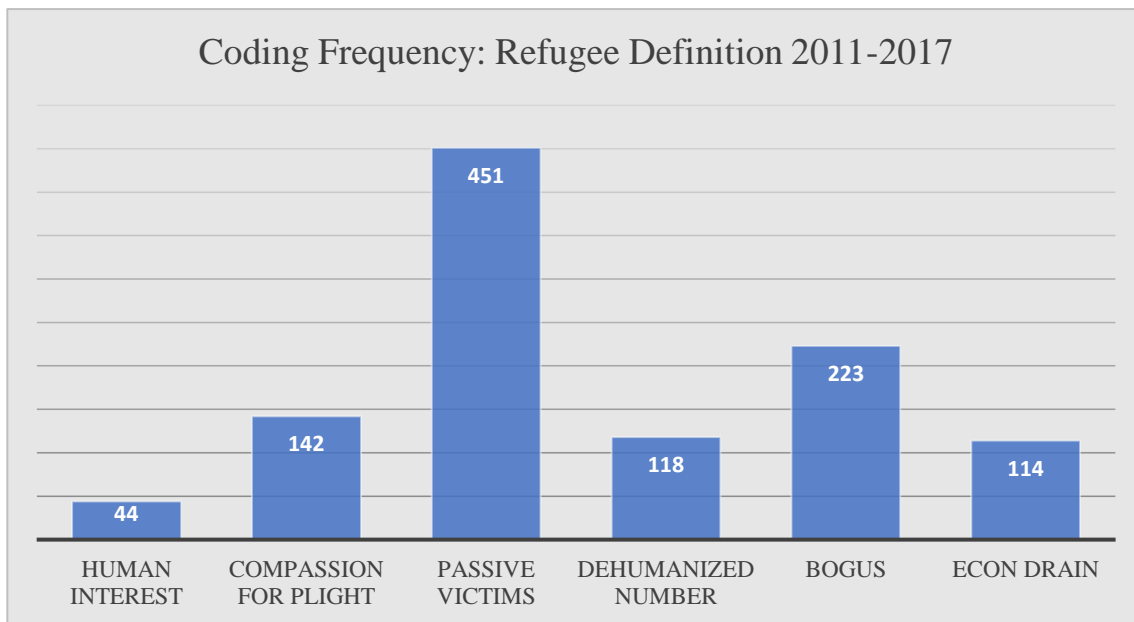


Figure 3:



Overall, the parliamentary debate held a generally positive view of refugees. Though the securitization frame and victimization frame were among the most commonly expressed, there was almost no mention of terrorism or more negative castings, especially when the crisis became an election issue. This period of time also covered the Paris attacks in 2015, which failed to significantly impact the parliamentary dialogue on the issue of resettlement. In Figure 3, the most

dominant frame was the passive victim frame, where refugees are depicted as lacking agency and as being vulnerable. While this often elicited compassion, it also served to reward Canada for its generosity and values, rather than provide informed nuance about refugee efforts to find safety. Taken together, however, less than a third of frames depicting refugees were explicitly negative (casting subjects as bogus or economic drains).

When breaking down the data by party,⁴ however, the data finds that some frames are clearly attributable to certain parties over others. As seen in Figure 4, the problem frames of ‘Bogus’ and ‘Economic Drain’ are disproportionately attributed to the Conservatives. For the NDP, they stand out in terms of using compassionate frames while discussing refugees. All three major parties, however, often depicted refugees as passive victims, especially the Liberals and NDP. As for the question of why (and if) Canada should admit more refugees, the Conservatives were almost unanimously the hesitant party, often bringing up security, illegality, and cost concerns over increasing the intake of refugees. They often did this while simultaneously boasting about Canada’s history of humanitarian support and refugee protection (see Figure 5).

Figure 4:

⁴ For clarity, the Green Party, Bloc Québécois, and Independent parties are not shown. They had very low input and do not significantly affect the analysis or findings.

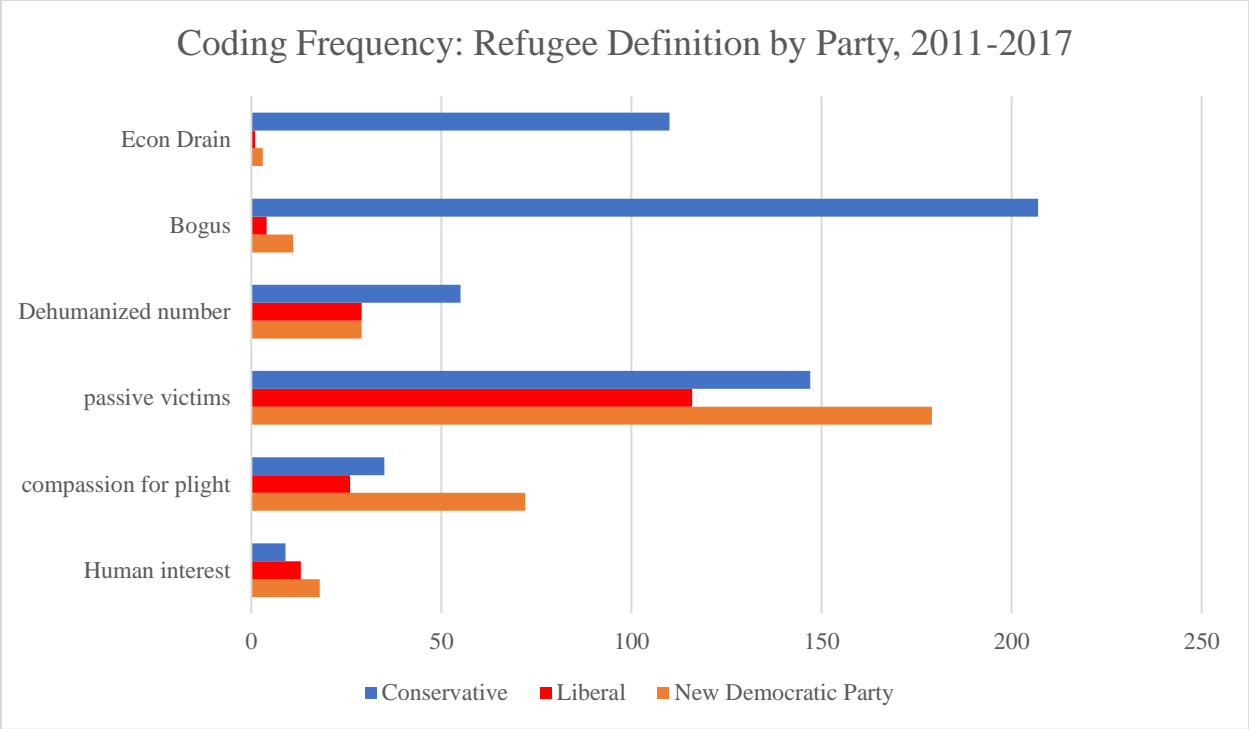
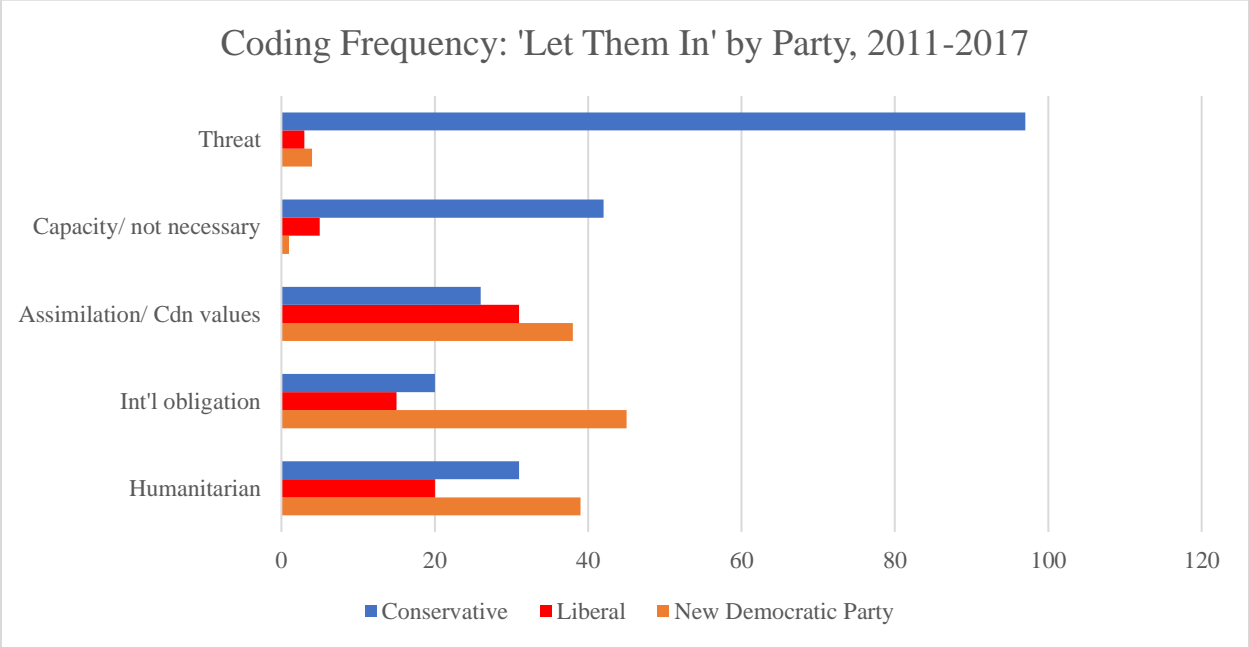


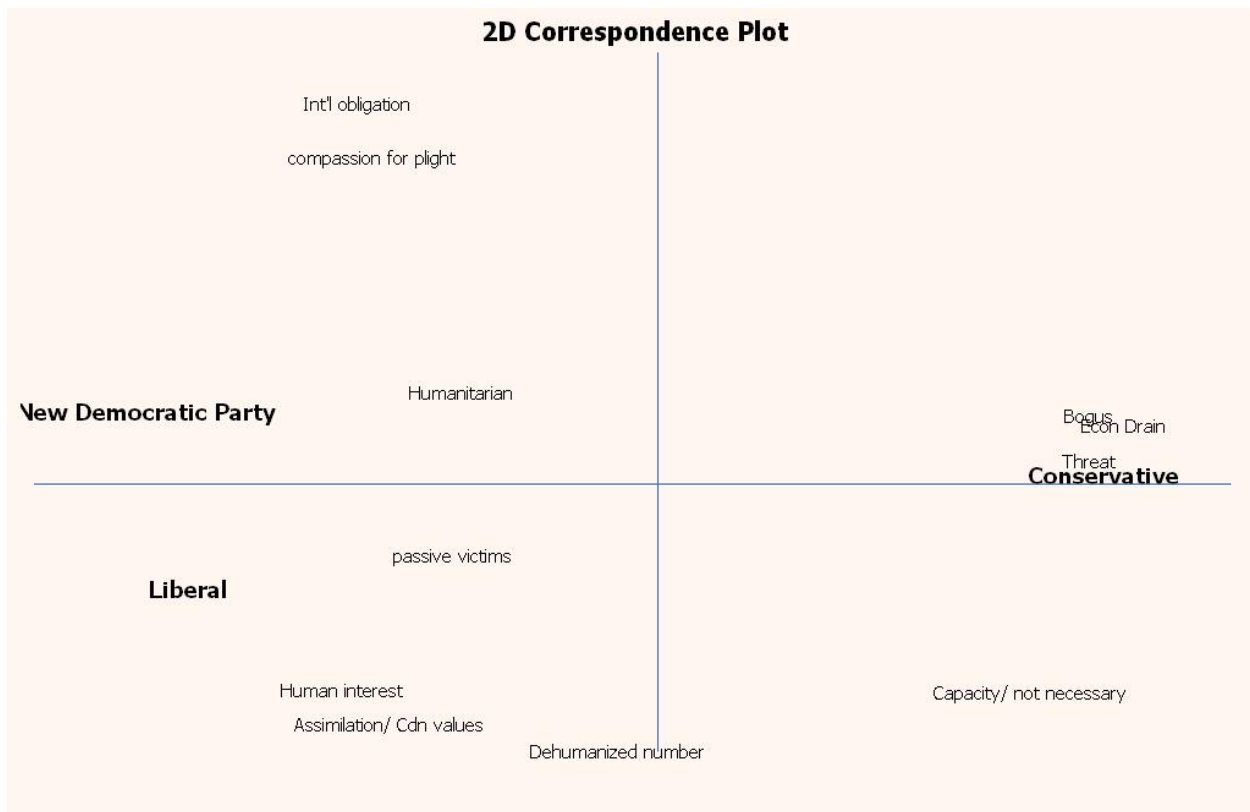
Figure 5:



The 2D Correspondence Plot (see Figure 6 below) visualizes the parties’ alignment on certain frames. The data is ‘reduced’ and simplified down to group data together into clusters.

Each frame or variable is then mapped along axes; the distance between variables illustrates their proximity or likeness. Here, the Conservatives are more closely aligned to ‘Bogus,’ ‘Econ Drain,’ ‘Threat’ and ‘Capacity’ frames, while the NDP and Liberals are associated with frames on ‘Humanitarian’ duty, and ‘International Obligations’, as well as depicting refugees as ‘Passive Victims’ or with ‘Compassion.’ The farther away from the origin (where the X and Y axes meet), the more discriminating or distinct the frames are. This indicates that the Conservative party utilized distinct frames from the other parties, and is positioned quite distinctly from the other parties. The NDP and Liberals, on the other hand, are more similar in their framing and political positioning, indicating more similarities on political issues and narratives. The correspondence plot is divided by two dimensions. On the left to right axes, we see a traditional political divide between conservatism and left or liberal thought. As expected, the NDP and Liberals are on the left, and rather closely aligned; on the right are the Conservatives. The North-South axes appear to be a spectrum between humanitarian concerns on the top, to economic, dehumanized depictions and concerns on the bottom.

Figure 6:



The frames utilized in the debates were not static. Figures 7 and 8 (see bottom) highlight the change over time of the frames. Interestingly, following the Alan Kurdi picture, the ‘Human interest’ frame is more pronounced, and the ‘Bogus’ and ‘Economic Drain’ frames are significantly less present for many months after. With their arrival, the fears about the economic burden subsided; the emotional power of the Alan Kurdi picture also probably dissuaded derogatory comments and concerns over legitimacy. There is also a marked decrease in the ‘Dehumanized number’ frame, indicating that the depiction of refugees began to shift away from an outsider, dehumanized representation, towards issues of resettlement as new Canadian residents. Additionally, the dominant frames on refugees after the election are ‘Passive Victims’ and ‘Compassion’, signifying a slight shift from the pre-election time, where a greater variety of frames, including problem-frames, are more present. In the lead-up to the election, the focus of Canada’s engagement with the crisis begins shifting away from international commitments, to a

discussion on Canadian values and Canada's humanitarian character and history. This makes sense, as parties had a multitude of messages linking Canada with a glorified humanitarian history and a proud moral tradition. As mentioned, the post-election period sees a shift in the tone used against refugees. Perhaps because they are now 'in,' the bulk of the debate surrounds the provision (or lack thereof) of resettlement and integration services, such as health and language training. Though still depicted as lacking agency and in need of support, the refugees are no longer anonymous masses.

6. Discussion

Although more research and analysis are needed on the subject, it appears that media narratives and frames matched frames used by political parties in the House of Commons. For example, Tyyska et al. (2017, 3) anticipated that "refugees are likely to be seen and depicted as a drain on government resources, and the emphasis is more likely to be on the private sector and individual citizens to volunteer to help them. Along with this goes a depiction of the Canadian public as generous and altruistic which are assumed to be superior 'Canadian values.'" Their analysis comes from a neoliberal critique, and they find the media to be on the whole uncritical. Wallace (2018) find that following the election and the Alan Kurdi photograph, the debate shifts towards questions of public services, resettlement support, and other operational concerns. My research also found this phenomenon, with more mentions of services, language courses, economic integration, and accommodations being debated. As well, the Conservatives began to plead for action on Yazidi refugees specifically, evoking their gender and religion (Christianity) substantially, to which the Trudeau administration eventually supported a motion to offer protection.

Canada's #Welcome campaign

Belanger McMurdo (2016) identifies three factors that influenced Canada's response to the refugee crisis, especially in the wake of the election. First, the Canadian public response to the crisis had gathered a significant amount of momentum over time. The public interest and concern reached a tipping point with the news of the death of three-year old Alan Kurdi, a Syrian child who drowned while travelling by boat from Turkey to Greece with his family. That his family had previously been refused resettlement to Canada, just added more emotional kindle to the fire. The event strengthened the public outcry for the Canadian government to change its previously more restrictive policies towards refugees. Second, the election saw each major political party competing for pledges to bring in more refugees, indicating that a consensus had been reached on Canada's obligation to take in a certain number of Syrians. That accepting more refugees was seen by the political parties as a strategic move means that most of the electorate were not swayed by concerns over threats and social service system abuse. The humanitarian or international obligations towards these refugees trumped other concerns for many. Thirdly, Belanger McMurdo believes that the public wanted their government "to match the rhetoric of Canadian identity as compassionate, actively engaged in the international community and open to newcomers" (Belanger McMurdo 2016, 82). It was no surprise, then, that Canadians pushed the government to bolster its effort towards resettling Syrians, given the longstanding willingness of many citizens to be actively engaged in sponsoring refugees themselves, through the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program. The PSR program had trouble keeping up with the number of volunteers and communities willing to sponsor refugees.

Alan Kurdi⁵ photo

Wallace (2018) conducted an analysis of media framing for the Syrian refugee crisis, and found that depictions of refugees shifted with the emergence of the Kurdi photo and the subsequent focus on resettlement in the election and post-election periods. According to her research, “the depiction of Syrian refugees largely transitioned from a focus on refugees as outsiders amidst conflict toward portraying refugees’ integration into Canadian life” (Wallace 2018, 228).

A recent study on the effect of the Kurdi photograph on empathic responses showed that an iconic photo of a single child had more impact than statistical reports of hundreds of thousands of deaths, in terms of empathy and issue salience. People who had been unmoved by the relentlessly rising death toll in Syria suddenly appeared to care much more after having seen Alan’s photograph; however, this newly created empathy waned rather quickly. This attention manifested itself in humanitarian donations as well. The number of average daily amount of donations to the Swedish Red Cross campaign for Syrian refugees, for instance, was 55 times greater in the week after the photo (around \$214,300) than the week before (\$3,850). By the second week, the donation totals had already begun to decline, but still topped \$45,400. After six weeks, the amount had leveled further, down to around \$6,500 — less than in the previous weeks but nonetheless higher than the original figure (Slovic et al., 2017). In my own analysis, the picture was only mentioned a few times, though this was partly due to the fact that Parliament was not in session during the height of the photo’s diffusion.

For the public service, the photo appears to have had a catalyzing effect. The picture’s emotive impact was not lost on the government, which scrambled to prepare a response, and

⁵ The young Kurdish boy, whose body washed up on a Turkish beach, is named Alan Kurdi. However, during initial coverage of his story and his picture, his name was often reported as “Aylan” or “Ayan” Therefore, for the purpose of this paper, I will refer to the boy as “Alan.”

quickly came to realize that they would face mounting pressure to do more. According to documents retrieved by the Canadian Press, Jean-Bruno Villeneuve, the assistant director of media relations for Citizenship and Immigration Canada wrote at the time, “Doesn’t matter how many thousands, a three (year-old) boy is dead” (Wright, 2018). September 2015 also saw the NDP’s lead in polling fall, and the Liberals’ pick up momentum, in part due to their emphatic message to bring 25,000 refugees in within the year.

Party framing of Refugees

There is very little literature on the link between media framing and political party framing. Framing conveys the party brand’s values and emotions to the electorate. Vliegthart and Roggeband (2007) argue that there is a bidirectional causal relationship between media framing and party framing, according to their analysis of the salience of political issues reported in the media and Parliament in the Netherlands. Interestingly, changes in framing only took hold if those frames had previously been used in each arena.

A growing field of Canadian political communication on political branding that attributes framing to brand consistency (Marland and Flanagan, 2012; Marland, 2016). Political parties are increasingly articulating their political platforms as ‘brands.’ Some scholars argue that branding is not a new phenomenon, rather branding is a new name for campaign tactics like framing and advertising (Adolphsen, 2010). Branding is distinctive, however, in that it uses frames in a very structured and consistent way, both during the campaign and non-campaign period. Especially under Harper’s Conservatives, party discipline has transformed into brand discipline, whereby all members of the party must adhere to the brand (Marland, 2016). For the public, the ‘brand’ informs them of what a party stands for and can summarize an issue using emotion and simple messaging.

The Stephen Harper conservatives' message had four pillars: balanced budget, low taxes, smaller government, and personal security (Marland, 2016). The criticism leveled at the Conservative government's for their response to the Syrian refugee crisis was focused on their repeated delays meeting refugee intake goals, their focus on security rather than humanitarian considerations, as well as the heavy reliance on private sponsors for Syrian resettlement efforts. The criticism highlighted these and others factors as evidence of a lack of commitment from Canada's government to meet their humanitarian commitments (Kennedy, 2015). In contrast, the Liberal campaign's platform promises to quickly receive 25,000 government-sponsored refugees, and to provide increased funding to support Syrian refugees fleeing the Syrian war, was attributed as the deciding policy point that ensured the Liberal majority win (Andrew-Gee, 2015).

By framing the issue as a direct response to the Conservative government's slow response, Justin Trudeau was able to claim that the party "was doing what is right as Canadians" (liberal.ca, 2015). The election was followed by terror attacks in Paris, which may have affected the Liberal's decision to slow down their resettlement plan, which they attributed to 'operational challenges' and 'security concerns'. When the plan was put back on track in November 2015, the issue was still very much a contentious media story (Riano, 2017). As for the other parties, the Conservative Party promised to "strengthen the integrity of [Canada's] immigration system, cracking down on those who would abuse Canada's generosity" and provide better economic opportunities for new Canadians (conservative.ca, 2015). The New Democratic Party promised to reverse the Conservative Party's discriminatory immigration policies and emphasized their commitment to family reunification (ndp.ca, 2015).

That the Conservatives were more concerned about security and threats is unsurprising. Conservatism has long branded itself as the school of thought most concerned with security-as-

preservation, defenders of values and a way-of-life, vanguards against unknown forces attempting to change and harm the home polity. In Fryberg et al.'s (2012) research into media frames on immigration issues in the United States, the researchers found that Conservative newspapers were more likely than Liberal newspapers to frame the narrative around an immigration bill in terms of economic and public safety threats.

Party pledges

The Conservative Party's 2015 election platform report pledged to "to resettle 10,000 Syrian refugees by September 2016" (conservative.ca 2015, 84). The rest of the platform has almost no mention of refugees, and Syria is only mentioned in regard to the military mission against Daesh. It also casts refugees in a dichotomous light; pitting "bona fide refugee claimants" against "bogus claimants" (p. 33).

The official Liberal Party 2015 election platform discusses Syrian refugees in more detail, using imagery and language to invoke emotions surrounding their situation, and linking Canadian 'values' (words like "open" "accepting" and "generous" are used) to the proposed response, and pledging to "expand Canada's intake of refugees from Syria by 25,000 through immediate government sponsorship" (liberal.ca 2015, 64). It also made reference to "restore Canada's reputation" abroad. The simplicity and immediacy to the Liberal plan sets it apart from the other major parties; the platform clearly states its goal to "immediately welcome 25,000 more refugees from Syria" (liberal.ca, 2015).

The New Democrats' platform also used emotive language in referring to the Syrian refugees. Acknowledging the Alan Kurdi photo, and that "Canadians were touched and shocked by the image of a young boy on a beach, as evidence of the magnitude of the Syrian refugee crisis.

Municipalities, provinces and families stepped forward to say they would help” and pledging to “Resettle 10,000 Syrian refugees in Canada by the end of this year” (ndp.ca, 2015) placed the NDP on similar ground to the Liberals, albeit with less clear and simple messaging. Their strategy to “welcome 9,000 Syrian refugees per year starting in 2016,” may have been much more generous than the Conservatives, but did not appear as dramatic as the Liberal’s pledge (ndp.ca, 2015). Further, the NDP’s decision to no run a budget deficit may have undercut the credibility of their plans. The NDP’s staggered approach, though initially more generous than the Conservatives, and arguably more generous than the Liberals’ in the long run, did not come off as direct, clear, and enthusiastic.

Whereas the response to Syria under Prime Minister Stephen Harper had clear emphasis on security concerns, from screening, to military campaigns in Syria, the Liberal Government in contrast focused on a policy that they deemed ‘representative of Canadian national identity’: a “whole of government approach [to] enhance security and stability, provide vital humanitarian assistance, and help partners deliver social services, rebuild infrastructure and good governance” (Government of Canada, 2016). By touching on the images and attributes that serve to set Canada apart in a positive light, the Liberals were able to project an image of Canadians as caring, generous people.

7. Concluding Thoughts

Parliamentary Question Period and media coverage provide an essential backdrop and arena for the formation of public opinion, political mobilisation, and policy support (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989; Greussing and Boomgaarden, 2017), because they employ particular interpretational lenses, or ‘frames’ on unfolding events, giving public audiences a cognitive

shortcut to make sense of these phenomena. This holds true for complex issues like the Syrian refugee crisis, which presented Canada with a major political and humanitarian challenge. This study aimed to shed light on the most dominant frames in parliamentary discourse on refugee issues in Canadian parliamentary debate over the course of the unfolding Syrian refugee crisis.

This paper sought to answer the following questions: What were the most common frames used during parliamentary debate to describe refugees? Do the frames vary by political party? How did Canada's largest political parties frame the crisis? How did the framing change over time? How does Canadian political framing compare with media framing?

My findings analyzed 11 frames regarding two aspects of the crisis – how were refugees depicted, and on what grounds should Canada respond to the crisis (if at all)? The most dominant frames on the depiction of refugees were of the victim frame, particularly as vulnerable, passive refugees lacking agency. Depictions of refugees as bogus 'queue-jumpers' or illegal migrants were also present, and often invoked alongside concerns over economization and the burden on social services and the immigration system. Interestingly, these two narratives were most often uttered by members of the Conservative party, who's branding tried to promote security and responsible spending. On the question of how and why Canada should respond, themes of humanitarianism, Canadian values and international obligations were all present, as were concerns with security and absorptive capacity. Both the NDP and Liberals tended to portray refugees as victims in need of help, and framed the crisis as a humanitarian issue. The Conservative party was positioned distinctly from the other parties, which employed similar frames and narratives. These findings were largely complemented by the literature on media framing of refugees in Canada and Europe. When analyzed chronologically, the debate over the crisis saw mentions of the international obligations peak, then fade as the election neared. As well, human interest stories began to appear

more once the first Syrians began arriving. On the whole, Canadian framing shares many similarities with the media's framing of the issue, with the Syrians often being 'Othered' as hapless victims.

More research is needed into the framing of this event, and how this compares with previous refugee crises, however. The Canadian reaction to the Syrian refugee crisis is likely to flavour future immigration emergencies, for better or worse. Moreover, depicting the resettlement efforts as a 'nation-building' event, will hopefully encourage a more compassionate view towards those fleeing oppression and seeking safety.

Figure 7:

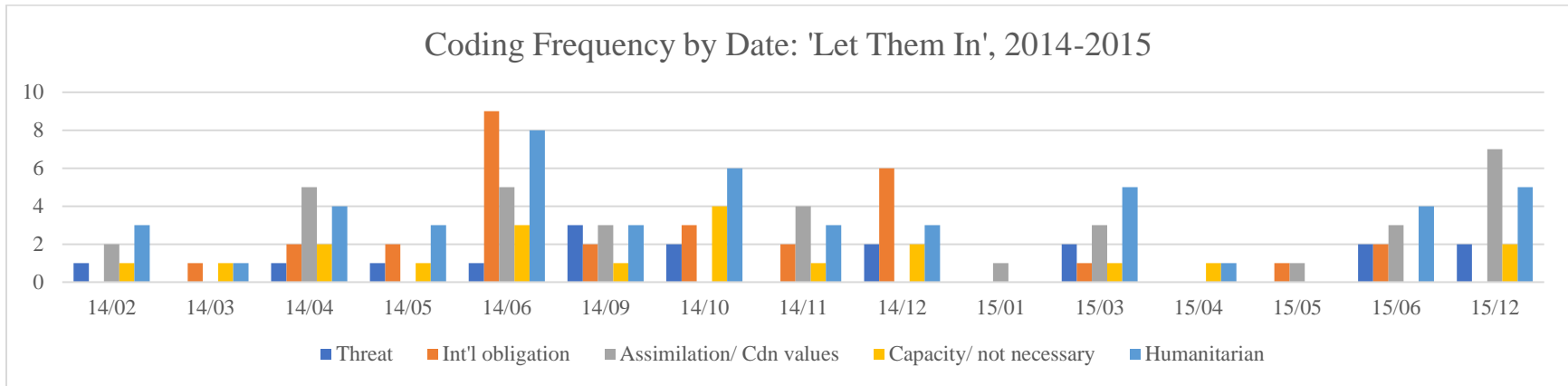
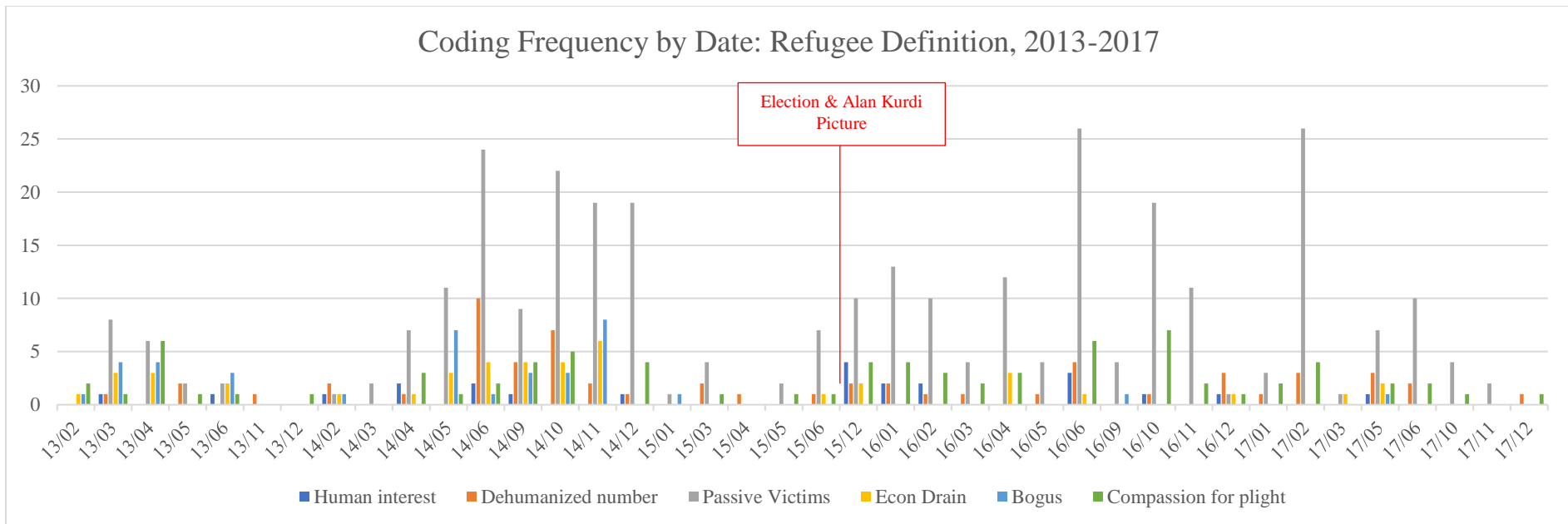


Figure 8:



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