

What It Means To Be American: Identity Inclusiveness/Exclusiveness And Support For Policies About Muslims Among U.S.-born Whites

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ABSTRACT

Americans' support for policies targeting Muslims was hotly debated during the 2016 presidential campaign. This study of U.S.-born White Americans seeks to move beyond explanations of this political polarization as a matter of liberal versus conservative, Democrat versus Republican focusing on the content of the superordinate American identity, in terms of how inclusive vs. exclusive it is. In line with the ingroup projection model, we expected that a more inclusive representation of the American identity would be related to support for more welcoming (rather than hostile) policies about Muslim people. White Americans (N=237) were recruited online during the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign (June 2016). Results supported our hypothesis and showed the independent associations of identity inclusiveness and exclusiveness with policy support. This study makes three important contributions to a growing literature on the relation between national identity representations and hostility toward immigrants and minorities: (1) directly and independently measuring inclusive and exclusive representations of the superordinate identity, alongside national identity, party affiliation, and political ideology; (2) focusing on Muslims, an understudied group targeted by a great deal of divisive political rhetoric in the 2016 campaign; and (3) considering policy support rather than general attitudes.

Keywords: keyword1; keyword2

Introduction

In the recent years, and during the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign in particular, Americans' stance toward policies targeting Muslims, both on U.S. soil and abroad, has been a point of significant contention. The debates that raged across the country following proposals to use a central database to track Muslims in the U.S. (Hillyard, 2015) and to ban all foreign Muslims from entering the country (Johnson, 2016) attest to the divisive

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nature and the salience of this issue in public discourse. Americans have been politically polarized in their specific stance toward Muslim people. A 2017 poll conducted in the wake of a presidential order banning people from seven predominantly Muslim countries found that 73% of Republicans agree with the statement that “banning people from Muslim countries is necessary to prevent terrorism”, in stark contrast to only 19% of Democrats who agree (Ipsos Public Affairs, 2017). Indeed, beyond issues related to Muslim immigrants, political polarization has become a salient feature of the American landscape, with growing ideological consistency and partisan antipathy over the last two decades (Pew Research Center, 2014).

In this study of White, U.S.-born Americans, we seek to move beyond explanations of this political polarization as a matter of liberal versus conservative, Democrat versus Republican. Specifically, we suggest that this debate reflects fundamental disagreements about who “we” (Americans) are, as a group. In the context of pervasive anti-Muslim sentiment (Ernst, 2013), we focus here on how Americans subjectively represent the content of the (superordinate) American identity and on prejudice toward Muslim people, which we operationalize in terms of support for surveillance of Muslims in the U.S. and for Syrian refugees. At this point, it is important to note that although “Arabs” and “Muslims” represent non-interchangeable ethnic and religious groups, they are often (and inaccurately) amalgamated in public perception (Al-Hazza & Lucking, 2005) and equally face greater prejudice than other minority groups in the U.S. (Kteily, Bruneau, Waytz, & Cotterill, 2015). Syrian refugees epitomize this typical amalgam and were prominent in public discourse at the time the study was conducted. As such, they likely represented a very salient exemplar of Muslim people for White, U.S.-born participants.

Better understanding the mechanisms underlying hostility toward Muslim people is important, as this group was the target of increasing numbers of hate crimes after the events of 9/11 (Disha, Cavendish, & King, 2011). Unfortunately, hostile rhetoric against Muslims has become even more pronounced in the wake of terrorism by groups such as the self-proclaimed Islamic State. The 2016 Presidential campaign, when this study was conducted, exacerbated these tensions, such that about 20% of young Muslims in the U.S. have made contingency plans to leave the country since the election (Green, 2017). In this work, we explore how the content of the American identity – in terms of how inclusive vs. exclusive it is – promotes support for hostile versus welcoming policies about Muslim people. This investigation is informed by the ingroup projection model (Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999; Wenzel, Mummendey, & Waldzus, 2007), which provides a theoretical framework as to when a superordinate identity (i.e., the American identity) is likely to be beneficial vs. harmful to sub-group relations. Here, we extend this model to the novel context of understanding support for diverging policy positions among White, U.S.-born Americans.

“American”: A Superordinate Group Identity

Throughout the 2016 presidential campaign and into 2017, the meaning of what it means to be American has been much considered in public discourse. For example, The Atlantic described the 2016 presidential election as “a referendum on America’s identity” (Brownstein, 2016). A number of commentators and officials called the contested ban on people from predominantly Muslim countries “fundamentally un-American” (Walters, 2017).

From the perspective of the social identity approach (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Turner & Reynolds, 2003), the American identity can be understood as a superordinate identity (Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman, & Rust, 1993; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000), where different racial or ethnic affiliations represent subgroup identities within the over-arching American national identity (Transue, 2007). According to the common ingroup identity model (Gaertner et al., 1993), embracing such a superordinate identity is positive: It can alleviate sub-group conflict and promote harmonious intergroup relations. Although research has often supported the positive effect of superordinate identification on intergroup outcomes (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000), identifying with a superordinate common ingroup can sometimes lead to negative outcomes (e.g., Banfield & Dovidio, 2013). The ingroup projection model (Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999; Wenzel et al., 2007) has helped to explain these discrepant findings and is particularly relevant for the present investigation.

Different Definitions of the Superordinate Identity Explain Support for Policies Hostile vs. Welcoming Toward Muslims

According to the ingroup projection model, the beneficial effects of the superordinate identity depend on the prototypicality of its different subgroups relative to the superordinate identity. In a nutshell, if a specific subgroup (e.g., Christians) is perceived to be more prototypical of the superordinate group (e.g., all Americans) than another subgroup (e.g., Muslims), then this other group's divergence from the superordinate prototype (e.g., prototypical Americans) can be used to frame this group as deviant and inferior. This perceived deviation leads to negative attitudes and prejudice of the ingroup toward the outgroup. This model was supported when focusing on the superordinate identity as European. The more Germans perceived their ingroup to be prototypical of the superordinate European identity, the more negative their attitudes toward Poles as an outgroup (Waldzus, Mummendey, Wenzel, & Weber, 2003; Wenzel, Mummendey, Weber, & Waldzus, 2003; Waldzus, Mummendey, & Wenzel, 2005 for similar results with Germans as the ingroup and British and Italians as outgroups; Reese, Berthold, & Steffens, 2012 for an ingroup projection perspective on global inequality). The current research adopts these insights to explain the political polarization around policies targeting Muslim citizens and immigrants in the period leading to the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

As a corollary, the ingroup projection model posits that a more complex representation of the superordinate identity (e.g., Americans as a diverse, multiethnic group) should lead ingroup members (e.g., Whites) to evaluate outgroup members (e.g., Blacks) more positively (Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999). Indeed, Waldzus and colleagues (Waldzus et al., 2005, 2003) found that when the representation of the superordinate European identity was manipulated to become more complex, German ingroup members reported more positive attitudes toward Poles and British/Italians as outgroups. Consistent with the ingroup projection model, research showing that greater social identity complexity (Roccas & Brewer, 2002) – which refers to one's subjective representation of the interrelationships and overlap among his/her multiple group identities – is related to more positive attitudes toward ethnic diversity and outgroups (Brewer & Pierce, 2005; Miller, Brewer, & Arbuckle, 2009). Several scholars have demonstrated the importance of accounting for the content (or subjective representations) of national identity when accounting for hostility toward minorities and foreigners (Esses, Wagner, Wolf, Preiser, & Wilbur, 2006; Pehrson, Brown, & Zagefka, 2009; Pehrson & Green, 2010). For instance, a recent study of young children in the U.S. showed that children reported more positive attitudes toward Arab Muslims if they perceived them to be prototypical Americans (Brown, Ali, Stone, and Jewell, 2017). In another example that is particularly relevant for the present investigation, Pehrson and colleagues (Pehrson, González, & Brown, 2011) found that among non-indigenous Chilean students, definitions of the national group that included indigenous people positively predicted support for indigenous rights, controlling for political affiliation. The present paper makes a contribution to this growing literature in the context of political decision-making during the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

Inclusiveness/Exclusiveness of the American Identity: The Present Research

We focus here on the notion of inclusiveness/exclusiveness of the American identity, i.e., whether its content is represented by all the different ethnic/cultural/linguistic subgroups it encompasses, or limited to a particular subgroup. Although any subgroup could in theory be perceived as more prototypical of the superordinate identity than others, historically, dominant groups have an advantage at that level. The likelihood of a particular subgroup to be considered most representative of the superordinate identity is constrained by sociohistorical factors and the hierarchical structure of societies (Devos, Gavin, & Quintana, 2010). In other words, if limited to a particular subgroup, the American identity is more likely to be represented by White Anglo-Saxon Protestants than by other subgroups. Indeed, Devos and colleagues showed that Whites are more associated with the category "American" than people with Black or Asian ancestry (Devos & Banaji, 2005), and are perceived to be more American than Latinos (Devos et al., 2010). Thus, contemporary debates about the inclusiveness/exclusiveness of the American superordinate identity tend to focus on whether a 'pure' America is

represented by Whites or Christians, vs includes other ethnic/cultural/linguistic/religious subgroups. These are the subjective perceptions and representations that we focused on here.

Based on the ingroup projection model and findings from other researchers on the relation between national identity representations and outgroup hostility, we propose that the inclusiveness/exclusiveness of the American identity has important implications for Americans' support for policies about Muslim people. In the context of the 2016 presidential campaign where such policies figured prominently in public discourse, the current study examines the relation between the inclusiveness/exclusiveness of White-Americans' subjective representation of the American identity and their support for policies that are welcoming vs. hostile toward Muslims as an outgroup.

To provide a stringent test of these associations, we investigate the associations between the content (i.e., inclusive/exclusive) of the superordinate American identity and the endorsement of these policies over and above partisan commitment and political ideology per se. Indeed, Americans' support for policies targeting Muslims has been hotly debated during the 2016 presidential campaign (and into the following year). This debate has been understood primarily as a debate structured by ideological (liberal versus conservative) or partisan (Democrat versus Republican) fault lines (Ogan, Willnat, Pennington, & Bashir, 2014). We propose that, beyond political ideology, how inclusive/exclusive the superordinate American identity is perceived to be will account for White-Americans' support for policies hostile/welcoming toward Muslim people.

Specifically, we expect that endorsing a view of American identity as including diverse ethnic/cultural/linguistic groups will be associated with greater support for more welcoming policies about Muslims as an outgroup, echoing findings on the complexity of the superordinate identity prototype in Europe (Waldzus et al., 2003, 2005) and other related work (Brewer & Pierce, 2005; Esses et al., 2006; Miller et al., 2009; Pehrson et al., 2009, 2011; Pehrson & Green, 2010). A diverse and inclusive superordinate American identity means that Muslim-Americans will be perceived as closer to the prototypical American, thus lowering negative perceptions of the Muslim-American outgroup by the White-American ingroup. In the case of incoming Muslim refugees or immigrants, they fall outside of the superordinate American group, however represented. Nevertheless, an inclusive American identity would imply that this Muslim group are compatible with, rather than deviant from, the American prototype, thus promoting a generally more welcoming stance toward this outgroup. Conversely, we expect that White-Americans for whom the American identity is represented exclusively by their own ethnic ingroup would support to a greater extent policies that are more hostile toward Muslim people.

In addition to controlling for conservatism and political orientation, we also control for important demographic variables (age, sex, and socioeconomic status) as well as for participants' strength of identification with the American (superordinate) identity overall. Based on the social identity approach (Turner & Reynolds, 2001), a superordinate category is relevant for group members only if they see it as personally relevant and identify with it. Given our focus on the subjective representation of a superordinate identity – i.e., by investigating the concepts of inclusive vs. exclusive American identity – controlling for participants' absolute levels of identification as an American will provide further evidence for the relevance of these novel concepts. In addition to American identification, we also control for satisfaction with life to ensure that the current findings are not explained by pre-existing distress.

In summary, we test the following two hypotheses:

(H1) Consistent with the dominant public discourse, greater conservatism will be related to greater support for more hostile policies about Muslims.

(H2) A more inclusive American identity will be related to more support for welcoming policies toward Muslims, whereas a more exclusive American identity will be related to more support for hostile policies toward Muslims. These associations should hold even when controlling for political orientation, demographics, socioeconomic status, satisfaction with life, strength of American identification, and conservatism.

With this study, we contribute to a growing body of work on the relation between national identity representations and hostility toward immigrants and minorities (1) by measuring inclusive and exclusive representations of the superordinate identity directly and independently, and alongside national identity, party affiliation, and political ideology; (2) by considering an understudied group which was the focus of a great deal of divisive political rhetoric in the 2016 campaign (i.e., Muslims); (3) and by considering policy support among Americans rather than general attitudes.

Methods

Participants and Procedure

We recruited adult American residents through Prolific Academic (www.prolific.ac) during the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign (June 2016, specifically). An alternative to Amazon Mechanical Turk, Prolific Academic is an online research crowdsourcing platform where participants have been shown to provide good quality data (Peer, Brandimarte, Samat, & Acquisti, 2017). Of the 375 participants who accessed the survey, we only analyzed data from participants who were born in the United States, self-identified as European-Americans, and who completed more than 60% of the questionnaire¹ (N=237). Although people registered on Prolific Academic come from a variety of backgrounds, our sample does not constitute a nationally representative sample. Missing data were missing completely at random, $\chi^2(df)=45.19(49)$, $p=.63$, and were replaced using expectation maximization estimation (Mazza & Enders, 2014; 1% of values used in the analyses were imputed that way). Univariate outliers (10 for age, 4 for identity inclusiveness, 1 for identity exclusiveness, and 29 for number of refugees allowed in the U.S.) were winsorized to three median absolute deviations around the median (Leys, Klein, Bernard, & Licata, 2013). One multivariate outlier was identified, based on its Mahalanobis distance evaluated at a stringent $p<.001$ level. The pattern of results was the same upon removal of this outlier, with one exception: the effect of identity exclusiveness on DV3 became statistically significant (compared to a marginally statistically significant effect when the outlier is included). Therefore, given the small impact of this outlier, we kept it in the analyses.

The final sample included 237 Americans (97 females, $M_{age}=30.61$, $SD_{age}=10.90$). On average, participants were 30.61 years old ($SD_{age}=10.90$). Thirty five percent of them were 18 to 24, 52% were 25 to 44, and 12% were 45 to 64. Thus, our sample was on the whole younger than the general adult population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Forty-two percent of participants reported that their highest qualification was a high school diploma, 12% held a trade school or college diploma, and 44% held a bachelor's degree or higher. These numbers suggest that educational attainment was on the whole a bit higher in our sample than in the general population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). The majority of participants (151, or 64%) indicated not following a religion. As can be seen, Muslims can indeed be considered an outgroup, as none of the 86 participants who indicated following a religion reported being Muslim (74 Christian, 7 Jewish, 5 Other). The proportion of religiously unaffiliated people in our sample is high, compared to that in the general population (23% according to Pew Research Center study; Pew Research Center, 2014). Participants completed a series of questionnaires online and received financial compensation (CAN\$5) for their time.

Measures²

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- 1 A histogram of missing data percentages showed a clear distribution break at 40%, separating the majority of participants from a few who dropped out of the study after a few questions. Nine participants who were born in the United States and self-identified as Caucasians were removed that way.
 - 2 These data are part of a larger research project that manipulated perceived social norms and justifications and included measures of self-determination, compartmentalization, vitality, positive and negative affect, and self and American humanization in addition to the measures reported here. However, the manipulations were not successful (perhaps

Dependent variables. As context for the ensuing questions, participants read the following brief description of the terrorist attacks that took place in the months prior to the study: “Over the last few months, several terrorist attacks carried out in the name of the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS) have shaken Western countries. In November 2015, terrorist attacks in Paris (France) killed 130 people and wounded more than 350. Only a few weeks later, two terrorists who had pledged allegiance to IS killed 14 people in San Bernardino, California. Recently, terrorist attacks in Brussels (Belgium) made 32 victims and injured over 300 people. These deadly bombings have stirred very strong reactions in the United States.”

Three questions then evaluated participants’ own reaction to these events by assessing their support for welcoming/hostile policies targeting Muslims. First, participants were asked the question “If you were in a leadership position, what action would you take?” and given two answer choices “Implement security precautionary measures seeking to control Muslims in the US”, and “Implement solidarity measures seeking to welcome Muslims in the US” (DV1: Security vs. Solidarity). Second, participants indicated how many Syrian refugees they would resettle in the U.S. if they were in a leadership position by answering the following prompt: “In the wake of the IS crisis in Syria, there have been discussions among political leaders about accepting at least 10,000 Syrian refugees in the US by September 2016. If you were in a leadership position, how many Syrian refugees would you resettle in the US by September 2016?” (DV2: Number of refugees³). The third question asked participants to choose whether they would sign a petition urging the U.S. government to oppose plans to bring in Syrian refugees or to resettle more Syrian refugees in the U.S. The exact question was: “A number of petitions are available online on the issue of Syrian refugees in the US. If you had to sign one petition, which one would you sign?” (DV3: Block vs. Welcome). These specific questions were chosen because they reflected salient public debates at the time of the study.

Independent variables. As a proxy for partisan affiliation, participants indicated whether they voted for a Democratic, Republican or other/independent candidate during the 2012 presidential election (categorical variable with Democratic vote as the reference category).

Subjective socioeconomic status. Participants rated their perceived socioeconomic status on a 1-9 scale using the MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status (Adler, Epel, Castellazzo, & Ickovics, 2000), which relies on a picture of a ladder representing how society is set up. Higher scores indicated higher perceived socioeconomic status.

Satisfaction with life. The Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) includes five items such as “I am satisfied with my life”. Participants rated their level of agreement with these items on a 7-point rating scale, with higher scores indicating greater life satisfaction ($\alpha=.90$).

Conservatism. Using the Social and Economic Conservatism Scale (SECS; Everett, 2013), participants rated the extent to which they feel positive or negative toward 12 economic (e.g., fiscal responsibility) and social (e.g., traditional marriage) issues on a 0-100 rating scale. Higher scores indicate greater conservatism ($\alpha=.86$).

American identification. We used the Inclusion of Ingroup in the Self pictorial measure (IIS; Tropp & Wright, 2001) to assess ingroup identification with Americans. Among seven pairs of increasingly overlapping circles, participants chose the option best representing their level of identification with Americans, with higher scores indicating greater identification.

Inclusiveness and exclusiveness of American identity. We created ten items to assess to what extent participants’ American identity is understood to be inclusive or exclusive. Participants rated the extent to which

because of the highly salient political conflict at the time). In the present paper, we focus on cross-sectional associations relating construction of the national identity to outgroup attitudes, as detailed above. Full details are available from the authors on request.

3 This variable was not normally distributed, but was positively skewed. A logarithmic transformation helped address this issue, but the pattern of results was the same regardless of transformation. Therefore, for ease of interpretation, we left it untransformed.

each item is representative of the American identity on a 7-point rating scale (1 = *do not agree at all*; 7 = *agree very strongly*). The Inclusive Identity subscale (InIS) comprised the following five items: “The various ethnic groups that live in the United States”, “The various linguistic groups that live in the United States”, “The diverse cultural groups that compose the country”, “All of America’s diverse population”, and “All of America’s melting pot of citizens”. The Exclusive Identity subscale (ExIS) comprised the following five items: “Only groups of people who are of European descent”, “Groups of people who share similar cultural characteristics with the first settlers in America”, “Only those who are native speakers of English”, “Group members who embrace core American values (such as equality, freedom, etc.)”, and “Only people who were born in the United States”.

Borrowing from the literature of positive-negative asymmetry in social discrimination (Mummendey & Otten, 1998), we suspected that high identity inclusivity may be different from low identity exclusivity. Therefore, we conducted an exploratory factor analysis (principal axis extraction with promax rotation) of all 10 items to support the creation of these two separate scales. Supporting our supposition, the Very Simple Structure criterion (Revelle & Rocklin, 1979), the empirical Bayes Information Criterion, and Velicer’s MAP (Velicer, 1976) all reached optimal values with two factors (regardless of whether exclusive identity items were reverse scored). In addition, exclusive and inclusive items loaded on their respective factors, with the exception of “Only those who are native speakers of English” (loading of .20 and cross-loading of -.16). This item was therefore removed, leaving four items in ExIS. Loadings in the inclusiveness factor ranged from .71 to .96 (all cross-loadings $< |.15|$), and those in the exclusiveness factor ranged from .70 to .87 (all cross-loadings $< |.09|$). Total scores for identity inclusiveness and identity exclusiveness were computed by averaging InIS and ExIS items, respectively. Reliability was good for both InIS ($\alpha=.92$) and ExIS ($\alpha=.88$), which were significantly, but moderately, negatively associated, $r = -.41$.

Results

Descriptive Results

Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations are presented in Table 1. During the 2012 presidential election, 146 participants (62%) voted for the Democratic presidential candidate, 58 for the Republican candidate (25%), and 33 (13%) indicated “Other” as a response. Participants who cast a Republican ballot in 2012 reported significantly more conservative views than participants who voted for a Democratic candidate, as indicated by SECS scores ($M_{Rep}=68.82$, $SD_{Rep}=15.27$ vs. $M_{Dem}=48.92$, $SD_{Dem}=16.44$, $t(112.18)=8.21$, $p<.001$). On average, participants indicated having a moderately high socioeconomic status, being fairly satisfied with their life, endorsing moderately conservative views, and identifying moderately strongly as Americans. In terms of policy support, 158 participants indicated (67%) that would implement solidarity rather than national security measures toward Muslims (DV1), and that on average, they would resettle about 14,600 Syrian refugees if they were in a leadership position (DV2). In addition, 167 (70%) would sign a petition urging the government to welcome rather than block more Syrian refugees (DV3). Finally, participants’ conception of the American identity was statistically significantly more inclusive than exclusive ($t(df) = 18.70(236)$, $p<.001$).

Zero-order correlations among study variables were consistent with partisan and ideological positions prevalent in public discourse. Table 1 shows that greater conservatism (SECS scores) and voting Republican in 2012 were statistically significantly associated with support for policies more hostile toward Muslim people: namely, deciding to implement security rather than solidarity measures toward Muslims, deciding to resettle fewer Syrian refugees in the U.S., and deciding to sign petitions in favor of blocking rather than welcoming Syrian refugees. Greater conservatism was also associated with stronger American identification (IIS scores). As preliminary support for our hypotheses, Table 1 also reveals that having a more exclusive American identity (ExIS scores) was associated with support for more hostile policies. Conversely, the inclusiveness of American identity was related to support for more welcoming policies. Also worthy of note, participants with a more inclusive representation of the American identity and higher socioeconomic status (MSSS scores) reported greater life

satisfaction (SWL scores).

Table 1 | Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations of the Study Variables

	M(SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Precautions vs. Solidarity (DV2)		-								
2. Number refugees (DV1)	14.62(17.25) ^a	0.58***	-							
3. Block vs. Welcome (DV3)		0.88***	0.88***	-						
4. Identity inclusiveness (InIS)	5.02(1.32)	0.57***	0.33***	0.52***	-					
5. Identity exclusiveness (ExIS)	2.27(1.37)	-0.45***	-0.28***	-0.35***	-0.41***	-				
6. 2012 vote ^a		-0.33***	-0.22**	-0.37***	-0.21**	0.19*	-			
7. Socioeconomic status (MSSS)	4.96(1.58)	0.08	0.01	0.09	-0.06	0.01	0.14	-		
8. Satisfaction with life (SWL)	4.31(1.49)	0.08	0.06	0.16	0.14 *	0.06	0.14	0.51***	-	
9. Conservatism (SECS)	53.65(18.38)	-0.55***	-0.35***	-0.45***	-0.28***	0.33***	0.48***	0.02	0.15*	-
10. American identification (IIS)	4.71(1.61)	-0.03	-0.08	0.03	-0.06	0.11	0.01	0.06	0.07	0.28***

Notes. ^aVariable coded categorically with levels Democrat, Independent, Republican in that order. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. ^aValues were rounded to the next 1000.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 2 shows the results of regressions statistically predicting support for policies toward Muslims. Covariates were entered in a first step, and inclusiveness and exclusiveness were entered in a second step. Supporting H1, conservatism was positively associated with support for more hostile policies toward Muslims, across all three dependent variables. Namely, people holding more conservative views were more likely to want to implement national security rather than solidarity measures toward Muslims in the U.S. (DV1; step 1 $B = -0.06$, $SE = 0.01$, $p < .001$, $95\%CI = [-0.09; -0.04]$), willing to resettle fewer Syrian refugees in the U.S. (DV2; step 1 $\beta = -.30$, $SE = .08$, $p < .001$, $95\%CI = [-.46; -.15]$), and more willing to sign petitions urging the government to block rather than welcome Syrian refugees (DV3; step 1 $B = -0.04$, $SE = 0.01$, $p = .003$, $95\%CI = [-0.06; -0.01]$).

Supporting H2, on the whole, both inclusiveness and exclusiveness of the American identity were statistically associated with support for welcoming/hostile policies about Muslims. In addition, introducing these two variables accounted for an appreciable additional proportion of variance in all three cases: 18% for DV1, 6% for DV2, and 12% for DV3. Specifically, people with a more inclusive American identity – as indexed by higher InIS scores – were willing to support solidarity rather national security measures toward Muslims (DV1; step 2 $B = 0.69$, $SE = 0.15$, $p < .001$, $95\%CI = [0.39; 1.00]$), to resettle more numerous Syrian refugees in the U.S. (DV2; step 2 $\beta = .21$, $SE = .07$, $p = .003$, $95\%CI = [.07; .34]$), and to sign petitions urging the government to welcome rather than block Syrian refugees (DV3; step 2 $B = 0.60$, $SE = 0.15$, $p < .001$, $95\%CI = [0.31; 0.90]$). Having a more exclusive American identity – as indexed by higher ExIS scores – was associated with support for a more hostile policy in the case of DV1 (step 2 $B = -0.38$, $SE = 0.14$, $p = .005$, $95\%CI = [-0.65; -0.12]$), and marginally in the case of DV3 (step 2 $B = -0.24$, $SE = 0.13$, $p = .07$, $95\%CI = [-0.51; -0.02]$, but see earlier description of the multivariate outlier’s influence). It was, however, unrelated to DV2. In contrast, the strength of American identification was related to none of the dependent variables, suggesting that support for diverging policies about Muslim people is related to how inclusive/exclusive the American identity is, rather than how strong it is. In short, supporting H2, the results show that beyond expected variables such as conservatism, the inclusiveness and exclusiveness of the American identity independently predict support for welcoming/hostile policies about Muslims.

Table 2 | Predicting Support for Hostile/Welcoming Policies About Muslims

Predictor	Dependent Variable											
	DV1: Security vs. Solidarity				DV2: Number of Refugees				DV3: Block vs. Welcome			
	Step1		Step2		Step1		Step2		Step1		Step2	
	B(SE)	OR	B(SE)	OR	B(SE)	B(SE)	B(SE)	OR	B(SE)	OR		
Intercept	3.45(0.97)***	31.62	1.23(1.39)	3.43	9605.81(6320.53)	-691.41(8193.73)	3.19(0.97)**	24.29	0.74(1.36)	2.09		
Age	-0.02(0.02)	0.98	-0.02(0.02)	0.98	-63.66(113.28)	-51.92(110.03)	-0.05(0.02)**	0.95	-0.06(0.02)**	0.94		
Sex (Male)	-0.42(0.34)	0.66	-0.45(0.40)	0.64	-2598.45(2277.13)	-1843.82(2218.34)	-0.90(0.36)*	0.41	-1.02(0.40)*	0.36		
Socio-economic status (MSSS)	-0.10(0.12)	0.91	-0.06(0.14)	0.94	567.57(785.08)	955.19(773.37)	0.02(0.12)	1.02	0.10(0.14)	1.11		
Satisfaction with life (SWL)	0.32(0.13)*	1.37	0.21(0.15)	1.23	1277.54(837.70)	562.88(845.46)	0.37(0.13)**	1.45	0.26(0.15)†	1.29		
2012 vote (Other)	0.26(0.50)	1.30	0.21(0.57)	1.23	3261.91(3190.28)	2659.04(3101.12)	0.07(0.51)	1.08	-0.06(0.56)	0.95		
2012 vote (Republican)	-0.23(0.40)	0.79	0.09(0.45)	1.09	-3429.54(2876.60)	-2407.61(2800.78)	-0.85(0.42)*	0.43	-0.71(0.45)	0.49		
Conservatism (SECS)	-0.06(0.01)***	0.94	-0.06(0.02)***	0.94	-5250.03(1322.23)***	-3862.77(1330.66)**	-0.04(0.01)**	0.96	-0.03(0.01)†	0.98		
American identification (IIS)	0.16(0.10)	1.18	0.19(0.12)	1.21	114.08(691.93)	100.01(671.49)	0.12(0.11)	1.12	0.12(0.11)	1.13		
Inclusive American identity (InIS)			0.69(0.15)***	1.98		2677.96(900.19)**			0.60(0.15)***	1.82		
Exclusive American identity (ExIS)			-0.38(0.14)**	0.69		-1268.89(850.98)			-0.24(0.13)†	0.79		
R ² / N-R ²	.30		.48		.15		.21		.30		.42	

Notes. A linear regression was used to predict DV1, and logistic regressions were used to predict DV2 and DV3. B=unstandardized regression coefficient; OR=Odds Ratio; N-R2=Nagelkerke pseudo-R2; †p<.10; *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

Discussion

This study tested the idea that, beyond political ideology and partisan leanings, the specific content of the American superordinate identity – namely how inclusive/exclusive it is – is associated with supporting for welcoming/hostile policies toward Muslim people among adult White-Americans. Although White-Americans have mixed views toward immigrants in general (Jones et al., 2016), attitudes toward immigrants from the Middle-East are relatively negative compared to attitudes toward other immigrant groups (Pew Research Center, 2015 – warranting focused attention on the mechanisms underlying these negative attitudes).

The expected pattern of correlations among the study variables was observed: Greater conservatism and Republican vs. Democrat political leanings were indeed related to more support for hostile policies targeting Muslim people, thus supporting our first hypothesis. These relations directly reflect the current dominant public discourse in the United States. In addition, supporting our second hypothesis, a more inclusive representation of the American identity was associated with support for more welcoming policies for Muslim people. This association held after controlling for other theoretically important variables (conservative ideology, partisan position) and across all dependent variables. Conversely, a more exclusive representation of the American identity was related to a greater willingness to implement national security (rather than solidarity) measures toward Muslims.

These results are consistent with the key theoretical framework articulated by the ingroup projection model (Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999; Wenzel et al., 2007): White-American participants who held a more exclusive view of the American identity perceived their ingroup (people of European descent, or sharing similar cultural characteristics with the first settlers in America) to be most representative of the superordinate identity (American identity), and correspondingly supported policies that are more hostile toward the less prototypical sub-group (Muslims). As such, these findings extend the ingroup projection model to the novel context of policy outcomes, an issue that is currently very salient in the American political landscape and that has important implications for Muslim Americans and immigrants from that group. In addition, given that public perception tends to amalgamate “Arab” ethnic and “Muslim” religious categories into a single archetype, the current findings are also relevant for Muslim and Arab minority groups in the United States more broadly. The notion that embracing a superordinate identity is beneficial for intergroup relations, as articulated by the common ingroup identity model (Gaertner et al., 1993), is appealing, but this study contributes to a growing body of work suggesting that the notion of superordinate identification needs to be qualified and nuanced. Indeed, the current results attest to the importance of examining the *content* of social identities (e.g., Amiot & Hornsey, 2010), in addition to the strength of people’s identification, as is customary in a lot of research targeting ethnic or national identities (Thomas, McGarty, & Mavor, 2009). Indeed, it is noteworthy that in the present research the strength of participants’ American identification was unrelated to outgroup outcomes, whereas the content of the American identity was. Other researchers have also noted that identity content tends to be neglected in favor of examinations of identity strength and have argued for the need to address this imbalance (Turner-Zwinkels, van Zomeren, & Postmes, 2015).

The 2016 presidential campaign was characterized by heated debates about “what it means to be American”, suggesting that beyond their theoretical interest, content-based investigations of social identities currently have high social and practical relevance (Reicher & Haslam, 2017). The contested nature of the American identity is not new, but what seems at stake in the current context is a resurgent interest in how national (American) and racial, ethnic, and religious identities align (or not). As Doane (1997) points out, the identity of a country’s dominant group is often unclear because it is typically less salient than minority identities are for minorities, which can in turn lead (for more privileged people) to an unquestioned representation of the national identity as isomorphic with the dominant ethnic or religious group (see also Reese et al., 2012, at the global level).

As a step toward a more content-focused analysis, we focused here on the inclusiveness/exclusiveness of the

superordinate American identity, which are simple and powerful concepts. The results show that these concepts can account for substantial variance in attitudes and behavioral intentions toward an outgroup. Practically, these findings suggest that focusing on how the American identity is represented, in public discourse and at the policy level, may provide some leverage for improving White-Americans' attitudes toward ethnic/religious minority groups. In other words, more inclusive representations of the American identity may help foster a more open and less prejudiced society through its potential downstream effects on tolerance toward outgroups. Ensuring that the American identity is represented in an inclusive, rather than exclusive way, in educational settings and materials may be a good place to start, given that associations between American identity representation and prejudice toward Arab Muslims can already be observed among children (Brown et al., 2017).

Inclusiveness and exclusiveness were measured directly and independently, which is a novel aspect of this research. Indeed, the factor analysis supported the validity of the two separate constructs and it is worth noting that these two variables were only moderately correlated, and both independently associated with the outcome variables. As such, the current findings articulate with research on the distinction between ingroup favoritism and outgroup derogation (Brewer, 1999; Mummendey & Otten, 1998): it seems that perceiving the group in inclusive terms is not the clear opposite of perceiving the group in exclusive terms. In the present case, it is interesting that identity exclusiveness was statistically significantly associated only with the decision to implement security vs. solidarity measures with Muslims currently in the U.S. The security measures publicly debated at the time of the study centered around the implementation of a central database registering Muslim citizens and/or immigrants from Muslim-majority countries. These measures fall much more in the category of outgroup derogation than decisions to accept more or fewer new refugees, which may be more tied to how "permeable" people wish their group's boundaries to be. In future research, it would be important to examine further the differences between inclusiveness and exclusiveness. It may be that the two forms of identity content (inclusive versus exclusive) are differentially related to key policy positions. For example, low identity inclusiveness might be related to the preferential treatment of ingroup members rather than direct hostility toward outgroup members, and vice-versa for high identity exclusiveness. The cross-sectional design of the present study did not allow us to disentangle these effects. In the current case, identity exclusiveness was related only to the national security vs solidarity, consistent with the above reasoning. Yet, systematically disentangling ingroup benevolence and outgroup hostility from other influences is a direction for future research.

The unbalanced proportion of participants who had cast a Democratic vs. Republican ballot in 2012 is another limitation of the current work. It would be important to examine issues of identity inclusiveness and exclusiveness in a politically more representative sample. Our sample was not representative of the general population in other ways: participants were younger, and more highly educated. Given that both age and education have been associated with lower prejudice (Firebaugh & Davis, 1988; Wagner & Zick, 1995), it is reasonable to expect that a population sample would show even more hostility and prejudice than demonstrated here. Future research should replicate our findings in a nationally more representative sample. It must also be acknowledged that these unequal numbers of Democrats and Republicans, as well as unaffiliated/non-voters, did not allow for a systematic test of party affiliation as a moderator of the impact of national identity construction, or as a distal variable driving an indirect effect on outgroup attitudes via identity construction. We certainly would expect that other causal paths are possible (and other complex feedback loops as party politics change over time). In addition, this study explored the implications of inclusiveness/exclusiveness for a limited range of policy outcome variables. Future research should address these limitations and also investigate the generalizability of our model in the context of other minority groups such as for example Mexican/Latino people.

In the meantime, by focusing on the role of White-Americans' representation of the American identity in predicting support of policies targeting Muslims, this study considered an understudied group that figured prominently in public discourse during the 2016 presidential election (and continues to do so during the current administration). It also allowed us to extend insights from the ingroup projection model and related work to the domain of policy support. The results show that beyond political ideology and partisan leanings, Americans'

diverging support for hostile/welcoming policies was tied to how inclusive/exclusive they perceive the American identity to be. For us, the present results highlight the theoretically interesting importance of superordinate identity construction in framing relations with outgroups, and the role of promoting inclusive identities, and challenging exclusive representations, in building a more welcoming and harmonious nation. In addition, we believe that in the current climate of extreme political polarization it is a message worth asserting, that common social psychological mechanisms operate across the political spectrum and can shed light on important societal issues.

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