The bond of displacement? Altruism of formerly displaced Serbian residents towards Syrian refugees[*]

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Nearly 70 million people have been displaced from their homes across the globe. Xenophobic reactions to them abound, especially in the West, creating an acute need for interventions to curtail those reactions. This article tests the effectiveness of one such strategy—raising the salience of an identity that hosts and refugees share—in the context of Serbian residents who were displaced during the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s and Syrian refugees traveling the Balkan route. Displaced Serbian residents are a challenging host population for this test. As displaced persons, they might exhibit greater generosity towards Syrians when their displaced identity is made salient, but they might also react against that common identity on account of anti-Muslim sentiment, a likely vestige of the ethno-religious wars in the former Yugoslavia. I find that a significant increase in the salience of participants' displaced identities resulted in neither higher nor lower levels of altruism towards a Syrian refugee family in need. Participants who witnessed someone being hurt during the conflict, however, reacted negatively to a more salient displaced identity and contributed significantly less to the family, though not chiefly because of anti-Muslim sentiment. This finding speaks to research on relative identity salience and cautions that commonality of hardship alone may not necessarily lead to a better reception of refugees. Humanitarian strategies aiming to exploit such commonality should therefore construct interventions with care.

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Introduction

During the European refugee crisis, well over 3 million people applied for asylum across Eastern and Western European states (Eurostat 2018). The largest number of applications—27.8% in 2016—came from Syrians fleeing a brutal civil war. Many who travelled north have disappeared or died; between January 2014 and June 2017 the Mediterranean sea has claimed at least 14,117 lives, and a further 246 have died on land, in Europe (Laczko et al. 2017). As images of capsized boats and lost lives became commonplace, the European refugee crisis consumed and divided the public (Faiola 2015; Graham 2015). Some went out to sea to help pull people out of the water, some volunteered at refugee camps, and some mobilized for policy change that would see the displaced population settled and protected (Löffler and McVeigh 2016). Others cautioned that not all who travelled the migration routes were fleeing war or persecution and that only those who were should be allowed forward (Trilling 2018). Others still mobilized to close borders altogether (Graham 2015). Harnessing these diverging sentiments, governments and political parties wrought remarkable change. Voters in the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union (Gietel-Basten 2016). The Hungarian government built a double fence along its southern border with Serbia and Croatia (Simonovits and Bernát 2016). Far-right parties secured parliament seats in Italy, Austria, Poland, Slovenia and elsewhere (BBC 2018). Understanding how individuals reacted to this crisis thus matters not only because of the human dimension, but also the political one. In such efforts, reactions of individuals who were themselves displaced are relatively understudied. But they shouldn't be, as those individuals hold the potential of being tremendous allies to the newly displaced.

Traumatic events affect how people behave. Exposure to war-time violence can hamper political participation (Lyall 2009) or increase it (Bateson 2012; Bellows and Miguel 2009; Blattman 2009). Experiencing violence can lead to apathy (Wood 2006), but also to backlash mobilization (Francisco 2004); it can result in a decrease of social trust (Nunn and Wantchekon 2011), but also in an increase of social cohesion (Gilligan et al. 2014). These diverging findings suggest that the relationship between traumatic events and behavior is meaningful, but far from simple. In this article I ask whether this meaningful relationship is receptive to manipulation, and explore how individuals who experienced wartime displacement behave towards distant strangers who experienced

the same.

In particular, I explore whether increasing the salience of an individual's identity as a displaced person affects levels of altruism towards displaced, outgroup strangers. The idea of "altruism born of suffering" (Staub 2003, Vollhardt 2009) posits that individuals who have suffered can be motivated to help others because of their own difficult experiences. Whether helping behaviors are limited to ingroup members or also extend to outgroup members is less clear, however, and scholarship on altruism and conflict victimization finds support for both the former (Gilligan et al. 2014, Voors et al. 2012) and the latter (Bauer et al. 2013, Whitt and Wilson 2007). I explore the flexibility of ingroup salience by re-categorizing erstwhile strangers who are ordinarily seen as outgroup members into ingroup members, where the new ingroup is defined by a superordinate identity—an identity that is shared and includes both groups (Gaertner et al. 1993, Transue 2007). I then examine whether such re-categorization results in higher levels of altruism exhibited towards the new ingroup members.

Indeed, a more salient superordinate identity encourages higher levels of altruism in a number of contexts, such as donating funds to help victims after an environmental disaster (Levine and Thompson 2004), helping an injured stranger (Levine et al. 2005), and, among children, expressing intent to help outgroup peers who are fellow earthquake survivors (Vezzali et al. 2015). Individuals can also resist a superordinate identity, however; particularly if that identity threatens the distinctiveness of their subgroup (Brewer 1991, Hornsey and Hogg 2000) or if animus exists between the two subgroups. In everyday conversations, the tension between superordinate-based solidarity and distinctiveness is perhaps most visible when the Holocaust is invoked in discussions on other rights abuses. Some Jews welcome the reference and call for solidarity and compassion with victims of conflict and violence across the globe (Banerjee 2006, Schulz 2001), while others do not, arguing that a generalization erodes the unique character and horror of the Holocaust (Rothberg 2011). And, when animus exists between the two subgroups, re-categorizing is naturally more challenging; while Jews have mobilized against ethnopolitical violence in numerous situations ranging from My Lai to Darfur, drawing on shared experience of suffering between Israelis and Palestinians is more fraught (Vollhardt 2009).

I explore the relationship between shared experience of hardship and altruism by studying

the reactions of formerly displaced Serbian residents to Syrian refugees. During the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s and early 2000s, many fled the Balkans and applied for asylum in the north, but many also remained. As a result of the wars, Serbia hosted 746,958 refugees and internally displaced persons (KIRS 2016). As of June 2014, almost a quarter million of them remained in Serbia, making up 3.5 percent of the population (KIRS 2016, RZS 2016). Since 2015, hundreds of thousands of other refugees, mostly from Syria and Afghanistan, have travelled through Serbia, along the Balkan route, on their way to northern Europe.[1] Having a substantial number of residents who experienced displacement as well as a prominent position on the Balkan route, Serbia presents a compelling opportunity to explore how people who were displaced behave towards displaced strangers in a real-life context.

Serbia also offers a hard test of re-categorization. The Yugoslav wars were fought along ethno-religious lines and resulted in the partition of a multi-ethnic Yugoslavian federation into individual states that were far less ethnically diverse (Subotić 2015). Anti-Muslim sentiment was highly salient among Orthodox Serbs who fought against Muslims in the conflict with Bosnia and Herzegovina, and later with Kosovo. Serbian campaigns of ethnic cleansing that included systematic rape, and, in the case of Srebrenica, genocide, leave no doubt as to the ethnic nature of the violence (Salzman 1998, Subotić 2011). Still, present-day discourse in Serbia presents the wartime past through the lens of Serbian victimization by Croats and Bosnians (Subotić 2013). As the wars are recent history—most Serbian residents alive today, if older than 18, will have been alive during at least one of these conflicts—anti-Muslim sentiment might still be salient, presenting a barrier to altruism towards the Syrian refugees, most of whom are perceived as Muslim. In particular, Serbian residents might react negatively to an identity that groups them together with Syrian refugees, emphasizing a commonality instead of a rather obvious national, ethnic, and religious difference.

To test whether the increased salience of a superordinate "displaced" identity affects altruism towards displaced Syrians, I conducted an online survey experiment. Potential participants were screened to include only individuals who experienced displacement in one of the past three conflicts

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[1]According to UNHCR, the number of refugees who passed through Serbia between October 1, 2015 and July 25, 2016 alone is 539,701.

in the region: Croatia (1991-1995), Bosnia (1992-1995), or Kosovo (1998-1999). One half of eligible participants received the superordinate "displacement" prime, while the other half received an ingroup prime. Participants then played the dictator game (Hoffman et al. 1994), in which they had the option of sharing their participation earnings with an anonymous Syrian refugee family.

The priming successfully increased the salience of the superordinate identity among participants who received the superordinate prime—they not only felt more strongly like a displaced person than their counterparts did but also assigned equal levels of strength to their identity as a displaced person as they did to their national/ethnic identity. Nonetheless, participants who received this prime were no more and no less altruistic than participants who did not. For a subgroup of participants, however, the displacement prime led to a difference in altruism. Participants who witnessed someone being hurt during the conflict sent significantly *less* to the Syrian refugee family if they received the superordinate prime. This challenges a number of findings on superordinate identity salience and altruism, and suggests that among those who are particularly victimized, simply increasing the salience of a superordinate identity does not necessarily lead to higher altruism towards strangers with whom they share some of that hardship.

Exploratory analysis suggests that prejudice, while a significant factor in determining levels of altruism, does not explain why participants who witnessed someone being hurt reacted negatively to the displacement prime. Instead, distinctiveness, measured as the level of closeness felt towards the refugees, most consistently speaks to the behaviors of these participants. In simple terms, displaced Serbian residents who witnessed someone being hurt during the war were more altruistic towards Syrian refugees if they felt a lot of closeness towards them, but reacted quite negatively to the displacement prime if they felt no closeness towards them at all. While additional research is needed to more fully explore the roles of prejudice and distinctiveness threat in this context, this initial exploration suggests that threats to group distinctiveness can offer a challenge to humanitarian appeals centered around commonality of hardship.

The need for understanding why humanitarian appeals work and why they fail is acute. Citizens and state actors across a number of countries, ranging from Hungary to the United States, are reacting to the European refugee crisis with open xenophobia. Exploring ways in which such hatred can be subdued, and altruism increased, is therefore a practical imperative. While the

European refugee crisis offers immediate context for these findings, their implications reach beyond this space. Of the 68.5 million individuals who are currently displaced around the world, 85% are hosted in developing countries (UNHCR 2018). There, too, situations may arise where members of newfound host societies have experienced conflict displacement themselves (Fisk 2018), and with that a need for careful framing of discourse and humanitarian appeals.

Background

This section briefly outlines recent scholarship in political science on host society attitudes towards refugees. While much has been written on native reactions to immigration (Dancygier and Laitin 2014; Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014), there are fewer explorations of attitudes towards asylum seekers specifically. Getmansky et al. (2018) examine the relationship between messaging and perceptions of refugees in the context of Syrian refugees in Turkey and find that negative messages about refugees result negative attitudes towards refugees among ethnic Turks. Among Australians, those who identified strongly as humans were substantially more welcoming towards asylum seekers, while those who strongly identified as Australians were not (Nickerson and Louis 2008). Survey participants in the United States are consistently more supportive of refugee resettlement elsewhere in the country than within their own communities, respond negatively to media frames that present refugees as a threat, but do not respond in any way to frames that rebut the idea of refugees as a threat (Ferwerda et al. 2017). Finally, in a survey spanning 15 European countries Bansak et al. (2016) asked participants to evaluate profiles of asylum applicants that varied on nine attributes. Participants expressed significantly greater support for applicants with high employability, severe vulnerabilities, and a consistent asylum testimony, as well as for applicants who were not Muslim.

Several recent studies examine the effect of exposure to refugees in the context of the current European crisis. Their findings are somewhat diverging. In Upper Austria, for example, community-level exposure to refugees dampens support for FPOE, the Austrian far-right party (Steinmayr 2016). Analyzing French municipalities, Vertier and Viskanic (2018) also find that hosting a temporary migrant center reduced the vote share increase of the Front National, the far-right party, by about 15.7 percent. Further, respondents in refugee-dense counties in the United States are less responsive to media frames that emphasize security threats posed by potential fu-

ture refugees (Ferwerda et al. 2017). In contrast, municipality-level exposure to refugees in Greece is linked to an increase in vote percent for the far-right party, Golden Dawn (Sekeris and Vasilakis 2016). In Turkey, the presence of refugees has a modest negative effect on support for AKP, the governing party responsible for the welcoming policy towards Syrian refugees (Altindag and Kaushal 2017) . Also in Turkey, high levels of exposure to refugees are linked to higher levels of refugee-related threat perception as well as to more negative attitudes towards them (Getmansky et al. 2018). Finally, a survey of small communities within 10 km of an asylum seeker center in the Netherlands shows that informal personal contact in a public space is positively related to support for the placement of the center in the vicinity, but that personal contact with asylum seekers at work strengthens negative attitudes (Zorlu 2017). In addition, Zorlu (2017) finds that contact is not linked to attitudes about granting asylum to the refugees.

Among recent scholarship that explores the current crisis, four studies examine the effectiveness of interventions aimed at improving host society attitudes towards refugees. The first emphasizes shared religion between the Syrian refugees and Turkish citizens, finding that religious primes improve certain attitudes towards refugees and increase respondent donations to a charity that supports them (Lazarev and Sharma 2017). The second study examines attitudes and behaviors of American citizens and deploys two interventions hypothesized to promote inclusion: information and perspective taking (Adida et al. 2018). The information treatment, which provided a set of facts on countries' commitments to accept refugees, did not affect attitudes or behaviors among Democrats and Independents, and resulted in negative reactions among Republicans. Perspective taking, which asked the participant to imagine they were a refugee, however, resulted in inclusionary attitudes among Independents and increases in writing a letter in support of the refugees to the incoming president, driven primarily by Democrats, but also by Republicans.

Third, Getmansky et al. (2018) find that reminding participants that Turkey's refugee policy has saved many innocent women and children results in a drop in positive attitudes towards refugees among non-Kurds. They point to perceptions of women and children as unproductive populations as one of the possible reasons behind this response. Finally, Dinas and Fouka (2018) leverage the massive religion-based exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey after the Greco-Turkish War of 1919-1922 to explore whether displacement of one's ancestors can be harnessed as a basis

for perspective taking. They prime half of their sample with a statement on parallels between that displacement and the current refugee crisis and find that the treatment positively affects attitudes towards refugees and donations to UNHCR, but only among current descendants of the early 20th century population exchange.

These recent studies reveal an important insight. While perspective taking appears to be an effective strategy to foster inclusion of refugees, as does emphasizing a common religious identity, there are interventions that do not appear to work and might even lead to backlash. A neutral, information-sharing prime is one such mechanism (Adida et al. 2018), as is a positive reminder that an open-door policy saves innocent lives (Getmansky et al. 2018). More research is needed, not only to explore whether variations of effective strategies work in a number of different contexts, but also to identify strategies that should be avoided, as consequences of interventions that invite backlash can be severe. While this applies to any potential host community, it is particularly the case for communities about which we know considerably less, like communities whose members experienced wartime displacement in the past (but see Hall 2016, 2018 and Corstange and York 2018).

This study contributes to this effort by examining the effectiveness of an intervention that has been successful in a number of contexts: re-categorization based on a shared, superordinate identity (Gaertner et al. 1993; Transue 2007). Like Lazarev and Sharma (2017), I exploit a common identity between hosts and refugees, but unlike them, I choose an identity that is acquired by experiencing displacement. Like Dinas and Fouka (2018), I leverage a personal experience of the same sort of hardship—displacement—but unlike them, I examine the effect of experiencing displacement first hand. I also diverge in examining the effect of a shared identity alone, without a perspective taking component that would draw parallels between participants' personal experiences and the current crisis. Building upon their work, I ask: If we aim to elicit altruism towards refugees by people who were refugees themselves, is it enough to simply remind them of their own displacement?

Theoretical Expectations

Humans possess, and can activate, a number of social identities. Which social identity is activated depends on the environment, as individuals self-categorize based on social categories that

are contextually salient (Turner et al. 1987). These social categories then classify the ingroup, to which the individual belongs, and outgroups, whose members do not share the individual's social identity (Tajfel and Turner 1979). While people commonly form ingroups on the basis of observable personal characteristics, proximity, meaningful lifestyle choices, and shared fate (Campbell 1958), group formation requires little. A mere perception of two distinct groups is sufficient, even if based on a random assignment of individuals into one or the other group (Tajfel and Turner 1979). When an individual activates a social identity, she begins to adopt the norms of the ingroup and behaves as a member of that ingroup (Turner and Onorato 1999). And, once people are categorized into groups, perceived differences between members of the same group are minimized (Tajfel 1969), and often ignored, while perceived differences between ingroup members and members of other groups are enhanced.

People have a tendency to systematically favor members of their own group over members of other groups (Billing and Tajfel 1973; Dasgupta 2004). This bias can manifest in ingroup favoritism, outgroup derogation, or both, and can extend to behaviors (Hewstone, Rubin, and Willis 2002). Prosocial behaviors, which are behaviors recognized as generally benefitting others, are among those more commonly exhibited towards an ingroup: people are more likely to help, trust, or share resources with members of their own group (Penner et al. 2005).

Group categorization is often spontaneous, but it is not unalterable. The characteristics on the basis of which categorization occurs can be manipulated by modifying the perceiver's expectations, goals, motives, past experiences, as well as situational factors (Gaertner and Dovidio 2000). As individuals have formed ingroups based on random assignment and clothing color (Wright et al. 1997), but also on the basis of ethnicity (Montoya and Pittinsky 2016), disability (Darling 2013), and environmental disaster experience (Vezzali et al. 2015), I hypothesize that experience of displacement can also form the basis of such a categorization:

H1: Participants who receive the displacement prime will report a significantly higher salience of their identity as a displaced person than participants who receive the ingroup prime.

Recategorization, as proposed by the Common Ingroup Identity Model (Gaertner et al. 1993), seeks to reshape group boundaries by creating an inclusive ingroup in the place of two (or

more) outgroups. While re-categorization processes do not do away with the smaller groups, they increase the salience of the superordinate identity that emphasizes the shared bond between the smaller groups. As the salience of a superordinate identity common to two outgroups increases, behaviors between members should improve, following the cognitive processes that motivate ingroup favoritism (Gaertner, Dovidio, Nier at al. 2000). Interventions that emphasize superordinate identities—ranging from dress similarity (Dovidio, Gaertner, Isen, and Lowrance 1995) to party identification (Riek et al. 2010)—have been shown to reduce intergroup bias and have led to increases in helping behaviors (Dovidio et al. 1997).

For example, Manchester United soccer fans were more likely to stop and help an injured stranger who was wearing an ingroup team shirt than a stranger wearing a nondescript or a Liverpool FC (rival) shirt (Levine et al. 2005). However, when a superordinate "soccer fan" identity was salient, Manchester United fans were just as likely to stop and help a Liverpool FC fan as they were to help a fellow Manchester United fan. Elsewhere, British citizens were asked if they would be willing to donate money to help victims of an environmental disaster (earthquake or flood) in Europe (Levine and Thompson 2004). Participants whose identity as Europeans was made salient indicated substantially higher willingness to donate than participants whose British identity was salient instead. This was the case even for participants in the "European" condition who felt less attached to their European identities than to their British identities.

Research on the behaviors of rescuers, bystanders, and Nazis during the Holocaust suggests that the critical difference between those who helped Jews and those who did not lies in their sense of self in relation to others (Monroe 2008). While bystanders and Nazis utilized ingroup/outgroup distinctions, rescuers used a much broader and more inclusive group classification, seeing themselves "connected to others through bonds of a common humanity" (Monroe 2008, 711). And, perhaps most relevant here, among Italian and immigrant children from Modena who experienced the powerful earthquakes in May 2012, those who thought that Italian and immigrant children victims of the earthquake belonged to a single group—the group of children—expressed higher levels of contact and helping intent than the children who thought that the victims belonged to different groups (Vezzali et al. 2015). This was the case for both Italian and immigrant child participants. I therefore hypothesize the following:

H2a: People who have experienced displacement will exhibit higher levels of altruism towards displaced outgroup members when the salience of their superordinate identity as displaced individuals is increased.

While a salient superordinate identity is linked to altruism in a number of contexts, ranging from soccer fandom to disaster survival, individuals do not always react positively to such an identity. This can be particularly the case when group members find their group distinctiveness threatened, or when one group is prejudiced against another.

Social identity is a "compromise between assimilation and differentiation from others" (Brewer 1991, 477), such that individuals seek identities that will satisfy both the need to belong and the need to be unique. Optimal identities that strike a balance between these two countervailing needs play an important role in maintaining an individual's sense of self worth (Brewer 2007). As a result, people are highly motivated to maintain group boundaries. When group identity is under threat—too similar to other outgroups or at risk of being absorbed into a larger group, for example—ingroup members might try to restore group distinctiveness (Jetten et al. 2004). Research in psychology typically captures such behavior with a variant of the dictator game: to differentiate their own subgroup from others, participants allocate less money to other subgroups and more to their own subgroup (Jetten, Spears, and Manstead 1996) or to themselves (Brewer 1991). Other ways of reinforcing group distinctiveness include evaluating one's own subgroup more favorably (Jetten, Spears, and Manstead 1996) and glorifying traits that render one's subgroup distinct, even if these traits are considered negative (Malovicki Yaffe et al. 2018).

Thus, in an experiment that either primed students' superordinate identities as university students or their subgroup identities as students of humanities or math-science, Australian students exhibited more bias towards the other subgroup when they received the superordinate prime (Hornsey and Hogg 2000). Further, among French college students who were born in France, native French speakers and French citizens, those who more strongly identified as French expressed significantly higher levels of prejudice against North-African immigrants when the two groups were presented as quite similar as opposed to when they were presented as dissimilar (Gabarrot and Falomir-Pichastor 2017). And finally, when students from the University of Amsterdam and the rival Free University played a variant of the dictator game in which they divided an endowment

between one ingroup and one outgroup member, they allocated significantly more to fellow ingroup members when norms of the two groups were presented as similar, as opposed to different (Jetten, Spears, and Manstead 1996).

While distinctiveness threat can lead to a negative reaction to a superordinate identity, so too can prejudice. Simply put, if an individual harbors prejudice against a particular group, she might not appreciate being associated with them. That this would happen in the context of Serbian residents and Syrian refugees, most of whom are considered Muslim, is not a stretch. Anti-Muslim sentiment is a staple of Western society. In the United States, Islamophobia has been linked to old-fashioned racism (Lajevardi and Oskooii 2018); in France, employers discriminate against Muslim job candidates (Adida et al. 2010), in Sweden, party gatekeepers contribute to their systematic underrepresentation in politics (Dancygier et al. 2015), and across Europe, individuals express significantly less support for granting asylum to a Muslim than to a non-Muslim asylum seeker (Bansak et al. 2016). Finally, in a group setting, French participants who are at least third generation French exhibited lower levels of altruism towards Muslim participants when the overall proportion of Muslims in the room was higher (Adida et al. 2016a, 2016b).

As Serbian residents who experienced wartime displacement might find that a superordinate identity of "displaced people" threatens the distinctiveness of their own experience or as they might harbor anti-Muslim prejudice against Syrian refugees, I hypothesize the following:

While some studies report an overall positive relationship between the experience of violence and prosocial behavior, others suggest that this relationship is limited to ingroups. Exploring altruism among Kosovar Albanians and Kosovar Serbs, Mironova and Whitt (2018) find that when ethnic cues are available, Albanians and Serbs are more altruistic towards ingroup members and that the experience of violence strengthens ingroup favoritism.

H2b: People who have experienced displacement will exhibit lower levels of altruism towards displaced outgroup members when the salience of their superordinate identity as displaced individuals is increased.

While all people who have been displaced in war suffer, their experiences likely differ in a number of ways. A particularly meaningful source of variation lies in their exposure to violence, as some may have fled before witnessing violence and destruction while others did not. Scholarship in

political science suggests that the experience of violence affects attitudes and behaviors, political or otherwise (Bateson 2012, Lyall 2009, Nunn and Wantchekon 2011, Wood 2006). In Burundi, for example, conflict victimization at the individual level is positively associated with altruistic behavior (Voors et al. 2012). Compared to communities that experienced less violence, violence-affected communities in Nepal also exhibit higher levels of altruism and contribute more to the common pool in a public goods game (Gilligan et al. 2014).

The intensity of experienced violence is further significant. In Sierra Leone, people from households that experienced more direct civil war victimization—like having their house burned down or having people in their households killed—are more likely to vote, join local political and community groups, and attend community meetings (Bellows and Miguel 2009). Ex-combatants from northern Uganda, who were victims of rebel abduction and conscription during the twenty-year war, have substantially higher rates of voting and becoming community leaders (Blattman 2009). Among them, witnessing violence accounts for a substantial portion of this relationship.

While some studies report an overall positive relationship between the experience of violence and prosocial behavior, others suggest that this relationship is limited to ingroups. Exploring altruism among Kosovar Albanians and Kosovar Serbs, Mironova and Whitt (2018) find that when ethnic cues are available, Albanians and Serbs are more altruistic towards ingroup members and that the experience of violence strengthens ingroup favoritism. Violence-affected residents of the Kibera slum in Nairobi reciprocate less in a trust game scenario after a group activity if participants in that group cooperate little with one another or if participants in that group are predominantly outgroup members (Becchetti et al. 2013). Further, young people from the Republic of Georgia and Sierra Leone exhibit higher levels of altruism towards ingroup members if they had someone from their household killed or injured during the civil war (Bauer et al. 2013). The experience of displacement appears to be additionally linked to altruism. In Georgia, participants who were both internally displaced and personally affected by violence more heavily favored their ingroup than participants who were affected by violence, but not displaced (Bauer et al. 2013). Both were less altruistic towards outgroup members than participants who were neither affected by violence nor displaced (Bauer et al. 2013).

Finally, some research suggests that the experience of violence might lead to a drop in

prosociality. Most notably, Cassar et al. (2016) find that individuals from Tajikistan who were victimized during the civil war express substantially lower levels of trust toward participants from their own village than do individuals who were not victims. Rohner et al. (2013) find that Ugandans who lived in counties with intense fighting during the 2002-2005 conflicts exhibit lower levels of generalized trust and identify more strongly with their ethnic identities than their national identities. And, studying Holocaust survivors and their families, scholars find that people who have experienced severe violence can develop severe distrust towards others (Niederland 1968), have their beliefs about the world as a just and safe place shattered (Janoff-Bulman 1992), and can develop social identities in which their victimization plays a central role (Adwan and Bar-On 2001). The high level of salience accorded to one's own suffering can then preclude one from recognizing or understanding the pain of others (Chaitin and Steinberg 2008), possibly resulting in lower levels of altruism towards them.

While the direction of the effect of experiencing violence remains contested, scholarship in both political science and psychology demonstrates that experiencing violence matters. The experience of violence might thus moderate the influence of a salient superordinate identity on altruism. I therefore hypothesize the following:

H3a: People who have experienced displacement and violent conflict will exhibit higher levels of altruism towards displaced outgroup members when the salience of their superordinate identity as displaced individuals is increased.

H3b: People who have experienced displacement and violent conflict will exhibit lower levels of altruism towards displaced outgroup members when the salience of their superordinate identity as displaced individuals is increased.

In sum, I hypothesize that the salience of a superordinate, displaced identity can be manipulated, that its salience will affect levels of altruism towards erstwhile strangers who belong to the superordinate ingroup, and that this relationship will be particularly strong for participants who have personally experienced wartime violence.

Case selection

During the European refugee crisis, between 2014 and 2017, over 3 million people applied for asylum in a number of European states (Eurostat 2018). Syrians and Afghanis made up the two largest groups of asylum applicants, respectively; the remainder consisted of predominantly Iraqis, Pakistanis, Albanians, Eritreans, Kosovars, Somalis, Nigerians, and Bangladeshis (Dustmann et al. 2016). Depending on their country of origin, individuals reached the EU through several primary routes: the Mediterranean routes, the eastern route along the border of easternmost EU member states, the western routes through the Canary Islands and the Iberian peninsula and, finally, the western Balkan route (Frontex 2018).

With its history of conflict and its prominent position on the Balkan route, Serbia offers an excellent environment for exploring the link between altruism and the experience of displacement. Serbia today houses a significant population of people who have experienced displacement, either as refugees or as internally displaced persons, during the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s and the early 2000s. In total, Serbia has hosted 537,937 refugees, mostly from conflicts in Croatia (1991-1995) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-1995), and 209,021 internally displaced persons, mostly from the conflict in Kosovo (1998-1999) (KIRS 2016). In June 2014, 43,763 refugees still lived in Serbia, as did 204,049 internally displaced people (KIRS 2016). This made up 3.5 percent of the Serbian population in 2014 (KIRS 2016, RZS 2016); the actual proportion of people who experienced displacement might have been even higher as only individuals who are formally registered as displaced are included in the official count.

In recent years, Serbian residents have witnessed tens of thousands of refugees traveling through the Balkan route. From October 2015 to February 2016, somewhere between 1,000 and 10,000 refugees entered Serbia daily, most continuing north towards Germany and beyond (UNHCR 2016). In early March 2016, Austrian border restrictions aimed at closing the Balkan route triggered a wave of similar policies in the countries to the south. As a result, Macedonia barred entry to all migrants except those deemed in need of protection (BBC 2016). Following these border closures, the number of refugees traveling the Balkan route was dramatically reduced, although a substantial number of people are still passing through, legally and illegally (Vasovic 2016). In March 2017, the UNHCR reported 7900 refugees who entered Serbia legally; 707 of them formally registered intent

Figure 1: Map of the Balkan route (source: Spiegel online).

to seek asylum there (UNHCR 2017).

Serbian public discourse surrounding the crisis differed substantially from that in a number of other European countries. While some press coverage in Hungary and France systematically and persistently promoted hostility and hate speech, and while the media in the UK, France, and Czech Republic wrote more commonly about defense than about caring, Serbian press systematically focused more on helping refugees (Georgiou and Zaborowski 2017). Early narratives focused on the criminality of smuggling networks, but as numbers of refugees passing through rose, humanitarian narratives took over, emphasizing the human dimension of the crisis (Petrović Trifunović and Poleti Ćosić 2018; Šelo Šabić 2017). The most common narrative, however, was one that favorably compared Serbia's response to the crisis with those of its neighbors (Petrović Trifunović and Poleti Ćosić 2018). Serbia was thus "saving Europe's soul" (Petrović Trifunović and Poleti Ćosić 2018, 223) and "teaching Europe a lesson," (223) while "Bulgaria [set] tanks on refugees," (224) "Croats [forced] women and children into a frozen river," (224) and Hungary's Victor Orbán, the "fascist from the heart of Europe" (224), built a wall.

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Scholars link these narratives to a combination of politically salient factors. The first is Serbia's need to re-build its image in the aftermath of the atrocities committed during the Yugoslav wars, and its stigma as a "rogue state" (Petrović Trifunović and Poleti Ćosić 2018, 212). The second is Serbia's status as an EU candidate. The refugee crisis presented an opportunity for the Serbian political community to advance on both agendas by linking the policy of welcome to memories of Serbia's own wartime plight and by demonstrating that Serbia is a competent and responsible champion of European values (Šelo Šabić 2017). Their efforts were recognized in December 2015 with the opening of the first accession negotiation chapters. Finally, scholars have also linked the tenor of the discourse in Serbia to its role as a transit country and not a destination. Indeed, as countries along the Balkan route progressively closed their borders, the discourse in Serbia became more security-driven (Sardelić 2017; Šelo Šabić 2017).

Serbia is thus not only a Balkan route country with a significant population that has experienced wartime displacement, but also one in which politically expedient narratives of openness and empathy played a prominent role in public discourse. As such, it presents an excellent opportunity to systematically examine how people who were displaced themselves react to strangers who share that hardship.

Empirical Strategy

Participants took part in an online survey experiment. Potential participants first answered four screening questions: if they experienced displacement either as refugees or as internally displaced persons during the conflicts in Croatia (1991-1995), Bosnia (1992-1995), or Kosovo (1998-1999), and were at least 7 years old when that happened (Bauer et al. 2013), they were eligible to participate. The entire sample therefore consisted of individuals who experienced displacement. While the majority of participants were ethnic Serbs, about 10% were of various other ethnicities, including Croatian, Bosnian, Roma, Albanian, Hungarian, and Montenegrin. All eligible participants then answered a few demographic questions and received either the ingroup prime or the superordinate prime.

To increase the salience of either an ingroup (national/ethnic) identity or a superordinate (displacement) identity, I used a questions-as-treatments framework (Transue 2007; Bloom et al.

2015) and asked participants a series of questions, listed in the Online Appendix. The final question in both primes was open ended, asking the participant to provide a short answer to "What does it mean to be displaced?" or "What does it mean to be Serbian [or other specified national identity]?". The selection of priming questions was determined in consultation with local experts.[2] I chose the dichotomous primes (instead of a prime and a control) in order to increase the difference in the relative salience of the superordinate identity between the two groups. The prime assignment was randomized at the level of the individual, without blocking. Table 1 presents basic population covariates, by prime assignment.

Table 1: Population covariates, by prime assignment

	ingroup prime	superordinate prime
number of participants	228	195
women (percent)	61	57
age (years)	44	45
serbian nationality (percent)	93	93
serbian ethnicity (percent)	90	91
education bracket (median)	high school	high school
employed (percent)	53	47
income bracket (median)	15,000-29,999 dinars	15,000-29,999 dinars

A manipulation check followed, aiming to assess the comparative salience of various identities by asking participants to rate how strongly they felt like a (1) man/woman, (2) Serbian (or other specified national identity), (3) a parent (if applicable), (4) displaced, and (5) Christian (or other appropriate religious identity).

Then, participants played the dictator game (Hoffman et al. 1994), as follows:[3]

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[2]I thank Jelena Jojkić, Vanja Slijepčević, and Dimitrije Zdravković for their contributions in crafting the survey.

[3]800 Serbian dinars is approximately $8.34, or 35% of the average daily wage in Serbia.

To thank you for participating in this study, [the flagship state university] gives you 800 dinars. If you wish, you have the opportunity to divide these 800 dinars between you and a Syrian refugee family in need that would like to seek asylum in Serbia. The family will be chosen with the aid of the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration of the Republic of Serbia and will remain anonymous. After this study is over, this family will receive the bulk sum of whatever the participants in this study send to them. You don't have to send anything to this family, but if you want to send something, type the amount in the box below:

The survey then continued with a number of questions on domestic political preferences, the EU and its migration policies, exposure to war violence, ethnic tolerance, and relative deprivation/agency. Population covariates and other characteristics that might affect altruism were particularly important to capture. As older people tend to be more altruistic than young people (Freund and Blanchard-Fields 2014), and as those with higher incomes might be able and willing to give more (Chowdhury and Jeon 2014), I asked participants about their age and income. I asked about gender because women tend to be more inequality-averse than men and can thus be more generous (Croson and Gneezy 2009). Questions on exposure to war violence help control for potential higher levels of altruism among those who individually experienced intentional harm-doing (Grossman, Sorsoli, and Kia-Keating 2006). Questions on relative deprivation address the possibility that participants who see themselves as substantially better off than the Syrian refugees would be more altruistic. To capture feelings of group distinctiveness, I asked participants what amount of closeness they felt towards Syrian refugees;[4] this addresses scholarship on distinctiveness threat, which suggests that those who feel their group distinctiveness threatened are less altruistic. Finally, asking about ingroup and outgroup sentiment will help control for variation in altruism due to ingroup favoritism and prejudice (Bracic n.d.; Hewstone, Rubin, and Willis 2002; Montoya and Pittinsky 2016).

The survey was administered by Ninamedia, a local research firm, between June 1st and August 2nd 2017. The survey used Qualtrics for the purpose of randomization, which immediately

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[4]This measure is reverse-coded.

linked to a Ninamedia online survey instrument that administered the questionnaire.[5] Participants were recruited using a Facebook ad.[6] As participants were recruited via Facebook, the sample is not representative of Serbian residents who have experienced displacement.

Results

This section first discusses the effectiveness of priming and then presents the results of the dictator game. Briefly, the priming questions appear to have been effective in increasing the comparative salience of the displaced identity, but the increased salience of the superordinate identity resulted in neither higher nor lower average contributions to the Syrian family in need in the dictator game. Among participants who witnessed someone being hurt, however, the increased salience of the superordinate identity led to significantly lower levels of altruism towards the Syrian family in need.

The relative salience of the superordinate identity

To increase the relative salience of the superordinate displaced identity, I posed a series of questions related to displacement to a randomly chosen half of participants. The other half of participants answered a set of questions relating to their national/ethnic identities. The manipulation check that followed examined the relative salience of the two identities.

I asked participants to rate, on a 5-point scale, how strongly they felt like a Serbian (or Bosnian, Croatian, etc.) and how strongly they felt like a displaced individual. The superordinate prime participants reported a significantly higher average salience of the displaced identity, compared to the ingroup prime participants ($p < 0.05$; t-test). The average salience of the na-

tional/ethnic identity, however, was the same for both groups (see Table 2).[7] Further, among ingroup prime participants the average salience of the displaced identity was significantly lower than the average salience of the national/ethnic identity ($p < 0.05$; t-test). This was not the case for the superordinate prime participants; for them, there was no difference between the two (see Table 3). They felt just as strongly displaced as they felt Serbian (or Bosnian, Croatian, etc.).

Table 2: Salience of displaced and national/ethnic identities, between groups (t-test)

How strongly do you feel displaced?		
	mean	95% CI
ingroup prime	3.52	(3.33, 3.71)
superordinate prime	3.84	(3.64, 4.03)
difference	**-.31**	**(-.59, -.04)**

How strongly do you feel Serbian (or other specified identity)?		
	mean	95% CI
ingroup prime	4.06	(3.89, 4.22)
superordinate prime	3.99	(3.81, 4.18)
difference	.06	(-.18, .30)

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[7]These results are substantively unchanged when a Mann-Whitney U is used instead of the t-test.

Table 3: Salience of displaced and national/ethnic identities, within groups

Ingroup prime

	mean	95% CI
How strongly do you feel Serbian (or other specified identity)?	4.06	(3.89, 4.22)
How strongly do you feel displaced?	3.52	(3.33, 3.71)
difference	**.54**	**(.28, .78)**

Superordinate prime

	mean	95% CI
How strongly do you feel Serbian (or other specified identity)?	3.99	(3.81, 4.18)
How strongly do you feel displaced?	3.84	(3.64, 4.03)
difference	.15	(-.11, .43)

The manipulation check suggests that the priming questions achieved their intended result. I therefore have support for *H1*, which stated that participants who received the displacement prime would report a significantly higher salience of their identity as a displaced person than participants who received the ingroup prime. I next examine whether the priming that successfully raised the salience of the superordinate identity also led to increases in altruism.

Levels of altruism exhibited by the two groups

Even though participants who received the superordinate prime reported a significantly higher salience of their identity as displaced individuals, they were no more generous towards the Syrian refugee family in need than the ingroup prime participants. Figure 2 presents the average amount of dinars sent to the Syrian refugee family by participants who received the ingroup and superordinate primes. The difference between the average amounts sent is not statistically significant. Participants sent 29% (ingroup prime) and 24% (superordinate prime) of their 800 dinars to the family.

Mean contributions to the Syrian refugee family in need in the
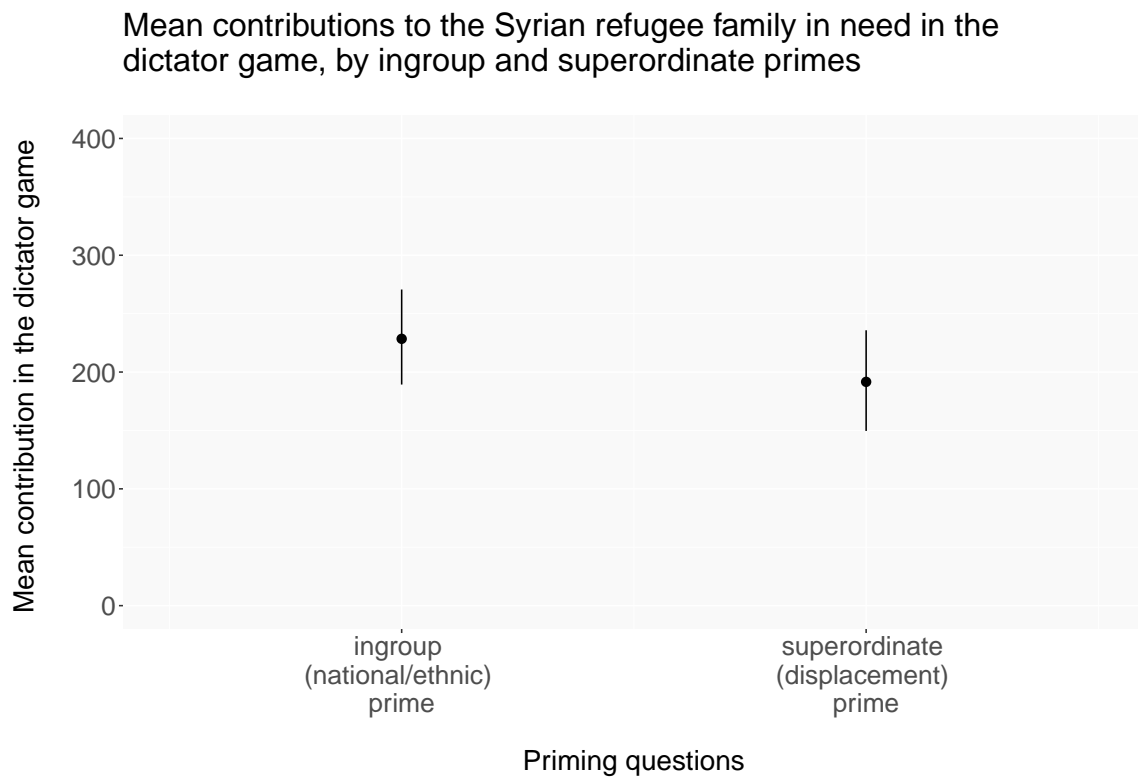dictator game, by ingroup and superordinate primes

Figure 2: This figure presents the average amount of dinars sent to the Syrian refugee family in
need along with 95% confidence intervals, by prime. Participants had an endowment of 800 dinars.

To control for covariates that might have influenced participant decision-making, I ran
a regression that included a host of relevant factors. The second column in Table 4 presents
results from an OLS regression that includes covariates for age, gender, income, education, Serbian
ethnicity, closeness felt towards coethnics, and closeness felt towards Syrian refugees. The regression
also controls for whether participants felt they were better off than the Syrian refugees, whether
they would be bothered if their child or grandchild married a Muslim, and whether they witnessed
someone being hurt during the conflicts in Yugoslavia.[8]

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[8]The results remain substantively unchanged when using tobit.

Table 4: OLS regression results

Amount sent in the dictator game

	full sample	witnessed violence only
superordinate (displacement) prime	-45.16 (30.21)	-125.13** (42.26)
woman	79.68** (31.11)	73.41† (42.68)
age	0.43 (1.53)	2.17 (2.01)
income	27.45** (12.18)	8.93 (18.59)
education	2.04 (11.34)	0.22 (16.22)
Serbian ethnicity	100.62† (53.60)	79.76 (70.95)
marry Muslim	-24.10** (10.12)	-15.63 (14.26)
witnessed someone being hurt	10.62 (30.56)	
closeness towards coethnics	-21.97 (14.30)	-21.88 (18.73)
closeness towards Syrian & Afghan refugees	65.25*** (13.61)	82.88*** (18.11)
doing better than Syrian & Afghan refugees	58.08** (22.01)	87.92** (30.67)
const.	-135.64 (127.23)	-238.84 (179.33)
number of participants	385	186
Adjusted R^2	0.1242	0.1851
F Statistic	5.95***	5.202***

$^{†}p<0.1$;* $p<0.05$;** $p<0.01$;*** $p<0.001$

Regression results confirm the initial null finding. As the superordinate prime had no discernible bearing on the participants' levels of generosity, I have no support for *H2a* and *H2b*,

which respectively hypothesized that a more salient superordinate identity would result in significantly higher (*H2a*) or significantly lower (*H2b*) levels of altruism. Participants who identified as women, who had higher incomes, who felt close to the Syrian and Afghan refugees, and who felt like they were doing better than those refugees, however, sent significantly more to the refugee family in need. Participants who would be bothered if their child or grandchild married a Muslim, in contrast, contributed significantly less.[9] In the model that examines all participants together, witnessing someone getting hurt during one of the conflicts does not appear to be related to levels of altruism. The next section takes a closer look at individuals who were particularly victimized during the wars.

Personal experience of conflict as moderator of altruism

Since experiencing conflict victimization is linked to a number of political attitudes and behaviors, participants who witnessed someone being hurt during the wars might have reacted differently, or more strongly to the superordinate prime. Figure 3 shows the average amount of dinars sent to the Syrian refugee family by these participants. Those who received the ingroup prime sent 34% of their endowment to the family, while those who received the superordinate prime sent 17%. The difference between the two is statistically significant ($p<0.05$).[10]

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[9]The treatment did not affect feelings of closeness to Syrian and Afghan refugees, perceived relative deprivation, or anti-Muslim prejudice.

[10]Repeating this analysis only with participants who did *not* witness someone being hurt during the war produces results similar to those in the full sample: the difference between the average proportion of the endowment sent to the family by participants in the two groups is not statistically significant. Participants who received the ingroup prime sent on average 26% of their endowment, while participants who received the superordinate prime sent on average 28%.

Mean contributions to the Syrian refugee family in need in the dictator game by participants who witnessed someone being hurt, by ingroup and superordinate primes
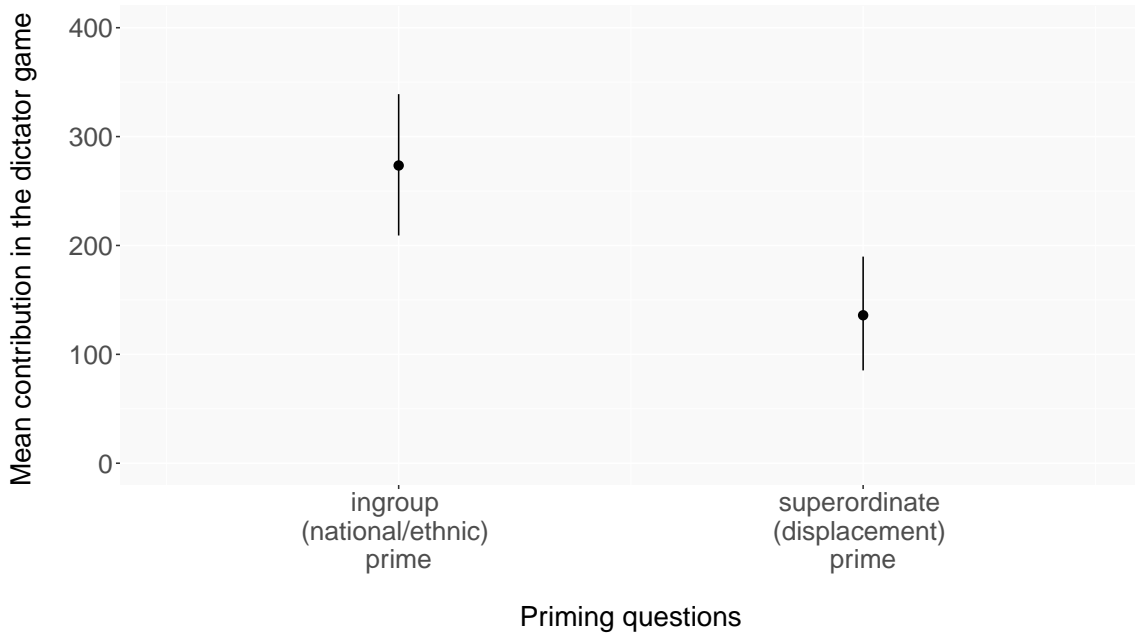
Figure 3: This figure presents the average amount of dinars sent to the Syrian refugee family in need along with 95% confidence intervals, by prime, for participants who witnessed someone being hurt during the wars.

The third column in Table 4 presents results from an OLS regression with relevant control variables that only includes observations from participants who witnessed someone being hurt. The superordinate prime is statistically significant: participants who received this prime contributed substantially less to the Syrian refugee family in need. This finding provides support for *H3b*, which hypothesized that participants who experienced violent conflict would exhibit lower levels of altruism towards the family when the salience of their superordinate identity as displaced people increased. Two other variables are significant as well; participants who felt close to Syrian and Afghan refugees, and participants who felt like they were doing better than those refugees sent more to the family. Perceived relative deprivation is thus an important factor, as is distinctiveness.

This finding deviates from conclusions in several studies, which find that conflict victimization is positively associated with altruism and other measures of prosociality (Bauer et al. 2013;

Becchetti et al. 2013; Gilligan et al. 2014; Mironova and Whitt 2016a; Voors et al. 2012). While some of these studies document increases in altruism across the board (Gilligan et al. 2014; Voors et al. 2012), others find that individuals who experienced conflict violence are only more prosocial towards other ingroup members (Bauer et al. 2013; Becchetti et al. 2013; Mironova and Whitt 2016a). The experiment presented here tried to shift the boundaries of the ingroup; according to the studies just mentioned, such a shift might have led to increases in altruism—either because such increases manifested across the board or because the increased salience of a shared, displaced identity between Serbian residents and Syrian refugees led the former to treat the latter more favorably. And yet, when the priming successfully increased the salience of a displaced identity, that salience resulted in a backlash.

To get a sense of why this group of participants reacted negatively to the superordinate prime I plot their average contributions to the family against the prime they received, their anti-Muslim sentiment, and the level of closeness they feel towards Syrian and Afghan refugees. By doing this, I explore whether prejudice or distinctiveness threat might serve as moderators such that the effect of the superordinate prime would be particularly strong or different for subgroups of participants. Looking at prejudice and feelings of closeness, one might expect that participants who are prejudiced or those who feel distinct from refugees would react negatively to an attempt at establishing a common, shared identity. In contrast, participants who are not prejudiced or do not feel distinct from refugees might react positively to the superordinate prime. As the numbers of observations in each of the categories are low, the analysis that follows is merely suggestive.

The top panel of Figure 4 explores prejudice. While participants who disagreed with the prejudiced statement contributed significantly more to the family than participants who agreed with it ($p<0.05$), participant reactions to the superordinate prime were consistent across all three levels of prejudice. Whether or not participants expressed anti-Muslim sentiment, their reactions to the superordinate prime, while negative, were not statistically distinguishable from their reactions to the ingroup prime. Therefore, based on the available data, prejudice does not appear to moderate the effect of the superordinate prime.

Mean contributions to the Syrian refugee family in need in the dictator
game by participants who witnessed someone being hurt, by prejudice

I would be uncomfortable if my child or grandchild married a Muslim. Do you agree or disagree?
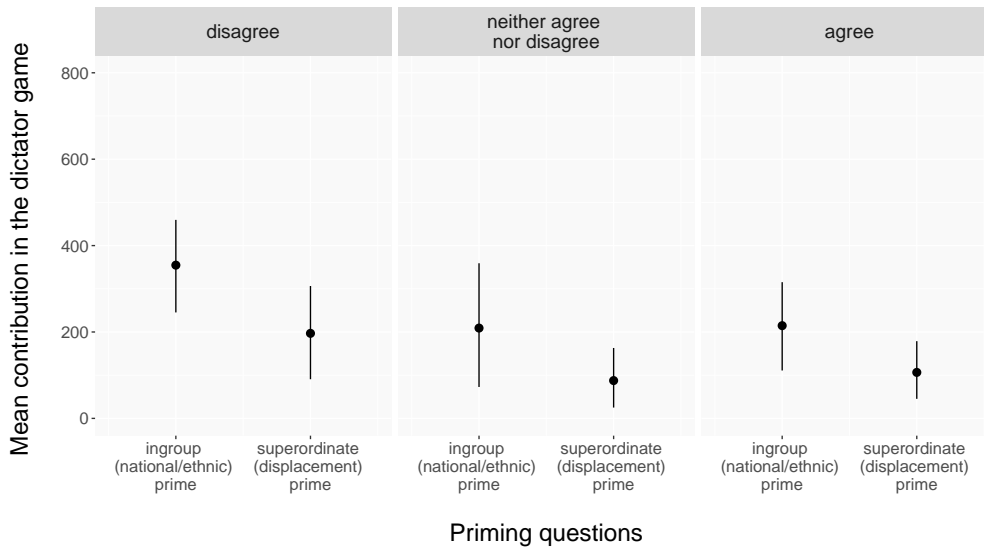
Mean contributions to the Syrian refugee family in need in the dictator
game by participants who witnessed someone being hurt, by distinctiveness

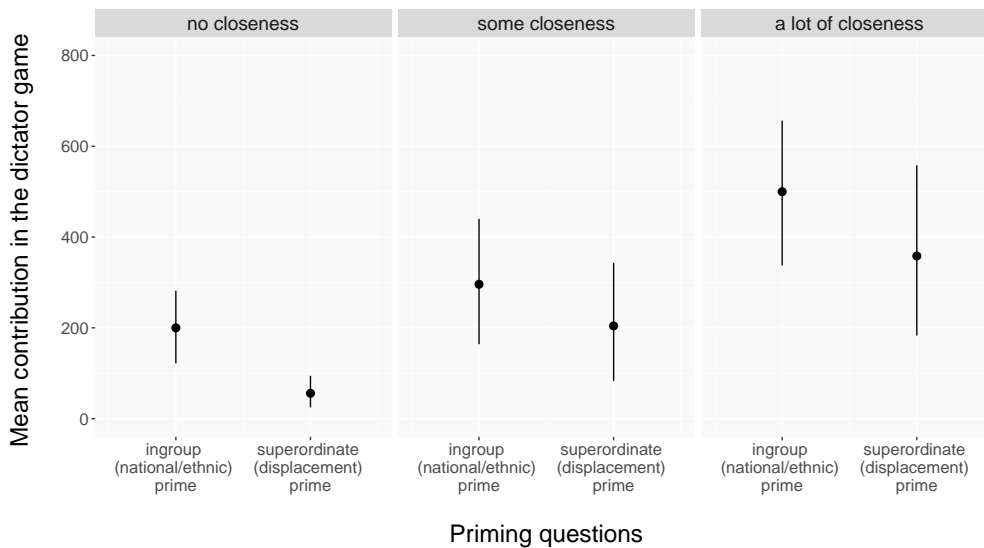What amount of closeness do you feel towards Syrian refugees?

Figure 4: Average amount of dinars sent to the Syrian refugee family in need for participants who witnessed someone being hurt during the wars, by prejudice (top) and distinctiveness (bottom).

That anti-Muslim sentiment is not a moderator might seem surprising to an outside observer—it certainly seems reasonable to expect that participants who agree with the prejudiced statement would react more negatively to a shared identity than participants who reject the anti-Muslim statement. Yet, research from the region shows that ingroup favoritism, and not anti-Muslim sentiment, motivates preferential treatment of ingroup members (Mironova and Whitt 2016a, 2016b; Whitt and Wilson 2007).

While prejudice against Muslims does not appear to moderate the effect of the superordinate prime, feelings of distinctiveness offer somewhat stronger results.[11] The bottom panel of Figure 4 shows the average amount sent to the refugee family by participants who witnessed someone being hurt, by the degree of distinctiveness felt by those participants. Participants who felt a lot of closeness—or low distinctiveness—towards the refugees on average contributed 55% of their endowment to the refugee family in need. Participants who felt no closeness—or high distinctiveness—contributed on average 16%. There is, therefore, a statistically significant difference in overall contributions by participants who felt high distinctiveness and those who felt low distinctiveness ($p<0.05$). Nonetheless, in no subcategory of distinctiveness were average contributions to the family in need higher among participants who received the superordinate prime. Participants who felt a lot of closeness or some closeness on average contributed amounts that were statistically indistinguishable from one another. Moreover, participants who felt no closeness towards refugees reacted quite negatively to the superordinate prime. While these participants on average contributed 25% of their endowment when they received the ingroup prime, average contributions dropped to 7% among those who received the superordinate prime ($p<0.05$). Importantly, the ingroup and superordinate primes did not affect feelings of closeness towards refugees.[12]

Just like prejudice, feelings of distinctiveness do not appear to moderate the effect of the superordinate prime. These results, however, do offer some insight into the role of distinctiveness threat. As mentioned earlier, individuals balance the need to belong and the need to be unique when

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[11]The analysis that produced the bottom panel of Figure 4 was not pre-registered.

[12]The primes were delivered close to the beginning of the lengthy survey, while feelings of closeness were measured at the end.

they form social identities (Brewer 1991). When an ingroup is at risk of being subsumed by a larger group—precisely what the superordinate prime sought to do—ingroup members might try to restore group distinctiveness. In other studies, dictator game participants have done that by allocating more money to ingroup members or themselves (Brewer 1991; Jetten, Spears, and Manstead 1996; Malovicki Yaffe et al. 2018). I observe the same here. Based on their rather extreme negative reaction to the superordinate prime, one could argue that participants who feel more distinctive from the refugees (feeling no closeness towards them) might be more prone to interpret an attempt to increase the salience of a superordinate identity as a threat to the distinctiveness of their own subgroup. While the number of observations in the analysis presented here is too low for the results to be conclusive, systematically exploring the role of distinctiveness threat in a context such as this would be a promising direction for future research.

In conclusion, while the superordinate prime worked and successfully increased the salience of a common, displaced identity among treated participants, the increase in its salience did not lead to changes in altruism towards a Syrian refugee family in need. These findings hold for the full sample as well as for a subsample of participants who did not witness anyone being hurt during the war. Participants who did witness someone being hurt during the war, however, reacted negatively to the superordinate prime by contributing significantly less to the refugee family in need. Exploratory analysis suggests that prejudice, while important in predicting overall levels of altruism, did not moderate the effect of the superordinate prime among this subgroup of participants. Similarly, distinctiveness, measured as the degree of closeness felt towards Syrian and Afghan refugees, did not moderate the effect of the superordinate prime: participants reacted more negatively to the displacement questions regardless of the level of closeness they felt towards the refugees. Still, examining distinctiveness revealed a particularly strong negative reaction to the superordinate prime: participants who witnessed someone being hurt during the war, but who felt no closeness towards the refugees contributed very little to the family in need after answering the displacement questions. This suggests that distinctiveness threat plays a prominent role in reactions to humanitarian appeals that aim to take advantage of altruism born of suffering (Staub 2003; Vollhardt 2009, 2013).

Discussion and Conclusion

On the Balkan route, with a recent history of a brutal ethno-religious civil war and several hundreds of thousands residents who experienced wartime displacement, Serbia presents a compelling opportunity to study the relationship between personal experience of displacement, identity salience, and altruism. Based on the conflict with Bosnia and Kosovo, one might expect anti-Muslim sentiment to govern the reactions of displaced Serbian residents. With its focus on the human dimension of flight, however, Serbian public discourse during the refugee crisis muddies this expectation. Indeed, it suggests that individuals who have themselves experienced displacement can and ought to be particularly generous towards others who suffer the same. The main result of the research presented here—showing that increasing the salience of a shared, displaced identity leads to neither higher nor lower altruism—is perhaps indicative of these countervailing forces.

The findings contribute to scholarship on multiple identities and their relative salience. Although it seems fairly straightforward to increase the salience of an identity—a few questions might suffice—behavioral change might not necessarily follow. While research elsewhere shows that individuals in groups that wear matching clothing report higher levels of group unity (Dovidio, Gaertner, Isen, and Lowrance 1995), that soccer fans are just as likely to help a fan of the opposing team as they are to help one of their own when their superordinate "soccer fan" identity is salient (Levine et al. 2005), and that even random group identity assignment leads to ingroup favoritism (Tajfel and Turner 1979), participants in this study either resisted the pull of a more salient displaced identity or rejected it altogether. This is particularly interesting in light of other evidence from the region, which suggests that ingroup favoritism based on ethnic ingroups—Serbian, Croatian, and Bosnian—governs disparate treatment of individuals from other groups (Mironova and Whitt 2016a). In this study, the treatment that primed the superordinate identity raised its salience such that it was indistinguishable from that of the national/ethnic identity, and yet I captured no evidence of ingroup favoritism that one might expect, if identity salience alone were sufficient in triggering such behavior.

If identity salience was not enough, what other conditions would have had to be satisfied to observe an increase in altruism towards the refugee family among treated participants? Perhaps an identity defined by descent-based attributes—ethnicity, nationality, religion—is markedly different

from an identity that is acquired during one's lifetime, via experience, such that expressions of in-group favoritism manifest sooner where descent-based attributes define the ingroup. Indeed, primes emphasizing shared religion between Syrian refugees and Turkish citizens increase altruism towards the former among the latter (Lazarev and Sharma 2017), though substantive differences between Serbian and Turkish contexts should preclude us from drawing a direct comparison. Further, as my exploratory analysis suggests, the displaced identity might have simply been too inclusive (Brewer 1991). Although distinctiveness threat likely played a role in negative reactions to the superordinate identity among participants who were particularly victimized during the war, the real-life context in this study perhaps presented additional challenges to an intervention that might have worked in a laboratory setting or in an emotionally less fraught real-world scenario (i.e. soccer). Finally, the answer might lie in the nature of the treatment. Perhaps a shared experience of hardship is insufficient if no explicit mention is made of the need for solidarity *because* of that shared experience. Work on perspective taking in Greece (Dinas and Fouka 2018), where the link between the participant and the refugees is made explicit, suggests that may be the case.

These results carry serious implications for displacement interventions. While a naive view might assume that societies with extensive experience of displacement would react to strangers going through similar hardship with understanding and generosity, the findings here suggest that reality is not quite that simple. Knowing how to frame a potential commonality between a host society and a refugee population does not only increase the chance that refugees will find a safe haven, but likely also affects how those among the host population who have been displaced process their own trauma. In aiming to reduce prejudice and discrimination against the newly arriving refugees, as well as any potential conflict between members of the host society and refugees, the type, direction, and framing of discourse should be considered with care.

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