

# **Public perceptions of Canada's response to the Syrian crisis: A preliminary examination of the views of white post-secondary youth**

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# Integrated Threat Theory

- ❑ Attempts to describe the components that cause a perceived threat between social groups as well as the role fear plays in producing prejudice (Stephan & Stephan 2000; Stephan et al. 2009)
- ❑ Basic model includes four types which Stephan & Stephan (2000) believe can cause prejudice:
  - ❑ *Realistic Threats*
  - ❑ *Symbolic Threats*
  - ❑ *Intergroup Anxiety*
  - ❑ *Negative Stereotypes*

# Why study youth public perceptions?

- 44% of Canadians oppose the Liberals resettlement of Syrian refugees
  - 58% of Canadians aged 18-34 support the government's plan
- 53% of Americans oppose accepting Syrian refugees
  - 63% of Americans aged 18-29 support accepting Syrian refugees

## Why St. John's?

- Most homogenous province in Canada
- Majority of immigrants who arrive in the province settle in St. John's
- Newfoundland & Labrador accepted ~200 GAR Syrian refugees and sponsored ~100 PSRs

# Research Questions

- ❑ What are your thoughts on Canada's response to the Syrian crisis?
  - ❑ What were your friends or family member's thoughts?
  - ❑ What comments have you seen on your social media accounts?
- ❑ Do you think Canada's response was appropriate?

# Methodology

- ❑ 30-40 minute interviews
- ❑ 30 respondents
  - ❑ Data reflects interviews from 16 youth aged 19-26 attending MUN during Spring Semester 2016
- ❑ Future plans:
  - ❑ Interview 30-40 post-secondary youth attending McMaster University

# Realistic Threats

□ Mostly manifested in concern over terrorism, cost, and employment

- I relatively agree with Trudeau's decision on the matter. I do think that he should be very thorough when there is a legitimate threat of a terrorist coming into Canada, so we should be careful with it.
- I am no expert on it but I'm glad we have taken refugees ... [but] with the bombing in France people were scared of terrorism. They thought that ... one thing I heard a lot of was that you never know who you are letting in.
- Canada seems more peaceful but I know it had also placed a lot of strain on resources like when refugees showed up and they didn't have enough hotel rooms for them.
- I have obviously seen a lot of backlash against it as well. In terms of it's not our responsibility to look after them, they are going to be too expensive...
- People are getting upset that they get jobs, that their jobs are being lost. I see that as a double edge blade.
- That these people are going to come to Canada and steal Canadian jobs.

# Symbolic Threats

□ Mostly manifested in concern over threats to values as well as differences in Canadian standards and beliefs.

- People saying that we shouldn't be welcoming terrorists into our country and that they are going to be preaching their religion into the street...
- [Saying that] they stay in their own country and help fight the war.
- They should be rebuilding their own country and fighting for their own country instead of fleeing the war.
- There are a lot of people who are saying to them [to go] back to their own country, help our people first.

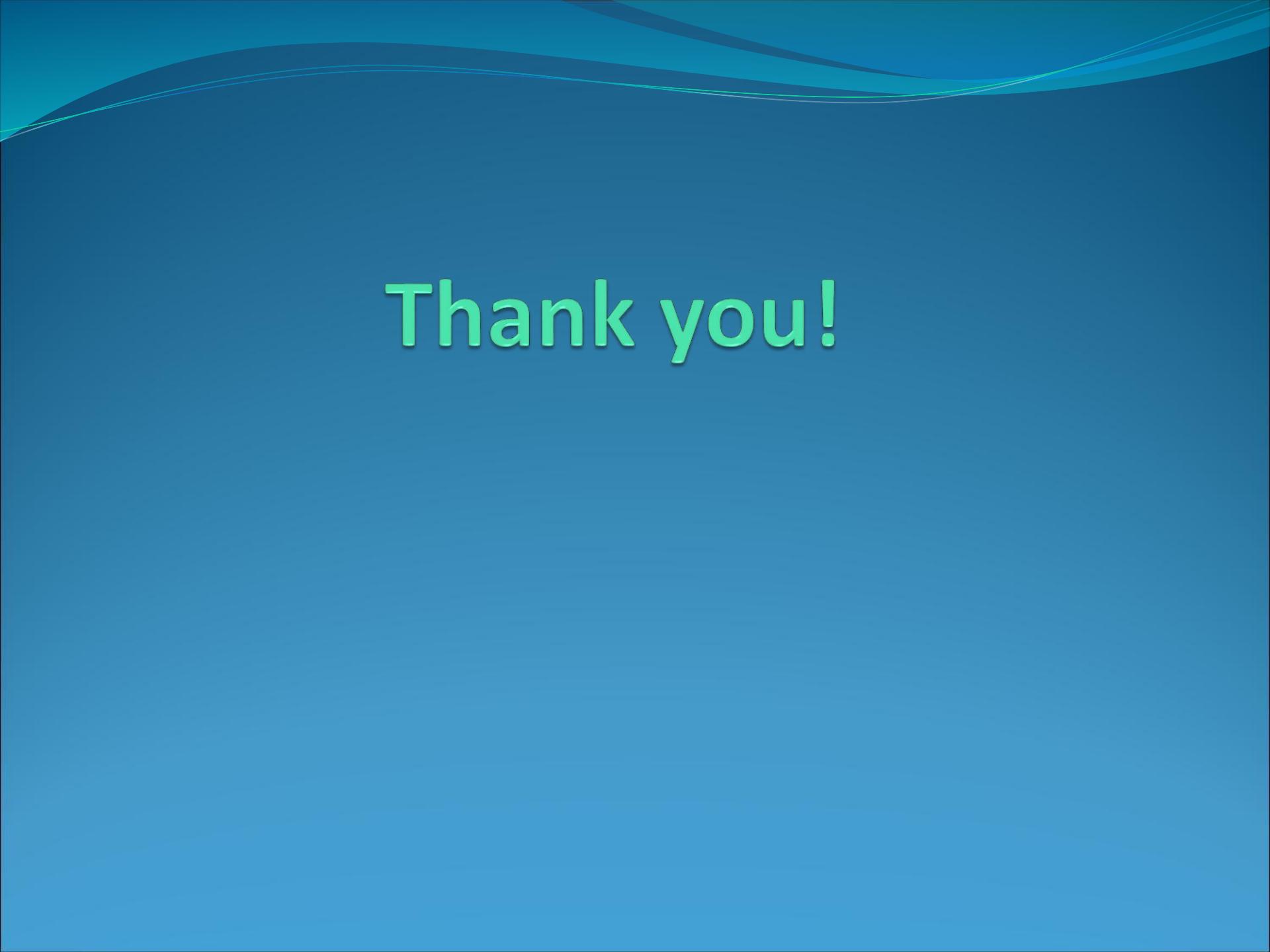
# Intergroup Anxiety

❑ Mostly manifested through the idea of other-anxiety

- ❑ People saying that ... the moment we retaliate or say anything to them ... they will pull the race card and will say we are racist.
- ❑ A couple of my aunts who I can't stand said they [Syrian refugees] don't have a place here. I think they were old fashioned so they don't embrace change.
- ❑ Because people were afraid. Because the terrorist attacks that were happening in other Western societies ... People are just straight up afraid.
- ❑ Whether these people were refugees or not, they were kind of scared of who was coming into the country and what could happen to them.

# Conclusions

- ❑ There is evidence to support the argument that these youth do perceive Syrian refugees as a threat [or at least they perceive others as perceiving them as a threat]
- ❑ Youth also believe that support for the Liberal plan is a generational issue



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# Thank you!